

THE SWORD OF SCRUTINY

The Unven and Meandering Course
to Find and Explore Facts About
The Morgan Affair



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INTRODUCTION

The multitude of conflicting statements about the life of William Morgan, his abduction by Masons in 1826 and subsequent disappearance, blurs the boundaries between fact and myth. The indictments, trials, and credible backgrounds of those directly involved or on the boundary of what we have come to know as The Morgan Affair, is a massive collection of polarizing narratives and fragmented historical records.

The first one hundred years of writing about the 1826 Morgan Affair can aptly be characterized as a jigsaw puzzle with many of the major parts missing. Nevertheless, a clearer picture of the puzzle is before us, if we remember to observe the reality that flawed witnesses and agenda driven books are not inherently unreliable, but their imperfections must be carefully evaluated.

The serious study of how organized American Freemasonry unfolded in the United States must be pursued in context and concert with the records of the nation's history. In that labor, we find an extraordinary number of flawed witnesses and accounts along with an exceedingly high number of imperfections to be carefully evaluated. Such an evaluation is impossible unless we insist on a facts-first approach, conclusions, if any, later, and no concession to those who prefer myth to factual history.

The serious research on that path finds that many of those who have written and who continue to write about the abduction of William Morgan at the plotting hands of Freemasons in upstate western New York merely copy from one another with no effort to verify the truth of the statements made that they have copied. To complicate matters further, the later writers created their own agenda-driven narratives on top of already exaggerated and unverified accounts and then presented them as factual. This cycle of repeating misinformation and embellishing flawed details has transformed the facts of The Morgan Affair into distorted remnants, leaving its actual history riddled with inaccuracies and myths. Grappling with these conflicting accounts while trying to piece together an objective version of events has been successfully achieved by very few writers in the 20th and 21st centuries so far.

By 1933 alone, we find six-hundred and twenty-three source documents that were available on the topics of Anti-Masonry and The Morgan Affair. The bibliography of these sources, as noted by the highly respected author compiling them, were considered only “the more important ones,” acknowledging too that a large number of the titles are simply “fugitive material” of no real importance other than displaying the bias of the writer.¹

¹ William L. Cummings, *Biography of Anti-Masonry with a Sketch of The Morgan Affair and an Appendix Containing Several Important Documents, Etc.*, Reprint from Part 1, Volume IV, Nocalore, by Permission of North Carolina Lodge of Research, 1934. (Cummings did not include newspaper and

The 1826 event ultimately shook the very foundation of the Masonic institution, and its lodges were decimated both in number and membership. It quickly became a political issue that touched local and state politics and the presidential elections of 1826 and 1832. A common defect in too much of what has written about The Morgan Affair treat it as an isolated event in the history of a young nation and been the fledgling institution of organized Freemasonry. This is a serious mistake. While a similar event has not repeated itself, the tentacles of the fallout from it continue to adversely affect American Freemasonry today.

PART I

A SUMMARY OF THE CONDITION OF THE NATION BY 1826

The political and financial affairs of the half-century old republic of the United States were in a very unsettled condition by 1825.² The second war with England in 1812, cost the nation millions of dollars and disrupted foreign trade. Paper currency was disarranged. The question of slavery was a constant source of irritation between northern and southern states. These issues facing the nation were far from settled.³

The time is referred to by historians as the period that the country was transitioning out of the "Era of Good Feelings," that was identified by a decrease in partisanship and increased unity following the War of 1812. However, by 1825, tensions were rising within the Democratic-Republican Party, which would soon split into factions that eventually became the modern Democratic and Whig (later Republican) parties.⁴ Ambitious politicians anxiously searched for some issue around which a new party antagonistic to the so-called Republicans could be organized.⁵

In 1825, the Erie Canal was completed, creating a critical transportation route that connected the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean via the Hudson River. This revolutionized commerce by reducing travel time and transportation costs, stimulating economic growth in the Northeast and facilitating westward expansion.⁶

At that time, the United States was comprised of twenty-four states. The Missouri Compromise of 1820 had temporarily settled that debate over the expansion of slavery into new territories, enabling Missouri to join as a slave state and Maine as a free state. The frontier remained a critical focus as settlers moved further westward, igniting conflicts with Native American populations.⁷

Religious revival movements associated with the Second Great Awakening were sweeping across the

magazine articles in his 1934 bibliography except for those that contained matter of special importance which had not appeared in book or pamphlet form).

² IBID.

³ D. W. Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815–1848*. Oxford University Press, 2007

⁴ IBID.

⁵ IBID, Ronald P. Formisano, *For the People: American Populist Movements from the Revolution to the 1850s*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007, Ronald P. Formisano and Kathleen Smith Kutolowski; "Anti-Masonry and Masonry: The Genesis of Protest, 1826-1827." *American Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 2, The Johns Hopkins University Press 1977. Stephen C. Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood: Freemasonry and the Transformation of the American Social Order, 1730-1840*, Omohundro Institute and UNC Press; 2nd ed. Edition, 1998.

⁶ A. Taylor, *American Revolutions: A Continental History, 1750-1804*, W. W. Norton & Company, 2016.

⁷ IBID.

nation in 1825, influencing American society and culture. These movements promoted moral reforms, including temperance and abolition, laying the foundation for future social reform efforts.⁸

Many citizens were susceptible to the control of leaders who could sway public opinion, and intense religious feelings gave rise to erratic movements. In many faiths, congregations were constantly warned in sermons against ritualism in all forms and the evils of organizations that were considered secret societies. In fact, the roots of the American Anti-Masonic sentiment are traced to the early years of Masonry in the Papal Bulls of Pope Clement XII, the Puritanism of New England, Reformed Churches, and other German sects, along with Quakers and the Scotch Presbyterian church. Eventually, certain evangelical churches took up the movement.⁹

Persistent narratives about The Morgan Affair litter the Internet and social media platforms today in a parade of snippets, papers, posts, and podcasts with little regard for historical accuracy that are much like the ones that chronicled The Morgan Affair during and in the immediate years – even decades – that followed it. The consequence for the Fraternity and much of its leadership today is that the lessons remain clouded and undistilled.

The steady scorching controversies surrounding the Morgan Affair and the responses of the Masonic Institution to them, set the stage for the swift but almost fated purge of the swollen membership rolls. Proof that the lessons were lost on the generation of Masons that followed, is found in the second, equally unbridled, rapid expansion of members that began to occur prior to, during and following the Civil War. That expansion, with little to disrupt it, continued into the 19th century and World War I. The Great Depression¹⁰ produced the next purge of over 813,000 members.¹¹

That decline did not make the lessons clearer to many in the generations that followed since as the greatest of all unbridled expansions of the American Fraternity began to take place in 1943. For the next seventeen years, the Institution was unable to admit men into the ranks fast enough – at least until 1959, when the increase stopped. Over 1,500,000 new members now swelled the ranks. However, by 2017, a steady fifty-seven-year decline of 3,985,380 members continued the rapid descent.¹² In 2025, membership is estimated to be around 800,000.

Assertions that the periods of significant, rapid membership growth in the history of American Freemasonry directly correlate with an increase in the quality or essence of Masonry do not hold up under the sword of scrutiny. While much has been documented about external factors contributing to the decline in membership and interest in American Freemasonry, internal factors have also

⁸ P. E Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837*, Hill and Wang, 2008.

