Lot 1, Block 4: Searching for the Grave of Anthony Morse

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Searching for the Grave of Anthony Morse

Lot 1, Block 4:

My fascination with family history began with my maternal grandmother's stories. As a child, I loved quizzesing her about the lives of her parents and grandparents, prodding her to reach as far back as she could into her memory and family lineage to tell me their stories. Her ancestors, English, Scottish, and French, had come to North America in the first half of the seventeenth century. Settling in the British colonies and New France, they participated in many of the events and movements that shaped the continent.

The family tales my grandmother told focused on deeds of female heroism, male soldierly, and the pioneering experience. Admittedly, not all of these stories can be verified. Passed down from generation to generation, they have inevitably become embellished and distorted. Nevertheless, I was and still am captivated by them. Through these stories, history comes alive for me and I feel a sense of connection to the past.

my mother's sister had first begun the genealogical process in 1980. This was during my time as a student at the University of Wisconsin, Madison in 1980. My grandmother had been born in 1880 in the town of Bath, New York, where her parents had been from Scotland. Her father, John Jackson Morse, had served in the Civil War, and the family tells me that he was a soldier of fame and honor, who had died in battle.

My active involvement in the genealogical process began in New York. Here, I found my first significant information about Anthony. A visit from my home state of South Dakota resulted in a visit to the Lewis County Courthouse in Lowville, my grandmother's hometown. There, I found several records for Andrew Jackson Morse, including his 1846 naturalization papers, which stated that he had come to New York from Lower Canada in 1817. The federal census records had identified Anthony's birthplace as Canada, but offered nothing more specific than that.

By Lisa Lindell

Anthony Morse

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At a standstill in tracing Anthony's lineage back any further, I directed my efforts toward following his trail in the United States. I determined in particular to find the place of burial for Anthony and Eliza. From the census records, I knew Anthony and his family had moved from New York to Waushara County, Wisconsin between 1850 and 1855 and had settled in Adams County, Wisconsin before 1860. After 1860 I lost track of them. Although I knew (also from the census records) that several of their children had eventually left Wisconsin, others had remained. I conjectured that the elder Morses may well have lived out their lives in Adams County, residing near their children and dying before 1870. Aged 54 and 53 in 1860 according to the federal census, they could well have died within the next decade. Therefore I checked for Wisconsin death records, but I learned to my disappointment that few of the state's records predated 1878 and that the State Bureau of Vital Statistics had not been established until 1907. Unsure how best to proceed with my search, I began to comb the cemeteries located nearest the last known residence of Anthony and Eliza. I was attending graduate school in Wisconsin at this time and was therefore able to carry out my research on weekends. When my family came to visit, I dragged them with me on cemetery expeditions. We spent some memorable times tramping through snow-covered Adams County cemeteries but to no avail. There was no sign of Anthony or Eliza.

At this point, the discovery of an 1870 Adams County land record redirected my search. I found that Anthony and Eliza had granted a life lease to their son Julius and that the residence of Anthony and Eliza was Dodge County, Minnesota. Excitedly turning to the Minnesota federal and state census records, I found Anthony and Eliza living near Mantorville, Minnesota in 1870 and near Milton in 1875 and 1880. There I again lost their trail. So once more I sought death and burial records, checked cemetery records, and wandered through a few cemeteries, this time in Dodge County, vainly searching for Anthony and Eliza's graves.

Since my cemetery sleuthing was not paying off, I refined my approach and began searching for the marriage and death records of Anthony's children.2

Mary Ann and Andrew Jackson Morse

Regrettably, I was not then able to trace descendents of Anthony and Eliza Morse. Recourse was less fruitful from Andrew Jackson's family. Verna had found my name, and this was a direct descendant of Anthony and Eliza. Her search led me to discover that Eliza's maiden name was Dezotell (or Desotell). But having no more specific information about the ancestors of my great-grandparents, I was unable to trace Eliza's ancestry.

We spent some memorable times tramping through snow-covered Adams County cemeteries to no avail. There was no sign of Anthony or Eliza. Although I found Anthony's marriage record in Wisconsin and Eliza's record in Minnesota, I was at least known to Anthony and Eliza's descendents. I was able to comb the cemeteries located nearest the last known residence of Anthony and Eliza, and this search brought fantastic results.

In summary, my efforts to trace Anthony's lineage have been unsatisfactory, although I have discovered much information about the family's migration pattern. However, I am still seeking more specific information about Anthony and Eliza's ancestors.
I knew, my great-great-grandfather Anthony, who died in 1817, and whose place complectly alien from that which found. Born near 200 years ago in Quebec, in a Anthony and Eliza, I am associated by what I have of all that I would like to know about the lives of the two parents, let alone their children, who were definitely buried in 1849 in Colman Cemetery, South Dakota.

Although I still don't know where Eliza is buried, I do know that Anthony's grave is marked. The grave of Lewis Morse, son of Anthony. The unmarked grave of A. Morse (lot 1, block 4) is off to the right.

My excitement turned to frustration as I realized that I might never know for sure if this was Anthony's grave. But suddenly it occurred to me that there might indeed be a way of lessening the uncertainty. I checked the coordinates of the A. Morse grave in the Colman cemetery. They were lot no. 1, block no. 4. Could the "lot 14 block" specified in the letter from Verna Koebel actually be lot 1. 4 block? I concluded that this was indeed the case, in all probability, I read at last found the place to search. In the letter from Verna Koebel, I am given the assurance that the Morse graves in the Colman cemetery, they were the graves of Eliza Morse, and Anthony Morse. The name appears as Morse to the left of Anthony's name. The spelling of Morse, The name appears as Morse to the right of Anthony's name.

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