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THE CONSERVATORS AND AMERICAN FREEMASONRY 1860-65

by

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During the past two and a half centuries Masonic writers have produced untold volumes, of varying value, relative to the search for uniformity in the rituals of the symbolic degrees. In their efforts to comply with the obligations given at the altar, every linguistic employ imaginable has been used to convey their messages; each trying to impart further light in accordance with their particular interpretations.

14.

History has been quite explicit in describing the manner in which Freemasonry crossed the Atlantic to Massachusetts in 1773 and traversing the wide expanse of America in the accustomed mode of "mouth to ear", still used in many jurisdictions.

Under ideal circumstances, the original "Work" would have come to this country in the possession of the duly appointed Provincial Grand Masters and been taught by them, however, idyllic conditions were not to be. Lodges were formed and chartered by them; but, apparently little else. Our immigrant brethren brought their "work" with them; retained in their somewhat less than perfect memories and passed it on as best they could. In many instances they formed new Lodges, according to usages "time immemorial", with the clear consciences of good and upright Masons.

The picture comes to mind of a brother of that era, working a newly cleared field, days away from the nearest settlement, musket in hand, looking past the blunted end of his plow animal, weary, hungry, thirsty and hoping the motion he sees in the nearby grove of trees is being made by an animal. He's not sat in Lodge since he migrated and, likely, and has not conversed as such during that time. Survival and family needs will occupy his thoughts until circumstances allow him freedom of mind.

In the early nineteenth century, the majority of Masonic writers, usually of the professions; medical, legal or cleric, who complained most about the lack of "uniformity", were of the larger cities; Boston, Chicago, New York and Philadelphia. The known Northwestern United States was Michigan and Wisconsin; the remainder of that beyond the Mississippi River was widely believed, to be Indian Territory.

Vociferous anti-Masonic factions and their vicious attacks nearly destroyed the fraternity after the highly-publicized "Morgan Affair" of 1826. One source states that between 1826 and 1840, 90% of an estimated 225 books classified as anti-Masonic were published in America. Many Lodges surrendered their Charters and some Grand Jurisdictions were dormant for years. American Masonry was in trouble.

As early as 1822, there were meetings between groups of influential Masons advocating the formation of a National or General Grand Lodge; such movements may be dated from the time George Washington declined the position as National Grand Master in 1777. The last concerted attempt, of which proceedings were published, occurred at Baltimore in 1847, when only seven Grand Lodges were represented (all from the South and the District of Columbia).

In attempting to achieve the long sought "uniformity" between the Grand Jurisdictions, conventions were held in 1842 at Washington; 1843 at Baltimore; 1853 at Lexington, Kentucky; 1855 at Washington and 1859 at Chicago. The War between the States precluded further National Conventions for several years after those dates

From the foregoing, it is quite understandable that the meetings between the several Grand Jurisdictions afforded the "Conservator Movement" fertile soil for its founding in 1860. There still remained several advocates for the formation of a National or General Grand Lodge and this new movement appeared to offer this concept under a new and novel guise.

The author and founder of "The Conservator's Movement", was Rob Morris, Past Grand Master of Kentucky (1858-59). He was born Robert William Peckham, August 31, 1818, in New York City or near Boston, Massachusetts; biographers do not agree on his birthplace or his education. Some say he had been educated as a civil engineer and geologist; others state he had been schooled as a minister and educator; none seem to say where. One says he had moved to western New York after the death of his father in 1825, to live with the family of John Morris, and had adopted the family name; others allege there had been no apparent reason for his name to have been changed to Rob Morris.

Regardless of the conflict in his biography it is documented that he was Principal of Mount Sylvan Academy, in the vicinity of Oxford, Mississippi, on March 5th, 1846, when, at the age of twenty

15. eight years, he was initiated into Oxford, (now Gathright) Lodge No. 33, in the town of Oxford.

In June of 1860, many prominent Masons, nationwide, of noted ritualistic capabilities and/or holding positions of past or present authority in the several Grand Lodge jurisdictions, received letters from Rob Morris, bearing the following the following notation; "Masonically confidential, and to be returned within Ten Days of its reception to Robert Morris."

