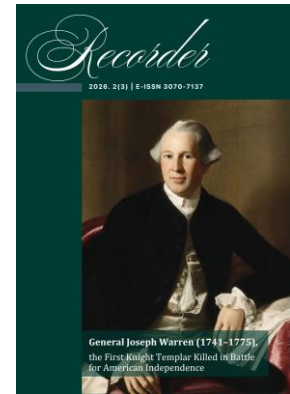




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Jacob Morton (1761–1836): A Biographical Study

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Abstract

In 2026, the 265th anniversary of the birth of Jacob Morton is commemorated. Morton was an American public official, an officer of the New York Militia, and one of the first three Masters of the Grand Lodge of New York. Despite his importance, his life and career remain insufficiently studied from a historical perspective and have received only limited attention in scholarly literature. The purpose of this article is to address this historiographical gap through a comprehensive examination of the various aspects of the life and achievements of this distinguished figure of his era.

The article examines Jacob Morton's early years in order to explore the circumstances and influences that shaped his character and worldview. Although his parents were Scottish-German immigrants, they quickly established themselves within New York society and played a significant role during the American Revolutionary War. The atmosphere surrounding the birth of a new nation, inspired by the ideals of liberty and self-determination, profoundly influenced Jacob Morton's outlook and his lifelong commitment to public service.

One of the most remarkable chapters of Jacob Morton's biography is undoubtedly his service as an officer of the New York Militia. During the formative years of the United States, when New York faced constant threats from both internal and external conflicts, the militia played a vital role in safeguarding the city. As demonstrated in this study, Morton distinguished himself as a capable and highly competent military commander. The article examines not only his contribution to the defense of New York but also his extensive service to the city's civic administration. Throughout his career, he held a number of important public offices, including judge of the Court of Justices, Alderman, Comptroller, City Inspector, and Secretary of the Common Council. His dedication to improving the welfare of New York's citizens is beyond question.

Particularly noteworthy is one of the least explored aspects of Morton's life—his involvement in Freemasonry. The article analyzes his activities as Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of New York and examines his contribution to the establishment and development of Morton Commandery.

Keywords: Jacob Morton (1761–1836), Morton's Brigade of Artillery, St. John's Lodge No.1, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of New York, New York Militia.

1. Introduction

The names of many outstanding individuals whose achievements helped shape the course of history are, over time, forgotten or overshadowed by more prominent events and personalities. Jacob Morton (1761–1836) represents such a case. Although his name appears in brief biographical sketches and reference works, his life and contribution to the development of New York during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries remain insufficiently studied from a historical perspective and have received only limited attention in scholarly literature. The purpose of this article is to address this historiographical gap by examining the various aspects of the life and career of this remarkable individual.

A comprehensive study of Jacob Morton's life and activities is both timely and significant. His service in the New York Militia, his energetic participation in municipal government, and his important role in the

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Masonic movement reveal a multifaceted personality who left a lasting imprint on the history of New York, yet continues to remain undeservedly overlooked in historical scholarship.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. The materials used in this study include artifacts preserved in the Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar (Houston, USA), as well as the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of New York ([Proceedings..., 1789](#); [Proceedings..., 1803](#)).

In addition, biographical studies on Jacob Morton were used in the preparation of this article. A variety of archival materials, memoirs, diary entries of contemporaries, and official documents served as the main supporting sources. Among the memoir materials that vividly describe the Morton household and family, as well as Jacob Morton's command of the Fourth of July parade, the diary of the young Ch.F. Adams, the future distinguished American diplomat, is of particular importance. The entry is dated July 4, 1826 ([Adams, 1826](#)).

After Jacob Morton's death, J. Herring became his first biographer, publishing an article entitled "Biography of the Late Major General Morton" in the New-York Military Magazine in 1841 ([Herring, 1841](#)). Herring presents a detailed personal portrait of Jacob Morton: he appears as a gentleman of exceptional noble qualities, intelligent and educated, devoted to his work, and possessing an active civic position. Herring pays particular attention to Jacob Morton's origins and early years; he discusses such aspects as his education and mentorship under Francis Barber, his lifelong friendship with Alexander Hamilton, which played an important role in Morton's life, as well as the influence on young Jacob of the Morton family's acquaintance with General George Washington and their support for the Continental Army.

