

WWI Snapshot: Thomas Aubrey Morse, 1896-1996

BY NORMA ECKARD
AND AMY ECKARD
GUEST COLUMNISTS

Thomas Aubrey Morse founded the YMCA in Florida. He is one of the longest living Brunswick County WWI veterans, living for over 100 years. Brothers Christopher Roger Morse and James Harris Morse also served in WWI.

Thomas Aubrey Morse and two brothers who also served in WWI, Christopher Roger Morse and James Harris Morse, were born in Southport. A photo is available for Christopher Roger Morse, who was featured in his own WWI Snapshot, at caswellriflerange.com.

Thomas, who went by the name Aubrey, was ordered to report for duty on Aug.

5, 1918. Corporal Morse served with the Medical Department at Fort Ontario, NY, until honorably discharged on Aug. 23, 1919.

A photograph was found on page 67 in the 1921 Trinity College (now Duke University) yearbook when Aubrey was a senior, and was copied into his Findagrave entry.

The following accompanied the photo:

Morse, although short physically, is pretty long mentally. He is best known by the fact that he has stood between the faculty and students during his senior year as a member of the Student Life Committee. As far back as we can remember, he has gone into college activities with every ounce he could spare, and very often he has been heard from. Kaiser Bill evidently thought that Morse

was coming because he vacated, and this action was probably a wise one. Shorty always has a smile for all of his friends, and if he has any enemies, we have never heard of them. It was chiefly because of Shorty's far-reaching influence that David Bispham honored Trinity with a concert. He has been a valuable assistant to Cap Card in his physical exercise. With such a good start, the question which arises is: Where will he stop?

Aubrey was one of the longest living Brunswick County WWI veterans, passing away at age 100 in 1996. His obituary listed his accomplishments.

Founder of local YMCA Aubrey Morse dies at 100

He headed up YMCA programs in Kentucky, Virginia and Tennessee before starting one in Tallahassee. A small man who did big things for Tallahassee, T. Aubrey Morse, has died.

Morse founded the Tallahassee YMCA in 1952. He later spent 17 years (1966-1983) as the cashier of Tallahassee Memorial Hospital. His wife, Cora Morse, was an ardent preservationist who nearly single-handedly saved the old Union Bank building from destruction in 1971. Cora Morse died in 1994.

T. Aubrey Morse died Wednesday at the extended



Photos contributed

Thomas Aubrey Morse from the 1921 Trinity College Yearbook (now Duke University)

care facility of Tallahassee Memorial Regional Center, where he had been hospitalized for two weeks. Morse, who suffered deafness, diabetes, and a broken hip in his final years, celebrated his 100th birthday on March 11, receiving congratulations from U.S. Sen. Bob Graham and Florida Gov. Lawton Chiles.

Morse stood only 5-foot-4, and he carried a wooden box to stand on when making speeches or teaching Sunday school at Trinity United Methodist Church. But in nine years of erecting the framework of an agency that now serves 10,000 area residents a year, he created a big legacy.

"Aubrey was small in stature, but he walked tall among men," said Tom Humphress, retired president of Barnett Bank, who headed the citizens group that petitioned the YMCA for a chapter in 1952. "Many, many young people got their best training, moral and spiritual-wise, from Aubrey."

Thomas Aubrey Morse, who went by his middle name, was born March 11, 1896, in Southport, N.C. He earned a degree in Christian

leadership and training from Trinity College, which later became Duke University.

A World War I veteran, Morse joined the Young Men's Christian Association after graduation, and headed up YMCA programs in Lexington, Ky., Norfolk, Va., and Jackson, Tenn., before Tallahassee.

The funeral will be today at 10:30 a.m. at Trinity United Methodist Church. The family will receive visitors immediately after the service in the church parlor.

Morse is survived by three sons, T. Aubrey Morse Jr. of Marietta, Ga., Robert G. Morse of Tallahassee, and William S. Morse of Franklin, N.C.; and three grandchildren.

(Ensley, Gerald. Tallahassee Democrat (Tallahassee, Fla.), 27 July 1996, p. 17.)

If you would like to help us honor Thomas Aubrey Morse or another Brunswick County WWI veteran, email

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By Gerald Ensley
DEMOCRAT STAFF WRITER

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Morse He started the YMCA in a basement office of the Tallahassee Bank and Trust.

News article announcing Morse death on July 27, 1996, in Tallahassee, Fla.

the Friends of Ft. Caswell Rifle Range at ftcaswellriflerange@gmail.com or go to www.caswellriflerange.com.

Funds continue to be sent to support the historical preservation of the 1918 World War I Fort Caswell Rifle Range Memorial and the book featuring all the men and women who served in the Great War from Brunswick County. Send donations to Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range, 5 Foxfire Trace, Caswell Beach, NC 28465.

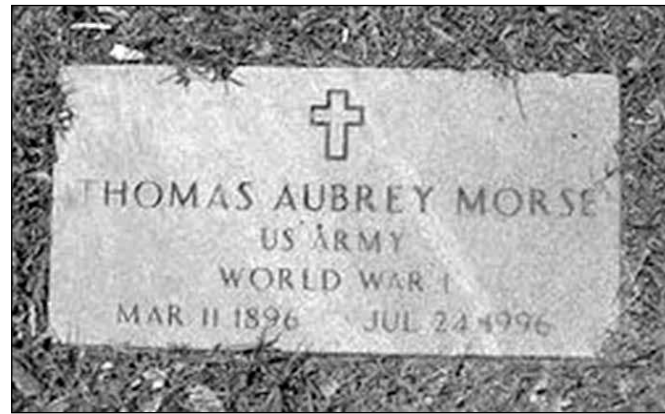


Photo contributed from Findagrave

Thomas Aubrey Morse was laid to rest in Tallahassee, Fla., along with a headstone. This military flat marker is located at his grave site.

Morse Thomas A		4,305,464	* White * Colored: 1
(Surname)	(Christian name)	(Army serial number)	
Residence: 513 So Front St	Wilmington	NORTH CAROLINA	
(Street and house number)	(Town or city)	(County)	(State)
* Limited to 100 words. * Inducted at Wilmington NC on Aug 5, 1918			
Place of birth: Southport NC	Age or date of birth: Mich 11, 1896		
Organizations served in, with dates of assignments and transfers: MD Ft. Ontario NY to Disch			
Grades, with date of appointment: Pvt 1st Oct 24/18. Corp Aug 18/19.			
Engagements:			
Wounds or other injuries received in action: None.			
Served overseas from † None to †, from † to †			
Honorably discharged on demobilization Aug 28/19, 19			
In view of occupation he was, on date of discharge, reported 0 per cent disabled.			
Remarks:			
Form No. 724-1, A. G. O. * Strike out words not applicable. † Dates of departure from and arrival in the U. S.			

NC Service Card WWI.