

**A SKETCH OF THE  
LIFE OF SYLVESTER  
MORRIS**

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A Sketch of the Life of Sylvester Morris by Kate Morris Cone

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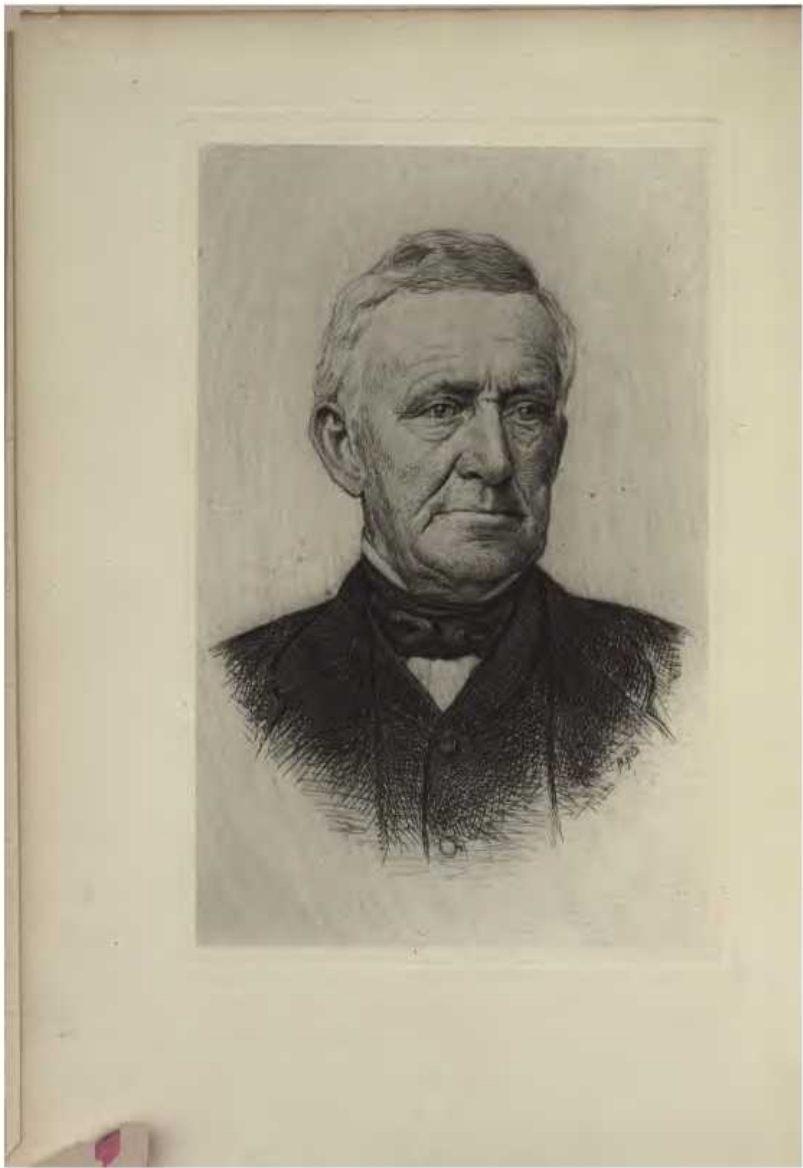
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OF THE  
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BY HIS GRANDDAUGHTER  
KATE MORRIS CONE

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ON the 12th of September, 1886, Sylvester Morris, of Norwich, Vt., died of old age, eleven days before reaching his eighty-ninth birthday. He was a man of the most marked individuality of character, a radical of the extreme type in the anti-slavery cause, and all his days a pillar in the church and an advocate of temperance reform. His memory is so much respected by those who knew him, and his life afforded so noteworthy an example of the sort of men who, unknown to fame, furnished the moral strength of the anti-slavery movement, that it seems worth while to recall something of what he was and did.

