

# SOME MASONIC TRIVIA

## Lodges that were closed

### 1.

As a result of anti-Masonic activity, the Syracuse Lodge ceased work in 1926. Its door was double-locked, the key placed in the hands of a faithful brother.

23 years later the lodge room was again opened for the first time since its closure.

The VSL was in its rightful place on the alter; the jewels were hanging behind each officer's station; the aprons were on the chairs where they had hastily been thrown 23 years earlier and on the Secretary's desk were still lying his pens and there was ink in the ink stand.

### 2.

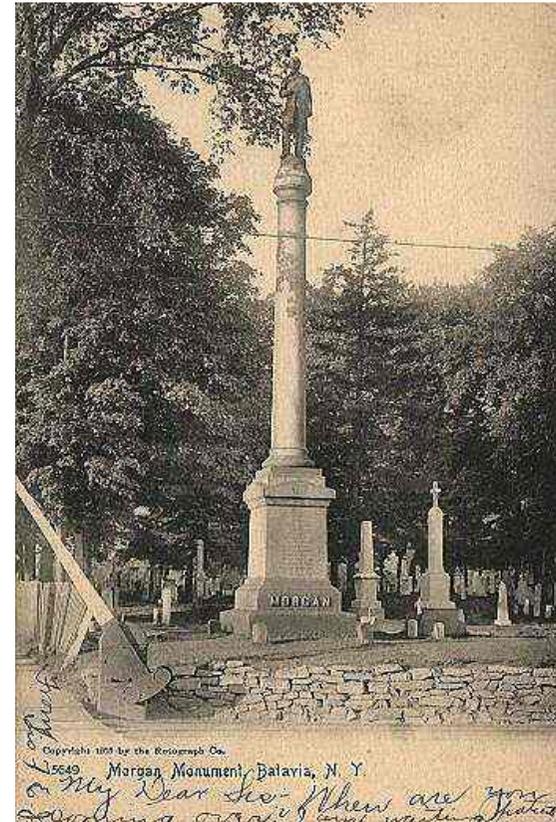
A lodge in Raleigh ( USA) was in session when the news came of the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln.

The brethren left the lodge room without any formal closing of the lodge.

This was in 1865. Fifty years later in 1915 the lodge room was re-opened and incredibly, the Worshipful Master in 1915 who took the chair was the same W.M. who was in the chair in 1865.

Technically speaking the lodge in 1865 was never closed so it remained open for 50 years.

# THE MORGAN AFFAIR



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The year was 1826; the place New York city. The USA was exactly 50 years old. The New York Grand Lodge was just 45 years old.

The Governor of New York, Dewitt Clinton, was the Past Grand Master. Masonic influence in America was considerable with 25% of all eligible voters in the USA being Freemasons and 66% of all public offices were held by members of the craft.

It was to take one man, and one man only, Captain William Morgan, to cast such a dark cloud over the Order that the impact on the fraternity's reputation was to last for more than a century.

So terrifying was the aura of suspicion that more than half of America's 12 000 lodges closed down - that is to say "went dark".

*Here is the opening synopsis from the entry to be found in Wikipedia, the internet encyclopedia.*

William Morgan (1774 - 1826 ?) was a resident of Batavia, New York whose disappearance ignited a powerful anti-Freemason movement in the USA in the early 19th century. After stating his intention to write a book exposing Freemasonry's "secrets", Morgan was arrested, kidnapped, and then apparently killed. His disappearance sparked a public outcry &

launched the formation of a new Anti-Masonic Party.

## What happened to Morgan's Wife?

Morgan's widow, Lucinda Pendleton, later became one of the plural wives of Mormon Church founder Joseph Smith Jnr (himself a Freemason).

Subsequent confrontations between Freemasonry and the Mormon Church included controversy surrounding the church's alleged adoption of Masonic rituals and regalia.

William Morgan was given one of the first official baptisms for the dead into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

Although it has nothing to do with the Day the Lodges went Dark, it is perhaps interesting to note that the first 5 Presidents/leaders of the Mormon Church, were all Freemasons.

## Conclusion

Although Freemasonry has been beset by many exposés over the centuries, all really have been motivated by one factor, that of making money.

In the case of William Morgan, his book came at a time when the members of the Craft were

perhaps, over sensitive to the confidential nature of some of the rituals in use.

Whatever the true situation, it is an absolute fact that this issue caused the greatest and most significant set-back to Freemasonry in the USA, than any other occurrence.

Soon after Morgan's disappearance, Miller published the book. It became a bestseller.

Morgan's disappearance and the minimal punishment received by his alleged kidnapers, sparked a series of protests against the Freemasons throughout New York and neighbouring States.

The statistics are available from various sources, and these are quite staggering. For example, Vermont had 52 lodges prior to this affair and by 1834 had none at all. This was typical of the whole of the USA.

Under the leadership of a New York politician, Thurlow Weed, the anti-Masonic movement was formed. From this came the Anti-Masonic political party which ran a candidate for the Presidency in 1828, against Andrew Jackson. Oddly enough, the man standing against Andrew Jackson (who was a Freemason) was also a Freemason.

The Anti-Masonic party was heavily defeated at the polls.

Nevertheless, 90% of the American lodges either closed down or "went dark" as a result of this incident.

## Monument to Morgan

On 13 September 1882 a large monument praising Morgan was unveiled in the Batavia cemetery by the National Christian Association, a group opposed to secret societies. The ceremony was witnessed by 1000 people, including representatives from local Masonic lodges.