⁹ "The Duty of Americans, At the Present Crisis, Illustrated in A Discourse," preached on the fourth of July 1798 by Timothy Dwight, Evan's Early American Imprint Collection, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/evans/N25378.0001.001/1:2?rgn=div1;view=fulltext>, accessed, March 2022, Vernon [L.] Stauffer, *New England, and the Bavarian Illuminati. Studies in History, Economics and Political Law*, edited by the Faculty of Political Science of Columbia University. Volume LXXXII, Number 1. Whole Number 191. New York: The Columbia University Press, Longmans, Green & Co., Agents. London, P. S. King & Son, Ltd., 1918. Richard J. Moss, *The Life of Jedidiah Morse: A Station of Peculiar Exposure*, Knoxville, Tenn., 1995, M.A. Davis, "Jacksonian Volcano: Anti-Secretism and Secretism in 19th Century American Culture," Doctoral dissertation, University of Cincinnati, http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=ucin1378109351, accessed 2014.

¹⁰ The Great Depression: 1929-1939.

¹¹ Masonic Services Association of North American, Membership Records: 1924-2020.

¹² IBID.

played a critical role. These internal dynamics have been recognized and recorded since the 1840s.¹³

Each period of rapid expansion came at a cost. An overreliance on ritual as the primary method of instruction led to a noticeable departure from and compromise of lifelong learning principles. By neglecting this issue, along with other deeper challenges, generations of members began interpreting and practicing Masonry through vastly differing perspectives. This divergence created the illusion that rapid membership growth was synonymous with a meaningful and robust presence of Masonry in the world.

The myopic focus on expansion prioritized quantity over quality, often undermining the foundational values that Masonry sought to uphold. Such shortsighted or narrow-minded approaches failed to consider the long-term impact on the cohesiveness and vitality of the organization. By concentrating only on immediate growth, the deeper meaning and purpose of the Craft were overshadowed, leaving future generations with fragmented interpretations and weakened connections to its core principles.

That analysis certainly holds true when examining the state of the American Fraternity, particularly in upstate western New York during the decades leading up to the Morgan Affair and relatable to the "cut flower" theory proposed by sociologist Will Herberg in 1951.¹⁴ Herberg likened cut flowers, which inevitably wither because they have been severed from their nourishing roots to societies that lose vitality when they stray from their foundational principles. His metaphor applies aptly to the trajectory of the Fraternity following The Morgan Affair. Faced with glaring and persistent challenges stemming from rapid growth, the Fraternity, instead of confronting these issues head-on, often chose to accept the situation as it was. This resigned approach allowed the unchecked expansion to persist, leading to the metaphorical withering of its roots and, by extension, undermining the enduring strength and historical aim and purpose of the institution.

¹³ Albert G. Mackey, "Reading Masons and Masons Who do not Read" This essay was originally published in *Voice of Masonry* in June 1875, then again in 1924 in *The Master Mason* magazine. Since 1924, Mackey's essay has appeared in number Masonic publications, multiple Internet site, and cited over 160 times in books, papers, and presentations from the 1980s-2002, 2022. https://archive.org/stream/MackeyAGReadingMasonsMasonsWhoDoNotRead1874/Mackey%20A%20G%20-%20Reading%20Masons%20%26%20Masons%20Who%20Do%20Not%20Read%20-%201874_djvu.txt, accessed, January 20, 2021, Peter Ross, *Miscellany of The Masonic Historical Society of The State Of New York*, Lewis Masonic, 1902, W.L. Wilmshurst, *The Meaning of Masonry*, WILLIAM Rider & Son, 8, Paternoster Row & Percy Lund, Humphries & Co., 1922, Hubert Hungerford, "The Future Of Freemasonry," *The Builder Magazine*, May 1929 - Volume XV - Number 5, Herbert Hungerford, Dwight L. Smith, "The Level of Leadership: Whither Are We Traveling?" *The Indiana Freemason*, Indianapolis, The Indiana Masonic Home Printing Office, 1962, Stephen Dafoe, "Reading, Writing, and Apathy: The Rise and Fall of Masonic Education," *Heredom*, Volume 14, 2006, Norman Broadwill Hickox, Fraternity, The Master's Lectures, Evans Lodge, No.524, 1923, Masonic Education, Address given by Bro. J.A. Evans, M.D., P.M., Before the Toronto Society for Masonic Study and Research, September 20th, 1930, Henry Wilson Coil, "Conversations on Freemasonry," *Transactions of the Grand Lodge of Missouri*, 32, 1976, Thomas W. Jackson, *North American Freemasonry: Idealism and Realism*, Plumbstone, 2019, Lynn Dumenil, *Freemasonry and American Culture 1880-1930*, Boston, Ovid Bell Press, 1997, John W. Bizzack, *The Cankerworm and the Rose*, BSF Foundation, 2023.

¹⁴ Will Herberg, *Judaism and Modern Man: An Interpretation of Jewish Religion*, New York, NY: Farrar, Straus, and Young, 1951 (Note: It is believed that Herberg borrowed the idea of the theory from Elton D. Trueblood, *The Predicament of Modern Man*, New York, NY: Harper and Brothers, 1944.

PART II

A SUMMARY OF THE CONDITION OF THE FRATERNITY BY 1826

As important as context is to the understanding of the 1826 Morgan Affair, the condition of the nation and the smoldering Anti-Masonic sentiment in the United States prior to Morgan's arrival in history, there must also be context about the condition of the Fraternity and the fact that conditions were not entirely harmonious within the Craft itself.¹⁵

There were internal dissensions in New York that split that body into two distinct factions in 1823, which did not unite again until 1827.¹⁶ The unbridled rapid expansion of lodges, especially in upstate western New York, was largely due to an effort to increase the voting representation at Grand Lodge Communications.¹⁷ Kentucky was a close second to New York's rapid expansion in lodges and membership from 1800 through 1827. The expansions exceeded the capability of both Grand Lodges to ensure that all subordinate lodges were properly administered, inspected, and irregularities eliminated. The preponderance of circumstances, annual proceedings, and later Masonic literature affirms that standards slipped, and unworthy candidates were admitted.¹⁸ To say that the necessary leadership and stewardship to ensure all newly chartered lodges were administered and led by dispassionate rationality during this period is naïve and a stretch.

This was not a new problem for early organized Masonry in the United State. As early as the mid-1780s, the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Virginia speak to the problem of being unable to ensure continuity of practices, and difficulties of correcting irregularities and inspections because of travel distances between the Grand Lodge in Richmond and lodges they chartered further west. Nowhere was the matter clearer at the time than when Virginia, in 1788, chartered their most western lodge in the Kentucky territory of Virginia in a town known as Lexington – some seven hundred miles from Richmond. The problem seemed solved when Kentucky became a state in 1792 and asked permission from Virginia to form a grand lodge. Permission to separate was granted.

Despite distance being a reason given for irregularities and almost impossible visits to and from lodges in Virginia, the new Grand Lodge of Kentucky repeated the process and began chartering even more distant Lodges, including one that was nearly eight hundred miles away from Lexington where the Grand Lodge was formed. Corresponding with disparate practices existing since 1788, the unevenness of instruction and understanding of Freemasonry by members, and the processes surrounding it, was exponentially replicated. This gilded the unreasoned notion that the larger the organization, the more value it has.

Penalties followed this recklessness. The September 1826 abduction of William Morgan by Masons came first, and then an event that is generally neglected by historians that took place in Vermont a

¹⁵ Cummins, Peter Ross, *Standard History of the Grand Lodge of New York*, Lewis Publishing Company, 1899, John W. Bizzack, *Age of Unreason: Dissecting the Infamy of the Morgan Affair and its Aftermath*, BSF Foundation, 2020, and *Canker Worm on The Rose*, (Bizzack), BSF Foundation, Lexington, Kentucky, 2023.

¹⁶ Cummins, Ross.

¹⁷ Peter Ross, *Miscellany of The Masonic Historical Society of The State Of New York*, Lewis Masonic, 1902.

