

Morgan
The Scandal That Shook Freemasonry
by Stephen Dafoe

A Cornerstone Book

Morgan: The Scandal That Shook Freemasonry

Published by Cornerstone Book Publishers
© 2009 by Stephen Dafoe

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American
Copyright Conventions. No part of this book may be reproduced in any
manner without permission in writing from the copyright holder, except by a
reviewer, who may quote brief passages in a review.

Cornerstone Book Publishers
New Orleans, LA

First Cornerstone Edition - 2009

www.cornerstonepublishers.com

ISBN: 1-934935-54-9
ISBN 13: 978-1-934935-23-1

MADE IN THE USA

Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| Dedication | vii |
| Word On The Form Of This Book | ix |
| Foreword: By Arturo de Hoyos | xi |
| Introduction: The Book Of The Dead | xiv |
| Prologue: A Powerful Institution | 1 |
| PART ONE: Under No Less A Penalty | |
| Chapter 1: The Traveling Stonemason | 10 |
| Chapter 2: The Traveling Freemason | 17 |
| Chapter 3: A Stonemason Rejected | 27 |
| PART TWO: The Gathering Storm | |
| Chapter 4: The Lodge Meeting | 45 |
| Chapter 5: A Notice And Caution | 51 |
| Chapter 6: The Imposters | 56 |
| Chapter 7: A Weekend Behind Bars | 62 |
| Chapter 8: The Pen Isn't Mightier Than The Sword | 72 |
| PART THREE: A Conspiracy of Craftsmen | |
| Chapter 9: Burn This Gossip | 83 |
| Chapter 10: Stolen Shirts And Unpaid Debts | 97 |
| Chapter 11: Meanwhile Back At the Press | 107 |
| Chapter 12: The Debtor's Prison | 116 |
| Chapter 13: The Long Ride Home | 124 |
| Chapter 14: A Cabletow's Length From Shore | 130 |
| Chapter 15: A Visit To Grand Chapter | 138 |
| PART FOUR: Is There No Help For The Widow's Son? | |
| Chapter 16: What Have You Done With My Husband | 147 |
| Chapter 17: An Honest Indignation | 159 |
| Chapter 18: A Conspiracy On Trial | 174 |
| Chapter 19: A Blessed Spirit | 215 |
| Chapter 20: Dedicated To The Holy Sts. John | 225 |
| Chapter 21: A Good Enough Morgan / Killer Confesses | 238 |
| Chapter 22: A Fugitive From Justice | 258 |
| Chapter 23: A Sheriff On Trial | 266 |
| Chapter 24: The End Of An Era | 288 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Epilogue: The Monument and the Empty Grave | 297 |
| Afterword: The Masonic Cold Case | 304 |
| Appendix 1: Letters Of William Morgan..... | 335 |
| Appendix 2: Members Of Batavia Lodge In 1826 | 340 |
| Appendix 3: Materials Related To Burning Of David C. Miller's Office | 343 |
| Appendix 4 David Miller's Testimony Regarding His Abduction | 349 |
| Appendix 5: Documents Related To Morgan's Removal From Canandaigua Jail | 359 |
| Appendix 6 Letter Of Colonel Knapp | 370 |
| Appendix 7: Lucinda Morgan's Deposition | 373 |
| Appendix 8: Depositions From First Morgan Trial | 378 |
| Appendix 9: Coroner's Reports..... | 385 |
| Appendix 10: Edward Giddins' Testimony | 389 |
| Appendix 11: Colonel William King's Denial | 393 |
| Appendix 12: Confessions And Accusations | 397 |
| Appendix 13: Materials Related Governor De Witt Clinton's Involvement | 410 |
| Appendix 14: Seceding Masons Convention | 426 |
| Appendix 15: Indicted, Tried and Convicted..... | 433 |
| Appendix 16: Chronology Of Events | 435 |
| Bibliography | 447 |
| Index | 455 |

Dedication

To the memory of Kent Logan Walgren (1947 -2003)

*I hope this book on the Morgan Affair comes close to the great
unwritten chapter of American history that you envisioned it to be.*

A Word On The Form Of This Book

The book you are about to read is not a novel, although it is written in a narrative style. I've chosen to tell the story of the disappearance of William Morgan in the fall of 1826 and the subsequent attempts to discover his fate through the eyes of the people involved because the majority of books written on the subject over the past 183 years have either demonized or sanctified the participants depending on the personal bias of the author. It is my hope that by taking a narrative approach, the partisan reader will develop empathy for the characters on both sides of the lodge room door.

