

**“As Bold As A Lion”
Dorilus Morrison, First Mayor of Minneapolis,
and the Morrison Family**

Dorilus Morrison, of Scottish ancestry, was the son of Samuel Morrison, a wheelwright in Maine. Born in Livermore, Maine in 1814, he began employment with William H. Britan in the mercantile business at the age of 18, working his way up to become a partner. Dorilus carefully saved almost \$20,000, a large sum for the time period. In 1854, four years prior to Minnesota statehood, he moved to Minnesota with his wife Harriet and children, attracted by the prospect of business opportunities. He invested in a large tract of pine lands and supplied logs to saw mills, then eventually acquired his own saw mill and lumber yard. Dorilus was a significant investor in the Minneapolis Mill Company, (precursor to General Mills founded by his cousin Cadwallader Washburn) incorporated in 1856, and bought up shares as other investors divested. He also pursued interests in the Northern Pacific Railroad and Minneapolis Harvester Works.



Figure 1: Dorilus Morrison, circa 1891 Ancestry.com

Dorilus was elected to the Minnesota State Senate in 1864. In 1872 Dorilus was elected the first Mayor of Minneapolis. During that time he also served as the first president of the Minneapolis School Board, and later, served on the Minneapolis Parks Board.

His wife Harriet Whitmore Morrison, who he married in 1840 in Maine, died in 1880. He married Abbie Colby Claystone in 1883 at the age of 68. Dorilus died in 1897.

In his obituary, the *Minneapolis Journal* called Dorilus “one of the dozen men who made Minneapolis the metropolis of the Northwest and the pride of its 200,000 people.” It went on to describe him as “A man of nerve in business, clear-headed and cool always, and as bold as a lion, physically and mentally...” He was instrumental in backing the creation of a street car line in Minneapolis and the launch of the *Minneapolis Tribune*. He was the first president of Northwestern National Bank and served as a trustee of the Washburn Home for Orphans. He was involved in organizing the Church of the Redeemer and remained involved with the church throughout his life. He also was involved in founding Lakewood Cemetery in 1871, and was elected Chairman of the Lyndale (later Lakewood) Cemetery Association.

The Minneapolis Institute of Arts (Mia), and The Minneapolis College of Art and Design (MCAD) are located on the land where Dorilus Morrison’s house once stood. Called “Villa Rosa,” it was donated by Dorilus and Harriet’s son DeWitt Clinton Morrison to the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts in 1911.

DeWitt Clinton Morrison (1842-1913) was the eldest son of Dorilus and Harriet. Born in Maine, he moved with his parents to Minnesota when he was less than 13 years old. After he left school, he continued his education by working for his father. Known as "Clinton," he achieved success in business, elected as President of Farmers and Mechanics Savings Bank of Minneapolis in 1876. During his career, he also served as President of Great Western Elevator Company, Northwestern Knitting Company, North American Telegraph Company, and North Star Woolen Mills.



Figure 2: Villa Rosa, Dorilus' home at the current site of Mia. Courtesy Hennepin County Library.

Clinton married Julia Kellogg Washburn (1853-1883) in 1873. He and Julia had children Ethel and Angus. Julia died at the age of thirty years old, leaving Clinton with two young children.



Figure 3: Julia K. Washburn Morrison circa 1868, courtesy MNHS.

As adults, Ethel and Angus donated funds to MCAD for a building, which was named in honor of their mother. The Julia Morrison Memorial Building, completed in 1916, is still in use today. A renovation of the central auditorium, funded with the help of the family, was completed in Fall 2018. Members of the family remain on the MCAD board today. Angus' son Clinton was a life trustee, as is grandson Clinton Hunter Morrison. Colonial Dame Julia Hunter Palmer Wright is current board co-chair.

Ethel Morrison van Derlip (1876-1921) was a Colonial Dame. Born in 1876 in Minneapolis, she traced her lineage to Francis Cooke through her mother's line. Ethel Morrison married New York attorney John van Derlip, a collector who was one of the founders of Mia (then the Society of Fine Arts) and served as president of its board from 1928 to 1935. In addition to her gift to the Minneapolis

College of Art and Design, the Ethel and John Van Derlip endowment was established at Mia, one of its largest, providing significant funding for acquisitions. Ethel and John also were benefactors of St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral in Minneapolis.

Ethel's brother, Dr. Angus Washburn Morrison (1883-1949), graduated from Yale University and earned his Doctor of Medicine from Johns Hopkins in 1910. After graduation he traveled in Europe for postgraduate study in England, Germany and France. He was a Captain in the Medical Corps in

France during World War I. Returning to Minneapolis after the war, he resumed private practice. He was a founder of the Nicollet Clinic and Chief Attending Neurologist at Minneapolis General Hospital.

His wife, Sarah Helen Truesdale Morrison, was also a Colonial Dame. Born in 1887, she was descended from William Swayne through another Minnesota ancestor, Robert Bruce Langdon.

Angus and Helen had children Clinton, Anne, Angus, and John. Anne was a Colonial Dame, going through her mother's lineage to William Swayne.