¹⁸ Ross.

month after Morgan's abduction known as the "Burnham Affair."¹⁹ Had the Morgan Affair not taken place, the anti-Masonic movement would likely have turned to the circumstances surrounding the question of what happened to Joseph Burnham Masons in Windsor, Vermont. Masons there denied Burnham was member of the fraternity, however, the denial, although true, only served to fuel the growing sense that Masons had faked Burnham's death so that he could avoid a ten-year prison sentence for the rape of a 14-year-old girl. According to the deponents, the prison officials in Windsor (all of whom were Masons) conspired to smuggle Burnham out of the prison and to bury someone else (possibly someone they had murdered) in his place.²⁰

The plunge in the number of Masons was a clear and prominent penalty. The number of Masons began a decline more rapidly than it had increased in the United States. Membership dropped from an estimated 100,000 to 40,000.²¹ New York alone plunged from 20,000 members to 3,000 and from 480 lodgings to only eighty-two. The largest defection was in the rural districts. In 1834 the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania conveyed its property to trustees and did not reincorporate until 1859.²² In New Jersey, 33 of 39 lodges closed their doors. Kentucky lost almost half of its members and 66 lodges.²³ In Vermont's forty-seven lodges went into a complete eclipse for about 13 years. Michigan ceased labor in 1829, as did Illinois.²⁴ In Indiana, 29 of 33 lodges surrendered their charters over a 7-year period.²⁵ Half of the Lodges in Massachusetts and Ohio were lost.²⁶

The characterization that in most of the United States during the Morgan craze, the Institution of Freemasonry was dead or sleeping is fitting.²⁷

Many members who may have been able to deliver effective instruction to members about the historical aim, purpose, and intent of the design of organized Masonry had, by mid 1840s, either died, defected, or stopped participating in their respective lodges. When petitions to join the fraternity began to slowly resurface in the early 1840s, that generation found themselves learning from fragmented knowledge. Their Masonic instruction relied heavily on what little could be recalled and passed down, and that was often influenced by the diversity of available exposures written years prior. Since Morgan's exposure was available in a variety of republished formats for decades, there is no reason to believe that instruction was not drawn from Morgan's publication.

Grand Lodge of New York historian, Peter Ross, explains that the reason the ranks of the Anti-Masons were "so quickly swelled by an army of renounced Masons was that the bulk of the 20,000 Masons of 1825 were Masons in only name."²⁸ Other jurisdictions can be said to have experienced

¹⁹ Lee S. Tillotson, *Ancient Craft Masonry in Vermont*, Montpelier, Capital City Press, 1920, Randolph Roth, "The Other Masonic Outrage: The Death and Transfiguration of Joseph Burnham," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 14, No. 1, 1994, jstor.org/stable/3124598, accessed August 2016, Mark Tabbert, "Breast of the Storm! Vermont Freemasonry During the Anti-Masonic Period, 1826-46," *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, 2011.

²⁰ Roth.

²¹ Lynn Dumenil, *Freemasonry and American Culture, 1880-1930*, Princeton University Press, 1984.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Grand Lodge of Kentucky Annual Proceedings, 1826-1845.

²⁴ Smith.

²⁵ *IBID.*

²⁶ Jason Ridley, *The Freemasons*, Arcade publishing, NY, 1999.

²⁷ S. Brent Morris, "The High Degrees in the United States, 1730-1830," *A Daily Advancement in Masonic Knowledge, The Collected Blue Friar Lectures*, Wallace McLoed editor, S. Brent Morris, Associate Editors, Macoy, 2005.

²⁸ Peter Ross' "The Morgan Craze," in the *Miscellany of The Masonic Historical Society of The State Of New York*, Lewis Masonic, 1902, p.16.

losses for that reason too in addition to their poor administration, a lack of meritorious leadership, and the unnecessary swollen mass of members who were undereducated about Freemasonry.²⁹

While losses can be attributed to these things, there were additional social pressures from the overwhelming public reaction to the news of Masons involved in crimes in upstate New York to cause members to withdraw and even denounce Freemasonry.

During those intolerant years, Masonic clergy were dismissed from their churches. Lodges were burnt and vandalized. Public Masonic participation at funerals, cornerstone laying, and parades all but completely disappeared. Businesses owned by Masons were boycotted. Charters were stolen. The Craft was characterized by the Anti-Masonic side of the media as a discredited intellectual society at best, and dangerously subversive at worst. Men were no longer eager to join. Masonry was accused of serving many members in place of a church, to the exclusion of true religion. Rumors that Masonic oaths took the Lord's name in vain and that alcoholic beverages were used in their various ceremonies irritated a growing sensitivity on the subject of temperance.³⁰ Masons were refused communion. Women resolved that their daughters should not be allowed to marry Masons and persuaded their husbands to withdraw from the order. Schools were torn asunder; teachers related to Masons and pupils who were children of Masons, were driven out. The Masonic order was declared to be sacrilegious, antireligious, and undemocratic.³¹

Even with the things that Anti-Masons were obviously wrong about, Masons and their leaders ended up playing to the hands of those who sought to destroy the organization. Instead, and from the outset, there was no robust or universal condemnation of such bold vigilante behavior by those Masons found to be directly or indirectly those involved in Morgan's abduction. There were no expulsions following guilty pleas and convictions. Charters that should have been arrested were not. The Institution took on the appearance and role of victim.³²

After the hysteria died down in the 1840s, absent The Morgan Affair, Anti-Masonry in the early 1800s may have dissipated naturally as the nation shifted its focus to debates surrounding slavery, industrialization, and westward expansion. But that would have required a more disciplined and reflective Fraternity, comprised of many more skilled leaders at the lodge level and well-instructed Masons, who may have been better equipped to extinguish anti-Masonic sentiment *before* it gained such momentum.³³ A rapidly expanding Fraternity, offering admission with little attention paid to Masonic principles, simply eroded the ability of the Institution to respond effectively to The Morgan Affair and the intensity of the Anti-Masonic crusaders.

²⁹ John W. Bizzack, *The Canker Worm on The Rose: The Story of The Struggle in Kentucky From 1800-2020 To Develop A Consistent Approach To The Observance Of Freemasonry*, BSF Foundation, Lexington, KY, 2023.

³⁰ *IBID.*

³¹ *IBID.*

³² William Preston Vaughn, "The Anti-Masonic Party in the United States: 1826-1843," <https://uknowledge.uky.edu/upkpoliticalhistory/>, 1983. (The trials of those Masons indicted dragged on for five years (1827-1831) but produced few convictions. Some twenty grand juries were called, fifty-four Masons were indicted, thirty-nine were brought to trial, and ten received convictions and jail terms ranging from thirty days to twenty-eight months. Of those not tried, two died before their day in court, twelve left New York for other states, and one fled to Europe. Of the ten convicted, only six were involved with Morgan's abduction), Michael A. Davis, "Life Death and Masonry: The Body of William Morgan," *Thanatos Journal*, Vol. 2, 2013, www.thanatos-journal.com/2013/06/30/thanatos, accessed 1 October 2016.

³³ Bullock.

The Civil War years brought with it a resurgence of membership as did the decades that followed that were seasoned by the not so constructive influence of the Age of Fraternalism.³⁴ Too much of the leadership and members paid no particular attention to lessons from the turbulent and devastating years of The Morgan Affair and returned to the unthinking and unbridled practice of rapidly expanding lodges and members. The historical intent of organized Masonry dimmed for the second time in a century and would twice in the 20th century when the third rapid expansion took place following World War I and the second during and following World War II.

However, the last two rapid expansion periods had something the first two did not.