But make no mistake; although the book contains dialogue, this has not been the product of my own imagination. Dialogue has either been taken directly from primary source materials including affidavits and personal memoirs or is derived from first hand accounts of the events. Some alterations have been necessary to make the dialogue flow; however, sources have been listed for interested readers to compare what I've written to the actual source from which it is derived. The same can be said for the book as a whole. Although the book is a narrative nonfiction tale, it is heavily populated with endnotes, which, in many cases, will provide the reader with a wealth of additional information that would have slowed the narrative down.

The book has been designed to work on three levels. The first portion of the book consists of 24 chapters broken up into four sections of three, five, seven and nine chapters respectively. When combined with the prologue and epilogue, this portion of the book is intended to cover the five-year period of history from Morgan's disappearance until the end of the trials held to punish those accused with his abduction and confinement.

The second section of the book allows me to do what I was not permitted to do in the main portion of the work, introduce my own voice to the story. The afterword offers my own interpretation of what happened to Morgan and also provides me an opportunity to dissect the myths of Thurlow Weed and Rob Morris, the two men responsible for the anti-Masonic and Masonic world views of the Morgan Affair. The purpose of this section is to offer the interested reader further light on the subject.

The final section of the book consists of a number of appendices collecting a variety of affidavits, letters, editorials and other documents relating to the Morgan Affair that were used in researching the first two sections of the book. The purpose of these additions is to show the reader that the first section is not an imagined work of fantasy, but is a book designed to put to rest the fantasy that Masons have subscribed to for nearly two centuries, a fantasy fully dissected in the second section.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my literary agent Fiona Spencer Thomas and publisher Michael Poll for assisting me in getting this work in the hands of readers. A special thanks to Arturo de Hoyos for taking time out of an always busy schedule to read the manuscript and to write a wonderful foreword for the book and to my big brother and good friend Stephen McKim for his digital talents in designing the Masonic square and compasses on the front and back cover. I'd also like to thank those friends who offered encouragement, advice or even criticism on the project, but particularly I offer my sincerest thanks to those friends who listened as I prattled on and on about the progress of the work: John and Linda Hayes, Lori Thompson, Jeff Naylor, Chris Hodapp, Etienne Thevou and Raul Duke.

Prologue: A Powerful Institution

June 24, 1825
New London, Connecticut

William F. Brainard took to the podium, ready to address the Masons of Union Lodge No. 31 who had gathered together to celebrate the annual St. John's Day feast, a tradition among Freemasons that could be traced back to England and the formation of the first Grand Lodge on that day in 1717. It was an honor to be asked to deliver the annual address to his brethren, and Brainard wanted to put on a performance worthy of that high responsibility. The day had begun with a parade of Freemasons marching in solemn formation through the streets of New London, some dressed in the regalia of a Master Mason, others in the colorful sashes and aprons of the higher grades of Royal Arch Mason and Knight Templar, their various jewels of office glittering in the afternoon sun. This outward display of Masonic pride was designed to show New Londoners that within Freemasonry lay strength in number and an influence on American communities that was without peer. If the parade was not enough to remind the public of Freemasonry's dominance and importance in society, the eloquent words of men like Brainard that always formed the capstone of the St. John's Day celebration would certainly do the trick.

This was not merely an annual display of Masonic braggadocio or the arrogant pretension of Freemasons; the Craft, as the Masons called their speculative philosophy, had come a long way over the past century, both geographically and culturally. It had simultaneously crossed the English Channel and the Atlantic Ocean, weathered a bitter schism between two rival Masonic factions in England and reunited all the stronger; it had overcome four papal encyclicals condemning the order, and – here at home – Freemasonry had survived both the American Revolution and the War of 1812 unscathed. A year shy of the American jubilee celebrations, marking a half century of American independence from Mother England, Freemasonry was one of the few things the English and the Americans still had in common outside a shared cultural heritage and linguistic tongue.

