

Alonzo Willoughby Morgan

January 7, 1799 – May 29, 1889

Plot 5 Lot 23

Alonzo Morgan was born on January 7, 1799 in St. Albans, Vermont. At the age of 4, he was sent to Sandy Hill (Hudson Falls) where he lived with an aunt and uncle for 5 years. In 1808, nine year old Alonzo traveled alone back to Vermont to reunite with his parents. In a harrowing journey on a sloop which capsized in a storm, he was rescued with all of the passengers on board. When he was met by his father on his arrival, the two barely recognized one another, having been separated for so long. He was reunited with his family which had grown to include two sisters.

Back in St. Albans, he worked with his father making potash. Farmers cleared the land, burning the trees on it to create ash which was sold to be made into potash. A fertilizer, potash is naturally water soluble, and easily absorbed by plants. The sale of potash provided much-needed income to the family. It sold for a higher price in Canada, but trade between England and her colonies was embargoed, so the business included smuggling the potash over the border into Canada.

In 1812, Alonzo's father died, leaving the family nearly destitute. The War of 1812 made life so near the Canadian border dangerous, so his mother gathered the children and their meager possessions and prepared to move to Sandy Hill. Providentially, troops from Sandy Hill were in the area and remembered Alonzo from his stay there. With the soldiers to look out for them, they were able to board a lumber ship to Burlington, where they were met by her uncle Jonas Galusha, Governor of Vermont. While in Burlington, one of Alonzo's sisters died.

They eventually were able to get passage on a steamboat to Whitehall, traveling from there to Sandy Hill. They settled in Glens Falls at the bottom of Glen Street hill across from the present day Finch Pruyn paper company. Alonzo's mother married Henry Spenser, the first sheriff of Warren County.

After the war, a depression crippled the nation's economy. In 1816, the Northeast was chilled by an unprecedented cold spell known as the "cold year." There was heavy snow in June, frost during every month, killing crops and causing widespread business failure. On the heels of these challenges, Alonzo's mother died in 1819. At the age of 20, he was on his own.

Despite a failed business venture with his step-father, Alonzo managed to persevere, buying first 40, then another 11 acres in the heart of the village of Glens Falls. He began to develop the land from the downtown area outwards, selling lots and developing Park Street,

Elm Street, and Exchange Street. He went on to purchase more land and develop parts of Warren Street, Cherry Street, Center, Maple, Lawrence and Oak Streets. In the area north of Lawrence Street, he maintained a large working farm which he kept until the Village needed the land for further expansion.

In the midst of these commercial endeavors, he married Emma Warren of Warrensburg in 1825 or 1826. He built a home in 1843 on the corner of Maple and Pearl Streets, a beautiful Greek Revival mansion. He attended the Presbyterian Church, and was at various times, a Director of the Dividend Mutual Insurance Company, President of the Glens Falls Insurance Company, and a Director of Glens Falls National Bank.

Separated from his family as a child, scraping out a meager existence with his family selling potash, Alonzo's early years might have been the beginning of a life of poverty and hardship. Instead the experiences must have instilled in him the qualities needed to prosper as he can be credited as being responsible for the development of the heart of the City of Glens Falls.

Prepared Evelyn Donahue from a theatrical script written by William Woodward for the Chapman Historical Museums fall Glens Falls Cemetery tour in 2002.

Questions and comments should be directed to the Glens Falls City Historian at: City Hall 42 Ridge St. Glens Falls, NY historian@cityofglensfalls.com 518-761-3871.

**A W Morgan and his wife Emma's
inscription in the family grave stone
at the Glens Falls Cemetery.
Taken by Wayne Wright, City Historian**