By 1914 and through the 1920s, a significant group of new generation Masonic scholars emerged. The influence of Andrew S. McBride, Joseph Fort Newton, H. L. Haywood, W.L. Wilmshurst, Delmar D. Darrah, Jacob Hugo Tatsch, Erick Erikson, William L. Cummings and Roscoe Pound (to name only a few) and their books, presentations, and other writings grabbed the attention of many, but not all of the members swelling the ranks. Their work was bolstered by the new *National Masonic Research Society* in 1918, and the work of Iowa Mason, George L. Schoonover to drive it. For seventeen years, the Society did a great deal to shape Masonry in the United States and beyond. While there is no evidence that all the 3,000,000 men who were reported as Masons in those years ever became more than only members of the Fraternity, they certainly had more of an opportunity to do so and learn about Masonry than members in the first century or more of organized American Freemasonry. Credit for that that opportunity must be extended to *The Builder Magazine* and the *Masonic Services Association*, and those managing and writing material for these resources that could benefit from those men who were serious in their pursuit of Freemasonry.

Reliable Masonic literature from that period aptly identified the threat of the return of the practice of rapidly expanding lodges and membership in the past and following World War I. Also was noted that the many unskilled leaders, and undereducated members should alarm all leaders. But not all leaders had attentive ears. So, the years of the Great Depression that followed significantly reduced membership, but around 1943 the cycle found traction again. Membership and lodges exploded for the fourth time in America – this time for nearly sixteen years. Then, in 1959, a long-troubling decline in membership slowly reduced American Freemasonry to peripheral status in the eye of the public. Men were no longer eager to join. And talk about the relevancy of Masonry in the modern world began to emerge.

Adding validity to the idea that there is strength in fewness, the 1990s delivered a burst of renewed interest from pockets of Masons in a new generation (and a corps of veteran Masons) that were seeking more than the Masonic experience of the previous two generations of members offered. Research and a significant increase in Masonic education materials slowly surfaced.

The 1960s writings of Past Grand Master of Indian Dwight L. Smith revived Masons, with that seriousness of purpose, pursued in the earlier writings of Ray V. Denslow and Henry Coil. Harry Carr's work was rediscovered as that of H.L. Hayworth's, Carl H. Claudy, Melvin Johnson, and others. The gate was opened by the Internet to introduce to all of Masonry the writings of the 1920s era, and with more enthusiasm, the name William Preston was introduced again as was Andersons

³⁴ William D. Moore, "Riding the Goat Secrecy, Masculinity, and Fraternal High Jinks in the United States, 1845–1930," *The University of Chicago Press Journal, Withrow Portfolio*, Vol. 41, No. 2/3, Summer/Autum, 2007. The University of Chicago Press Books, The University of Chicago, 2006.

Constitutions of 1723 and 1738. One must keep in mind that not all Masons or their leaders of the period or of any other were ignorant of writings. But then, as today, not every man admitted explores Masonry beyond what he is exposed to at his initiation, passing, and raising. And ultimately, some of those members become elected and appointed leaders of the Fraternity.

Over the next two decades, the work and papers of S. Brent Morris, Arturo de Hoyos John Bolton, John Hamil, and a flurry of new Masonic authors, research publications and magazines, were even more accessible. That led serious Masons to the earlier work of Douglas Knoop, Albert Pike, Robert F. Gould, the Quatro Coronati Lodge of Research, Lynn Dumenil and Margaret Jacobs. In addition, the hundreds of book reviews and multiple writings from James T. Tresner and Thomas W. Jackson. Kent Henderson, Tony Pope, Christopher Hodapp, Andrew Hammer, Alexander Piatigorski, Robert G. Davis, and Stephen S. Bullock – all found a ready audience of non-casual Masons. Adding to the short list were Shawn Eyer, Michael R. Halleran, Michael Poll, C. R. Dunning, Tobias Churton, and the work of David Stephens and Robert L.D. Cooper.

Despite the wealth of Masonic books, publications, and readily available resources since the rise of the Internet and sources available in the early 21st century, progress toward cultivating a more educated fraternity has been inconsistent at best and far from uniformly successful. Expectations that it would otherwise is unreasonable for the same reason Andrew S. McBride identified it to be unreasonable in 1914: what is taught in too many Masonic lodges is not Freemasonry.³⁵ And untaught Freemasonry among too many members creates what Past Grand Master of Oklahoma, Robert G. Davis identified in 2023 as fake authenticity.³⁶ Contrary to the embedded cultural belief in much of Masonry, being admitted into the Fraternity as a member is not synonymous with *becoming* a Freemason.

Organized Freemasonry in the 21st century is clearly miles ahead of where it was in the previous two, and promising signs across the nation show an expanding interest by members and their leaders to embrace the primary business of a Mason Lodge: the exploration of Freemasonry as it was designed and historically intended.

However, expansive cultural change within the Fraternity has not kept pace with slowly mounting interest. The deeply embedded nature of organizational culture in the American Fraternity makes constructive change a process that moves at parade speed. A meaningful and measurable shift from ingrained cultural norms formed and hardened over two centuries demands deliberate and consistent effort - something there has been a consistent shortage of until around 2000. Much of that can be attributed to excess of inattentive ears in the American Fraternity that took no stock in the lesson from The Morgan Affair – if, that is, they knew them at all.

But the constructive shift is evident, and we find some irony in that. This shift has mostly been in the first twenty-five years of the 21st century. The destructive shift took place in the first twenty-five years of the 19th century. The old saying that *Freemasonry* moves slowly seems now to have two hundred years of evidence.

³⁵ Andrew S. McBride, *Speculative Freemasonry*, D. Gillfillan and Company Printers, Glasgow, Scotland, 1914.

³⁶ Robert G. Davis, "It Is Time to Cross The Rubicon and Battle Our 20th Century Ruffians," A Presentation given the William O Ware Lodge of Research in Fort Wright, Kentucky on November 3, 2022, posted at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SmMEJErveXU>, accessed March 20, 2025.

PART III

THE MORGAN AFFAIR: CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND AND SOBER PREPONDERANCE

Without David Cade Miller, it is doubtful if William Morgan or the hysteria that surrounded his name from 1826 and into the next decade would appear in any written history of American Freemasonry as it did. In kind, neither would Miller.

Being aware of Miller's role in the pre and post Morgan years adds considerable context.

The earliest credible trace of Miller is in 1804. That year, Miller, at Courthouse Hill, a small hamlet that grew up around Saratoga, began the *Saratoga Advertiser*, known for its anti-federalist position.³⁷ In 1805, he married Lucy Gilbert of Stillwater, New York.³⁸ Around 1811, Miller was working as a supervisor of the mechanical work at *The Batavia Republican Advocate* Newspaper, which was owned and operated by Benjamin Blodget.³⁹ In 1815, he became Blodget's partner in the business. Five years later, in 1820, Miller became the sole owner of the newspaper. In March 1827, Miller established from the office of the *Advocate*, the *Morgan Investigator* weekly newsletter publication.⁴⁰ Then, in 1828, Miller's son, Charles W. Miller, took over the *Advocate*, which had by that time had already become the leader in Anti-Masonic journalism.⁴¹

After his arrival in Batavia, Miller was often referred to as Colonel. He was an officer during the War of 1812 and later attained the title of Lieutenant Colonel in New York State Militia, not in the Federal service.⁴²

Miller was also said to have been admitted to a Masonic Lodge sometime in the early 1800s, in Albany, New York. However, records of early lodges in Albany are incomplete.⁴³ Other lodges in the area either do not show Miller's name but many records have not been preserved and returns of these lodges to the Grand Lodge Miller's name does not appear.⁴⁴ The first record of the story about Miller receiving the Entered Apprentice Degree appears in the March 14, 1827, *Masonic Intelligencer*, a weekly newsletter published by *The People's Press* in Batavia that was pro-Masonry. The fact that their editors were all Freemasons is not surprising.⁴⁵

The printed mention is as follows:

About 18 years ago Miller took the Entered Apprentice Degree in an

³⁷ Anti-Federalist favored strong state governments, a weak central government, the direct election of government officials, short term limits for officeholders, accountability by officeholders to popular majorities, and the strengthening of individual liberties.