They contained the outline of his organization and purposes as follows; "An Association of experienced and devoted Masons has been formed under the title of CONSERVATORS OF SYMBOLICAL MASONRY"

He elaborated the objects of the program in ten steps; - - here somewhat abbreviated:

1. The dissemination of the ancient and genuine Work and Lectures.
2. Discountenancing all changes, etc., since the death of Webb in 1819.
3. Establishing perfect uniformity in recognition, ceremonies, language, etc.
4. Building Schools of Instruction in every Lodge.
5. Instructing Masons to work as Lecturers.
6. Instructing traveling Masons how to visit Lodges.
7. Adding Conservators of the Work to bind Masons together.
8. Detecting and exposing Impostors.
9. Encouraging acquaintance, conference, counsel and sympathy among the Conservators.
10. Opening the way for intimate communion between Masons of Europe and America.

He described his ranking system within the organization as follows: One Conservator to be a direct representative within each Lodge, who may appoint and

be responsible for two Deputies. A Deputy Chief Conservator may be designated for every Congressional District, and a Vice Chief for every Grand Lodge jurisdiction, but every Grand Master; Deputy Grand Master; Grand Senior Warden, Grand Junior Warden; District Deputy Grand Master and Grand Lecturer, who unites with the Association, becomes an ex-officio Deputy Chief Conservator.

The Chief Conservator (Rob Morris) has the general control and management of the Association.

"In those States where the Grand Lodges have established systems of Lectures more or less differing from Webb's, the Association will endeavour to effect its great and important objects by instructing one or more intelligent Masons in every Lodge, as above mentioned, and them bringing the influences of truth, consistency and uniformity to bear upon the Grand Lodges themselves. And no measure will at any time be adopted which is opposed to that filial affection and duty which are due the Grand Lodge, or which is contrary to its Constitutional Regulations and Landmarks of Masonry."

He completed the letter with his signature as "Chief Conservator at LaGrange, Kentucky, and a series of four questions:

"Question First --- Does the plan, as above specified, strike you favorably?

Question Second -- Do you desire to be informed relative to the Details of the plan?

Question Third --- Will you take hands with us in the enterprise, if the manner of operations is such as you deem prudent, rational and practicable?

Question Fourth -- Will you treat, as sacredly confidential, whatever explanatory documents I may send you in reply to your letter?

An answer to the first letter, immediately brought the second of the confidential communications explaining the detailed features of his plan and a request for individual approval of each.

16.

The First expanded upon the plan for each member to nominate two deputies from his own Lodge to receive the same communications, as he, and elaborating: "The strictest secrecy is observed that the Craft at large may know nothing of the Association, nor of us as its members, nor of the plans on foot, until the work in which we are engaged is finally accomplished, say in 1865." * *We have a frightful accumulation of flawy, imperfect materials in the Masonic Temple, ignorant of all Masonic learning, and only able to pull back upon any proposition for their improvement. Thomas Smith Webb, and Preston before him, accomplished their work through private instrumentality's as, please God, we will do. And SECRECY and DISCRETION shall be our watchwords, as they were theirs."

The Second explained the plan for "intimate and confidential communication" between the members and the Chief Conservator; the publishing of a journal "The Conservators" and promising the members would be given access to his personal library, said to have included upwards of 1200 volumes.

The Third set forth his goals for the entire operation, herein quoted in its entirety: "Our great aim, and the key to our Association, is National Harmony in the Work and Lectures on Symbolical Masonry. This harmony shall consist in the most perfect uniformity amongst ourselves and our pupils, and the Craft at large so far as we can honorably influence them. It shall reach to the strictest minutiae--- to words, syllables and letters ---- to official matters ---- to times and seasons ---- to modes of inculcation. To this end, the Conservators

must resign every conceived habit of notion that conflicts with the standard of Preston and Webb, and must sacrifice every variation of word, syllable and letter, upon the common altar of National Uniformity. The Chief Conservator has done this. After teaching Masonry as a public lecturer for many years, and establishing some reputation in that way, according to the Bastard systems in vogue in the South and West, he sacrificed all feelings of pride and consistency, and as soon as he discovered the genuine Old Work, by irrefragible tokens of identity, he began the study of the Rituals from the beginning as a humble scholar. You will not have a tithe as much to give up in this way as he had, and the task to you will be immensely easier. If you are an officer of your Grand Lodge or bound by constitutional regulations to any other system of Work and Lectures save Webb's, it is, of course, not expected you will disobediently throw down the things which superior authority has set up. In such case, however, you will be expected to give your opinion, and at proper time, in favor of the genuine system, make friend for it and, with the great assistance the Association will render you, secure your Grand Lodge approbation in its behalf. This is not so difficult as at first sight may appear to you. The Craft at large is sick of bastardisms, and hails with avidity every proposal to return to the Old Work, and to set up the Old Landmarks, too long thrown down. The admirable success of this Association is abundant proof of this.