The monument reads:

*"Sacred to the memory of Wm. Morgan, a native of Virginia, a Capt. In the War of 1812, a respectable citizen of Batavia, and a martyr to the freedom of writing, printing and speaking the truth. He was abducted from near this spot in the year 1826, by Freemasons and murdered for revealing the secrets of their Order. The court records of Genesee County, and the files of the Batavia Advocate, kept in the Recorder's Office contain the history of the events that caused the erection of this monument."*

In June 1881 in Pembroke, New York, a grave was discovered in a quarry two miles south of the Indian reservation, and in it a metal box containing a crumpled paper with a few words on it, hinting that the **body** might have been Morgan's.

## Was William Morgan a Freemason?

Morgan attempted to join the Masonic lodge in Batavia, but was denied admission. He is known to have received the York Rite Royal Arch degree in Leroy, New York in 1825 and when a new chapter was being formed in Batavia, Morgan's name was on the list of petitioners for a charter. Allegedly, some Masons objected and a new petition was drawn up with Morgan's name omitted.

We do not know the reasons for these objections, but Morgan was known to be a heavy drinker and a gambler.

By occupation he was an apprentice stone mason or bricklayer and was briefly a brewer in Canada before returning to quarry work in Rochester, New York.

He worked in Rochester for a Freemason named Warren whose confidence he won and he was able to persuade Warren that he had been made a Mason in Canada. Warren thus vouched for him, enabling him to visit lodges, declaring upon oath that he had received six degrees in regular manner.

He petitioned on 15 February 1825, to Western Star Chapter of the Royal Arch No. 33 of

LeRoy, New York and his application was accepted and thus he was exalted to the degree of Royal Arch Mason.

There is absolutely no evidence anywhere that he ever received a Masonic degree other than that of the Royal Arch referred to above.

Although he became an accomplished ritualist, suspicion of his regularity began to become more prominent as his drunken habits, his gambling, financial looseness and his neglect of family became obvious.

## What act did he commit that caused so much damage?

Angered by his rejection, Morgan declared that it was his intention to publish a book entitled "*Illustrations of Masonry*", critical of the Freemasons and describing their secret degree work in great detail.

Morgan announced that a local newspaper publisher, David Cade Miller, had paid him a sizable advance for the work. (It is said that Miller actually received the entered apprentice degree but had been stopped from advancement by the objection of one or more of the Batavia lodge members. This would certainly have given him motivation

to join forces with Morgan.

It appears that on the 13 March 1826, Morgan entered into a US\$500 000 contract with David C Miller, John Davids ( Morgan's landlord) and one Russell Dyer, for the publication of his book. At the same time he also filed with the clerk of the Northern District of New York, for a copyright.

Advertisements for the new book were placed in all upstate newspapers and Morgan boasted about it in the many bars he frequented.

The more he bragged, the higher the feelings ran against him. The brethren were deeply angered and tempers ran high.

Some members of the Batavia lodge published their own advertisements denouncing Morgan . These efforts failed and on the night of 8 September 1826, a party of about 40 people set of to sack the premises of David Miller, where the first part of the book was ready. This attack was rebuffed. On the night of the 10 September an unsuccessful attempt was made to set fire to the premises.

The following day Morgan was arrested and taken to debtors prison for money the Masons claimed he had borrowed and not repaid. Miller, after several attempts, was able to secure the release of Morgan.

A few hours later he is again arrested allegedly for stealing some clothing.

On the night of 11 September 1826 someone appeared at the jail, claiming to be Morgan's friend, paid his debt and he was released. He was taken to a carriage that was waiting for him outside the prison and this carriage arrived the next day at Fort Niagara.

The person who was said to have been this friend was a Freemason by the name of Loton Lawson who, together with two others, Nicholas Chesebro and Edward Sawyer, were charged with Morgan's kidnaping. They were, in fact, convicted and served sentences for this crime.

### **Morgan last seen alive**

Morgan was seen to board the coach which arrived on the 13 September at a point some 3 miles past Rochester, in Fort Niagara. The passengers disembarked and the coach returned to where it set off.

This was the last time and the last place that anyone saw William Morgan again, alive or dead.

There are several stories as to what happened next, but the most persistent and common

tale is that Morgan was taken in a boat to the middle of the Niagara River and drowned. A man by the name of Henry L Valance allegedly confessed on his deathbed to his part in the murder in 1848.

### **The Facts Emerge**

Not until 40 years after Morgan's disappearance did the true facts emerge when a man by the name of John Whitney made a complete statement which could not be published until after his death. The following facts were revealed.

Chesebro and Whitney, incensed at Morgan's treachery, consulted with Governor Clinton who was Head of the Royal Arch at the time. He told them that they should not do anything that would conflict with a citizen's civil rights, but suggested the purchase of the manuscripts of Morgan's book and, if he was willing, to ask Morgan to relocate. A sum of US\$1000 was pledged for this purpose. Whitney and Chesebro alone drew up a plan for Morgan's removal, but enlisted the help of the other Freemasons to carry out the plan.

On 5 September 1826, in Darnold's Tavern in Batavia, John Whitney met with Morgan and concluded a deal in terms of which all manuscripts and pa-

pers connected with the book would be destroyed and that the \$50 he would receive immediately would be used to clothe himself properly, reduce his drinking, and cover his immediate family needs. In addition he would not communicate with his partners and would hold himself in readiness at an hour's notice to go to Canada and settle there.

On reaching Canada he would be paid US\$500 upon a written pledge to stay there and never return to the USA. Whitney pledged that Morgan's family would be cared for and sent to Canada as soon as housing was available and that in all of this, no personal embarrassment to Morgan would be permitted.

**Unfortunately the plan came unstuck as the conspirators were to find out.**

Within a fortnight a messenger was sent to Morgan in Canada only to find that he had left the village where he had been sent. He had gone! He sold his horse in the east at Port Hope and disappeared, probably having boarded a vessel for parts unknown.

### **Repercussions**

The repercussions of this affair were vast and disastrous to the craft.