

**Morse Family
Papers, 1796-1929
MSA 537-538**

Introduction

This collection consists of personal papers of Abigail Chase Morse (1759-1793) and John Morse (1752-1822) and succeeding four generations of family members of Randolph, Vermont, during the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Surnames documented in the collection include Morse, Chase, Flint, Washburn, Sawyer, and Smith. This collection also consists of original documents, records, correspondence, and account books of the Grace (Episcopal) Church in Randolph, Vermont, in which the family was active. The collection was donated to the Vermont Historical Society in 2009 (ms. acc. no. 2009.4) by Laurence Eldredge, great grandson of Clara Morse Washburn Sawyer who assembled the collection. It is housed in two archival flip-top boxes and consumes 1 linear foot of shelf space.

Biographical Notes

John Morse was born in Walpole, Massachusetts on November 13, 1752, the son of Obediah and Bethia (Ruggles) Morse. John Morse served in the Revolutionary War from New Hampshire. According to a document in the collection from the New Hampshire Adjutant General's office, Oct. 7, 1897, John Morse "appears as private on a pay-roll of Col Jonathan Chase's regt. of militia which marched from Cornish in the state of New Hampshire Sept., 1777, and joined the continental army under Gen. Gates near Saratoga; enlisted Sept. 23, discharged Oct. 23, 1777."

John Morse married Abigail Chase on January 1, 1779 in Cornish, New Hampshire. Abigail was a member of the prominent Chase family of Cornish, New Hampshire. Her father was Deacon Dudley Chase. Her brother, Dudley Chase (1771-1846) of Randolph, Vermont, was a U.S. Senator from Vermont for two terms, 1813-1817 and 1825-1831, among other accomplishments. Another brother, Philander Chase (1775-1852) was an Episcopal bishop in Ohio and Illinois. A nephew, Salmon P. Chase (1808-1873), son of Ithmar but raised by his uncle Philander, was a U.S. Senator from Ohio, Treasury Secretary under Abraham Lincoln, and Chief Justice of the United States.

John and Abigail had eight children. One of those children, Intrepid Morse, was rector of St. Paul's Church in Steubenville, Ohio, for 45 years. Their oldest daughter, Asenath, married Martin Flint (1782-1855). Flint was a representative of Randolph to the Vermont legislature in 1831-1834 and to the Council of Safety in 1835. From 1841-1844 he was an Assistant Judge for Orange County.

Martin and Asenath Flint had seven children. Their son, James Tarbox Flint (1820-1868), served in the Civil War. One of his letters is in this collection. Their youngest child, Prudentia (1815-1906), married Levi Washburn (1815-1898).

Levi and Prudentia Washburn had four children. The youngest, Clara Morse Washburn (1842-1926) married Charles Edward Sawyer (1830-1879). Clara collected the

documents in this collection. Charles' grandfather, Conant Sawyer, served in the Revolution from Connecticut as is certified by a document in the collection.

One of Clara and Charles Sawyer's daughters, Alice Clara Sawyer (1872-1946), married John Sabine Smith (1843-1900). Smith's grandfather, James Sabine, was an Episcopal clergyman who baptized Clarissa Morse Washburn, sister of Prudentia and aunt of Clara Morse in 1843 as is documented in the collection. John Smith's father was a physician who practiced in Randolph for more than 50 years and his great-grandfather was one of the founders of Windsor, Vermont.

Institutional History

According to Abby Maria Hemenway's *Vermont Historical Gazetteer*, in 1820 there were only three Episcopalians residing in Randolph: Hon. Dudley Chase and his wife Olivia, and the wife of Dr. John Spooner Smith. Eventually the community grew and the Grace Church was founded in 1834 in West Randolph, Vermont. The first wardens were Edmund Weston and Dr. Smith; the first clerk was Hon. Dudley Chase. By 1847 there were 35 communicants residing in Randolph. A site for the church was donated by William Nutting Jr., and \$500 and an organ were contributed by Hon. Isaac F. Redfield, chief judge of the Vermont Supreme Court and new resident of the town. The church building was erected and was consecrated by Bishop John Henry Hopkins in 1848.

A separate parish and building, St. John's Church, was established in 1869 in Randolph Center, Vermont. The Grace Church membership gradually declined and the building was razed in 1969.

Scope and Content

The collection is divided into two series. One series documents the founding and organization of Grace Episcopal Church of Randolph and the second documents the Morse-Chase-Flint-Washburn-Sawyer-Smith family. Several generations of this family were active in the Episcopal Church.

The church records include the earliest documents of the Grace Episcopal Church that are referred to in *The Illustrated Souvenir of Randolph, Vermont, 1895* and *The Vermont Historical Gazetteer* by Abby Maria Hemenway, among other historical references. Among these documents is the document signed by twenty-two citizens to form the church. Also in this collection are the subscriptions of members of the parish to pay for various aspects of setting up the new church including baptismal bowl, bass viol, Bibles, Sunday school books, and wine. The collection also includes documentation for the payment of numerous early ministers.

The bulk of the family series is comprised of correspondence among family members in the Morse, Flint, and Washburn families during the last years of the 1700s through the 1800s. The earliest correspondence starts with a letter from Clarissa Morse written in 1796 from Bethel, Vermont, to her father John Morse in Cornish, New Hampshire. In it she reminisces about her family and friends in Cornish, and as a teacher

referring to her school, that she did not “expect a very full school but shall make tolerable good mages for the folks bound me.” Her father responds with picturesque description of their “pleasant vale.”

Correspondence and papers of Alice Sawyer Smith and her husband John Sawyer 1845-1929 comprise the balance of this series. Letters home describe European travels during 1904 and 1905 from Alice Sawyer Smith to her mother Clara Morse Sawyer.

Related Collections

Letters to John H. Hopkins

Tin type of Dudley Chase

The Descendants of Philander Chase by Richard D. Flinn 929.2; C386pf

Inventory

I. Grace Church Records

- MSA 537:01 Establishment of Church, 1834-1838
- 02 Subscriptions, 1834-1862
- 03 Ministerial Money, Financials, 1834-1862
- 04 Ministerial Appointments and Resignations, 1849-1868
- 05 Church Building, 1862-1905
- 06 Account Books, 1898-1911
- 07 Correspondence, 50th Anniversary 1898
- 08 Reminiscences and Photographs, 1898-1922

II. Family Correspondence & Documents

- MSA 538:01 Morse Family, 1796-1928
- 02 Flint Family, 1823-1895
- 03 Washburn Family, 1802-1862
- 04 Sawyer Family, 1845-1905
- 05 Sawyer-Smith, 1878-1910
- 06 Sawyer House Records, Randolph Center, 1882-1929
- 07 Alice Smith Letters to Clara Sawyer, 1904-1905
- 08 Alice Smith Letters to Clara Sawyer, 1905

III. Supporting Material

- MSA 538:09 Genealogical Charts: Morse, Chase, Washburn, Flint, & Sawyer Families

Leslie Rowell
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