The Fourth explains the existence of a mode of recognition and of the Conservator's degree.

The Fifth provides for the attendance of a Vice Chief Conservator at every Grand Lodge Communication competent to confer the Conservator's degree and skilled to rehearse the "genuine Webb Work and Lectures" in the Grand Lodge, if invited, or in private Halls, if not.

The Sixth provides for "the adoption of the mode of disseminating the Work and Lectures adopted by the Grand Lodge of England in 1728, when Masonry was introduced in France; in 1733, when Masonry was introduced into America; in 1795, when Preston transmitted his Work and Lectures to the United States by Thomas Webb."

The Seventh merely asks for a contribution of ten dollars, in advance, as his subsidy in accomplishing the various plans he specified.

He closed his second communication by asking, "Do you approve of these ideas, and are you willing to make this contribution?"

In keeping with the esoteric nature of Masonic rituals and Morris' necessitating the requirement of secrecy within the Conservator's Movement, he devised the Conservator's Degree as an additional

17.
attraction for disciples and potential members of the Association. He based his degree upon the Book of Nehemiah, specifically the second Chapter; seemingly equating the condition of the currently used Masonic Work to the ruined walls of Jerusalem giving numbers to the gates of the city, using them as a part of the member's identification system and thereby, enhancing the secrecy of his planning.

He devised and printed a cipher of the three degrees and their lectures, entitled:

"WRITTEN MNEMONICS
ILLUSTRATED BY COPIOUS EXAMPLES
FROM

MORAL PHILOSOPHY, SCIENCE AND RELIGION."

To use this small book of approximately 150 pages, another book and sheet of instructions were required. The additional book was called "a spelling book" and the sheet of instructions were the guide telling the reader where to begin the different portions of the work. The complexity in the use of "Mnemonics" must have frustrated the most patient of Masonic minds, and is much too lengthy to critique in this paper. Fortunately, such a system is not known to have survived to torture the minds of later generations of American Masons. The title, "Mnemonics", however, has not disappeared from Masonic use. Webster's New World Dictionary describes "Mnemonics" as "the science or art of improving the memory, as by the use of certain formulas; formulas or other aids to help in remembering". At least one of our present-day Masonic jurisdictions uses the word, "Mnemonics", in the title of the cypher to their esoteric work.

It would have been difficult for Rob Morris to have chosen a worse time in Masonic history to form his "Conservator's Movement".

The Baltimore Convention of 1843, assembled for the purpose of "revising and perfecting a system of MASONIC WORK AND LECTURES", although approved unanimously by the convention, ran into dissension in the committee assigned to prepare the "Trestleboard" or "Text Book for the use of the Lodges". The committee, consisting of R.W. Charles C. Moore, Grand Secretary of Massachusetts; R.W. S.W.B. Carnegy, P.G.M. of the Grand Lodge of Missouri and R.W. John Dove, Grand Secretary of Virginia could not agree on the proposed retention of the printed illustrations contained in the existing Monitors and other similar works. Bro. Dove believed they should be deleted and their description communicated orally. Bros. Moore and Carnegy felt that such deletion would result in the loss of uniformity through differences in the capabilities of oral transmission. The Trestleboard was completed without the abrogation of Bro. Dove, who prepared his own Monitor for use in the jurisdiction of Virginia. Rob Morris used this dissension as one of his propositions in the formation of the Conservator's Association; maintaining that only, his Association had the power and capabilities of re-instituting harmony between the jurisdictions.

The War between the States, April 12, 1861 - May 26, 1865, could have caused the Conservators untold disastrous consequences, but apparently did not. He travelled widely during that period; exemplifying his version of Webb's Work and speaking wherever invited. A letter to the "Masonic Review", in December 1863, from the Grand Chaplain of Michigan states: "That at a social gathering, some two or three years ago, Morris gave him, with several others, what he called the 'Conservator's Degree', rather in the way of pleasantry than as a serious matter. That he subsequently paid no attention to it, and now knows nothing about it, and does not wish to be considered among the number of conservators. That he never taught the Morris work, does not know what it is, and does not desire to -- as the Michigan work he believes to be genuine." (Rob Morris had published his name as a Conservator.)