³⁸ Troy Northern Budget, September 3, 1805, Marriage Announcements.

³⁹ Milton W. Hamilton, "Anti-Masonic Newspapers," 1826-1834, *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, Vol. 32 (1938), pp. 71-97 (27 pages), Published By: The University of Chicago Press.

⁴⁰ IBID.

⁴¹ IBID.

⁴² Military Minutes of The Council of Appointment for the State of New York. Published by the State, 1901, four volumes, contains record of David C. Miller's appointment as Captain in the 164th Regiment of New York Militia in 1817, and as lieutenant Colonel in the same state Regiment in 1820.

⁴³ Cummings-

⁴⁴ IBID.

⁴⁵ "The Masonic Intelligencer" (weekly newsletter) Published by *The Peoples Press*, Batavia, New York, from February 7, 1827, to July 25, 1827.

Albany, N.Y., lodge. He found it convenient to leave that vicinity. He afterwards applied for the second and third degrees in the Lodge at Stafford, N.Y., but did not receive them, due to the lack of proper vouchers.⁴⁶

Miller, along with two other Masons, did sign his name to a certificate on February 19, 1828; to attest as an Entered Apprentice the exposure he printed in December 1826 by Morgan, was a “fair and full exposition”⁴⁷ Although only an Entered Apprentice, Miller could not have effectually affirmed that he knew for fact that *all degrees* were authentic since he had not receive but the first, but one Fellow Craft Mason signed the certificate too, along with twenty-six other Master Masons that had reviewed the book to authenticate its content.⁴⁸

Miller also signed the “Declaration of Independence from the Masonic Institution” at the LeRoy Anti-Masonic Convention on July 4, 1828. He appended to his signature the statement that he had received one degree of Masonry but says nothing as to the time or place of receiving it, but nor did the other signatories.⁴⁹

So, the best evidence available is that Miller was an Entered Apprentice in his own statement to the effect and there seems no reason to dispute it.

Miller’s profit level from sales of Morgan’s exposure is not known. Since the *Batavian Republican Advocate* became the fountained for Ant-Masonic materials and publishing for several years, it may be presumed that Miller did profit from at least that part of his business.

Although Morgan and Miller held the copyright for the exposure (initially held by Morgan as of August 1826) that did not prevent the exposure from being reprinted without permission as early as March 1827, just months after Miller had released it. *The Buffalo Journal* reported that year that Miller, together with a later partner he had in the *Advocate*, John Davis, and using Morgan’s name too, filed a Chancery Suit against “certain persons” in the city of New York, for publishing Morgan’s exposure without permission and infringing on the copyright. No record is found on the outcome of that suit or if Miller filed other similar suits. However, there were various publishers in the United States that did reprint the book in the decades to follow to capitalize on its popularity, which contributed to its widespread circulation. Some estimates suggest that tens of thousands of copies may have been printed during the height of its popularity, but precise figures are unavailable without detailed archival documentation.

What became of Miller after the excitement of The Morgan Affair subsided in the late 1830s is uncertain, except for newspaper accounts of his venturing into politics and serving as an elected county clerk from 1828-1830. In September 1830, he was actively supporting republican candidates for the 8th Senate District and served on a Senatorial Corresponding Committee for the district.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Cummings.

⁴⁷ “*Masonic Anti-Masons Proceedings*,” *Fredonia Censor*, Fredonia, N.Y., Wednesday, March 12, 1828, page 1 article about Freemasons opposed to secret societies, held in LeRoy, N.Y, Tuesday, February 19, 1828. (Along with Miller’s signature on the proceedings, other signatories were Entered Apprentices Platt S. Beech and Henry Peck, George Blodgett, a Fellow Craft, and twenty-four names of Master Masons, two Royal Arch Masons, one Knight of the Red Cross, and seven Knights Templars. And Illustrious Knights of the Cross.)

⁴⁸ IBID.

⁴⁹ Cummings.

⁵⁰ “Senators for the 8th District,” (Report on Convention), *Buffalo Patriot and Commercial Advertiser*, Buffalo New York, October 5, 1830.

The previous paragraphs offer verifiable facts. No corroboration is found about the reports of Miller being an alcoholic, a “businessman bully,” or that he fought in the Battle of New Orleans with William Morgan. Assertions that he was a devout Christian and was being groomed by veteran politicians in New York for the United States Senate and a later vice-presidential candidate are unverifiable and can be only attributed to the pool of rumor, gossip, and hearsay.

To believe that Miller had no role in The Morgan Affair beyond that of the publisher of Morgan’s exposure shows little depth of context and understanding of the subject matter.

PART IV

A SUMMARY OF WILLIAM MORGAN: BACKGROUND

The number of times information is published about Morgan’s physical appearance and life before his abduction, does not make them true. The effort to discover the antecedents of Morgan following his disappearance and in the immediate years afterward did not extend much beyond the emotionally charged information hastily gathered at committee hearings in upstate New York in the late 1820s and early 1830s that relentlessly spread and repeated in both Anti-Masonry publications. Those defending the Institution also had their own version of Morgan.

By 1827, Anti-Masonic newspapers (also pamphlets, and fast-print flyers) began to appear but mostly in northern states. There were fifty-two of these newspapers in New York alone and fifty-seven in Pennsylvania.⁵¹ Vetting the information printed in many of these newspapers about Morgan did not appear as important as churning out issues with the latest news of Anti-Masonic committee work in various counties, indictments, trials, that pushed their purpose.

By the darkest years of the Anti-Masonic hysteria, accurate accounts, information and details about Morgan and his background did not matter. It was not important to the Anti-Masonic movement if Morgan was dead or alive. What mattered shifted to whether Masons, who held a significant number of political jobs and had friendly local and state authorities in their corner, perpetrated a cover-up to conceal crimes that reasonable people would believe were a result of Masons systematically violating the law.⁵² Politics had entered the picture.

The many so-called facts about Morgan and his background were left to be vetted, curated, and put into context by historians. However, until 1899, the attempts to do that by writers and some who are considered historians (Masons and non-Masons alike), failed to accomplish more than a restatement of what had already been written in the late 1820s through much of the 1840s.

⁵¹ Kathleen Smith Kutolowski, “Freemasonry and Community in the Early Republic: The Case for Anti-Masonic Anxieties,” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 5, Winter, 1982.

⁵² William Preston Vaughn, “The Anti-Masonic Party in the United States: 1826-1843,” 1983, <https://uknowledge.uky.edu/upkpoliticalhistory/>, accessed December 2018.

Then, in 1899, historian Peter Ross (Grand Historian for the Grand Lodge of New York) released “The Morgan Craze,” which is possibly the first publication about The Morgan Affair that used the facts-first approach with no concessions to myth lovers that offered an analysis carrying much less bias than previous examinations.⁵³

Although a century and a quarter have passed since Ross and other fact-first research from the early 1900s through today, such work stands apart from the deeply embedded, hastily assembled produced information about Morgan during the hysteria of the Affair and in the immediate post years of it. It remains the most often cited information about Morgan’s background, his description, and many other details of the Affair and those who played roles in it.

