

Articles and Notes

Colonel Morgan Morgan and his Descendants

ROBERT ELLIS

The Morgan family and the development of West Virginia are as intertwined as two strands of a rope. There would likely be no West Virginia, no Marion County, and no Fairmont without the work of the Morgans. Let's look at some of the Morgan history.

Our story begins with Col. Morgan Morgan. He was born in Glamorganshire, in Cardiff, Wales, on November 1, 1688. His ancestry dates back to the days of the ancient Celts and the King Arthur tradition. Pendragon, the father of King Arthur, was of the House of Morgan, according to the legends of the Middle Ages.

Colonel Morgan Morgan's uncle was Sir Henry Morgan, the buccaneer. Actually, the term "privateer" is more appropriate. Sir Henry may have been a rogue, but he was not a pirate. He spent the last part of his life as a deputy governor of Jamaica.

Col. Morgan Morgan was educated in London during the reigns of Queen Anne and of King George I. After immigrating to the colonies at the age of 19, he became a merchant-tailor in Christiana, Delaware. In 1713 or 1714, he married Catherine Garretson. During 1726-1727 he moved his family to Bunker Hill,

Virginia, in what is now Berkeley County, West Virginia.

Morgan built the first Episcopal Church there in 1727, and he was credited with many other "firsts":

First permanent white settler of present-day West Virginia

The first civil officer

The first judicial officer

The first commissioned military officer

The first licensed tavern keeper

The First Engineer in Supervision of the first public enterprise undertaken in the state (a road, some 12 miles long)

The Colonel organized the first militia in the United States. The West Virginia chapter of the National Guard is this nation's premier chapter. It is probable that Morgan's son, David, was the first recruit.

Of Morgan's eight children there are two, Zackquill and David, who are important in West Virginia's history. David was born in 1721. He was a farmer, soldier, explorer, surveyor, guide and developer. He served in the French & Indian war with George Washington, along with his brother, Zackquill, at Fort Necessity, and in the Revolutionary War. He surveyed throughout Virginia, often with his cousin Daniel Boone.

He assisted George Washington in setting the Fairfax Stone.

David Morgan married Sarah Stephens and settled on a farm near Winchester. In 1787, David persuaded Boaz Fleming, a family friend who still lived in Delaware, to bring his family and friends (43 in all) to the Monongahela Valley.

In 1771, David moved to Monongalia County and settled on a large farm near the present town of Rivesville. He and Zackquill created the town of Pleasantville. David also developed his land near the Watson Bridge area of present-day Fairmont, called it "Riversee," and built the first log house in the area. This house still stands, and it is a residence in the Fairmont Farms neighborhood.

The Native Americans were troublesome to European settlers during this period. These settlers erected a fort in 1774 at the mouth of Prickett's Creek, and called it "Prickett's Fort." The Fort was across the river from David's farm. At this location comes the story of David saving his children, Stephen and Sara, from the Native Americans. Through the telling and retelling of this story, David became known far and wide as "The Indian Fighter."

In 1779, Zackquill moved down

the Monongahela River where he created "Morgan's Town," Virginia (now Morgantown, West Virginia). He became sheriff of Monongalia County. In 1780, David set aside 39 acres of Riversee to establish a trading post, a ferry, and a mail drop at the confluence of the Tygart, West Fork, and Monongahela rivers, to be run by the brothers William and John Pettyjohn. At Pettyjohn, David was also responsible for establishing a military headquarters, a surveyor's office, a Justice of the Peace's office, and a saw-mill. Near his house, he established a salt-making plant, the first industry for the area.

David persuaded John Pierpont, who was a tanner, to come to this area. Pierpont married Zackquill's daughter. John Pierpont's grandson was the "Father of West Virginia," Francis H. Pierpont. In this way, David Morgan was the germinating force for much of present-day Marion County, Fairmont, Rivesville, and West Virginia!

Shortly before his death in 1813,

David was making guns to be used in the War of 1812. He and Sarah are buried in the family cemetery on the Morgan farm near Rivesville.

William S. Morgan, son of Stephen, and grandson of David, from Rivesville, was a well-known painter, botanist & zoologist. William was employed by the Smithsonian, and is buried in the U.S. Congressional Cemetery. He was responsible for introducing into Congress the bill to split Marion County from Harrison and Monongalia Counties.

