

2021-08-30

The date of Rubinstein's death



We received an interesting question concerning the date of the death of Akiba Rubinstein from Mr. Philip Jurgens (Ottawa, Canada):

“[...] I noticed on your following web page: [Rubinstein, Akiba K.](#), that you give 15 March 1961 as the date of Rubinstein's death. However, below this information you present photographs of Rubinstein's grave which clearly show 14 March as his date of death. Is there an explanation for the discrepancy?”

As our member John Donaldson, co-author of the two-volume monography on Rubinstein ([The life & games of Akiva Rubinstein](#), 2nd ed. 2006), is an authoritative expert with regard to the great Polish chess master, I forwarded this question to him:

“[...] As far I can see, remarks of Philip Jurgens are correct. Everybody can see that discrepancy and I wonder why he seems to be the first one who draws attention to this question. Anyhow I

couldn't find an earlier discussion on Rubinstein's day of death. [Wikipedia](#) mentions March 14th, Gaige March 15th. In the 2nd edition of your book on Rubinstein's 'chess life' it seems that you didn't pay any special attention to the day of his passing away. The picture on p. 424 shows his grave with the illegible date of 14 [-03-1961]. Do you have an explanation for these different dates?"

Promptly I got his reply from John:

"[...] The e-mail from Mr. Jurgens is the first time I have noticed the discrepancy in the day Rubinstein died. When Dr. Minev and I wrote our two volume work on Rubinstein we relied on Jeremy Gaige's Chess Personalia, the gold standard when it comes to chess related archival information. That said it is hard to argue with a gravestone.

If it was anyone else one might go with March 14 without further thought, but Gaige being Gaige the matter merits more investigation. Unfortunately a little digging doesn't clear things up, if anything it only muddies the water further. An examination of some of the sources Gaige cites (the FIDEmagazine for example) do give March 14 as the date of Rubinstein's death, yet J.G. lists the following day as does the normally reliable website [Ancestry.com](#).

Did Gaige sort through the evidence and come to the conclusion March 15 was the correct date? If so what key document caused him to favor the 15th? It seems likely he never saw a picture of Rubinstein's grave. If he had would it have changed his mind?

I don't know the answers to these questions, but hope there is a death certificate out there that clear things up.

It's interesting how Paul H. Little (Litwinsky) handled the date of Rubinstein's death in his memorial in [Chess Review](#) (June 1961, pages 182-84). He gives March 1961 not providing a specific day. Is there a reason he chose to do so?"

So the conclusion must be that the last word will be spoken by the researcher who finds Rubinstein's death certificate or another reliable document.

Bob van de Velde

