



Samuel Finley Brown Morse (1885-1969) in 1924, age 39

the future Duchess of Windsor, Wallis Simpson, the well-known painter Gene Francis, and many others. Relda's father had been Attorney General of California after entering politics in Downieville, California, his place of birth. Her mother was the daughter of an Irish immigrant who came to California in the 1850s.

Sam and Relda were married for over 30 years until she passed away in 1951. Jane and Harry Hunt also stayed happily married and the two couples were close friends. The Hunts lived on Ondulado Road in Pebble Beach.



(left) Harry Hunt. (right) Mrs. Harry Hunt and Marquessa de Portago and pet goat at polo, 1928.

Sam once described Relda as being "of '49ers stock, which in California is like being descended from the Puritans in New England, but a hell of a lot more fun." Relda was indeed a lot of fun and lived a full but short life.

Relda's grandmother, Mary Catherine Freehill, came to California in the 1850s with her brother and went directly to the gold fields. They came from County Cavan in Ireland. She met her husband, Lewis Byington, in the boomtown of Downieville. He came to California from Ohio seeking riches in the Sierra foothills, but found he could do better selling meat to the miners. I was always told (incorrectly it turns out) that Lewis came in '49 and Catherine in '51. There was an old ditty my mother recited to me that went:

"The Miners came in '49
The whores in '51
And from that holy union
Came the native son."

When I asked my mother about her great-grandmother she sternly replied, "Catherine came with her brother." Actually, Lewis came in '51 and Catherine in '53. Men substantially outnumbered women in the gold country even in 1853, but not all those women were prostitutes by any means. As children we heard that her brother did well in the goldfields and Catherine was soon married to Byington. They had two children, Lewis Jr., who became a lawyer/politician and Emma, mother of Relda.

Revival style although he made exceptions. Helene Irvin's "Marble Palace" near the Ghost Tree was one. Helene was Templeton Crocker's ex-wife and a Hawaiian sugar heiress. She built a copy of a Travertine Monastery complete with stone towers, a pool filled with sea water and an interior boasting gold faucets in marble bathtubs, hence the name. The interior cost an estimated \$2,000,000. Next door to the Marble Palace, Bill Crocker, son of W.H., built a beautiful Spanish style house and next to that, Charles Crocker II commissioned G.W. Smith to build "Videa Vista," where his son now lives. On the hill looking down on these mansions, Cortland Hill, son of the founder of the Great Northern Nekoosa Railroad, built a house his son Jim now owns. Jim says it was the fifth house built in Pebble Beach. The building boom, the new lodge and golf courses and the construction of the clubs in the '20s must have been exciting to witness.

The 1920s were happy for Sam Morse. He had a new wife and a new daughter, Mary, born in September of 1920. He ran a large company developing land as he saw fit and was making money. He drew some very nice cypress trees using charcoal and enjoyed this avocation of drawing and painting for the rest of his life.

He traveled frequently and in luxury. In 1921, he toured Mexico and was hosted by Alvaro Obregon, the president. He loved going to Europe, especially Paris, but then again, who doesn't? He took long horseback rides in California, learned how to play golf (badly) and enjoyed carousing with his artist friends from Carmel.

After the San Clemente Dam was completed in 1920, he was anxious to sell the rest of his Carmel Valley property. The company replaced the old redwood box pipeline with clay pipes to carry the water to Forest Lake Reservoir in Pebble Beach. From there it was distributed to the cities of Carmel, Monterey and Pacific Grove. Now that the infrastructure was in place, he saw no use for the rest of the land. "There are millions of acres like this



Charcoal drawing by Sam
(See photo on page 104)



married name, so we often confused the two: Gene Francis McComas and Francis McComas. A large framed charcoal by Gene depicting a Mexican plaza sits outside on the brick patio under an awning. It has been there for over 80 years and appears to be in perfect shape.

