Squire Morgan

UNION'S PERSISTENT FAILURE

Fame and fortune somehow escaped Jonathon "Squire" Morgan. But not because he didn't try. The 1803 Union graduate took many titles — lawyer, inventor, writer, businessman — but the ones that stuck were not of his choosing — eccentric and failure.
Morgan, who lived to the age of 93, may have owed his longevity to the critical observation of his own infirmities, but this book sold about as well as all his others.

Morgan was born March 4, 1778 in Brimfield, Mass. At 21, he entered Brown University, but was probably asked to leave because of his unconventional scientific and philosophical ideas. From Brown, he came to Union, and after his graduation in 1803 studied law in Schenectady and Massachusetts.

In 1812, he moved to Alma, Maine where he worked as a lawyer and part-time inventor.

In 1820, he moved to Portland, Maine, where he lived the rest of his life. "Writing and invention rather than law claimed his chief attention," said a newspaper account, "but although Squire Morgan had a keen and able mind, it was somehow unfitted for dealing with the practical aspects of life. During the latter years he made little use of his fine legal education and rarely appeared in a court room, preferring to keep in touch with the events there by calling on the lawyers of his acquaintance."

The wiry, old man lived alone in a single room (surrounded by his gadgets) on Casco Street, an area frequented by teamsters.

He lost all his possessions in 1866 in a fire that destroyed much of Portland. Smith wrote after Morgan's death of the ill treatment Morgan received after the fire: "He was treated by the city authorities with an illiberality to which no others of the same class of suffering citizens were subjected, and could be aided by them only on terms of

There's old Squire Morgan! Arthur cries,
And the bending 'neath the weight of years
The Pilgrim plods along. His Eyes
Are weak and dim, and dull his ears,
His cloak for half a century
Has done him service, with the strap
He buttons round. It seems to me
He always wore the same gray cap.
He's so peculiar, odd and queer,
He finds but few associates,
His little chamber in the rear
Of Huckle's Row, a neighbor state,
Is filled with model pumps and mills
His ingenuity has made;
And half his drawers are lined with pills—
He never calls the doctor's aid
With all his love for oddity.
The patriarch has a generous heart,
And on the street is always free
His treasured knowledge to impart.
As he the power of want has known
His sympathy is with the poor;
Good men he loves, but hates a drone,
And shuts the miser from his door.

Daniel Clement Colesworthy

Daniel Clement Colesworthy paid tribute in 1876 to one of Portland's most recognized historic characters in his epic poem "School's Out."

with a silver-headed cane in hand. His peculiar (but familiar) appearance during these constitutional made him a favorite subject for 19th century silhouette cutters.

"Prompt in attendance at all public lectures on science, theology and matters of public welfare, he was always a profound listener. So well stored was his mentality with resources of thought and study that he never felt himself alone, even after many of his closest friends had departed from the earth."

Morgan was a joiner. He was a member of the Whig party, a clerk of the Universalist society, a librarian of the Portland Mechanics Association, a Mason, and a charter member of the Cumberland County Bar Association.

Morgan was last seen alive on a November Sunday in 1871 when he entered his room. Friends "who missed his weary and creeping steps upon the street where he sojourned" entered his apartment the next day to find he had died in his sleep, surrounded by a few pieces of furniture and a roomful of half-finished inventions.

His friend Smith, who shared membership with Morgan in many organizations, wrote in a tribute: "It would seem that this venerable citizen has by his death, and almost as suddenly, become to the public mind of Portland a recognized historic character. The memory of him is the subject of more general and lasting conversation and newspaper articles than has been the memory of all of the many distinguished men, professional and non-professional, who have died within the last months of the year."

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Squire Morgan

As an inventor, his gadgets rarely worked, and even more rarely sold.

As a writer, he produced a number of books, including one opposing the Newtonian system of philosophy, but none of them ever sold.

As a lawyer, he was always on the side of justice and mercy, but he often provided his services without charge.

His list of attempts far outweighs his list of accomplishments. Among his "inventions" were a lamp that wouldn't light, a steamboat that wouldn't move, a steamboat that did (but only at four miles per hour), a steamboat that cost him $2,000, a perpetual motion machine that "would stop now and then," and a glue that reportedly worked, but only until a wealthy glue merchant from Massachusetts undersold him.

He took up farming in 1850, but an unscrupulous partner swindled him and nearly ruined him financially. He invented a coffee mill (that worked) but it never sold well.

