

A Quissett Summer Romance

Thomas Cushman Morse



Family photo: front row, l to r : Miss Ritch, Cornelia Carey, Oldy Carey, Sarah Carey;
middle row, l to r : Bella Lee Carey, Stephen W. Carey III, Stephen W. Carey, Sarah S. B. (Yale) Carey, Sarah Dimon;
back row, l to r : Stephen W. Carey, Jr., Maria Yale Fish, Arthur M. Morse, Mary Carey Chapman, Sallie Chapman.
Photo by Baldwin Coolidge, Sept. 6, 1897. Courtesy WHHC.

Among many papers left in Hurricane Hall, the ancestral Fish/Morse homestead overlooking Quissett Harbor, were seventy-five letters between Arthur M. Morse and Maria Yale Fish written during their engagement in the summer of 1897.

Arthur Morse was manager of the Recreation Department for Outlook Magazine, which was published in New York. In his job, he sold advertising to resort hotels, spas, restaurants and railroad lines. For five years he had traveled from coast to coast in the United States and had made one trip to England. He was twenty-seven years old and a worldly man.

His twenty-three year old betrothed, Maria (pronounced Mar-eye-a), lead a sheltered life in a wealthy family. Until she met Arthur, she had assumed that she would be a "spinster," or so she told her Aunt Sarah B. Carey.

Arthur and Maria were to become the parents of my uncle, the late A. Metcalf (Metty) Morse, Jr. This is the story of their romantic summer one hundred years ago and, in the telling, it is the story of a quintessential summer place, Quissett Harbor, Massachusetts just before the turn of the century.

On a fine, warm September day in 1897, Boston photographer Baldwin Coolidge, carefully arranged the family at an ivy-covered corner of "Petrel's Rest," the Carey summer home. The resulting photograph portrayed everyone posed for the camera; everyone but Arthur Morse in the back row. The bearded, young man's attention focused on Maria Yale Fish.

He had proposed to her in June, writing afterward:

My Dear Little Girl,

Just a line to hope that you had a fine night's rest and to tell you how happy I am this morning. Everything seems just about right and, as Dr. Allan remarked as he walked down to the train with me, "Seems to me you are pretty happy this morning." Well, I told him that I rather thought I was. . .

I guess the whole story is that the reason everything seems so nice is that Maria said "yes" the other night. I am just beginning to appreciate my blessings.

I suppose you will wonder why I wrote this, I guess it is because I love you.

Arthur

He had courted her all spring, during Sunday afternoon walks at "Brooklawn," the Carey estate in Montclair, New Jersey, where Maria was raised by her aunt and uncle, Sarah B. (Yale) and Stephen W. Carey, after her mother had died in childbirth.

They kept their engagement secret for a month, then announced it in the newspapers without telling their friends. Their betrothal filtered into the community with a mysterious air.

The Montclair Times

SATURDAY, JULY 3, 1897.

NOTES ABOUT TOWN.

Mr. and Mrs. Stephen W. Carey, of Orange road, will spend the Summer at their cottage at Quissett, Mass.

The engagement of Mr. Stephen W. Carey's niece, Miss Maria Yale Fish, to Mr. Arthur M. Moore is announced.

Maria Yale Fish and
Arthur Metcalf Morse's
engagement photographs,
fall of 1897.
Portraits by Hargrave.
Courtesy Thomas Morse.



THE OUTLOOK
13 ASTOR PLACE

Monday morning

My dear little girl:

*Just a line to hope
that you had a fine night's rest
and to tell you how happy I am
this morning.*

*Everything seems just about
right and as Dr.ellan remarked
as he walked down to the train with
me "Seems to me you are pretty
happy this morning." Well! I told
him that I rather thought I was.*

Letter from Arthur to Maria, summer 1897.
Courtesy Thomas Morse.