He was the oldest child of Ephraim Morris and Pamela Converse, of Stafford, Ct., and afterwards of Bethel, Vt., and on both his father's and mother's side was descended from the sturdy English stock

which first settled New England. His Morris ancestors came to this country in the train of Nazing Pilgrims who followed the Apostle Eliot to Roxbury, Mass., in the years 1630-36,<sup>2</sup> while Edward and Sarah Converse, from whom his mother was descended in the seventh generation, were members of Winthrop's expedition in 1630, and their names are to be found recorded among the original signers of the First Church covenant of Boston. Nazing and Waltham Abbey in England, and Roxbury and its pious church and pastor in New England, the early movements of Winthrop's colony at Salem and Charlestown, and the settlement of Woburn and Winchester, are the respective associations of the two families in the early history of Massachusetts. Puritans among Puritans, they and their children shared in the process of town-planting in New England which is at once so historically significant, and to us so full of commonplace and familiar details.

Edward Converse was a deacon in a Congregational church, and first had charge of the Great Ferry between Boston and Charlestown. He surveyed a portion of the town of Woburn, and built the first house and grist-mill in that part of Woburn known as Winchester, near the celebrated Woburn Elm. His son, who came from England with him, and



his son's son in turn were town clerks of Woburn many years, and for three generations the family furnished majors and lieutenants in local wars against the Indians. Edward Morris came to Roxbury as a child, and grew up under the ministrations of the "blessed apostle," John Eliot, by whom he was admitted to the church in 1658, and who baptized all his children. He was selectman in Roxbury in 1677, and deputy to the General Court at Boston the following year, and from 1683 was especially prominent in the settlement of New Roxbury or Woodstock in Connecticut, going to and fro over the old "Connecticut Path" on business concerning the granting of the land and the final transferral and location of the settlers.\* Part of his family accompanied him to Woodstock, and there he and his son and grandson, Edward Morris, 2d and 3d, held places of responsibility, both civil and religious, and took an honored part in the development of the town.

But Morrises and Converses carried their names and the hardy traits of English Puritan pioneers not only from England to Massachusetts and from the older towns in Massachusetts to Connecticut, but in yet another generation from the prosperous townships in Connecticut to the wilderness in Central

Vermont. Both families in successive generations helped to swell the tide of settlement and emigration which, in its gradual progress over New England, has been marked by the renewal of the names, the circumstances, the architecture, and always the political and educational principles of Pilgrims and Puritans.

One hundred and twenty years after Edward Morris removed from Roxbury, Mass., to New Roxbury (Woodstock) in Connecticut, his great-great-grandson, Ephraim Morris, father of the subject of this sketch, revived the family tradition of frontier life, and, curiously enough, also the connection between local and family names, by emigrating to Roxbury, Vt.

Of the Converses, also, Josiah Converse, of the fifth generation from Edward Converse, came to Stafford, Conn., some time previous to 1733. His son, Israel, about 1790, and another son, Joseph, in 1801, emigrated to Randolph, Vt., while his granddaughter, Pamela, daughter of Jesse, a third son, was the wife of Ephraim Morris.

Ephraim Morris, father of Sylvester Morris, was the youngest child of Isaac Morris and Hannah Chaffee, of Wilbraham, Conn. He was born March 17, 1772, and was brought up by an older brother, Isaac, of whom "he often spoke with the utmost

regard from the remembrance of those principles which he inculcated, which had much to do with the formation of his own character."<sup>3</sup> He received a common-school education. His trade, that of a tanner, was learned at Stafford, Conn., and there he married, Oct. 16, 1796, pretty Pamela Converse.<sup>4</sup> She was nineteen at the time of her marriage, a village beauty, and very lively and gay, with hair so long that she could sit upon it, and a waist so slender that her husband could touch the tips of his fingers around it.

To them was born, Sept. 23, 1797, their son Sylvester, in his young mother's eyes, as a little anecdote remembered of her relates, "the most beautiful child in the world." He had the blue eyes of some remoter ancestor, for both his parents were dark, and the square features and broad forehead which are characteristic of his own descendants. He was seven years old the month, September, 1804,<sup>5</sup> when the family emigrated to Vermont, the motive for this change being probably to be found in the example of kindred and neighbors,<sup>6</sup> and, according to certain references still remembered in the family, a prospect of getting rich raising wheat in the new country.

Although no record of it remains, the journey thither, long and difficult as it was, doubtless made