Decades of work in perfecting a steam boiler benefitted not Morgan, but a businessman who had the funds to refine and produce Morgan's invention. Morgan's friend F.O.J. Smith, a lawyer and former congressman, wrote after Morgan's death, "after working for fifty-five years to reduce steam to a motive power, his first great thought for benefiting mankind, exhausting all his resources in his efforts, he failed from no want of correct conceptions but for want of the means to perfect them."

Through his failures, though, Morgan kept his sense of cheerfulness and he was content to keep trying.

A reporter from the Eastern Argus was probably being as diplomatic as possible in Morgan's obituary in 1871 when he said "no man knew better than he how to project...and few ever effected small results from so large a domain of great expectations."

If Morgan was unknown as an inventor, writer and lawyer, he was known even less as a financial success. "It was inventions — provided only ten dollars. Some attorney friends gathered the necessary funds for a funeral. They also established a plot for indigent lawyers in a Portland cemetery. Today, Morgan's unmarked grave holds the only lawyer ever buried there.

Morgan often was helped (usually financially and socially) by friends, sometimes without his knowledge. Wrote Smith: "Proud, sensitive, his friends carefully, and when possible, secretly, performed acts of benevolence with the spirit of delicacy, which lifted from the good man's heart all sense of obligation."

His published works include a new theory of philosophy, an arithmetic, "The Elements of Grammar" (one edition was titled the "Steamboat Grammar" because it was ornamented with a picture of a steamboat, probably one of Morgan's designs), and a translation of the New Testament from Greek to English that differed widely from other translations.

He also published a 60-page work titled "A Synopsis of Diseases." "In this little work," he wrote in the preface, "I have endeavored to explain the original principles on which all diseases originate, progress, and terminate, either for health or harm to the individual."

He went on to that the book was based on "about 50 years painful experience, and very careful and critical observation of my own infirmities." He said he expected the book to be received by "the learned profession, with very stern and iron countenance, and have no hope for patronage nor support from them, and for a very good reason, because it will very much abridge their practice and lighten their purse."
Squire Morgan, Once A Familiar Figure In Portland, Shunned Law Practice For Life Of Solitude

Squire Morgan At His Appearance At 91

Clad always in long, thick coat and choker hat, with the usual addition of glasses on the street and an embroidered handkerchief on his pocket, Jonathan Morgan, better known as Squire Morgan, was king of the streets of Portland. And many a local lawyer's office knew this odd personality who came in to visit himself, but pulled over his eyes, and listened silently to any conversation that might be going on. For Morgan was himself a man of few words.

The why, little old man lived in a single room on Cross Street, behind what was then called "Simonsen Bros," much frequented by lawyers, but he loved company and a warm place, and he was one of the few reminiscences of his social life, he was asked about the City.

Born at Bridgford, Maine, in 1884, he graduated from Union College in 1888, studied law and moved to Portland. Here however, writing and invention rather than the law doldred his chief attention, but although Squire Morgan had a keen and active mind, he was somewhat uninterested in dealing with the practical aspects of life. He wrote several books, invented a cylinder stove, a coffee mill and various other appliances and was popularly supposed to have made a working model of a submarine which sailed Fullerton's famous Cleopatra, but none of these brought him any financial return. During the latter years at least, he made little use of his fine legal education and never appeared in a court room, preferring to keep in touch with the events there by calling on the lawyers of his acquaintance.

When Zin Taverner stood at the corner of Federal and Temple Streets, Squire Morgan was accustomed to converge on him the group which assem- bled around the store, remaining till 11 when he reluctantly took his departure for Cross Street. Samuel King's grocery store on Green Street was another of his haunts when the lawyer's offices were closed. The picture taken by J. F. King shows the old man as he looked at 91, when he signed a will before the late Judge McCormick.

As the infirmities of age came upon him, Squire Morgan was cared for by the Cumberland County Bar Association, and when nearly 94, he died there on her death from pneumonia which occurred in his room on Cross Street, surrounded by the members of the county bar and nurses from whom he had been so much and gained so little.