An example of such reckless scholarship or other writing, we have the long-played information that Morgan was a captain during the War of 1812. That information was sufficiently debunked in the 1920s and 1930s. Morgan has never been confirmed as serving in American military forces but was bestowed the title of captain either by his printer, David Cade Miller or by Morgan’s own self-credential building after he arrived in Batavia, around 1824. The extended claim that he served under General Andrew Jackson at the Battle of New Orleans was discredited too since no official record exists to corroborate it.

Another example that was part of the narrative of reports gleaned from early investigation committees held in western New York in 1827, is that Morgan owned and operated a brewery in Canada before arriving in New York. The original story was expanded and remains commonly reported to this day that Morgan’s brewery burned to the ground and that Morgan lost his savings and livelihood and had to move on with his life elsewhere. According to J. Ross Robertson’s, *The History of Freemasonry in Canada from its Introduction in 1749* Morgan did work at a brewery in Toronto, Ontario and on a farm in the area.⁵⁴ However, the brewery, which was owned and operated by businessman and politician, John Doel did burn to the ground but that did not happen until April 11, 1847 - twenty-one years after Morgan disappeared.⁵⁵

But the Great Fire of Miramichi, as it came to be known, was a massive forest fire that devastated forests and communities throughout northern New Brunswick, Canada in October 1825,⁵⁶ seems a more likely basis for the unsubstantiated story – if, that is, there is any truthful basis for the story at all. Destroying at least three-million acres, the Miramichi Fire is noted as one of the three largest forest fires ever recorded in North America. While there were well-known breweries that were destroyed by fire noted later in Canadian history, no specific breweries that were consumed by fire is found in Canadian history prior to 1826.

Perhaps a lesser-known brewery burned in the early 1820s in Little York, Canada and that was the basis of the Morgan story. However, four breweries in Little York, (now Toronto, Ontario) are identified in Canadian history. None were established prior to 1830, except the John Doel’s brewery.

⁵³ Peter Ross' "The Morgan Craze," in the Miscellany of The Masonic Historical Society of The State Of New York, Lewis Masonic, 1902.

⁵⁴ J. Ross Robertson, *The History of Freemasonry in Canada from its Introduction in 1749*. 2 Volumes Hardcover, The Hunter, Rose, Co. Publishers, Toronto, 1899.

⁵⁵ IBID, The Black Creek Growler, The Journal of the Black Creek Historic Brewery, “History Byte “The Doel Brewery,”

<https://blackcreekbrewery.wordpress.com/2011/06/01/history-byte-the-doel-brewery>, accessed, January 2025, Robertson, John Ross. Landmarks of Toronto Vol. 1. Toronto: J. Ross Robertson, 1894, Charles Pelham Mulvany, Adan Mercer Graeme, *History of Toronto and County of York Ontario*, Vol. 1. Toronto: C. Blackett Robinson Publishing, 1885.

⁵⁶ Alan, MacEachern, *The Miramichi Fire: A History*, Vol. 26, No. 4, Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queens University Press, 2021.

But, as noted, that brewery did not burn until 1847. The Doel Brewery is over nine hundred miles east of where the Miramichi Fire occurred.⁵⁷ In the absence of more information to verify the brewery story or the claim that there was a brewery that Morgan operated, the information can only be characterized as one of many stories about Morgan that lack sufficient details to be considered factual. But this has not prevented it from being regularly repeated today.

The record that can be most relied on about Morgan is narrow and limited. What can be said with a degree of confidence is that Morgan had worked as a bricklayer (synonymous to some at the time as a stone mason). He was around fifty-years or older and married to Lucinda Pendleton from Virginia who was his junior by as much as two decades and with whom he had two children (Lucinda Wesley Morgan and Thomas Jefferson Morgan). Much of the information about his physical appearance and background can be traced to unsurprisingly biased sources that introduced information that most suited a corresponding narrative of either the Anti-Masonic sentiments of time or those who were defenders of Freemasonry. It can also be said with confidence that because of facts that quash the assumptions and discrepancies of early agenda-driven information that much of what clutters writings today continues to stem from second and third hand sources, agenda-driven authors, myth-lovers, and casual scholarship.

Like the minimum labor put forth to learn the antecedents of William Morgan after his disappearance, the same lack of effort is evident when it comes to his wife, Lucinda Morgan. This is a shameful matter too because, in her case, this could undoubtedly have been done since she lived for at least another thirty years after Morgan disappeared.⁵⁸ Three of those years were in Batavia or a nearby community. It does not appear that she was ever interviewed about the subject aside from a simple statement made by her in a deposition before Daniel H. Chandler, Justice of the Peace, on September 22, 1826, in which he says she was Morgan's wife, born in Virginia and was a stranger in Genesee Country, which is virtually the same as testimony she gave at the abduction trials.⁵⁹ There is no record that she ever made any statement concerning her own or her husband's early life, military service, or time as a mason before arriving in Batavia, businesses in which he engaged, his drinking, indebtedness, place of birth, or where she met Morgan.⁶⁰ To date, no smoking gun statement by Lucinda Morgan about herself, Morgan, or her marriage has ever surfaced nor has the little information she provided been necessarily disputed.

On November 23, 1830, at age twenty-nine, Lucinda, apparently convinced her husband was dead, married the fifty-year-old George W. Harris who is reported as the proprietor of a silver shop and Lucinda's landlord.⁶¹

Harris was Mason. He was expelled from Batavia Lodge 433 on August 15, 1826, for "the enormous depravity of his Masonic conduct." The explanation of "enormous depravity was described as Harris

⁵⁷ Local History & Genealogy, Ontario's Historic Breweries, June 27, 2018 <https://torontopubliclibrary.typepad.com/local-history-genealogy/2018/06/ontarios-historic-breweries.html>, accessed January 2025.

⁵⁸ Cummings, and Biographical Registers—"H," Brigham Young University, www.byustudies.byu.edu/Resources/BioAlpha/MBRegisterH.aspx, accessed December 20, 2015.

⁵⁹ IBID.

⁶⁰ IBID.

⁶¹ *Rochester Daily Advertiser*, Marriage Announcement, Volume V. 1249, Saturday, November 27, 1830. *Wayne Sentinel*, Marriage Announcement, December 3, 1830.

informing “his friend, William Morgan that Batavian Lodge was planning to destroy him.”⁶² This would have occurred about three weeks before Morgan was abducted, which corresponds with another member of Batavia Lodge, Smauel Greene, who was expelled for much the same thing that year and who later wrote a memoir about that experience and the night he heard members of Batavia Lodge speak of the penalty Morgan should receive for writing an exposure of Masonry.⁶³

According to Biographical Register H, at Brigham Young University, the Harris’s moved to Terra Haute, Indiana [presumably from Batavia or the general area] where they converted to Mormonism. Harris rose in the ranks of the council of the church and Lucinda, later separated from Harris, [by 1856] and is reported as one of many wives of Joseph Smith, the founder of the Latter-day Saints movement.⁶⁴

Rob Morris reports that Lucinda Harris died in Memphis, Tennessee and that she was a nurse in a hospital during the Civil War, but he offers no source for his claim. In 1934, William L. Cummings reported recently discovered evidence that Harris died at the home of her daughter, Lucinda Wesley Smooth in Memphis, Tennessee in 1856, which if true, means she was dead five years before the start of the Civil War. A researcher who is familiar with Morris’s loose play with facts and details compared to the responsible work of Cummings, sees how untenable Morris’s claim is.

In fact, most of the details about Morgan and his wife we have been asked to accept come from a spectacularly flawed book written in 1884 by Morris.⁶⁵ Unfortunately, many have cited Morris’s work as if it were the most authoritative information that exists.