On July second, Maria left with the Careys for Cape Cod to spend three months at the Carey's summer home overlooking Quissett Harbor. It was always an adventure, this return to Cape Cod. The "civilized" world of Montclair and New York faded away to the cool and primitive Cape, where constant breezes carried rich aromas of wild rose, bayberry, scrub oak and pine across the low sand hills, the air occasionally spiced with a tang of salt water, seaweed and marsh.

For Maria it was a return to her traditional summer home and the home of her grandparents, the Joseph

C. Fish's. Here, over the years, she had spent her summer days with summer friends, on the beach or sailing in the harbor and bay. In the evenings, they made candy, played seven handed euchre, or held poetry contests:

When Are You Going Home?

I am sorry to say in a week or two,
And not being fond of lies
Will tell the truth when I say to you
"How I'll miss those Quissett Pies!!!"
Every one is so jolly here
That I shall be loth to go,
But it's really getting so very cold
That I think it soon will snow.
However until those weeks are gone
I'll try to improve my mind.
And that's why I write this little verse
For those that I'll leave behind.

Quissett, Mass. Sept. 9, 1893 Beatrice Swasey

But the summer of 1897 meant, for Maria, separation from her fiancé and a postal romance.

On a hill above Quissett's wind-swept fields, "Petrel's Rest" overlooked both the Harbor and Buzzard's Bay. At the sound of a gong, Maria and her family would walk the downhill path to take meals with hotel guests at the Harbor House. Stephen Carey owned the hotel, so eating there was economically expedient as well as convenient.



Quissett Harbor, 1907. Courtesy WHHC.

The usual crowd assembled this summer. The Carey family was there, of course, as well as Maria's friends from previous years. Occasionally a new member of the group would arrive, Arthur Morse, taking time from his business to visit Maria.

Between visits, Maria's letters left the Quissett Post Office daily, often with photographs from a new "Eureka" camera Auntie had given her; one which used film instead of expensive glass plates, "so we can experiment developing ourselves, or rather the films, this summer. . ." On clear days, Maria could be found in an attic room at "Petrel's Rest," using sunshine to print photographs on blue "Solio" paper, the images still sharp and clear to this day.

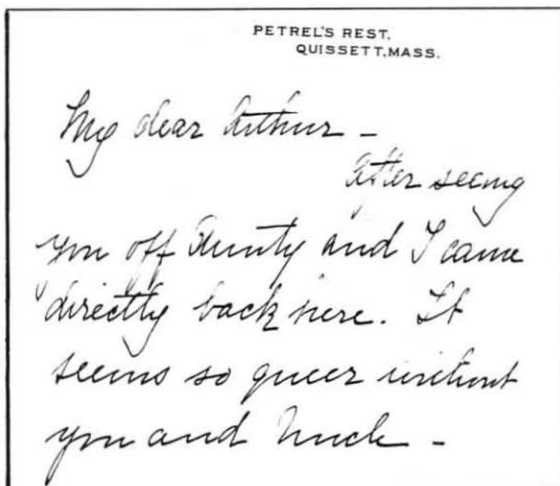
Her pictures show family members with their children, women at the beach in chin-to-ankle bathing outfits, and parties aboard Mr. Carey's yacht, *Petrel*, with men in coat and tie; young ladies in chin-to-ankle dresses.

The *Petrel*, with full-time captain, sailed whenever a party desired to leave the harbor for a few hours or the day. Often the destination was a passage through tide-ripped Woods Hole into Vineyard Sound.

On August 7th, Uncle Stephen suggested taking *Petrel* into Vineyard Sound to watch the Newport yachts sailing to Vineyard Haven. "Maria," her aunt wrote, "went out with her red hat on, short skirt and light



The Harbor House with Stephen W. and Sarah B. Carey walking to dinner. Photo by Maria Fish, 1897. Courtesy Thomas Morse.