Jacob Morton is also represented in R. Johnson and J. H. Brown's *The Twentieth Century Biographical Dictionary of Notable Americans*, published in 1904. Despite its brevity, the biography of Jacob Morton includes his engraved portrait, as well as information about his family, his career as a lawyer and militia officer, and details about his wife and children ([Johnson, Brown, 1904: 506–507](#)).

Detailed information about Jacob Morton's military activity and his role in the formation and development of the New-York Militia is presented in E. Clark's *History of the Second Company of the Seventh Regiment (National Guard) N.Y.S. Militia* ([Clark, 1864](#)). This study carefully examines the fact that the 7th Regiment of New York, which later became the pride of the state, grew out of Morton's Brigade of Artillery. The author's coverage of Jacob Morton's activity during the War of 1812 also deserves special mention.

As for one of the least studied aspects of Jacob Morton's biography – his affiliation with Freemasonry – the present article draws on such materials as *Historical Reminiscences of Morton Commandery, No. 4, Knights Templars, Stationed at New York City, from its Organization in 1823 to the Present Time, 1891* ([Historical Reminiscences of Morton Commandery, 1891](#)), as well as O. Lang's *History of Freemasonry in the State of New York*, published in 1922, which cites valuable documents on the history of the Grand Lodge of New York ([Lang, 1922](#)).

2.2. This historical-biographical essay, being the result of consistent scholarly research, is based on the fundamental principles of historical scholarship: historicism, systematic analysis, comprehensiveness, determinism, and specificity. For a comprehensive and objective analysis of the key stages of Jacob Morton's life, military service, and Masonic activity, both general scientific methods (analysis, synthesis, deduction, and induction) and specialized historical approaches (ideographic, chronological, historical-genetic, and biographical) were employed.

3. Results

Origins and Family

Jacob Morton (Fig. 1) was born on July 8, 1761 (according to some sources, 1762) in New York to John Morton (1711–1781) and Maria Sophia (Kemper) Morton (1738–1832). His father, John Morton, the son of a Scottish clergyman, immigrated to the New World and entered the Commissary Department of the British Army in New York sometime before 1760. After leaving military service, John Morton established a successful business exporting flaxseed from America and importing linen cloth from Ireland. Among the residents of New York, he became known by the nicknames "Handsome Johnny" and "Rebel Banker."

His wife, Maria Sophia, came from the family of the German immigrant Jacob Kemper. Jacob Kemper was born in Caub on the Rhine in 1706 and emigrated to the New World with his wife, Maria Regina Ernest, who was a native of Mannheim, Germany. The family initially settled in Rhinebeck on the Hudson River, later moved to Beekman in the Livingston Patent, and from 1749 resided in New Brunswick, New Jersey.

Before the American Revolution, John Morton owned a substantial estate on Water Street, including a large three-story brick residence located three blocks from Old Slip, a store and warehouse, a wharf situated behind them, and several merchant vessels used to transport flaxseed and other goods.

During the American Revolutionary War, John Morton sided with the American colonists. When it became apparent that New York would fall to the British, he fled the city with his family, first relocating to Elizabethtown and later to Basking Ridge, New Jersey, where he died in 1781. During his lifetime, John Morton invested most of his capital in the colonial Loan Office, earning him the British nickname "Rebel

Banker." Under his will, Jacob Morton was appointed executor together with his mother and the Honorable Elias Boudinot.

Because of the war and the family's repeated relocations, the Mortons found themselves in difficult circumstances. In addition to Jacob, there were five younger children to support. Although the family possessed considerable property, it was widely dispersed, and substantial debts to British creditors remained from John Morton's commercial activities: "The certificate given by the Loan Office for the money deposited there for the use of the government, together with the real estate in New York recovered in a dilapidated condition, the farm at Baskenridge, and a small estate at Elizabethtown, was all that remained of the family property. When they returned and settled in the city, the claims of British creditors for goods received just before the commencement of the war presented and acknowledged to be just" (Herring, 1841: 18).