Soldiers To Stage Play

Melbourne, Nov. 26.--The Three Act comedy, The Adventures of Grandpa, will be presented at the Army Club, 1 and 3, by local talent under the auspices of Co. I, 133rd Infantry. The production is being coached by Carl E. Cunningham. Among those taking part are Hazel Perkinson, Roger Cuba, John E. Quigley, Hayden Lahee, Martin Thierhapp, Hilda Soule, Francis Brown, Clara Stenman, Margaret Metz and Isabelle McDonald. Speciality numbers will be presented between the acts. Music will be furnished by a local orchestra.
ARTS/BOOKS

Paintings from life

A look at some of the street people who caught the eye of our portraitists of a century ago

By WILLIAM H. KENT

Top left: Portrait of a Gentleman (Courtauld Institute, More Miromand, Sotheby's)

Top right: Portrait of a Lady (Courtauld Institute, More Miromand, Sotheby's)

Bottom left: Portrait of a Gentleman (Courtauld Institute, More Miromand, Sotheby's)

Bottom right: Portrait of a Lady (Courtauld Institute, More Miromand, Sotheby's)
12 November, 1940

Graduate Council
Administration Building

The attached typescript is a copy of a typescript by Florence E. Barker, Portland, Maine, concerning Jonathan Morgan, Union College alumnus. The college librarian's office has made two copies of this, the one attached and one for the library files.
Died in Portland, Maine, between November 3rd and 6th, 1871, aged 93.
He was born at Brimfield, Mass., March, 1778, and was the son of Jonathan Morgan, whose father, David, was one of the first settlers of that town.
He entered Brown University 1799, but changed to Union College, where he graduated 1803. He studied law with William Teler, of Schenectady, removed to Waterford, N. Y., afterwards to Brimfield, Mass., then to Cincinnati, studying with Ethan Allen Stone, and was admitted to the bar.
He removed to Shrewsbury, Mass., in 1812, thence to Alma, Maine, in 1820, and finally to Portland, where he lived about a half a century. He had a taste for mecbanics and speculative philosophy, spent much time in endeavoring to obtain perpetual motion, and wrote a large book, still in manuscript opposing the Newtonian system of philosophy. He published some years ago a translation of the New Testament.


In 1860 Jonathan Morgan, who had been clerk of the parish for thirty-one years, retired from the office and received the thanks of the society. (Universalist). History of Portland, Me., Wm. Willis, by Bailey & Noyes, Portland, 1865.
Morgan, Jonathan
From: Brimfield, Mass.
Last residence: Portland, Me.

War 1812
No record found
March 6, 1986

Mr. Wilfrid G. Lofft
19 Kenwood Drive
Kitchener, Ontario
Canada N2B 3H1

Dear Mr. Lofft:

Enclosed you will find a copy of the contents of our alumni file for Jonathan Morgan class of 1803.

As you can see, a biographical sketch was done on Mr. Morgan by one Florence E. Barker. I think you will find the information you need contained in it.

I hope we have been of some assistance.

Sincerely,

Tina Cleason

Enclosures
Alumni Records Offices,
Union College,
Schenectady, New York, U. S. A.

Dear Sirs:

Re: Jonathan MORGAN : March 4, 1778 - November 6, 1871

During the past fifteen years I have been compiling biographies of the scholars who translated the English Bible.


One source states that he received a degree (B. A.? ) from Union College in 1803, but no location for the college is given and no details.

Query - Can you confirm which degree Jonathan Morgan received from your college?

Query - Would your records hold any biographical data on this scholar?

Particularly I am seeking the name of his mother, but any details would be most welcome.

Thank you warmly for your gracious assistance, it is truly appreciated.

Faithfully,

Wilfrid G. Lofft
Alumni Records Office,

Union College,

Schenectady, New York,

U.S.A.
While looking over some newspapers of the year 1871 I came upon an obituary notice. Its opening sentence attracted my attention: "Jonathan Morgan is dead." I read it through, and re-read it, and marked the page. There was something about that short tribute to a man of whom I had never heard that made me wish to know more about him, if possible; so I searched all available sources of information and gathered the following material, which I submit. I had no idea of collecting these items for publication, but it seemed to me as I looked up the ancestry of this remarkable man that he deserves a place among those whose names are scattered through the pages of the history of our early times.

Born during the Revolutionary struggle, his boyhood and youth were spent amid scenes which molded his character, and his heritage was that of the pioneer and patriot. I can find no record of any sketch of his life having been published. If this imperfect attempt should chance to come to the attention of any branch of the family, I believe that they will be interested to learn something of the life of one of its members who by reason of his upright life and his talents, deserves to have his name brought from obscurity into a place where it rightfully belongs.