As the Conservator's Association began in June 1860, in a quiet manner; it's reception was anything but peaceful. Bro. Robert Morris' pleas for secrecy were roughly ignored by those Masons who believed in the ancient landmark, "no man or body of men may make any alteration or innovation in the body of Masonry without the consent of the Grand Lodge."

18

Beginning in early 1861, Reports on Correspondence in the Grand Lodge Proceedings and certain Masonic periodicals began to carry condemnations of

Morris' programs; most being delivered in the customary gentlemanly, Masonic terms, but a few rather severe.

Of course, there were some high-ranking Grand Lodge officers who espoused Morris' work and his Conservator's Association, but the Reports on Foreign Correspondence for the years 1860-65, compared with the membership list in "The Masonic Conservators" by Ray V. Denslow, in 1931, proved them to be a very small minority. One of the first widely publicized denunciations of the Conservator's Association came in 1862, when members of that association submitted a document to their Grand Lodge declaring "individually, upon their honor as Master Masons, that the purpose of said association they believe to be strictly Masonic and loyal to this Grand Lodge; that they never for one moment entertained the idea of violating or evading any edict of this Grand Lodge, or its constituted authority, and repudiate the thought as unworthy of them or their brethren. But it appears that the continuance of said association would have the effect to create confusion and discord among the brethren of that jurisdiction, owing to its objects being misunderstood, and being desirous of healing all dissention's and meeting our brethren in the truly Masonic spirit of conciliation and brotherly love, we do hereby withdraw from said association, and do declare it dissolved ."

The severest of the many denunciations, individually and collectively was from a Grand Lodge of one of the mid-western States, which passed a series of resolutions in 1863, containing such statements as are here paraphrased:

1. The Grand Lodge declare the said Association a corrupt organization, treasonable to the Institution of Masonry and subversive to its sacred interests, honor and perpetuation.
3. That no Mason, subject to, or adhering to said Association shall be allowed to sit in or visit this Grand Lodge, or any subordinate Lodge, or hold affiliation with, or be recognized by any Mason in this jurisdiction, until he shall have solemnly, and in open Lodge, recanted and denounced all such connection with said Association.
4. No Grand Officer, and no officer of any subordinate Lodge shall be installed until he shall have made solemn pledge, in open Lodge, that he repudiates and condemns the said Association, and has never had any connection therewith.
5. That the Grand Lodge under which Robert Morris, the "Chief Conservator", holds or pretends to hold membership, be respectfully and fraternally requested by this Grand Lodge to bring him to suitable and merited punishment, "for his offenses against Masonry"; and that all sister Grand Lodges be requested to join us in this our solemn demand.

Several Grand Lodges felt this last vitriolic condemnation to be far too severe and most kept their repudiations and condemnations within the more gentlemanly language as expected in Masonic communications.

From an editorial by Cornelius Moore, in The Masonic Review, December 1863, he states: "The Grand Lodge of Kentucky, at its recent session placed the quietus upon the whole subject, by adopting the following: 'Resolved, That until the Grand Lodge of Kentucky shall otherwise order and determine, all so-called conservators, and all other persons not specially authorized by this Grand Lodge, are hereby prohibited and forbidden to lecture or work the so-called Conservator's work in any subordinate Lodge or Lodges, open schools of Masonic instruction, or lecture in any way on the subject of Masonic work, either to individual Masons or to assemblies of such within this Masonic jurisdiction; or to sell or dispose of any books by said secret order, or any member thereof, to any Mason owing Masonic allegiance to the Grand Lodge; and all such Masons and

Lodges are hereby forbidden to hear such lectures or work, or to purchase or receive such so-called Masonic books, or to unite themselves with the said body of Conservators.' "

As might be expected, during this period of our history, when the Civil War and Morris' Conservators' Movement held supremacy in the thoughts and actions of the Craft in the United States and,

19. in contrast to our time of instant communications, the personal piques, insults, accusations, denials, emotional displays and retributions (vicious and otherwise) had to rely upon the printed pages of the few Masonic publications it being doubtful that the largest had 10,000 circulation.

In one of the larger mid-west jurisdictions, the activities within the Grand Lodge assumed the comical aspects of a 1920's "Keystone Kops" movie. The Grand Secretary began publishing articles against Morris, the Conservators and their adherents. A petition was filed with the State Legislature to amend the Grand Lodge Charter, depriving the Grand Master (named a Conservator in Morris' membership rolls) of many of his official prerogatives. The Grand Secretary was removed from office by the Grand Master. The newly assigned Grand Secretary, also on the rolls of Morris Conservators, attempted to gain possession of the official books, seal, etc., by calling at his home with 'brotherly' assistance, resulting in, reportedly, physical violence and interference by the local law enforcement authorities..