Recognizing the prudence and maturity of the eldest son, the Honorable Elias Boudinot declined to serve as executor and entrusted these responsibilities to the young Jacob Morton, who eventually succeeded in restoring his family's financial position. As Herring explained: "...was made to dispose of the real estate, and retain the certificates. The sale of the real estate of every kind was effected to advantage, and the whole amount which was very large, was devoted to the discharge of just claims of the British creditors. On this question Jacob Morton followed the dictates of his own faith in the government: assisted by the advice of Mr. Hamilton and others he took the responsibility; and his confidence was rewarded, after the adoption of the Federal Constitution, by the full payment of principal and interest of his claims, as executor of his father's will upon the United States. This favourable result placed the family in comfortable circumstances. The property, by his management and care, served for their support, enabled him to give his brothers an education, and the claims of the members of the family were satisfied when changes rendered considerations necessary" (Herring, 1841: 18).

Education and Early Career

As the eldest son, Jacob Morton received considerable attention from his parents, who spared no effort in providing him with an excellent education. Before the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, he completed his elementary education and, while living in Elizabethtown, prepared for college under some of the area's finest instructors. Among his teachers was the distinguished Colonel Francis Barber, noted for closing his academy in 1775 to join the patriot cause and later earning distinction through his service in the Continental Army.

It was during this period that Jacob Morton formed a lifelong friendship with Alexander Hamilton, who was also studying privately under Francis Barber. This relationship would have a lasting influence on Morton's personal and professional life.

During the Revolutionary War, Jacob Morton entered the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University), where he graduated with honors in 1778, receiving the degree of Bachelor of Arts. In 1781, he studied law under Judge William Paterson in Trenton and was subsequently admitted to the bar of New Jersey.

Following the conclusion of the war in 1783, the Morton family settled temporarily in Elizabethtown before returning to New York in December of the same year. Jacob Morton was admitted to the New York bar, established his own legal practice, and practiced law successfully for the next twelve years.



Fig. 1. Jacob Morton ([Historical Reminiscences of Morton Commandery, 1891: 21](#))

Military Career

While still a student at college, Jacob Morton developed a strong interest in the military profession, although he initially chose the legal profession as his career. His growing fascination with military service was undoubtedly shaped by the events of the American Revolutionary War. Moreover, while the Morton family resided in Basking Ridge, their home was frequently visited by General George Washington and his officers. The area also housed military medical personnel and an army hospital. Thus, both during his college years and while at home, Jacob Morton was surrounded by educated and distinguished individuals. As one of his biographers observed: "With these opportunities and advantages [he] profited and improved, and he there acquired social and agreeable manners, hospitality, and a taste for society which always adorned and marked his character" ([Herring, 1841: 17](#)).

It is also known that Jacob Morton wished to volunteer for the Continental Army and participate in the Battle of Monmouth in 1778, but his request was declined because of his youth.

In 1786, Morton received his commission as an officer in the New York militia and eventually became colonel of the 6th Regiment of Infantry. He later transferred with his regiment to the artillery. In 1804, Colonel Jacob Morton was appointed Brigadier General in the Army. The brigade under his command later became known as Morton's Brigade of Artillery and laid the foundation for what would become the renowned 7th Regiment of New York. According to a contemporary history, it was "for many years the pride of the New York militia and the favorite of the public" ([Clark, 1864: 9](#)). The brigade also maintained close connections with Freemasonry.

Contemporaries likewise emphasized Morton's personal contribution to the brigade's success: "was for many years a man of distinction and importance in New York, and to his activity and popularity 'The Brigade of Artillery' was mainly indebted for its success and prosperity. Prominent as a politician, a leader in every public movement, and of high social position, he had the faculty and capacity of attracting to himself the active and leading young men of the city, and interesting them in his plans and projects. The Masonic institution was at this time at the height of its prosperity—and General Morton, as Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of the State of New York and of the Grand Encampment of Knights Templars, occupied a position with the public, the prominence of which, at this day, it is almost impossible to appreciate. His ambition and military taste made 'The Brigade of Artillery' the centre of military attraction, and its popularity did not wane until his promotion to the command of the Division..." ([Clark, 1864: 9](#)).