The Haida House

One house at the ranch with an interesting history was built in San Francisco and then brought down to the property on a truck. In 1941, the World's Fair on Treasure Island in San Francisco was drawing to a close. In the Western States exhibit, which included both U.S. and Canada, a young man named Dudley Carter built an authentic Haida Indian lodge. With his axe, knives, and froes, he carved and shaped and built the lodge using ancient techniques. There are pictures of Carter carving and chopping in booklets about the fair. No nails, screws or steel are in the construction; everything cut then cleverly fitted together. The front door was built into a 15-foot Haida Totem pole with raven and bear totems. The lower section of the pole a door set on sturdy carved wooden hinges which opened inward. The closing device was a carved wooden frog mounted next to the door inside which swung down into the locking position. A raised platform attached to one side of the house served as a sleeping area—very cozy and private and where I'm sure half my relatives lost their virginity.

When the war broke out in 1941 and the fair closed, Carter disassembled the lodge, loaded it onto a flatbed truck and drove down the coast to Carmel. He received permission from Flip Hatton to set up the lodge at the mouth of the Carmel River. Sam heard about it and went to see it. He was very impressed and Carter agreed to sell it to him for \$500. Sam moved it out to the ranch, located it facing the swimming pool and commissioned Carter to build a second little house next to it.

We had to take the "Haida House" down in 1978. The fireplace had been built over an abandoned septic tank which was pulling the house apart. The family decided to move the whole thing down to a piece of family property in the South Coast section of Big Sur. We found Dudley Carter in Vancouver, British



Sam with Ginger Rogers
at the River Ranch 1940

Chapter Fifteen

Family Life, 1920s Pebble Beach

The year 1920 introduced Mary Morse to the world in September and she was the apple of Sam's eye. Although he was not one for expressing emotions, he loved spending time with his little girl and showered her with affection.

Mary enjoyed encounters with movie stars and sports figures. Her golf guru, Marion Hollins, was the women's amateur champion in 1921. As mentioned, Jean Harlow taught Mary how to milk a cow. Errol Flynn gave Mary her first gin and tonic, leaned back and said, "I do believe I've kissed a virgin." He then tried to seduce the 15 year old. She said recently that she often second guessed herself about her refusal of his advances: give it up to Errol Flynn or wait for her marriage day? One deterrent was that Sam would beat Flynn senseless if he found out. One day, Olympic swimmer and Tarzan, Johnny Weissmuller escorted her around Pebble Beach with her girlfriend. Tarzan sat in the middle and put his big muscular arms around the two of them. She said it was very cozy. Salvador Dali insisted she sit next to him at dinner parties. She spoke French and he pretended not to speak English. It didn't hurt that she was attractive as well.

Sam and Mary at the
Pebble Beach Equestrian
Center, circa 1927





Sam and his four children. Left to right: Jack, Nancy, Sam, Mary, Sam Jr.

family explanation for his death. He was a poor student and could not stick to much of anything. He was very well liked by all but lived in the shadow of his father, had an unhappy marriage, and ended his life at an early age.

Sam Jr.'s only child, Sam III, or Sammy³ to the family, turned to S.F.B. for paternal guidance, but old Sam was never one for this task. He could be quite brusque with his family and Sammy³ got a little wild. During college, he dated the daughter of a famous movie star. One night he borrowed his girlfriend's sports car without bothering to tell her. The car was registered in her mother's name. The girlfriend reported it stolen and he got arrested. Headlines the next day said, "S.F.B. Morse steals Ingrid Bergman's car." He was humiliated, of course. The final blow came about two weeks later when a clipping service sent S.F.B. a notice saying, "Your name has appeared in the New York Times. If you would like a copy please send us \$5 and a return envelope." He didn't.

Sammy³ now lives in Santa Fe, is happily married to Joan and has two successful and beautiful grown daughters.

Sam Sr.'s second son, Jack, and I once talked about his alcoholism. He started life as a golden boy, in S.F.B.'s mold: barrel-chested, an athlete at Yale, worked for his

were detailed accounts of the people he met and the uniqueness of the islands. Sam wrote in his monograph that Templeton's *Zaca* was moored nearby at one stop, but he does not mention seeing him. Their different lives left them with little to say.

The group took a steamer home from Tahiti and late in the summer of 1929 Sam sold *The Temptress*. Perfect timing, given what happening in the economy.