The Masonic order had been brought to American shores from Britain during the early colonial period, first centering on Boston and

Charleston and then spreading out in a multitude of directions as America grew in both land and population over the next century. In its infancy, back in 1734, a Boston Merchant and tailor named Henry Price had been appointed Provincial Grand Master of Masons with the authority to preside over all parts of North America that were then under British rule. Less than a century later, The United States had twenty-six autonomous Grand Lodges, ruling over approximately twenty-five hundred subordinate lodges and the approximate 100,000 Freemasons who made up their membership.¹

In a young country that had, within a half century, freed itself from British rule, established a workable constitution of its own and nearly doubled its land holdings with the Louisiana Purchase, Freemasons had played an important role in almost every step of its development. Washington was a Mason, as were nine of the 56 men who signed the Declaration of Independence and 13 of the 39 men who signed the U.S. Constitution. Robert R. Livingston, who helped negotiate the Louisiana Purchase, was also a member of the Masonic brotherhood, having served as the first Grand Master of New York, a position he held until 1801. Throughout the short history of the emerging nation, men of power and influence like Washington and Livingston, Franklin and Revere, had been proud of their Masonic affiliation, largely because the Craft was populated by men of equal caliber and character.

But America was changing and changing rapidly, taking Freemasonry along with it. The agrarian society of the founding fathers had been replaced by capitalistic agriculture and industrialization, creating a new class system that many Americans had difficulty coming to terms with. While the America of fifty years past had as her backbone the self-sufficient farm and household, the new and emerging America was becoming dominated by the wage earner. No longer did a person's place of residence dictate where and how they would work; rather, one's occupation often took them far from the communities their ancestors had settled. Additionally, shortages of land in New England was forcing many young Americans to move westward in search of their own stake in the world, many finding little more than loneliness and unemployment in their new homes. It is little wonder that so many men were flocking to Freemasonry looking for a connection to their new communities. Many such young men were sitting in the hall waiting to hear Brainard speak.

Stephen Dafoe

But there was more to the increase in young men joining the Craft than a quest for friendship in a strange town. Freemasonry appealed to young Americans because it offered an all-male society made up of the community's movers and shakers, a group young men longed to become a part of, a group made up of men of power and influence. For these young men there was a growing belief that one's destiny lay in which path they chose to take at the fork in the road. Anything that could help them along that chosen path was worth investigating. As practitioners of an emerging cult of success, many of these young men had little interest in the manual labor of their fathers and grandfathers, preferring the white collar world, a world that seemed to be dominated by Freemasons.²

But not everyone was as enamored with the Masonic Order as the young men who had been swelling its ranks the past few years. Some members of the community saw in Freemasonry the embodiment of elitism, a reflection of the new class system that was driving a greater economic and social wedge between people. For some, the public display of fine garments and glittering jewels that the Freemasons had paraded through the streets of New London earlier that day was salt in an already opening wound, proof that the Masons believed themselves better than those who were not counted among their number. Freemasonry was fast becoming a scapegoat to justify feelings of anxiety and confusion brought on by the changing face of society and the public's inability to deal with that change.³

The sentiment was nothing new, nor was the fear that Freemasons were becoming a little too numerous in positions of power. Although the discussion of partisan politics was prohibited behind the closed doors of the Masonic Lodge, Freemasons had no qualms about bringing Masonic politics to the public arena. This notion would have been clear to readers of the March 30, 1816 edition of the *Columbian Centinel*, published in Boston, which carried the following advertisement:

TO THE MASONIC FRATERNITY.

Brethren: – It need not be repeated that the internal regulations of your benevolent order exclude all discussions of political dogmas. But every Master Mason knows that his public obligation

obligates him to discharge the duties he owes to the state with diligence and fidelity.