Upon the walls of the Greenleaf Law Library, on the upper floor of the County Court House in Portland, Maine, hangs a diploma bearing the date of 1803, which was awarded by Union Law College, Schenectady, N.Y., to Jonathan Morgan. There, also, hangs a portrait of the man, in the characteristic posture in which he always appeared in the court room. There
Jonathan Morgan - 2.

also is his cane, with the date of 1809 thereon, and a small statue of him, seated, wearing a felt hat with drooping brim, a long cloak, and holding a scroll in his hands. The diploma was purchased (sic) after his death by Thomas Markey, and presented to the Mayor, who gave it to Judge Morris. It was framed by Mr. Hale, and placed upon the walls of the Municipal Court Room, where it hung for several years.

Jonathan Morgan was born in Brimfield, Mass., March 4th, 1778. He was the son of Jonathan Morgan, grandson of David Morgan, one of the first settlers of that town. The name of Morgan, as is well known, is a name of honor, and of great antiquity. It is a Welsh name, of Celtic origin, common in England before the Norman Conquest. Lower, in his "Dictionary of Family Names," says this:

"MORGAN — A Welsh name of high antiquity. Founder of the Pelagian Heresy in the fourth century (about A.D. 260). The name signifies, (of the Sea)."

Top, one of the ancient Welsh kings, Morgan of Cae-Morgan, is accredited the invention and adoption of the "Trial by Jury" which he called the "Apostolic Law; for as Christ and his twelve Disciples are finally to judge the world, so human trials should be composed of the King and twelve wise men." This was a century before Alfred the Great, who is given the credit of being the founder of the trial by jury.

The American Morgans, to which family the subject of this sketch belongs, trace their descent from two brothers, James and Miles. James settled in Virginia, one of his descendants being Daniel Morgan of Revolutionary fame.

Miles, the ancestor of Jonathan, sailed from Bristol, England, to Boston in 1636. He soon married Prudence Gilbert, and he and his young bride, "on horses and carrying their muskets," joined a party of Springfield
Jonathan Morgan - 3

planters picked up by Col. William Pynchon, and set across the county, resting at the site of Brimfield and making camp there. Two Quohog Indian villages were situated near the town, as also was the principle (sic) Indian stronghold known as Quohog Old Fort. Although Miles was the youngest of the party, not yet twenty-one, he took command, was given positions of trust, and finally became one of the most valued men in the colony. Indian fighter and sturdy tiller of the soil, his name was prominent in town affairs.

The Morgan-Pynchon lands included the present city of Springfield, West Springfield, Wilbraham, Ludlow and Longmeadow. Morgan's allotment comprised lands afterwards occupied by car and repair shops of the Boston & Maine Railroad, formerly the Connecticut River Railroad, and remained in the family for two centuries.

Springfield was burned and sacked by the Indians during King Phillips' (sic) War in 1675. Col. Pynchon being absent, Miles took command. His son, Peleliah, aged fifteen, was killed in this engagement. In 1879 a statue of Miles Morgan was placed in the public square.

David, son of Miles, was born July 23, 1648. Married Mary Clark.

David, son of David, called "Deacon David", was born in 1679, married Deborah Cotton. He was one of twenty citizens of Springfield, who petitioned Governor Stoughton that "lands are falling short, and any thoughts of such falling off being very afflicting to us, lest there should be want of accommodations for our posterity to live comfortably thereon, the want thereof may enforce their removing (as well as some of ourselves) out of the province to such place where they may obtain lands to live on." The result was that Governor Stoughton, with the consent of the Council, laid off the township of Brimfield, seventeen miles from Springfield.
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Here a meeting house was built, and on a distribution of "sittings" therein, David was given a "seat in the front pew, on the men's side", and was appointed deacon. He was allowed one hundred and twenty acres of land.

Jonathan, son of David, born —, married Ruth Miller.

Jonathan, Jr., son of Jonathan, was born April 12, 1748, married Elizabeth Thompson.