During the War of 1812, Jacob Morton played an active role in the defense of New York. He served as a member of the State Board of Fortifications, participated in organizing the defenses of New York Harbor as

commander of the artillery, and commanded the city's militia. In 1815, he was appointed commander of the First Division of the New York Militia Artillery. Morton remained in active service with the New York militia for fifty years, serving until his death.

Political and Public Life

In 1789, Jacob Morton was appointed Chief Marshal of the procession for the inauguration of President George Washington (Fig. 2), with whom he had been acquainted for several years.



Fig. 2. «The Inauguration of George Washington» (1899) by Ramon de Elorriaga.

In 1795, Jacob Morton was elected to the New York State Assembly for the first time. In 1797, he was appointed a judge of the Court of Justices and subsequently held the offices of alderman, comptroller (1807–1808), and city inspector.

In 1800, Morton ran as the Federalist candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives from New York's 2nd Congressional District. He finished second, receiving 2,091 votes and losing to the Republican candidate, Samuel L. Mitchell, by only 89 votes ([American Election Returns, 1787–1825](#)).

In 1810, Jacob Morton was appointed Clerk of the Common Council of the City of New York, a position he held until his death. He was also a member of the Society of the Cincinnati, one of the oldest patriotic organizations in the United States, founded in 1783 by officers of the Continental Army. A portrait of Jacob Morton wearing the insignia of the Society of the Cincinnati was preserved together with a large punch bowl that he had presented to the Board of Aldermen in the Governor's Room at New York City Hall ([Johnson, Brown, 1904: 507](#)).

In 1831, General Jacob Morton was honored with the command of the military escort during the funeral procession of President James Monroe.

Masonic Career

Jacob Morton joined the Masonic fraternity in New York at an early age and became one of its most active and distinguished members. He belonged to St. John's Lodge No. 1, working under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of New York.

In 1789, while serving as Chief Marshal of the inaugural procession of George Washington, Morton discovered that no Bible had been provided for the presidential oath of office. As Worshipful Master of St. John's Lodge, he retrieved the Lodge's altar Bible (Fig. 3) and brought it to the inauguration ceremony. Today, George Washington's Inaugural Bible is regarded as one of the most iconic historical artifacts in American history and, with the permission of St. John's Lodge, is exhibited at Federal Hall in New York ([Federal Hall](#)).

