

# Morse, Byron Lowell (1872–1960)

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Byron 'Lee' Lowell Morse was a pioneer missionary to Kenya, educator, and church administrator.

Byron 'Lee' Lowell Morse was born on May 18, 1872, in Hillsdale, Mill County, Iowa.<sup>1</sup> His parents were named Eliza and Chance Morse of Holdrege, Nebraska.<sup>2</sup> In 1899 Morse joined Union College, the premier Adventist institution in Nebraska. He graduated with a B.A. degree in 1902. He then moved to England in October 1902 and began colporteur work starting in Ryde, in the Isle of Wight.<sup>3</sup> He worked in England as a self-supporting evangelist and also conducted evangelistic campaigns for a number of years. In 1909 he decided to move to Africa to become a missionary in East Africa.

On May 12, 1909, his boat arrived in Mombasa, British East Africa (later renamed Kenya). With him was Mrs. Raessler from Germany who was to also work in British East Africa together with her husband.<sup>4</sup> They remained in Mombasa two days and left by train for the 600-mile journey to Kisumu and arriving a day later. They completed the final leg of their journey by boat to Gendia where they were introduced to the work by pioneer missionary Arthur A. Carscallen who had founded the Gendia mission in November 1906.

On November 22, 1909, Morse married Ms. Fanny Gingell whom he had met while working in England.<sup>5</sup> Ms. Gingell was born on April 18, 1879, in Ashton Keynes, Wiltshire, England. They were married at the Anglican Church in Kisumu by Rev. F. H. Wright of the Church Missionary Society.<sup>6</sup> Morse became the secretary of the new mission and also taught at the school in Gendia together with his wife. He laid out plans for the expansion of the work estimating that the South Kavirondo area (now the South Nyanza region) would be well served by up to six new mission stations.<sup>7</sup> When he arrived in 1909, there was only one other mission station at Wire Hill; it was pioneered by J. D. Baker. Morse then scouted the country and identified spots for new mission stations. Kanyadoto, Karungu, Kamagambo, Rusinga, and even Nyanchwa were organized during his tenure as the secretary.

During the onset of the First World War, Morse had just returned from furlough and was among those interned in Kaimosi in September 1914, remaining there for two years. Morse remained in British East Africa after the war and left for England shortly. In 1920 he returned to America and settled at Lincoln with his wife. He went back to school and earned an M.A. from the University of Nebraska. In July 1926 Pastor W. T. Bartlett, who was in charge of the mission work at Gendia, met with Morse while on a tour of America that also took him to Nebraska.<sup>8</sup>

Morse opened a store just across the Union College campus that he operated until his death on December 15, 1960. He was survived by his wife Fanny, three sisters, and a brother. Fanny died on June 27, 1970, in Lincoln, Nebraska.<sup>9</sup>

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## SOURCES

Bartlett, W. T. "Old Friends in Africa." *Missionary Worker*, July 30, 1926.

"Brother B. L. Morse who has recently entered . . . ." *Missionary Worker*, March 18, 1903.

Carscallen, A. A. "Joy in Africa." *Missionary Worker*, January 5, 1910.

Carscallen, A. A. "Reinforcements." *Missionary Worker*, June 23, 1909.

*Columbia Union Record*, February 7, 1960.

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## NOTES

1. [www.europeansineastafrica.co.uk](http://www.europeansineastafrica.co.uk) (accessed June 27, 2021).
2. *Columbia Union Record*, February 7, 1960.
3. "Brother B. L. Morse who has recently entered . . . ." *Missionary Worker*, March 18, 1903, 41.
4. A. A. Carscallen, "Reinforcements," *Missionary Worker*, June 23, 1909, 104.
5. A. A. Carscallen, "Joy in Africa," *Missionary Worker*, January 5, 1910, 8.
6. The Church Missionary Society was the Church of England mission.
7. B. L. Morse, "British East Africa," *Missionary Worker*, December 30, 1912, 208.
8. W. T. Bartlett, "Old Friends in Africa," *Missionary Worker*, July 30, 1926, 1.
9. *Columbia Union Record*, February 7, 1960.

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