When two candidates, therefore, present themselves for his suffrage, he is not bound to inquire to what party the one or the other belongs; but whether he is "a good man and true," and faithful to the Constitution which he may be called upon to administer. And all other things being favorable, he is bound by every Masonic obligation to give his vote for the one who is a Free and Accepted Brother in preference to one who is not.

Brother John Brooks shall receive the vote of A MASTER MASON.⁴

Eight years later, De Witt Clinton, who had served as Grand Master of New York from 1806 to 1807, was running for Governor of the state against a non-mason. In the October 30th, 1824 edition of the *National Union*, published in New York City, was another example of how Freemasons were quite willing to take a political position on the public side of their lodge doors:

Brethren: Your former Grand Master is now a candidate for the support of the 'free and accepted.' De Witt Clinton, if there be any virtue in the cardinal principles of your faith, will receive your undivided suffrage for Governor. It is in periods of trial, like the present, that the wisdom of Freemasonry has been exercised, its strength tested, and its beauty displayed. Amidst the dark ages of past time, the great lights of our Order, though often obscured, have never been extinguished. Shall they now be eclipsed by the 'introduction of strangers among the workmen?' Will you suffer the political edifice to be 'daubed with un-tempered mortar?' No, surely! The architect of your internal prosperity is before you. Enter warmly into the cause of your Brother – pass onward to the ballot boxes, with the tokens of your zeal and fidelity – and by your united votes contribute to raise the State to that exalted rank to which she is so justly entitled.

(Signed) THE WIDOW'S SON.⁵

Clinton won the election by a large majority, in part due to articles in the *National Union*, a paper started by a Freemason named Samuel H. Jenks, solely to assist Clinton in his gubernatorial bid.⁶

This dominance and influence of Freemasons in American communities was a reality to which Brainard possessed full knowledge, himself a member of the legal profession and therefore a member of that class of citizen the public looked at with some suspicion, particularly if they were a Freemason. Brainard was also aware of the growing unrest against his fraternity both socially and religiously, for he had prepared a few words on it in the address he was now at last about to deliver. But for Brainard and the Masons who had assembled to hear his words of Masonic inspiration, Freemasonry was an unstoppable juggernaut of brotherhood.

"What is Masonry now?" the Connecticut lawyer asked his audience, looking around the room to see if anyone would answer his rhetorical question. Pausing briefly for effect, he answered himself with but three words, setting the tone for the rest of his address.

"IT IS POWERFUL!" he said, allowing just enough time for the impact of his words to swell the chests of his fellow Masons, before picking up the pace, rattling off the many benefits of being a Freemason.

"It comprises men of rank, wealth, office, and talent, in power and out of power, and that in almost every place where power is of any importance. And it comprises among other classes of the community, to the lowest, in large numbers, active men, united together, and capable of being directed by the efforts of others, so as to have the force of concert throughout the civilized world! They are distributed too, with the means of knowing one another, and the means of keeping secret, and the means of co-operating, in the desk, in the legislative hall, on the bench, in every gathering of business, in every party of pleasure, in every enterprise of government, in every domestic circle, in peace and in war, among enemies and friends, in one place as well as in another! So powerful, indeed is it at this time, that it fears nothing from violence, either public or private; for it has every means to learn it in season to counteract, defeat, and punish it."⁷

Brainard let his words trail off long enough to catch his breath. Looking around the room to ensure that his words were taking hold, he continued on towards his closing argument.

“The power of the pope has been sometimes friendly and sometimes hostile,” Brainard continued in a lower tone, the comment a reference to the four papal encyclicals issued by the Holy See that had attempted to damage Freemasonry, the most recent of which had been penned only three months previously.⁸

“Suppose now,” the Connecticut lawyer pondered, “the opposition of either should arouse Masons to redress its grievances. The Jesuits with their cunning might call on the holy brotherhood, and the holy brotherhood on the holy alliance, and they might all come, too, and in vain. For it is too late to talk of the propriety of continuing or suppressing Masonry, after the time to do so has gone by; so good or bad the world must take it as it is. Think of it, laugh at it, hate it, or despise it, still it is not only what I have told you, but it will continue to be — and the world in arms cannot stop it — a powerful institution.”⁹