Yachting Ladies

the Beach Club, and miles of trails out of the stables for the casual rider. There was also archery, swimming, and gambling. What it lacked was an area of smaller homes and a country club. A conversation with General James Harbord stationed at nearby Fort Ord, planted the

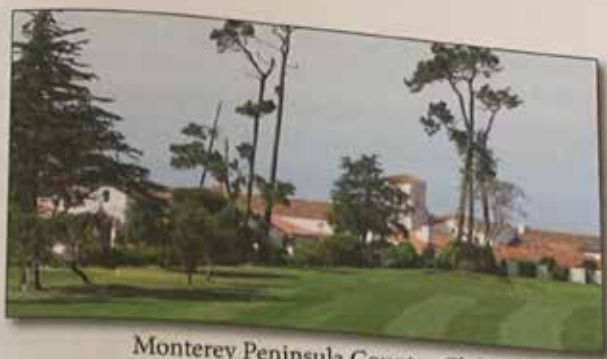
seed. The general, General John Pershing's second-in-command, mentioned to Sam that many personnel were quite fond of the area, and would love to retire there. Sam ran with the idea in 1926.

The Monterey Peninsula Country Club (MPCC) was unique in its development. A group of retired military men formed a club while Sam built the clubhouse and golf course and developed the lots. He then sold the lots to the retired military who became members of the club. In other words, first you were deemed acceptable by the other members, then you bought a lot and were officially admitted into the club. The lots were set back in the forest, away from the course, to enhance the beauty of the links. Lots uniformly sold for \$1,500. At first the lots sold quickly, and the membership flourished, but when the Depression hit, sales slowed to nothing. Club dues were \$2.50 a month with no initiation fee if you bought a lot.

In the late 1940's and early 1950's my father Richard Osborne was the club manager. The company wanted to turn the course over to the members, but the members didn't want the expense of maintenance. They enjoyed their low dues while taking full advantage of the amenities.

In order to convince them it was a very good deal, Sam promised to build them a second course known as the Shore Course as a sweetener. This sealed the deal, and the MPCC continues to this day as a private club. In 2015 they tore up the original Dunes Course and built one far more spectacular in its place. Sam's Shore Course, after some remodeling in 2003, remains.

The next club to be built was dreamed up by Marion Hollins.



Monterey Peninsula Country Club



Sam showing the layout for the Shore Course of the Country Club

She never moved into their love nest and sold the property to a couple from Pittsburgh. The Murrays lived there for many years, but sold off pieces of the property. The eventual buyers were the sardine canneries. Sardines were plentiful in Monterey Bay, and demand for them was strong before World War II through the early '60s. The canneries multiplied and they changed the name of Ocean View Boulevard to Cannery Row after John Steinbeck's book of the same name.

The stench from the canneries was horrific and the pollution in the bay, deadly. The hotel was near the canneries so guests often got a nauseating dead-fish odor mixed in with their grilled steaks. The heated salt water pool was unique at the time but the offal from the canneries found its way into the intake valves and the pool became unusable. Sam saw no way around the problems with the canneries and was happy to have the Navy take the property off his hands.

John Steinbeck began Cannery Row with this description: "... (it) is a poem, a stink, a grating noise, a quality of light, a tone, a habit, a nostalgia, a dream. Cannery Row is the gathered and the scattered, tin and iron and rust and splintered wood, chipped pavement and weedy lots and junk heaps, sardine canneries of corrugated iron, honkytonks, restaurants and whore-houses, and little crowded groceries, and laboratories and flophouses." Cannery Row was not exactly the neighbor for a luxury hotel.

In the 1950s when Sam was firmly ensconced in Pebble Beach and well away from the stench of



Cannery Row Madam
Flora Woods

Cannery Row, he received a surprising phone call. Flora Woods, the famous madam and owner of the Lone Star Cafe on Cannery Row, began the call with, "Mr. Morse, I need your help." Flora was immortalized in Steinbeck's book as Dora Flood and the bar as The Golden Bear. Flora said the State of California wanted to take away her liquor license. She said, "You know I am providing an important service to Monterey. If my girls were not here, then the soldiers at Fort Ord would be after the local girls."

Sam thought for a moment and said, "Well Flora, I am not sure what I can do, but I'll make a few calls."

His first and only call was to Governor



Sam and Earl Warren

At the foot of the main table and a few feet behind was a ruined car with a naked girl inside appearing to be dead. Ariss later explained he had given the model several sleeping pills and she slept through the entire event, but he worried about fire with all the paper decorations and how he could rescue the girl should it become necessary.