The end result of this tragic, though somewhat hilarious episode was an article published in a local Masonic periodical, and reprinted in the Masonic Review of Cincinnati, Ohio, May 1863; one of the better known, highly respected, national Masonic magazines of the nineteenth century. To preface his copying the article, the editor says, "It is difficult to know whether to laugh or weep over the revelations of the following article, * * *

If his statements are true, and he says proofs are in his possession, the Order should at once take measures to rid itself of such dangerous internal enemies. * * * *

ED. REVIEW.

"TWELVE POINTED AND ONE POINTED CONSERVATORS."

The question is often asked us, "What is a twelve pointed Conservator?" We will answer as well as we can.

We have some printed evidences, which we cannot commit to writing. The points to which a twelve-pointed Conservator are bound, are, so near as we can ascertain from the proofs before us, as follows:

1. To secrecy.
2. That every document furnished the candidate as a member of the Conservator's Association, whether written or printed is to be considered as between himself and the Chief Conservator; that no one is to have access to any such document, to be informed of its allusions or existence, except those directly accredited by the Chief Conservator.
3. To answer and obey all summonses and orders of the Chief Conservator, and of all such who may be duly accredited by him without question as to the object or intent thereof.
4. To aid and help all Conservators in distress or in need of help, with advice, money, information, service, or in any other way, in preference to any other person, and especially in any way that will advance the interests of their association.

5. That the great end of the association shall be constantly kept in view, and uniformity of the work upon the basis prescribed by the Chief Conservator, commonly called the Webb-Preston system, shall be strenuously urged to the exclusion of all other Systems.

6. Every Conservator is bound to use all his influence to obtain and hold the first three offices in his Lodge; to teach the Morris system and no other, and to seek by every available means to obtain possession of the Grand Lodge so as to compel all Lodges to adopt and use the above named system of work.

7. To root out all the old Masons who adhere to any other system from office; to depreciate and diminish their influence, seduce them to their support when necessary or advisable by giving them unimportant offices; to create divisions and jealousies among them; to attack them and drive them from all participation in the business or counsels of the Craft.

20.

8. To menace and threaten all brethren who will not submit to their terms; to aggravate and persistently annoy them until they commit some indiscreet act, so that they may take advantage of the same.

9. To make use of the power when obtained to propagate the system of work dictated by the Chief Conservator, and to break down every Lodge that stands in the way.

10. To keep all secrets communicated by Conservators, without exception, let their character or objects be what they may.

11. To insist everywhere and at all times that the system of the Chief Conservator is the only true system, and that all other systems are illegitimate.

12. Not to assist in the making a Conservator, who has not previously declared in writing that he will fully conform to all the rules of the order.

A one-pointed Conservator is one bound to secrecy in general and special terms. The twelve-pointers are the confidential and trusted agents of the Chief Conservator, and are furnished with all the documents of the association, even the infamous "printed book."

The One-Pointers pay their ten dollars, but if supposed to be conscientious or tender-footed, they receive a very mild and inoffensive degree in lieu of the 'real' one, are furnished with the Mnemonics and vocabulary, and are taught how to read and work them.

They answer the purposes of the Chief Conservator. For special purposes he has his men. These special men are Jesuits in regard to everything and every body in Masonry but conservatism. The One-Pointers comprise nineteen out of twenty of the Conservators, and are actuated only by an honest desire to get instruction and secure uniformity.

The Twelve-Pointers aim at power, influence and money. If successful, they aim to increase the burdens of the Lodges, circulate their publications, speculate upon the money of the Grand Lodge, and create a necessity for new 'lectures and lecturers' by which the Craft can be bled and fleeced at their "will and pleasure".

How often do the Craft propose to submit to this system or bleeding? By and by another Cagliostro will arise, who knew not 'Moses' ".

The impact of the foregoing article must have raised the hackles of many of the Brethren of the affected jurisdiction who were undecided, relative to Morris' Conservator's Association. The writer, also the editor of the Masonic journal in which the article appeared, wrote nothing that was not in a customary mode of

the 18th and 19th centuries of American Freemasonry, relative to writings on virtually any subject that was not considered in accordance with the mainstream of Masonic philosophy. He followed the features and plans laid Out by Rob Morris in his letters of 1860, included his own interpretations and explanations, tactfully omitting references to personalities, etc., that might be considered ungentlemanly.