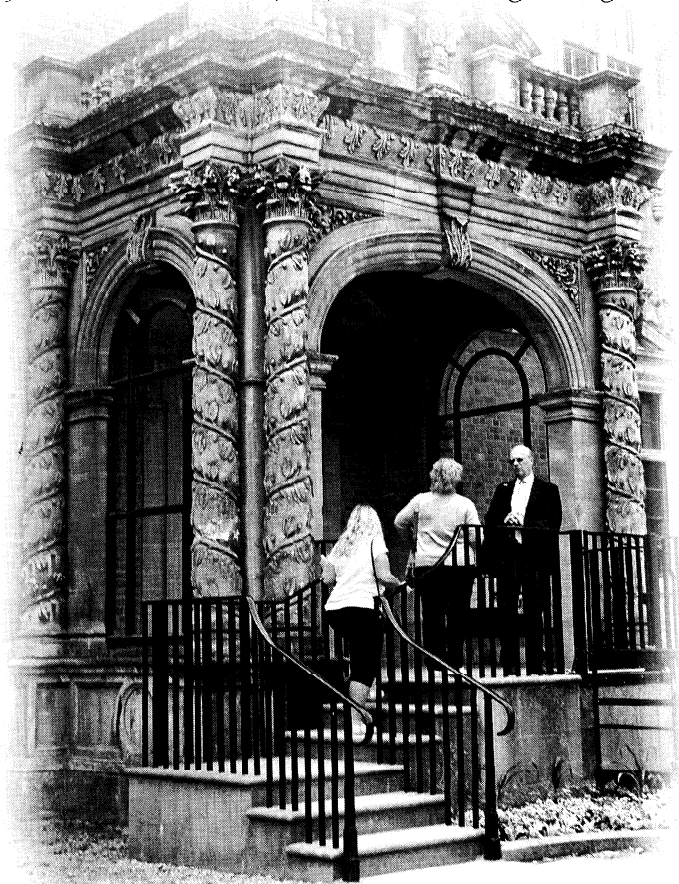
His brother, Pinkney, fought in the Civil War and died in a prison camp. Pinkney's house stands on the land of the Morgan farm near Rivesville. It is owned and being restored by a local citizen. On that property stands the monument to David Morgan, erected in 1908, along with the graves of David, Sarah, and several of their descendants.

Ephraim Morgan began his tenure as governor of West Virginia 1920. His great nephew, Paul Prunty, was a West Virginian legislator for

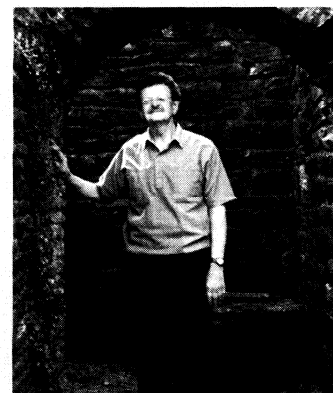
many years. These and other members of the Morgan clan have helped to make West Virginia an important part of Appalachia.

The book by French Morgan, *A History and Genealogy of the Family of Col. Morgan Morgan*, was published in 1950, and is occasionally available at out-of-print prices. DVD versions of the book's contents available on eBay.

The Tredegar House in Newport, Wales, is the reputed ancestral home of the Morgans. We do know it was lived in by a branch of the Morgans from 1402 until 1951. In the 1660's the house was rebuilt, and it has become one of the finest examples of Restoration architecture in Great Britain. It was my pleasure to visit Tredegar House in June, 2008 with a tour-group from the Frank and Jane Gabor West Virginia Folklife Center, led by Dr. Judy Byers and Noel Tenney.



Tredegar House in Newport, Wales



Robert Ellis at Carleon architectural dig, Wales

Robert Ellis is a ninth-generation direct descendant of Col. Morgan Morgan. He lives in Fairmont, West Virginia, where he is pastoral musician for Parish of St. Peter the Fisherman, a music teacher for Fairmont Catholic Grade School, and has a private studio for piano, voice and organ. He has taught at Glenville State College and at Rygaards International School in Copenhagen, Denmark. He holds a Master of Music degree from West Virginia University and completed four years of study towards the Doctorate of Musical Arts from the College Conservatory of Music of the University of Cincinnati. This summer, he portrayed David Morgan for the 102nd reunion of the Descendants of Col. Morgan Morgan at Prickett's Fort.