Jonathan, the subject of this sketch, son of Jonathan, Jr., was born in Brimfield, March 4, 1778. At the age of twenty-one he entered Brown University, Hartford, Connecticut. After a short time, a friend of his being transferred to Union College, Schenectady, N.Y., Jonathan went with him, graduated from that institution in 1803, and commenced the study of law with William Tiller in Schenectady, with whom he read law for a few months. Then after six months in Waterford, N.Y., he returned to Brimfield, his home town, and read with his Uncle Abner; after several months removed to Cincinnati, to study with Ethan Allen Stone, and was admitted to the Bar. But home ties drew him again to Massachusetts; and after being for a time in the office of Stephen Pynchon, and being admitted to the bar in New Hampshire, he began the practice of law in Shrewsbury, Mass., in November, 1806. In 1812 he came to Maine, settling in Alma, Lincoln County., where he practiced his profession, and in his spare hours worked out a number of mechanical devices. He turned his attention to steam boilers, and in 1814 built a steamboat having a stern paddle wheel. The engine was built for him in a country blacksmith shop. This proving to be a failure, he built another the following year which had a speed of four miles an hour. In 1818 he started another boat, improving the model; and becoming short of funds, gave the boat as security for money with which he perfect and complete it. But he lost the boat, and over $2,000 in the venture. The following year he taught school and practiced law in Brunswick,
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Maine, and in 1820 came to Portland, where he lived until his death in 1871. He maintained an office in Haymarket Row, after a time removing to Middle Street, boarding at Boston’s Tavern, which later was the United States Hotel; then at the old Kendall Tavern, kept by Israel Waterhouse; later boarded with a Mrs. Mayberry, and then with a Mrs. Mason. Finally, his aged mother came to the city and he maintained a home for her on Casco Street until her death, after which he kept bachelor’s hall on Exchange Street till the fire of 1866, when he suffered the loss of all his earthly possessions. Then his friend, the Hon. F.O.J. Smith, provided a room for him in the old Advertiser building on Cross Street, where he lived alone until the time of his death.

In 1831 he operated a glue factory in Portland, having obtained a patent for the manufacture of commercial glue, and was successful until a wealthy glue manufacturer of Massachusetts dropped the price so low that Mr. Morgan, not being able to compete, was obliged to close his factory. He then manufactured coffee mills, his own invention, invented a cylinder stove, and in many New England towns superintended the construction of brick fireplaces built upon the plan of the Franklin stove.

In August of the year 1856, there was an exhibition at the Elm House of a "new article in the pump line", another invention of Mr. Morgan’s. The chief feature of this pump was its valve arrangement, which instead of the usual clapper valves consisted of a round rubber ball, which it would seem never could get out of order. It was arranged to be used as a common suction pump and as a force pump. With a few feet of hose attached to it, it would serve the purpose of a fire engine, window washer, tree sprayer, etc. Connected with a cistern or a well, it made a very efficient and serviceable piece of apparatus.” In the year 1850
he took up farming and an unprincipled partner swindled him and nearly ruined him financially. Early in the year 1871 he offered to supply the city with wooden paving blocks at four dollars per cord.

A few months after Mr. Morgan's failure, through lack of funds, to finish one of his inventions, I find the following paragraph in one of the daily papers of the time:

"NEW STEAM BOILER - REMARKABLE RESULTS. For the past week, careful experiments have been made at the Portland Company's Works by an expert from Boston, to determine the economy of the Blanchard Steam Boiler compared with the ordinary boilers now in common use. The test was made between a Blanchard boiler of 834 square feet of heating service, and the two horizontal tubular boilers of 1552 square feet of heating service, which are being used at the Company's works. The experiment was a practical one, made with great care, and has developed such important results that, should future trial corroborate those obtained in the present experiment, a new idea in steam power will soon be inaugurated, and the inventor will reap a large reward for his boldness in taking a new departure and in proving an acknowledged principle entirely incorrect. In a few days other experiments will be made, a report of which will be made in public. If, with a boiler of one half the heating surface, a gain of 50 per cent. in power is obtained, which it is claimed was obtained in this test, it behooves steam users to look to their coal piles."

Knowing that Mr. Morgan had been for years studying the steam problem; that his ideas were original; and that he had nearly perfected a steam boiler, and only lacked the necessary funds to make it available to the public, explaining their various and unusual points, it makes one wonder whether, instead of spending his declining years in penury, he might not have been the inventor who should rightfully have enjoyed the fruits of this successful product of mechanical skill. Whoever profited by claiming the poor old man's ideas and developing them as their own, no doubt reaped a golden harvest—a thing which Jonathan Morgan would have scorned to do. Like Elijah Kellog, his heart was too big and his sympathy too far reaching for him to be able to accumulate this world's goods, especially at the expense of others.
In the practice of law he was always to be found on the side of justice and mercy; and he pleaded many a client's case when he knew he could never be paid for his services. Neither could he be brow-beaten or bribed.

During all the time that he was engaged in his various activities he studied the problem of perpetual motion, sometimes working all night on his theories; and his room was always filled with parts of machines with which he experimented. His active brain was always at work. His labors in the fields of science, art and mechanics would require a large volume to describe.