Strange though it may seem, this article does not appear to have been re-printed in any of the other national Masonic publications, of that period, although not all have survived the ravages of time; no other references have been discovered of the article or its author.

On June 24, 1865, Bro. Morris terminated the existence of the Conservators' Association in accordance with his original plans of 1860. He had promised to bring American Freemasonry into a state of uniformity in the Rituals and Lectures, based on the Work of Thomas Smith Webb of 1797.

For one in search of a Masonic paradox, a prime example would be Rob Morris and his Conservators movement. In a letter to the Freemasons of Michigan, July 6, 1863, he wrote concerning the Thomas Smith Webb Work: "For indeed the evidence, upon which the genuiness of the Webb Rituals, which I teach, is founded, is the same sort as that by which the genuineness of the 66 Books of the Bible 21. are established."

In his final correspondence to the members of the Conservators, June 24, 1865, he wrote: "Thomas Smith Webb, of Albany, N.Y., a paper-stainer by profession, not a member of any Grand Lodge, nor, at the time, a Mason of any note, did in the year 1797, issue a 'Freemason's Monitor', arrange a system of rituals corresponding to those of Preston and form a plan for their dissemination outside of the Grand Lodge authority. By instructing intelligent men as Lecturers, he published many editions of his own work and much personal travel, also by the arrangement of many new degrees in Masonry, he achieved a great success, and to this day, there is no higher comparison that can be applied to his system of lectures than to affirm, 'They are like those of Webb' ".

Rob Morris, in 1863, published:

THE MINATURE MONITOR
containing
ALL THE MONITORIAL INSTRUCTIONS
in
BLUE LODGE MASONRY.
of Thomas Smith Webb
compiled by
ROB MORRIS, LL.D.
Masonic Author and Lecturer."

Verbatim

"PREFACE:

The present national movement, which has for its object a perfect uniformity of Work and Lectures, by a return to the teachings of PRESTON AND WEBB, demands a cheap Pocket Monitor, which will give simply those portions used in acquiring and imparting the Rituals. Such a volume is here offered. The text conforms literally to Webb's Freemason's Monitor, edition of 1816. The omission of cuts, in accordance with his views, is compensated here by inserting the 'names of the

usual emblems', in their appropriate places respectively." (An original copy of the "Minature Monitor" is in the archives of Olympia Lodge, No. 1, F. & A.M. at Olympia, Washington.)

In the same communication, June 24, 1865, from which the above quotes were taken, Bro. Morris states: "The attacks, official and non-official, made upon the Conservators' Association will form a prominent feature, and naturally a disgraceful one, in the history of American Masonry from 1862 to 1865. Upon the one hand, a company of intelligent members of the Masonic Order, numbering nearly three thousand, including twenty-eight Grand Masters and Past Grand Masters, many Grand Secretaries and other dignitaries of the Order, a band embracing age and youth, learning, talent, experience and a fair ration of the religious and moral element as Masonry affords ----"

The Conservators' movement, finally has resulted in an establishing of a national uniformity in the work to a degree ten times greater than has been experienced since the revival of Freemasonry."

To arrive at a conclusion, relative to the veracity, sagacity and tenacity entailed in the efforts expended in the five years of the existence of the 'Conservator' Movement would be a near impossibility.

Attempting to measure the veracity of the efforts expended upon the Movement would try a viewers ability to understand his ofttime rambling, contradictory dissertations and assertions; charges and disputations of the validity of opinions of eminent Masons throughout the fraternity, and, most certainly, the tendency to demean the characters of the designers of the rituals and lectures in Masonic history. Rather than attracting loyalty and support among the Craft, Bro. Morris' plans for a highly secretive,

22.

centralized controlling body, composed of a select few with himself at the head, instilled fear among the Craft in general and brought about an unforeseen cooperation among the bodies and Grand bodies, nationwide, to defeat such an insidious threat, real or imagined.

The wisdom of the founder of the Conservators will, no doubt, be argued for years to come; a healthy sign of the generations of thinking Masons of the future.

From his design of the Order of the Eastern Star, poetry, books, almanacs, papers and letters, Bro. Rob Morris was a man of vision, not to be deterred by mere unsurmountable obstacles.

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