Morris, Past Grand Master of Kentucky (1859) claims that he traveled to Batavia in 1882, interviewed one hundred people, read all the newspaper articles in archives about The Morgan Affair and trial manuscripts, dove into the personal notes he says that he kept for twenty-five years about the Affair and bid to set the record straight about not only the backgrounds of William and Lucinda Morgan, but solve the mystery surrounding William Morgan’s disappearance. What Morris managed to achieve was merely adding another thick layer of biased, agenda-driven storytelling to the existing stockpile of weak and brittle theories, and unverifiable sources. Many of the things he asserts as evidence appear invented by Morris to fit his subjective narrative.⁶⁶

Although respected historians in the 20th century referenced Morris in their work about The Morgan Affair many also pointed out discrepancies. By the early 2000s, the book was on its way to being refuted as the evidence-trouble narrative it is. Morris’s dubious account which was designed to sway the anti-Masonic narrative that was mounting again in the late 1870s and 1880s, caught up with him in Stephen DaFore’s, 2009 groundbreaking book: *Morgan: The Scandal that Shook Freemasonry*, and

⁶² *Ithaca Chronical*, December 22, 1830, reprinting a statement signed by R. Martin, Secretary of Batavia Lodge No. 433, that appeared in *The Masonick Mirror* [sic.], and credited to the Albany Evening Journal.

⁶³ Samuel D. Green, *The Broken Seal; Or Personal Reminiscences of the Morgan Abduction and Murder*. (The book was published by the author in Boston in 1870 shortly before his death).

⁶⁴ B. W. Richmond, “Smith’s Funeral,” *Deseret News* (November 27, 1875) and “Biographical Registers—H,” Brigham Young University, www.byustudies.byu.edu/Resources/BioAlpha/MBRegisterH.aspx, accessed December 20, 2015.

⁶⁵ Rob Morris, *William Morgan or Political Anti-Masonry, its Rise, Growth and Decadence*, Robert Macoy Publishing, New York, 1884.

⁶⁶ John W. Bizzack, “Deciphering Rob Morris in Context,” a Presentation at The Rubicon Masonic Society Conference In “Shapers of Our Ritual,” Lexington, Kentucky, September 28, 2024. (This presentation was the result of a year-long exploration of Morris’s credentials, writings, and inconsistencies found in biographies, businesses in which he was involved, his methods of self-promotion, and the 1860s Conservator Movement in Freemasonry in which he named himself Chief Conservator. Joining in the inquiry was author, Dan M. Kemble, Past Master, William O. Ware Lodge of Research).

later Stephen Dafoe's essay that appeared in *Heredom*, "Batavia to Baltimore and Beyond: A Re-examination of the William Morgan Story and Its Effect on Freemasonry." Stephen Dafoe outlines the egregious lie Rob Morris told about a major event that had significant bearing on the claims he made in that 1884 book.⁶⁷ For reasons well beyond but certainly including that 1884 book about The Morgan Affair, Morris's entire Masonic legacy was thrown into question in 2024 after a yearlong investigation into his credentials and life.⁶⁸

If Morris did not go to Batavia as he said he did to conduct the "extensive investigation" he claims to have made, where did so much of what is found in his book originate? How did he determine the holes he needed to bridge and weave his hollow account if he was going to sway the swelling of Anti-Masonic sentiments in that decade?

A partial answer is found in a particular book that was published four years before his, then republished by a different publisher two years after his own. That book was authored by Pope Catlin Huntington and written from a Masons standpoint.⁶⁹ No footnotes or bibliography are found in Huntington's work and there are glaring errors, but the book has many dates and names correctly noted along with reprinted newspaper accounts. No verifiable background is found for Huntington other than a reference suggesting that he was born in Connecticut and lived in Chicago in the 1880s. But clear is the position he takes in his book that he was either a Mason or strongly pro-Freemasonry.

Interestingly, Huntington's first edition was released by Macoy Publishing in 1880, which was owned and operated by Robert Macoy who was a twice elected Deputy Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of New York. There is no known record of sales or the popularity of the book after its release. Macoy announced to Masonic outlets that Morris was traveling to New York in 1882 and would investigate The Morgan Affair. Then, in 1884, Morris's book about his investigation was published by Macoy.

Both books came at a time when the remnants of Anti-Masonic stirrings were stirring once again. Macoy may have seen the value of Huntington's book, which was published by M.W. Hazen Publishing Company in New York, as a hedge against the recent stirring of those remnants of the formerly dormant Anti-Masonry voices. But a book by Morris, a well-known Mason with a degree of standing in the Masonic world, may prove to be an even more powerful hedge. Morris and Macoy were closely associated well prior to the 1880s.⁷⁰ As it turns out, Macoy not only published Morris' book about his supposed visit to Batavia, but republished Huntington's book four years after Morris's.

Both books are an example of classic apologetics, but neither is stronger than what Anti-Masons had

⁶⁷ Stephen Dafoe, "Batavia to Baltimore and Beyond: A Re-examination of the William Morgan Story and Its Effect on Freemasonry," *Heredom*, 15:43–116, Dafoe, "The Lie Rob Morris Told," *The Square Magazine*, Vol. 42, No. 4, December 2016, <https://www.thesquaremagazine.com/mag/article/202106the-lie-rob-morris-told/>, accessed, June 2020.

⁶⁸ John W. Bizzack and Dan M. Kemble, (see note 70).

⁶⁹ P.C. Huntington, *The True History Regarding Alleged Connection of the Order of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons with the Abduction of William Morgan in Western New York, 1826 Together with Much Interesting and Valuable Contemporary History Compiled from Authentic Documents and Records*, Macoy, New York, 1880. Second printing is 1885, by M.W. Hazen, 1886. *The True History Regarding Alleged Connection of the Order of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons, With the Abduction and Murder of William Morgan*, In Western New York, 1826.

⁷⁰ See John W. Bizzack, "Deciphering Rob Morris in Context," a Presentation at The Rubicon Masonic Society Conference In "Shapers Of Our Ritual," Lexington, Kentucky, September 28, 2024.

already published or were speaking about in the late 1870s and early 1880s.

Although both books may have sold well in certain circles of Masonry, there is no known record that documents that either book was in high demand at that time or later. Nevertheless, both books are considered part of the Masonic literature on the subject – notwithstanding glaring inaccuracies, lack of verifiable sources, and plotted but jumbled logic they offer.

Disappointingly, each book avoided the sword of scrutiny by skilled researchers for decades. Disappointingly, that is, if, for no other reason, other than Huntington's book promulgated a nonsense story about Morgan living elsewhere after he disappeared that was utterly ridiculous and unverifiable, and Morris based his book on information that would not inconvenience the invented evidence and story line he created.

PART V

A SUMMARY OF OTHER ABSURDITIES

Neither Huntington nor Morris were the creators of absurdities surrounding alleged sightings of Morgan after his disappearance. Morris did report on some of them in 1837 and certainly sounded like he believed them but seventeen years later he had to renounce them because they did not fit his new narrative.

Regardless, sightings of Morgan merely added another layer to the many already evidence-troubled layers in the literature of The Morgan Affair. There are multiple alleged sightings of William Morgan outside of Fort Niagara where he was held after his proven abduction by Masons and then remained in their custody for eight days. However, reports of Morgan being alive and living elsewhere in the world wither from their own absurdity and wilt when confronted by the sword of scrutiny. Regardless, they continue to be referenced in ways that allow them to persist in contemporary writings as if they had merit. Such content is identified by superficial arguments, cherry-picked evidence, or unsupported claims to convey a sense of authority.