Clinton Morrison (1915-2012) graduated from Yale and earned a MBA from Harvard Business School. He married Mary Josephine Knoblach. During World War II he served in research and development for the Office of the Quartermaster General of the US Army. He later held a post in the Eisenhower administration. A longtime banker with First National Bank of Minneapolis, he served as a director both of the Greater Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Among his many civic engagements were life trustee of the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts and MCAD.

Anne Morrison (1917-1960) attended the Northrop Collegiate School and Smith College. She married John Pillsbury Snyder, Jr. who was the son of John Pillsbury Snyder, survivor of the sinking of the *Titanic*. Anne served on the board of the community chest and was active with the Red Cross and Symphony Ball. Anne and John's children are Helen, a Colonial Dame, Susan and John III.

Angus Truesdale Morrison (1919-2016) was the son of Angus Washburn Morrison and great grandson of Dorilus Morrison. Angus T. Morrison earned his pilot's license at age 17 and maintained it for 70 years. He served as a naval aviator in World War II, earning two distinguished flying crosses, four air medals, and a Navy Unit Citation. After his service, he graduated with honors from Yale University and joined the Minnesota and Ontario Paper Company. In 1962, he joined the investment firm Paine Webber where he became a partner, retiring at age 70. He was involved in the Minneapolis Chapter of the American Red Cross, United Negro College Fund, among his other interests. In 1947 in Portland, Maine, he married Virginia Hunter Gault (1924-2000), a graduate of Smith College. She was a Colonial Dame descended through her mother's line from George Maris. They had four children: Julia, Nancy, Angus, and Clinton.

John Morrison (1922-2012) married Charlotte Lewis. John attended Yale University, interrupting his studies to serve as an aviator in the Army Air Corps flying C-46 planes from Burma to China. He returned to Yale, completed his degree, and began a career with Honeywell and later Norwest Bank. Charlotte, her mother Dorothy DuToit (Mrs. Addison) Lewis, and her sister were Colonial



Figure 4: Photo identified as Sarah Helen Truesdale and Angus Washburn Morrison - public domain

Dames through Colonial ancestor Nathaniel Sparhawke. Charlotte and John's children were John Morrison (Jack) and Helen Morrison.

Julia Washburn Morrison Palmer is the daughter of Angus Truesdale Morrison and Virginia Hunter Gault. Her Colonial Dames ancestry also goes through her mother's Hunter line to George Maris. Julia, now retired, owned a computer consulting business in Wayzata, practiced as a tax consultant, and is former board chair of the Family Partnership, a nonprofit social services agency founded in 1878 in Minneapolis. She married Brian Palmer in 1972.

Colonial Dame Julia Hunter Palmer Wright is the daughter of Brian and Julia Palmer. A graduate of Colorado College, she received a master's degree in historic preservation and lived in New York until she married Adam John Wright in 2012 in Boca Grande, Florida. She now resides in Minnesota. She is Chair of the Minneapolis College of Art & Design board and is the Secretary of the Woodhill Club's board of directors. She has three daughters: Julia Morrison Wright, Winifred Washburn Wright, and Palmer Langdon Wright.

Colonial Ancestors:

Four Colonial ancestors are present in the lineage papers of the Morrison family's Colonial Dames: Francis Cooke, George Maris, Nathaniel Sparhawke, and William Swayne.

Francis Cooke is the ancestor of ten of Minnesota's Colonial Dames, including Ethel Morrison van Derlip. Born in England in 1582, he was a passenger on the Mayflower along with his son John. He signed the Mayflower Compact, pictured below. His wife Hester and remaining children, including daughter Jane, Ethel's ancestor, arrived by 1623. Francis was appointed to perform several duties in Plymouth Colony: to lay out boundaries for land grants, to lay out roads and highways, and to survey land boundaries and highway routes. Over the years, he served on juries in both civil and criminal cases. He died in Plymouth in 1663.



Figure 5: *Signing the Mayflower Compact 1620*, a painting by Jean Leon Gerome Ferris 1899, public domain

George Maris, born in 1632, was a shoemaker by trade. He was persecuted for his religion in England and emigrated to America in 1683 with his wife Alice and children, following William Penn. In Pennsylvania he became a minister in the Society of Friends. He was commissioned Justice of the Peace in 1685 and continued serving the court until 1693. He served in the Assembly (legislature) for eight years. Sessions at the time averaged nine days per year. He died in 1705. George was the ancestor of Virginia Gault Morrison, Julia Washburn Morrison Palmer, and Julia Hunter Palmer Wright.

Nathaniel Sparhawke was born in Essex, England in 1597 and had settled in the Massachusetts Bay Colony by 1638 with his wife Mary. He was appointed Deacon of the church in Cambridge and served as Deputy to the General Court from 1642-1647. He died in Cambridge in 1647. Nathaniel and Mary are the ancestors of Colonial Dame Charlotte Lewis Morrison and her sister through their mother, Dorothy (Mrs. Addison) Lewis.

William Swayne, born in England in 1585, came to America in 1635. He settled first in Massachusetts and by the end of 1636 was in Wethersfield, Connecticut. He is considered one of the six founders of Wethersfield. William was appointed as a commissioner to govern the colony until the adoption of the constitution in 1639. He was a member of the court, serving as deputy, juror, and magistrate. He died in 1664 in New Haven Colony. Nine Colonial Dames in the state of Minnesota have descended from William.

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