Letter from Maria to Arthur, August 2, 1897.
Courtesy Thomas Morse.

waist" to sail with Uncle and five guests from the Harbor House. At first there was no breeze, but finally it came up and, with a fair tide through Woods Hole, Maria related, "we reached there just as the *Vigilant* came down, and I snapped her, as I did several others for we sailed in and out among them all afternoon and it was the prettiest sight I have seen for a long time, for they had all sails set."

During another voyage, she wrote: "We are trying to get through the Hole, the tide has turned against us & we have very little wind, consequently the Captain is rather dubious, but we are still trying. . . We have



Sailing aboard *Petrel*. Miss Marvin, Florence Baylis, Ethyl Hunter and Maria Fish. Courtesy Thomas Morse.



Quisset Harbor from Love Fish's cottage.
The Harbor House, Petrel's Rest and Harbor
Head Cottage in background.

Cat boats and boat house, Quisset Harbor.



Quisset Harbor from Sunset Hill.

Fireplace, Petrel's Rest.



Photo
Essay



Sallie Chapman, Maria Fish and Florence Baylis
at the bath house.



Bella Carey and Maria at Stephen Carey, Jr.'s cottage
(later to be Cornelia Carey's home).
Hurricane Hall in background.



Maria's grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph C. Fish
just before Mr. Fish's 93rd birthday.

All photos taken by Maria Fish, 1897. Courtesy Thomas Morse.

had the excitement of hitting the centreboard on a rock, but are going along all right now & we have passed the black can so I think we shall get through. . ."

Back in Montclair, Arthur was caught up in the stir caused by their engagement. "Yes, people are still rattled." He wrote. "Everyone said that such a thing had never been done before in Montclair & never would again. All thought we were wonderfully clever etc., etc. . . almost everyone who knew us had hardly recovered yet, and it was still a topic of conversation among the girls. Perhaps they will get over it when you return. I am glad we were able to keep matters so quiet. It has been so much more fun."

With daily train and boat service, a visit to the Cape was relatively easy for Arthur, when his job permitted. He made the trip six times between July and October. Maria would meet him at the Falmouth Station in a buggy. On the way to Quissett they would stop in the woods for "hugs and kisses." They would bathe in the Bay, sail on the *Petrel* and take long walks among the hills and ponds, as Arthur tried to catch bullfrogs and picked flowers for his "little girl."

His return trips were equally convenient and, by Arthur's accounts, enjoyable. He describes one such trip, traveling to Fall River by train and then on to New York by boat. Once aboard "the Fall River boat," Arthur dined well, starting with little neck clams, taking a second course of steak, sweet potatoes and Bass ale, then finishing up with ice cream and coffee. On deck after dinner, he watched the water and lights along the Connecticut shore as they steamed the length of Long Island Sound. That night they encountered a terrific thunderstorm with "almost constant lightning and terrible crashes. It was as tho we were struck several times. The fog horn also kept going. This started my head again, but I find myself much better this morning." At seven the next morning, they docked on the East River in New York. Arthur pro-

ceeded to his office and, leaving his bags, went out for breakfast before returning to work.

Maria and Arthur took many photographs to document their time together. Later, concerning a photograph they had taken of the East End Meeting House, Maria told him "Last night I wrote Sallie a long letter and enclosed the East End Meeting House. Wonderful feat!"



East End Meeting House. Maria in the buggy. Photo by Arthur Morse, 1897. Courtesy Thomas Morse.

Maria spent part of each day writing Arthur all the "news" of Quissett. On July 4th, she wrote, "this afternoon (I hope you will not be shocked) we are going to celebrate the fourth by going to a horse race. It really is different than at home, or I would not go, mostly town's people and town's horses."

Most evenings were spent playing games or socializing with friends at the Harbor House. Occasionally there were special events, such as the evening "we had an entertainment, admission 25 cents, proceeds for the benefit of a new raft, which you know we need, one which will stay on top of the water. . . I believe they took in \$27 or \$28. I am not sure of the amount of the expenses, but know they have more than necessary. . ."