Brainard gave a slight nod, signaling that he had spoken his final words of the address. The brethren rose in applause, a customary response to let their Masonic brother know that his efforts and zeal for the institution of Freemasonry were appreciated and shared in common. It was a St. John’s Day address that would be talked about for some weeks and months to follow, but before the decade was over, Freemasonry would be sapped of the very power Brainard had only so recently boasted it possessed. A couple of years after Brainard made his eloquent speech on the strength of Freemasonry, Masons, in large numbers, would quit the Craft, attacking the very institution they had for so long defended, and join a growing socio-political movement to ensure that no Freemason held public office again.

The high tower that speculative Freemasonry had so carefully built for itself in the United States was about to be brought crashing to the ground, brick by brick, by an operative stone mason named William Morgan.

Endnotes

1. Morris, Rob. The Masonic Martyr; The Biography of Eli Bruce, Sheriff of Niagara County, New York. Louisville, KY: Morris and Monsarrat, 1861. pp. 4, 5.
2. Goodman, Paul. Towards a Christian Republic : Antimasonry and the Great Transition in New England, 1826-1836. New York: Oxford UP, 1988. pp. 49,50.
3. Ibid. p. 38.
4. Quoted in Gibbs, Emery B. "The Anti-Masonic Movement." The Builder Dec. 1918. Gibbs incorrectly refers to the paper as the Boston Centinel.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. McClenachan, Charles T. History of Freemasonry in New York. Vol. 2. New York, NY: The Grand Lodge of New York, 1892. pp. 570-571. Brainard's dialogue has been taken verbatim from McClenachan's reprinting of the *Proceedings of the Anti-Masonic New York State Preliminary Convention, Held At Utica, August 4th, 5th, and 6th, 1828*.
8. Pope Leo XII's Quo Graviosa had been released on March 13, 1825.
9. Bernard, David. Light on Masonry: A Collection of all the Most Important Documents on the Subject of Free Masonry. 1.3 ed. Utica, NY: William Williams, 1829. p. 465. Bernard's book contains additional portions of Brainard's address, which have been used to form the remaining dialogue.

PART ONE



**Under No Less
A Penalty**

Chapter 1: The Traveling Stonemason

September 4, 1824

Batavia, New York

William Morgan sat on the steps of Nahum Loring's home, his wife's most recent letter held tightly between his trembling hands. The news had not been good. Little Harriett was dead. For Morgan, the 34 miles that separated him from his daughter's tiny corpse might as well have been 500, for in his present condition he couldn't make the trip back to Rochester to say farewell to the daughter he'd yet to hold, nor to wrap his arms around his grief stricken wife, Lucinda. It had only been a few weeks since he'd been injured at work and he'd spent that time recovering at Loring's house. Despite his injury, when he'd first learned that Harriett was not well, he wanted to return to Rochester at least for moral support and the power that the proximity of his prayers might have in saving his child. But his doctor had told him that traveling home in his present condition could trigger a relapse, a relapse that could kill him.¹ So he'd stayed in Batavia, worrying about the health of his newborn daughter and the wife who had given her birth, recovering well enough himself over the weeks to be able to do the few odd jobs Loring had contracted him to do on his new house.

At 48 years of age, Morgan wondered if this was all that life had left for him to experience, a menial existence bouncing from town to town in search of work that was more charity than employment, too poor to provide much of a roof over his young bride's head, and too poor to travel the half day's journey to comfort her as she mourned the loss of their dead child.² It was true, the doctor had told him to stay put, but Morgan had to face the truth that even had he been well enough to make the trip, he was not well off enough in pocket to afford the carriage man's fare. Sure times were tough, which is why so many men were moving westward in search of new opportunities, but Morgan had to admit, if only to his own mind, that the majority of men seeking work on the frontiers were young men, men less than half his age. These were not men like Morgan who had more steps behind them than they had left in front of them, but young men just starting out in life. Morgan could not help but channel his grief into the painful realization that, after nearly a half century of existence, he

should be firmly established by now and not traveling the country with his hat in his hand like a common beggar. Morgan wondered, as he often did, if life was worth living at all.