His published works include a new theory of Philosophy, an Arithmetic, a volume of five hundred pages, The Elements of English Grammar, first published in 1830 and revised in 1814 (Hallowell: Goodale & Burton, 1814; 2nd. ed., corrected and revised, Portland: Thurston, Illsley & Co., 1844), a copy of which is in the Portland Public Library. One of these editions was called the "Steamboat Grammar", the cover being ornamented with the picture of a steamboat. "The New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ" translated from the Greek into pure English; with explanatory notes on certain passages, wherein the author differs from other translators; by J. Morgan, A. B.; Portland: S. H. Colesworthy; Boston: B. B. Mussey; New York: P. Price; Philadelphia: C. J. Gilron; Cincinnati: A. F. Ames; Louisville: Noble & Dean; 1848. He also published a treatise on "Diseases; Cause and Cure", of about sixty pages.

In a letter to his friend, Daniel C. Colesworthy, in 1869, he said
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"My Synopsis of Diseases", I have nearly revised and enlarged for
a reprint, and have my New Theory of Natural Philosophy nearly ready".
He had been at work upon a commentary of the Bible for many years
before his death, which was left unfinished; Morgan & Thompson,
Marriages; Extract from papers of Jonathan Morgan, late of Portland,

"There's old Squire Morgan", Arthur cries,
And, bending 'neath the weight of years,
The pilgrim plods along; his eyes
Are weak and dim, and dull his ears.
His cloak for half a century
Has done him service, with the strap
He buttons 'round. It seems to me
He always wore the same grey cap.
He's so peculiar, odd and queer,
He finds but few associates;
His little chamber in the rear
Of Huckster's Row, a neighbor states,
's filled with model pumps and mills
His ingenuity has made;
And half his drawers are filled with pills;
He never sought the doctor's aid.
With all his love of oddity,
The patriarch has a generous heart,
And on the Street is always free
His treasured knowledge to impart.
His sympathy is for the poor;
Good men he loves, but hates a drone,
And shuts the sniveler from his door."

Colonel Fred N. Dow, who at the time of his death a few months ago was the oldest living member of the Cumberland Bar, remembered Mr. Morgan well, who, he said, often came to call upon him at his office, and sit for a while, and talked of his various interests, and occasionally took models of his inventions there. Col. Dow, then a very young man, enjoyed listening to the eccentric old gentleman and cordially welcomed his frequent evening calls. Hon. Augustus Moulton also remembers the old and his peculiar appearance upon the streets.

The following tribute is from the pen of Hon. F. O. J. Smith, Mr. Morgan's friend and brother member of the Bar and Masonic lodge, at whose residence, Forest House, Mr. Morgan was often a guest:

"It would seem that this venerable citizen has by his death, and almost as suddenly, become to the public mind of Portland a recognized historic character. The memory of him is the subject of more general and lasting conversation and newspaper articles than has been the memory of any and all of the many distinguished men, professional and non-professional, who have died within the last months of the year. What makes the contrast more marked is the fact that, with one exception, he seemed to be forgotten by the several institutions, scientific and benevolent, of which he had been, in more prosperous times, and had continued to be down to his death, a member, unimpeachable in his fidelity to each, as he was in his morals, conduct and habits of life."
"As a sufferer in the conflagration of '66, and of the number who lost all their possessions, he was treated by the city authorities with an illiberality to which no others of the same class of suffering citizens were subjected, and could be aided by them only on terms of submissions to a pauper guardianship, which was humiliating and unjust to his well earned and merited self respect. If poor in purse, he was not so poor, in the face of his misfortune, namely spirit and no ility of thought not to resent the indignity becomingly, and scorn the proffered endowment that so larded his bread with poisoned humility. In an article which he wrote and published, when the weight of more than ninty years was bowing his once erect form, he has left a record of the sense of this injustice in words calm, logical, and of unquestionable rebuke.

"The sublimity of his years, running far back of the memories of those around him, was personified in him as in few other men. Every person, old and young, felt in their heart on coming into his presence, the involuntary uttering of a voice which said, Peace on earth to this man of good will.

"By nature, education and habit, from his early manhood, he was known as being social—not convivial—fond of intercourse with, men of education observation and intelligence. He became an ascetic, not from choice, but from the influence of the world around him. He found himself aloof only by being in advance of it in thought, and in his ambition to serve his fellow men. He could not practice duplicity in his profession. He was too honest for the world and its controlling interests to succeed with it, in a material way. One of his admiring friends said of him, I have spent many hours, when I should have been asleep, listening to him and his friend, John Gordon, discuss their favorite theories. I have visited him in his
Jonathan Morgan—11

room, many times, always learning something. He was a great lover of nature, and through it saw and worshiped God."