Trotting Park

Horse racing, long absent from the Cape, flourished in Barnstable County well over a century ago. When houses were erected around a one-time salt pond, now Wychmere Harbor, in Harwich about 1870, they were occupied by retired whaling captains who built a half-mile trotting track on the site. There they competed with each other in their sulkies as they once did aboard their vessels, shouting excited, sea-faring commands foreign to equine ears.

The track in Harwich was at that time the sporting center of the Cape. The stakes were low but enthusiasm high. A dike kept the area dry, but repairs were needed whenever the waters broke through from Nantucket Sound. Finally, in 1884, when the track was inundated by a terrific storm, the sportsmen conceded defeat: a permanent channel was dug, the sea reclaimed the basin, and yachts and fishing boats began to squeeze their way through to the little harbor.

Racing was popular also in the town of Barnstable, where the Hyannis Trotting Park was built in 1876. The first trot, on July 4 of that year, attracted "300 carriages and 1,200 spectators," while another meet in August drew 2,000 onlookers. Russell Marston, president of the Trotting Park Association, reported that the track "paid a dividend of 15 per cent the first year." Nearly all the villages of Barnstable had trotting parks at that time.

In 1873 the Barnstable County Agricultural Society (Levi L. Goodspeed, president), reporting on "Transactions" for the year, noted that there had been three trotting horse entries in the Society's annual fair, "The best time," wrote J. K. Baker for the race committee, "was made by 'Josh Billings,' owned by N. Edson. . . but as he took first premium last year he was awarded second and R. Eldridge the first and W. H. Nickerson the third."

When the town of Barnstable marked its Tercentenary in 1939, daily features at a revival of the old Barnstable Fair were trotting races every afternoon and baseball games afternoons and evenings. . .

The Falmouth Gentlemen's Driving Club built a half-mile trotting track between Gifford Street and Locustfield Road in East Falmouth in 1896. There, according to Falmouth Historical Society Archives, trotting, bicycle and running races were held for several years. Sheds for horses and a high judges' stand were erected on the 24-acre site. The track's formal opening on the Fourth of July, 1896, drew 1,000 spectators (most arriving by bicycle). Sulkies and trotters raised a fine dust on the track and picnic lunches were brought out on the grass inside the oval.

In 1897 and '98 as many as 25 horses were entered in "grand trots" with prizes as high as \$300 and crowds reaching 1,200. Betting was not uncommon, although the discreet reports of the day failed to mention it. With indebtedness mounting, the track was sold in 1899 for \$960 to John H. Crocker, a "man of means," who was also an agent of the driving club. The plan was to add an adjoining 20 acres and further develop the property as "a place of amusement for the people of Falmouth." Racing died a couple of years later, however; seedling pines closed in, obliterating all traces of the track, the sport remaining only in a few memories and old photographs.

F. J. Delear, "Sports" in *Three Centuries of the Cape Cod County Barnstable, Massachusetts 1685 to 1985* published by Barnstable County, coordinator Louis Cataldo, 1985. pp. 314-315.



Trotting Park in Teaticket, ca. 1896. Courtesy Falmouth Historical Society.



Maria driving the buggy.

Their Summer Together



Arthur with Jessie and the buckboard.



Maria rowing across harbor to Petrel's Rest sporting her new engagement ring.



Arthur sailing aboard *Petrel*.

All photos taken by Maria Fish, 1897. Courtesy Thomas Morse.

HARBOR HEAD COTTAGE,
QUISSETT.

Wednesday Aug 11
My dear Maria,
Will you and Mr
Carey come over this
evening for a rare-
bit and will you ask
Mr. Carey to will come?
Rare-bit at mine so
come before that time-
please - Edward will
wait for answer
affly yours
Sallie B. Hills

Letter from Mrs. Hill at Harbor Head Cottage inviting Maria and her uncle for a supper of rare-bit on August 11, 1897. Courtesy Thomas Morse.