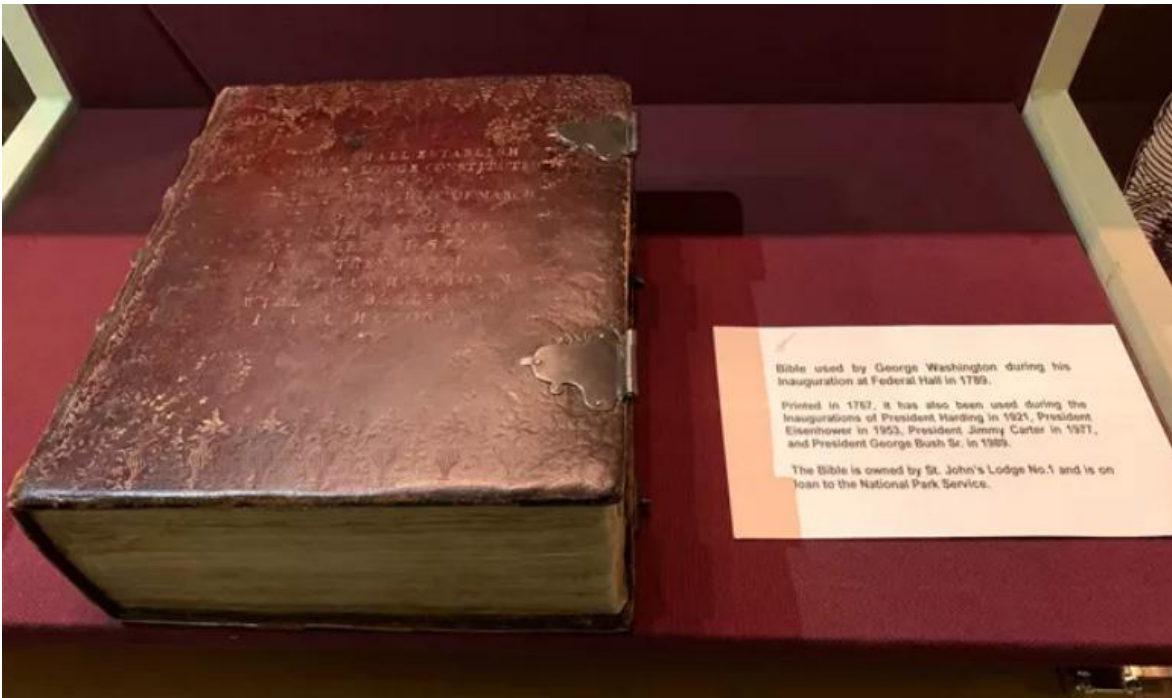


Fig. 3. The George Washington Inaugural Bible ([Federal Hall](#)).

Beginning in 1789, Jacob Morton served as Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of New York and remained actively engaged in the affairs of the Craft ([Proceedings...](#), 1789: 84). In recognition of his dedicated service to both the Fraternity and society, a new lodge was named in his honor in 1797—Morton Lodge No. 63.

In 1798, Morton was elected Deputy Grand Master under Grand Master Robert R. Livingston. After Livingston was appointed United States Minister to France on June 3, 1801, Jacob Morton was elected as his successor and assumed the office of Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of New York, serving until 1806. He is also regarded as one of the first three Grand Masters of the Grand Lodge of New York ([Proceedings...](#), 1803: 333).

A portion of Morton's first address to the Grand Lodge as Grand Master has survived. In it, he expressed sincere gratitude and admiration for his predecessor, Robert R. Livingston: "From his labors in the Fraternity, he hath been called by the voice of his country, a voice which can never be heard within these walls but with veneration and respect. To her call we yield him, and assure him, sir, that he carries with him our fondest, our sincerest wishes for his happiness and prosperity, that it is our earnest prayer that an all-gracious Providence will make him its particular care, that it will bear him in safety over the waters of the mighty deep, that it will prosper his labors in the service of his country, and that it will return him crowned with honor, and with health and happiness to the bosom of his fellow-citizens and to us, his affectionate brethren" ([Lang, 1922: 87](#)).

The officers of the Grand Lodge during this period included some of the most distinguished and respected public figures in the United States:

- Colonel Jacob Morton (Counselor), Grand Master;
- Edward Livingston (Mayor of New York City), Deputy Grand Master;
- Cadwallader D. Colden (District Attorney and former Mayor of New York City), Senior Grand Warden;
- Philip S. Van Rensselaer (Albany), Junior Grand Warden;
- Robert Cocks (merchant), Grand Treasurer;
- Daniel D. Tompkins (who later served successively as U.S. Congressman, Justice of the Supreme Court of New York, Governor of New York, and Vice President of the United States), Grand Secretary ([Lang, 1922: 87](#)).

During Morton's tenure as Grand Master, the Grand Lodge continued to strengthen its institutional structure and expand its influence. The composition of the Grand Lodge leadership remained largely unchanged between 1801 and 1804. The principal changes occurred in 1804, when New York City Mayor Edward Livingston resigned as Deputy Grand Master and was succeeded by Martin Hoffman, who remained in that office until 1820. Hoffman's career within the Grand Lodge was notable: he had previously served as Grand Treasurer (1795–1797) and, at various times, as both Junior and Senior Grand Warden.

Another important personnel change took place in June 1805, when Daniel D. Tompkins resigned as Grand Secretary and was succeeded by John Wells, who held that office until 1816.