Mary Morse was seated at the end of the table with her date, John Haffner. Behind her was the wrecked car and people kept bumping into Mary trying to get a picture



Gala and Dali in costume at the party



Nude model in the wrecked car

of the nude girl. Mary said she did not like the party at all. She did not enjoy competing for attention with a naked girl.

The party, a fundraiser for needy artists, had several celebrity guests including Bob Hope, Jackie Coogan, and Gloria Vanderbilt. The Del Monte press machine went into high gear to get the word out. Articles appeared about it off and on, including one in the New Yorker 70 years later in 2011. A YouTube video



Nancy Morse and Bob Hope

entitled "Dali's Dizzy Dinner" features Hope opening the frog platter. In Sam's words, "I have attended a lot of parties in my life... but this one topped them all. It would not have surprised me at all if someone brought in a platter with a bleeding head on it and Salome danced vigorously with nothing on but the last veil."

He talked about the wild parties at the Carmel Art Association. It is tempting to remind the current members of the time when their staid organization presented a completely nude woman on a platter held up by four "blackamoors." Back then, the Art Association also auctioned off a group of nude women in a "slave market."

Sam was a firm believer in free publicity and although the party was expensive it created a tremendous buzz. Many people wanted to come and would have paid the \$500 admission to join in but it was sold out. Sam spent \$50,000 on the party, well over the contributions, but the expenses were covered eventually by the increase in occupancy created by the publicity.

The extravaganza in June 1941 was the last time Hotel Del Monte hosted a large party. By the end of the year, the U.S. was pulled into the war and the Navy took over the hotel entirely. The main building with the dining room is now called Hermann Hall. The 160 acres of gardens have been seriously reduced. The swimming pavilion burned down in 1930 and was not replaced. Several military style buildings now crowd the property. The main building still displays its former glory with high ceilings, beautiful murals by Frank McComas and others and highly polished Spanish tiles on the floor. Once a year it displays a touch of its former glamour when the Navy holds a winter fundraising ball with attendees in formal attire: men in dress blues, women in ball gowns.

The railroad line was discontinued in the 1960s and the nascent town of Del Monte ceased to exist. But it was not the end of the line for Sam Morse or his artistic dream of Del Monte.

landscapes. He was quite prolific for a busy man and even lent one of his signed paintings for use on a much-reproduced Kurok tray. His third wife, Maurine, disposed of most of his works or gave them to her fourth husband, Milton Coburn. Sam, like many men of his generation (Eisenhower, Churchill, even Hitler) found painting to be a welcome distraction.

His mother was also an artist and Sam inherited her sense of color, design and balance. She may also have given him some training in technique. The environment of the Monterey Peninsula also was a significant contributor to his art muscles. Not only the spectacular scenery, but the art community was attractive. His closest friend was artist Frank McComas, who helped Sam lay out some of the landscaping in Pebble Beach.

He thought of land development as an artist thinks of a canvas. He often consulted with artists on landscaping, golf course design and home building. McComas was involved in many of these projects as well as murals in the hotel and lodge. McComas was an original member of the Cypress Point Club and helped design the course.

Sam told me that if I went into business I should make sure I had art in my life, because that would provide me the right balance I needed to be successful.



Sam at his easel, c.1960

The Investor

I was upset to see reference to Sam at the Carmel Valley History Center as one of a group of investors who bought Carmel Valley. I couldn't disagree more. Although Sam was indeed involved in buying vast acreage in Carmel Valley, he was more artist than investor. He was too specific about where he would invest, land on the Monterey Peninsula or the Carmel Valley. He said giving land for a fire station was the best investment he ever made, because they were now closer to his house. He bought stock in U.S. Steel because a friend worked there, and he sold it when his friend was fired. He made a profit, but it was the Roaring Twenties and everyone made profits. Or selling his yacht in late 1929; it wasn't an investment move, he had lost interest in ocean cruising. His purchase of 150 gallons of green whiskey just before Prohibition was another of his "great investments," but in this case, his profit was the reward of many friends when the casks were opened. Other "investments" included giving land to hospitals and schools. These altruistic investments were for his and the community's future, not for his own financial gain, although he may have benefited in some fashion.