On another evening, with Aunty in Montclair for a short visit, Maria and her Uncle accepted a supper invitation from the Hills, "though I care very little for them. However, it will be something to do. . ." The next day she reported, "We went to Mrs. Hill's last night. I had some of the rare-bit but the beer I let alone. I am afraid not from any good motives, but because I don't like it. . ."

Maria was also witness to adventures which took place in the area. A thunderstorm came up one August morning as three men, Rob Bleakie, Led Herman and Lloyd Brown, sailed out of Quissett Harbor. Because of the storm, they turned back, but before reaching their mooring, the wind carried away mast and sail. They dropped anchor immediately. "Then," Maria wrote, "they just cut the mast down to good wood (it was cracked before) & are putting it up again, & then I suppose they will start off on their cruise. They wouldn't stop for a little thing like a mast."

At noon the same day, a sailing party from Nonquit arrived at Quissett and because it was blowing hard, decided to spend the night, but they didn't have any money. "Fortunately Uncle knew the lady's husband quite well so it was all right. . . They had a fine time at the hotel last night. . . They were up on the piazza for a while in the evening, but I was bad & didn't go down. Today the wind is just the way they want it, so they had fun and all just right."

While writing this letter, Maria was interrupted "by a small girl with a 'Subscription list to help the Chadwick children get a cow.' What do you suppose will happen next?"

What happened next might have been "an organ grinder at the hotel playing 'The Bully' or some other jiggy business," or shrieks of laughter interrupting Maria's letterwriting because "someone had dared that youngest Miss Holmes to jump with a stick from the stone dock to the float, and of course she tried it &

landed in the water between the two. . . everyone was laughing so hard they could scarcely get her out."

Maria's best friend and future Maid of Honor, Sallie Chapman, spent most of the summer at the Harbor House, helping make Maria's days more enjoyable. It was Sallie who had the spunk to try anything and who was good at almost anything she tried. It was she who caught the most fish, and was "great fun, for everytime she begins to pull a fish in she squeels & keeps it up till she gets him into the boat." It was she who won the sailboat races, and it was she who cooked on the out-ings and made candy in the evening for all to enjoy.

Sallie's parents, the Chapmans and her grandmother, Mrs. Sarah Carey Dimon (Stephen Carey's sister) arrived in late August. The Chapmans took up residence at the Harbor House and Mrs. Dimon stayed at "Petrel's Rest" with her brother and sister-in-law. Mrs. Dimon immediately established a watchful eye over a certain Mr. Arthur Stahlschmidt from Vineyard Haven, who seemed to be pursuing Sallie's affections.

As Mrs. Stephen Carey wrote, "Mrs. Dimon has been flying in and out. She has taken a fancy that Stahlschmidt has arrived to board for a few days to be with Sallie and she may be correct. . . It is very funny to see Mrs. Dimon trying to appear as if he were not visiting them." Each time Stahlschmidt arrived for a visit there would be "considerable fun and noise behind his back," according to Maria, who related later, "I have just had a fine bath & came out to find Mr. Stahlschmidt here again, much to Mrs. Dimon's delight!"

While the family enjoyed teasing Mrs. Dimon, they also had great affection for her, so, when she became ill on September 17, it was reported to Arthur with some concern. "Mrs. Dimon has another cold & is quite sick with it, but I hope she will be better soon." Nearly every day he got a report on her condition. "Mrs. Dimon is still in bed and has had the doctor but he thinks it (her cough) is only in her throat & that she ought to be much better very soon." She was moved into the Chapmans' quarters at the Harbor House, where her daughter, Mary Chapman, could give her better care.