He'd been born in the summer of 1776,³ just two months after America severed its apron strings from England, the turning point of what would be a long war of independence. Raised in Culpepper County, Virginia, young William had left his Blue Ridge Mountain home for Madison County to apprentice with his cousin John Day, a stonemason working at Hap Hazard Mills.⁴ By 19, William had completed his apprenticeship and began plying his trade as a journeyman stonemason near Lexington, Kentucky, where he worked for about four years⁵ before returning to his Virginia roots, mallet and trowel in hand.⁶ Life was good in those days and Morgan felt like he was growing alongside the nation whose birthday he shared.

But war once again reared its ugly head and, at the age of 36, Morgan entered the army as a private during the War of 1812. Although he modestly told those close to him, without delving into specifics, that he had taken part in most of the battles south of the Potomac,⁷ he'd occasionally exaggerate his military record in the public houses he frequented, telling his fellow elbow benders that he'd earned a captain's commission for having fought alongside the gallant General Andrew Jackson at the Battle of New Orleans. But such was the nature of taverns, a place where patrons liked to be regaled with tall tales and bar-room braggadocio; after all, who wanted to hear boring war stories from a common private?

Yet, it was just a few years after the war had ended that the meager private was able to attract the eye of a preacher's young daughter, a woman 27 years his junior. Of course, the Reverend Joseph Pendleton was not as thrilled with the idea of Morgan marrying his 16-year-old daughter, Lucinda, and her decision to do so against his wishes created an estrangement that had lasted to the present time.⁸ If the strained relationship with her father was not bad enough, there were the rumors that Morgan and a gang of thugs had stolen the girl from her father's home.⁹ But the rumors were to be understood; Lucinda was an attractive, petit, blue-eyed blonde, and he was a man old enough to be her father. What other way than by force could he ever capture the heart of so beautiful a bride? What other way than by scandal could envious and jealous men explain away her choice of husband?

With his wife's familial ties severed, no ties of his own to speak of and a bleak economic outlook on the horizon, Morgan decided to leave Virginia for Upper Canada, arriving in the City of York in 1821, where he found employment on the Humberstone Farm on Yonge Street.¹⁰ Morgan remembered the time well. Yonge Street was a five mile-long stretch of farmland that extended from the north end of the City of York to the old covered toll gate. Like most of the farmers along Yonge Street, Humberstone was a Freemason, but whether his kindness in offering Morgan work was because of his character or his understanding of Masonic teachings, Morgan never knew. It had been enough to know that he had a job to go to each morning and a roof to cover his head each night.

But Morgan was not content to be a farm hand. At 45, he was starting to feel the ravages of time. What he could not feel in body, he could perceive in mind through the reflection in his shaving glass each morning. He was a short, squarely built man with a dark complexion, balding head and the peculiar distinction of having double teeth.¹¹ Despite combing his hair over his head to hide his baldness, Morgan doubted that he was fooling anyone, let alone himself, that he was aging well.

As grateful as Morgan was to Humberstone, he wanted to find work that was a little easier than what the farm offered him. John Doel's Brewery proved to be just such an opportunity and Morgan was delighted to be able to move from itinerate farm worker to the employee of a well-established York businessman.¹²

Though closer to his wife's age than his own, Doel was certainly the type of man that Morgan aspired to be. He'd left his home in Wiltshire, England at the age of 27 determined to make his fortune in the New World, and after spending a year in Philadelphia, the young entrepreneur had traveled to York in 1818, where he established a brewery on Caroline Street, before relocating the business behind his home on the north-west corner of Bay and Adelaide Streets.¹³ Although it would later be told that Morgan had a financial interest in the business or that the brewery had been destroyed by fire forcing him to move on,¹⁴ the truth of the matter was that life had a way of dashing Morgan's dreams and preventing him from ever getting a leg up in the world. Soon after he had taken up employment with the brewery, Morgan found himself once again packing up his belongings and look-