The predominance of New York City Masons within the Grand Lodge leadership gradually gave rise to internal tensions. A conflict began to emerge between the metropolitan center and the upstate lodges. Lodges outside New York City—particularly those in Albany—expressed growing dissatisfaction, believing that the affairs of the Grand Lodge had become effectively monopolized by the New York City lodges (Lang, 1922: 88).

Indeed, nearly all Grand Lodge officers were members of the metropolitan lodges, especially St. John's Lodge No. 1 and Holland Lodge No. 8. Philip S. Van Rensselaer was the only senior officer representing Albany, serving as Junior Grand Warden. In addition, Masons from more distant parts of the state faced considerable difficulties traveling to New York City, which encouraged some of them to seek greater autonomy from the central authority. Although these tensions did not result in an open confrontation during Morton's administration, O. Lang observed that "except that the up-State Lodges became more and more indifferent to Grand Lodge rules and regulations" (Lang, 1922: 88).

In an effort to prevent further discord and to establish greater uniformity in Masonic administration, a resolution was introduced on December 5, 1804. It proposed granting the Grand Master the authority to appoint inspectors throughout New York State as official representatives of the Grand Lodge within their respective districts, with the additional responsibility of collecting Grand Lodge dues. Although the resolution was ultimately not adopted, it demonstrates that at least part of the Grand Lodge leadership recognized the growing institutional tensions within the jurisdiction—tensions that would ultimately contribute to the schism in New York Freemasonry several years later (Lang, 1922: 88).

In 1806, Jacob Morton was succeeded as Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of New York by the prominent statesman and Mason DeWitt Clinton.

Morton Commandery No. 4, Knights Templar

As noted above, the Masonic fraternity experienced increasing difficulties in regulating the activities of its constituent bodies, while the issue of centralizing authority became progressively more pressing.

General Jacob Morton, serving as Grand Master and, in effect, the commanding officer of one of the independent bodies of Knights Templar, presided over this encampment from 1796 to 1810. Contemporary sources refer to it as the "Ancient Encampment No. 1," the "Grand Morton Encampment," the "Old Encampment" (Historical Reminiscences of Morton Commandery, 1891: 21), or simply the "Grand Encampment." The latter designation was largely conventional, as no national Grand Encampment exercising jurisdiction over all Templar bodies yet existed.

Although this encampment operated as an independent Masonic body, its membership included many of the most prominent citizens of New York State, reflecting its exceptional prestige. Information concerning the officers of the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar in 1805 is preserved in Longworth's American Almanack and New York Register: "Jacob Morton, Grand Master; Peter Irving, Generalissimo; Edward W. Laight, Capt. General; John G. Bogert, Aid de Camp; Nicholas C. Palmer, Standard Bearer; John Bleeker and Melancton Smith, Commissioners; Andrew Smyth, Paymaster; Elias Hicks, David S. Jones, John K. Benjamin, William Cutting, Court of Inquiry; Benjamin Jones, Sentinel" (Historical Reminiscences of Morton Commandery, 1891: 21–22).

In addition to these officers, the distinguished businessman John Jacob Astor served as Grand Treasurer of the Knights Templar Encampment from 1798 to 1801.

Under Jacob Morton's leadership, the Grand Encampment met on the second Tuesday of January, March, May, July, September, and November, with meetings held at the City Hotel. Annual convocations were also conducted on Trinity Sunday. During these annual meetings, officers were elected, and the Grand Master—or a Sir Knight appointed by him—delivered an address to the assembled members whose attendance had been duly authorized. Jacob Morton himself is listed in the records as residing at "No. 1 Pine Street, Greenwich Road Office" (Historical Reminiscences of Morton Commandery, 1891: 23). After 1810, however, references to Morton's encampment disappear from the historical record.

In 1816, a convention of Knights Templar Masons was convened to establish the General Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the United States, creating for the first time a national governing body with jurisdiction throughout the country. The General Grand Encampment was formally organized, its Grand Officers were elected, and DeWitt Clinton was chosen as Thrice Illustrious Grand Master.