Meanwhile, recreation continued during September with new activities being introduced. "What do you think! I guess you will smile, but this morning Ned Ryerson was practicing golf on the croquet ground and Sallie & I went out & did it too & we have sent for clubs & balls and are going to play! . . . Ned is going to set the links with tomato cans on those fields around Sunset Hill. . . I say I will make golf links on Uncle's unused ground in Montclair for I can't afford the M.G.C. [Montclair Golf Club] fees unless they lower their rates."

On September 20th, Mrs. Dimon was still in bed and did not seem to be getting any worse. Maria spent most of the day sewing, as rain curtailed her outdoor activities.

The following day, Maria and her friends "put out the links." Their golf clubs also arrived. Maria and Sallie



Playing informal golf over Quissett hills. Maria, Ned Ryerson and Sallie Chapman. Photo courtesy Thomas Morse.

Chapman drove to town to run some errands and treated themselves to "some raw oysters instead of soda."

On Tuesday, September 21st, Mrs. Dimon took a turn for the worse. Maria's uncle, Dr. Leroy Milton Yale, Jr., was "telephoned" to have a talk with Mrs. Dimon's doctor. The next morning, Dr. Yale came over from New Bedford and met with Dr. Walker. They decided that Mrs. Dimon had "phneumonia." Maria and Sallie went to Falmouth to bring back a nurse.



Sarah Carey Dimon, September 1897. Photo by Maria Fish. Courtesy Thomas Morse.

In her September 23rd letter to Arthur, Maria asked, "How did you like the way I spelled pneumonia in my yesterday's letter? . . . The doctor has just arrived so we shall soon hear from Mrs. Dimon. Last night she was doing as well as could be expected. We found the nurse all right, & very nice she seems to be, but the best part is that Mrs. Dimon has taken a fancy to her."

Meanwhile the vacationers were reduced to playing only golf, because the weather had become too cold for bathing and fishing.

Arthur arrived on Saturday the twenty-fifth for the weekend.

Mrs. Dimon died on Sunday. On Tuesday, Mr. Smythe, the minister, came and held a short service for the family. In her letters, Maria did not express much emotion concerning this death, probably because she had an opportunity to express herself verbally to Arthur during the weekend. She did make one understated reference in her letter to Arthur the day after Mrs. Dimon's passing; "take care of yourself for we don't want any more people sick."

The season at Quissett wound down, with guests leaving and Maria helping her friend Sallie through the ordeal of losing a grandmother.

Golf continued with Maria lowering her score from 104 to 71. Mr. Stahlschmidt came over to say good-bye. On the day before she left for home, Maria wrote, "They are getting boats into winter quarters, taking down their masts etc. so the harbor is beginning to look deserted. . ."

On October 10, Arthur wrote, "If all goes well we shall meet at the Fall River Dock, New York, Tuesday morning. . . Please say goodbye for me to the people on the other side of the harbor." Their summer apart had come to an end.

Arthur and Maria were married in Montclair, New Jersey on Thursday, January 6, 1898. Their marriage lasted 54 years.

*Mr. and Mrs. Stephen W. Carey
request the pleasure of your
company at the marriage of their niece
Maria Yale Fish
to
Arthur Metcalf Morse
Thursday evening January the sixth
at eight o'clock.
First Congregational Church
Montclair, New Jersey.
1898*

Thomas Cushman Morse was born in Concord, Massachusetts, son of Cushman C. Morse and grandson of Arthur Metcalf and Maria Yale Fish Morse of Quissett Harbor. His family moved to Arizona in 1947 when he was eleven years old. Later, he attended Dartmouth College, graduating in 1958 with a B.A. in English. He completed post-graduate work at The American Institute for Foreign Trade and worked in the international and domestic marketing of pipeline products during the 1960s. Eventually, he returned to Arizona where he was a real estate appraiser in Flagstaff for many years. He is now retired and resides in Paonia, Colorado with his extensive archives of the Fish/Morse families, researching and writing about his family's history.



Maria's wedding photograph. January 6, 1898.
Photo by Butler. Courtesy Thomas Morse.