A popular claim that Morgan disappeared into Canada, then either to Boston or New York, where he sailed to Smyrna (modern day Turkey) where he was afterwards seen by various people spread rapidly in Masonic publications and newspapers. The claim crumbles easily with serious research. Intensive study of the shipping news of the time by Grand Historians of the Grand Lodge of New York proved beyond the possibility of a doubt that the vessels on which it has been reported that Morgan sailed, and verification from captains of those vessels, were on voyages to entirely different parts of the world at the time Morgan was said to take passage.⁷¹

A two-part series Rob Morris wrote for the *National Freemason Magazine* in 1867 about The Morgan Affair corroborates that he had been collecting bits and pieces of information for years.⁷² Unfortunately, much of it was based on hearsay. Nevertheless, parts of that series reappeared in his book sixteen years later, but his 1867 articles were not as organized in his 1883 book. No matter,

⁷¹ Cummings.

⁷² National Freemason, "Life of Captain William Morgan—His Abduction—What Became of Him?" Vol. VIII, No. 16 and No. 17, April 20, 1867, and April 27, 1867.

these articles, like his book, carried all the earmarks of writing designed to tell a particular audience what they wanted to hear.

Written in Morris's apologist style, the series concluded with two completely uncorroborated stories of Morgan being seen in 1830 - four years following his disappearance. One account claimed Morgan "sailed from this country to Smyrna." Morris claims, without supporting evidence, that "several of our brethren, when in Smyrna, received from the American residents there such accounts as fully satisfied them, it was William Morgan." Another source, who Morris goes to great lengths to qualify as he did with the first, claimed the source met a man while in Smyrna who had adopted Turkish dress and was going by the name of Mustapha. The man taught English and French in Smyrna and confessed to him he was William Morgan. Morris concluded and wrote that Morgan was "quietly luxuriating in a quiet, dreamy life, among the Turks."⁷³

He closes his series with his regular egotistically, dramatic flair, saying, "If such testimony is not to be credited, all belief is at an end." Considering the absurdity of Morris offering such unsubstantiated assertions as confirmed and therefore was undisputably valid evidence, makes one understand why his 1884 book was so evidence troubled. When Morris's 1884 book was published, he did express a change of heart about the stories he believed in 1867. He lists the stories he had heard about what happened to Morgan and the locations where he supposedly lived out his days, including the story about Morgan living as a Turk. By 1884, Morris refers to the stories this time as "ridiculous" and "silly fallacies."⁷⁴ Considering none fit the later "conclusion" his 1884 book, it is clear why he had to discredit the earlier stories. No matter, his book shared the same counterfeit characteristics as anything he ever wrote about The Morgan Affair.

Other rumor-based stories by other writers about what happened to Morgan after he disappeared have it that Morgan became an Indian chief in Arizona, was hanged as a pirate in Havana, lived as a hermit and recluse in the northern regions of Canada and lived off the funds furnished to him by prominent Anti Masonic leaders. Another story asserted that Morgan was living in Albany, New York as a hermit using the name "Wanamaker." He was reported in Holland and as a resident in concealment in Russellville, Kentucky, as well as reportedly seen south of Australia on the island of Tasmania. Another report tells us he was found as a master of a trading vessel and business in England that ran from Liverpool to Southaven, and another about a sighting in Vermont and Boston where Morgan was selling his exposure. It was reported too that he lived New Brunswick, New York and was employed in the fisheries and had learned and taught French. Another story was about how he became a Turk and converted to the Muslim faith and used the name Mustapha. Then there is the report that while living on the Cayman Island he sent for his wife, Lucinda, and their children, and they lived peacefully on the islands for the rest of their lives. A twist on that story is that after surviving a shipwreck in Cuba, he found his way to the Cayman Islands where he remarried and fathered six children while operating a successful banana plantation.⁷⁵

⁷³ Rob Morris, *William Morgan or Political Anti-Masonry, its Rise, Growth and Decadence*, Robert Macoy Publishing, New York, 1884.

⁷⁴ IBID.

⁷⁵ Bizzack, *Age of Unreason*.

In the 1950s there was another surge of stories about William Morgan escaping upstate New York to live out his life elsewhere in the world. These stories were sporadic and lasted until 2019.⁷⁶

Not an iota of proof of the 19th century or later sightings in the 20th century that were made concerning Willam Morgan's whereabouts after September 19, 1826, have ever been produced.

CONCLUSION

The pursuit of truth surrounding The Morgan Affair *is* undoubtedly a challenging and time-consuming endeavor. Moreover, it is not of interest to everyone. Similarly, this pursuit serves as a story about the kind of dedication required for the pursuit of Freemasonry if a member is to *become* a Mason, which too, is not of interest to everyone - even all who are made members - because *it* calls for a willingness to explore context, a seriousness of purpose, and, above all, a steadfast commitment.

The purpose of this writing is not to exhaustively account the enigmas, controversies, trials, and entangled misrepresentation and full and impacts that are associated with The Morgan Affair. Instead, it aims to distill the lessons from the popular vanished accounts that this historical period imparts, focusing on its factual elements or lack thereof. Through this lens, The Morgan Affair becomes a metaphor for the commitment and depth necessary to fully realize the ideals of Masonry.

The takeaway should be unmistakable: nurturing Masons rather than simply creating members is what ensures the values of the Institution shine brighter than any discord that threatens it.

⁷⁶ IBID, Allison D. Bryant, "The Morgan Affair: What Happened to Morgan: Investigating a Speculation" a paper presented to the Michigan Lodge of Research No. 1. on June 20, 1992, Gillian Patcher, "Island Mentality," *The New Statesman* (a progressive political and cultural magazine in the United Kingdom offering a weekly review of politics and literature since 1913), April 30, 2007, Maggie Hall, "Turn the Caribbean Clock Back, Utila is the Way to Go," *Capital Community News*, http://www.capitalcommunitynews.com/PDF/2010/90-91_RAG_0610.pdf, accessed December 31, 2019, Shelby McNab, *Robinson Crusoe's Island Utila, Bay Island, Honduras Central America*, http://www.kanahau.com/uploads/1/0/7/5/10756768/shelby_crusoes_utila.pdf, accessed December 31, 2019. William Jackson, *The Incredible Death and Revival of William Morgan, Including His Adventure with The Masons*, Nightingale Press, Mequon, Wisconsin, 2007.

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- The image on the cover of this essay is "The Abduction of William Morgan," New York, USA, 1826 (c1880). Artist: Hooper. A print from *Cassell's History of the United States*, Edmund Ollier, Volume III, Cassell Petter and Galpin, London, c1880.

- William Preston Vaughn, "The Anti-Masonic Party in the United States: 1826-1843," University of Kentucky Press, 1983. <https://uknowledge.uky.edu/upkpoliticalhistory/>, accessed November 2020, (The trials of those Masons indicted dragged on for five years (1826-1831) but produced few convictions. Some twenty grand juries were called, fifty-four Masons were indicted, thirty-nine were brought to trial, and ten received convictions and jail terms ranging from thirty days to twenty-eight months. Of those not tried, two died before their day in court, twelve left New York for other states, and one fled to Europe. Of the ten convicted, only six were involved with Morgan's abduction. Four were punished for illegally moving David C. Miller from Batavia. Five indictments remained on the judicial calendar when the term of the third and last special counsel, Birdseye, expired in 1831. Morgan's abduction occurred at a crucial time in New York state politics. The John Quincy Adams-Henry Clay party was in a rapid state of decline, and New York Governor Dewitt Clinton had affiliated with the Jacksonians (Andrew Jackson supporters) leaving many of his followers in a quandary, for most of them could hardly follow Clinton into a party controlled on the state level by Martin Van Buren and the hated Regency. Conditions were ripe for the creation of a new organization that would submerge factional differences and would unite voters behind a platform pledged to defend democracy and equality before the law. It was no accident that the Anti-Masonic Party evolved in January 1827 from a series of local conventions that met while the first trial of Morgan's kidnapers was taking place.

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