"Prompt in attendance at all public lectures on science, theology and matters of public welfare, he was always a profound listener. So well stored was his mentality with resources of thought and study that he never felt himself alone, even after many of his close friends had departed from the earth. When his aged mother came to the city, for many years he set an example of filial devotion.

"Much more might be said of him and of his character; of that inner divinity which made him the man he was. The writer of this tribute knew him personally, at an earlier day than any other person, perhaps, who was present at his funeral.

"After working for fifty-five years to reduce steam to a motive power, his first great thought for benefiting mankind, exhausting all his resources in his efforts, he failed from no want of correct conceptions but for want of the means to perfect them. It was then that I, as a boy, made his acquaintance. He was the same mild, instructive, communicative and social man that he was at the time of his death. For forty-five years I have known him familiarly and found him sterling. Proud, sensitive, his friends carefully, and when possible, secretly, performed acts of benevolence with a spirit of delicacy, which lifted from the good man’s heart all sense of obligation." F.O.J. Smith, Forest House.

Jonathan Morgan was small in stature. He was never robust but had great tenacity of life. His features were good, but were usually partially hidden by a broad brimmed hat which he wore with the brim turned down, and he always wore goggles on the street and a shade over his eyes when indoors. His bent form, enveloped in a capacious cloak, was a familiar sight on
Portland streets and often attracted the attention of strangers. Notwithstanding his advanced age his mind was alert and active, and though he appeared feeble, it was the feebleness attendant upon old age and constant activity of mind and body.

He was a Whig in politics and a Universalist in religion, and was clerk of the old Universalist Society for many years. He was librarian of the Portland Mechanics Association. He was also a Mason. In a book of "The Rules and Regulations of the Cumberland Bar" I found his name and that of his friend, Hon. F.O.J. Smith, enroled as charter members. At his death he was the oldest living member. These rules were adopted March 13, 1829. There are only two of these pamphlets in existence today, as far as known; one is in the possession of Mr. Ward, custodian of the Greenleaf Law Library, and the other in the library of the Maine Historical Society in Portland.

During his last days, when he lived in his little room on Cross Street, it was his custom to spend his evenings calling upon his friends, and would be seen late at night slowly making his way homeward. On Friday evening, November 3, 1871, he was seen thus homeward bound, apparently in his usual state of health. That was the last. On Monday morning, a friend, on going to his room, found him lying peacefully at rest. There was the same calm look, showing no signs of suffering. His age was ninety-three years, eight months. He was unmarried.

His funeral, held at the Congress Square Church, of which he was a member, was attended by the members of the Cumberland Bar, the Aged Brotherhood, the Masonic orders, and many others. The interment was in Evergreen Cemetery, a lot being provided by the Cumberland Bar. Notice of his death was read at the next session of the Superior Court, which adjourned to honor his memory,
and flags on the City building were set at half mast.

Jonathan Morgan died poor in purse but rich in the knowledge and experiences of a well spent life.

The sale of his personal effects at auction was held in his room, by F.O. Bailey, the proceeds of which netted only ten dollars. Besides the bed and a few odd pieces of furniture, there were stored in an adjoining room, mills, mowing machines, plows, harrows, and models of his steamboat and cylinder stove, and various other unfinished products of his inventive genius.
Portland’s Cheerful Failure
by Tom Verde

Portland's Jonathan E. ("Squire") Morgan was the eccentric personality behind countless ventures and inventions that for one reason or another didn’t work, didn’t make money or never attracted public support. "No man knew better than he how to project ... and few ever effected small results from so large a domain of great expectations," stated the writer of Morgan's obituary in the Eastern Argus in 1871.

Morgan invented a lamp that "utterly refused to give light," a steamboat that wouldn’t move, a second steamboat that did move—at a speed of four miles an hour ("too slow for any practicable purposes"); a perpetual motion machine that "would stop, now and then," and a glue which appeared to have promise until another fellow undersold him. He tried farming once, but was cheated by his partner and that enterprise failed as well.

Yet, according to contemporary accounts, he "kept his cheerfulness" and seemed not the slightest discouraged by his constant failures.