This impressive structure, made of rustic logs and containing a fireplace a 6-foot-tall person could stand in, was built in the early '20s during Prohibition, and contained a hidden bar as well as a balcony for an orchestra.

Jack did not buy it, but lived there in the late '60s and made a small portion of the house livable. He installed a library and a studio in one wing and renovated the kitchen, one bedroom and a bath, essentially making a cozy cottage inside a decaying mansion. He left the grounds alone. The overgrown forest on the property created a primeval feeling Jack enjoyed.

When the Macomers bought the 80 acre lot they agreed with Sam to never subdivide it while their house was standing. The company took over the property at some point, and mysteriously the house burned down in the '70s. The company sold it to J. Lohr who promptly subdivided it.

Jack died a Nelson Rockefeller death in Los Angeles at the relatively young age of 75, in the arms of two prostitutes. His ashes, like Sam's, are scattered at the River Ranch.



Sam and son Jack at River Ranch, early 1950s

The tournament was a USGA sanctioned professional and amateur (Pro-Am) event with a date slot at the beginning of the season, fine for Palm Springs, but January weather in Pebble Beach could be pretty miserable. Not so good for golf, but great for staying inside and drinking and partying -- the primary purpose of "The Clambake."

The tournament was unique and had its characters, from Ray Bolger to Bill Murray, who liked to joke and horse around on the course and please the crowds. Pros put up with it as the play was enjoyable and the prizes substantial. The top pros enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere until Tiger Woods decided it was beneath him. It used to be an all male affair, but now amateur women are included. Mary Morse was asked to be the first female, but declined.

Sam with Ed Sullivan
and Bing Crosby, 1950s

Crosby and Pebble Beach were a great draw: movie stars, business moguls, golf pros all mingled together in the Pro-Am. Parties every day for two weeks reached a crescendo in the final four days of the actual tournament. We kids were totally ignored during the Crosby, which was fine with us. We wandered around collecting autographs, ogling celebrities and taking part in the free party food.



Bing lived on the 14th fairway in a house I got to know well after he died, a lovely large modern home with a very attractive den looking out over the golf course and the ocean. My first girlfriend's parents bought it from the estate. Her father, Ted Talbot, was the scion of a lumber and shipping family originally from San Francisco. Their daughter, Pam, was not only beautiful but owned a vintage Jaguar which never seemed to run. However, while it was in her driveway, we could sit in it very comfortably and make out. A cartoonist named Jimmy Hatlo lived on one side of Crosby's house and on the other a Central Valley farm baron named Ralph Hammonds.

Richard and Mary, representing Pebble Beach, had taken over most of the entertaining from Sam by then. They lived in a mansion not far from the Lodge which the company eventually bought and turned into a spa, Casa Palmero. Many celebrities came to the parties there or at other homes and at the Indian Village.

In 1954, Mary was pregnant with her fourth child, Ellen. Her delivery date was during the Crosby but she had a responsibility to make sure people went to the right



Pebble Beach Road Races 1952

thousands of people flood the little Monterey Peninsula during Car Week. The events have spilled over to Carmel, Monterey, and Carmel Valley, but the main show is still in Pebble Beach.

The event is held in August on the 18th fairway. Tickets are \$300 and the proceeds go to charity. In 2016, the Best of Show was a 1936 Lancia Pinin Farina Cabriolet.

The Concours delivers a mighty lift to local businesses and charities. The County of Monterey estimates that in 2016 visitors spent \$53 million, booked 17,978 hotel rooms and the Concours was attended by 85,000 people. Tax revenues were \$4.8 million and all net proceeds went to local charities through the Pebble Beach Foundation.*

From the Pebble Beach Foundation website:

This prestigious, invitation-only competition is not only a spectacle of beautiful motorcars; it also serves as a fundraiser for nearly 100 charities throughout the Monterey Peninsula.

The Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance brings together our passion for cars with the opportunity to raise money for people in need. With the help of our generous donors and sponsors, as well as many volunteers, the 2016 Concours was able to raise more than \$1.7 million for charity. This brings the total raised for charity to more than \$23 million since the Concours began in 1950.

Through our primary charitable partner, the Pebble Beach Company Foundation, proceeds from the Pebble Beach Concours benefit 85 local charities. Several charities also benefit directly from our Concours Opportunity