Morgan was born in Massachusetts in 1778. He attended Brown University but graduated from Union College in Schenectady, New York. Morgan was probably "rusticated" to Union—that is, asked to leave Brown—perhaps because of his unconventional scientific and philosophical ideas. Morgan had "a taste for mechanics and speculative philosophy," according to Union's alumni file.

After his graduation from Union in 1803, Morgan moved around quite a bit. He studied law in Massachusetts, where he was admitted to the bar. He finally settled for good in Portland in 1820.

Morgan was rarely consulted, and even less frequently paid (he often offered his services gratis to those in need of them). When he died, Morgan was both the oldest and the poorest member of the Cumberland County Bar. A prominent friend, fellow attorney and former Congressman F.O.J. Smith handled the sale of the
Squire's estate. The total value of Morgan's possessions at the time of his death was ten dollars.

Smith induced his fellow attorneys to foot the bill for Morgan's funeral expenses. He also had a plot set aside in Portland's Eastern Cemetery at the foot of Munjoy Hill for indigent lawyers. Today, Morgan is the only lawyer buried there. No headstone marks the grave.

Financial success was the least of Jonathan Morgan's concerns. As the Argus delicately put it: "It was not one of his traits, the art of keeping or accumulating money."

According to a local historian, Morgan was "an impractical person, a bonâ fide eccentric." Wearing a broad brimmed hat, a camel cloak and leather gogles, Morgan would walk the cobblestoned streets of Portland, silver-headed cane in hand, slightly stooped. His curious appearance made him a favorite subject with 19th century silhouette cutters.

Portland historian Nathaniel Gould wrote, "When I was a boy I used to see [Squire Morgan] at the Elm House sitting by the stove warming himself. At about eleven o'clock he would start for his lonely room.... He was an inventor but never invented anything of benefit to himself. He invented a cylinder stove and coffee mill and other appliances.... He was an intelligent but an eccentric man."

Morgan was an author as well as an attorney and inventor. In 1844 he wrote an English grammar and in 1848 he translated the New Testament from the Greek. In 1860 he published a pamphlet entitled A Synopsis of Diseases.

"In this little work," wrote Morgan in its preface, "I have endeavored to explain the original principles on which all diseases originate, progress, and terminate, either for health or harm to the individual." Morgan based his conclusions on "about fifty years painful experience, and very careful and critical observation of my own infirmities." He expected his ideas to be received by "the learned profession, with very stern and iron countenance, and have no

from them, and for a very good reason, because it will very much abridge their practice and lighten their purse." He was right. Like everything else he published, A Synopsis of Diseases never sold well.

Morgan was also a religious fanatic. In the preface to his New Testament translation he defends Christianity for the benefit of "that class of people called infidels." Morgan discussed the practicality and virtue of the Ten Commandments and demonstrated that the teachings of Christ were of Christianity. He then posits, with logic smacking of legielistic gymnastics, that unbelievers must therefore be obstructors of virtue.

No doubt about it, Morgan was a grossly opinionated man. But he was not egotistical about his opinions—he merely wanted to do good for his fellow man, whether through something as simple as the invention of a substitute for plaster (a formula which others later stole from him to invent papier-maché) or as monumental as the defense of the Christian religion.

On a Sunday in November of 1871 Jonathan Morgan entered his rooms on Cross Street and was not seen alive again. Those "who missed his weary and creeping steps upon the street where he sojourned" entered his apartments the following Monday and found that he had died in his sleep. In his 93-year lifetime, Morgan had been asked to leave a prominent college, opposed Newtonian physics, performed free legal services, produced machines and gadgets that rarely worked, and been cheated and misled by various commercialists.

Five years later, Daniel Clement Colesworthy, in "School's Out," his epic poem of Portland, paid tribute to Portland's most prominent eccentric.

There's old Squire Morgan! Arthur cries, And the bending neath the weight of years, The Pilgrim plods along. His Eyes Are weariest, and dim, and dull his ears, His cloak for half a century has done him service, with the strap, He bounds round. It seems to me, He always wore the same gray cap. He's so peculiar, odd and queer, He finds but few associates, His little chamber in the rear Of Huckle's Row, a neighbor states, Is filled with model pumps and mills, His ingenuity has made: And half his drawers are lined with pills, He never calls the doctor's aid, With all his love for oddity, The patriarch has a generous heart, And on the street is always free His treasured knowledge to impart, As be the power of want has known, His sympathy is with the poor. Good men he loves, but hates a drone, And shut the sniveler from his door.

Tom Verde is a Portland writer with a passion for odd bits of