One year after the establishment of the General Grand Encampment, its members voted to admit Jacob Morton as an honorary member in recognition of his distinguished Masonic service: "That General Jacob Morton, whose well known and praiseworthy Masonic qualifications entitle him to every mark of attention and respect on the part of his brethren be and is hereby admitted as honorary member of this Grand Encampment. That the Grand Recorder be accordingly instructed to apprise him of this resolution; and also, that Sir Knights Hoffman and Hicks are appointed a committee to wait on him upon the same subject" (Historical Reminiscences of Morton Commandery, 1891: 22).

In 1823, a new Templar body was authorized and formally chartered on August 16 under the name Jacob Morton Encampment. This organization would later become known as Morton Commandery No. 4 (Fig. 4) (Catalog..., 2026: 83).



Fig. 4. Emblems of Morton Commandery No. 4, Knights Templar, Stationed at New York City. Late nineteenth century

The Museum of the History of the American Knights Templar preserves both a badge (Fig. 5) and a lapel pin (Fig. 6) of Morton Commandery No. 4. These artifacts demonstrate that Jacob Morton's name was permanently commemorated within American Masonic circles.



Fig. 5. Badge of Morton Commandery No. 4, NY ([MHAKT CGU. Collection 3. Badges and Ribbons. Exhibit No. 244](#))



Fig. 6. Lapel pin of Morton Commandery No. 4, 1898
(MHAKT CGU. Collection 3. Badges and Ribbons. Exhibit No. 252)

Personal Life

On June 25, 1791, Jacob Morton married Catherine Ludlow (January 23, 1767 – May 11, 1849). Her father, Cary Ludlow, served as Master of the Court of Chancery and Surrogate of New York. Through his wife's family, Jacob Morton later inherited the Ludlow Mansion at 9 State Street, New York, a residence comprising twenty-six rooms. Contemporary observers described the mansion as "emphatically the centre of intellect (and) refinement" ([Jacob Morton](#)).

It was in this residence that the celebrated ball honoring the Marquis de Lafayette was held in 1824. Most likely, this is the house and the Morton family described by the distinguished American diplomat Charles Francis Adams in his diary while recalling the Independence Day celebrations of July 4, 1826. During these festivities, Jacob Morton served as Grand Marshal of the military parade and was honored with an artillery salute: "From here I was carried to Mr. Bradish's room by these two, and after a short visit, I was then conducted to General Morton's where I found a large Company waiting to see the grand procession. After many introductions and a great deal of exertion which was all forced I saw the whole ceremony as I have seen it a hundred times and felt a little interested as usual. All the great company in New York was there. Miss Morton is a young lady who has dashed for some time past as a leading belle but now going fast into the list of the passées. I talked a little with her upon the subject of the Quincys, who of course are matters of interest to both as connections of each family" ([Adams, 1826](#)).

Jacob and Catherine Morton had eleven children, of whom seven sons and one daughter survived to adulthood. Although relatively little is known about their descendants, the surviving children included:

- John Ludlow Morton (March 16, 1792 – August 2, 1871), artist;
- George William Morton (July 5, 1793 – May 7, 1865), first Treasurer and third Mayor of Hoboken, New Jersey;
- Charles Ferdinand Morton (October 30, 1794 – April 10, 1868), Captain, 2nd New York Regiment, U.S. Army;
- Edmund Morton (June 1, 1800 – August 7, 1881), gentleman farmer;
- Washington Quincy Morton (April 12, 1802 – September 6, 1878), attorney;
- Alexander Hamilton Morton (January 21, 1804–1895), surgeon, attorney, and Secretary of the New York Yacht Club;
- Rev. Henry Jackson Morton (1807–1890), Rector of St. James Church, Philadelphia ([Jacob Morton](#));

- Hester Sophia Morton (August 3, 1796 – June 26, 1868), who married Dr. R. Bullus ([Johnson, Brown, 1904: 506–507](#)).

Jacob Morton died on December 3, 1836, from complications resulting from exposure to severe cold suffered while participating in the November military parade in New York City.

4. Conclusion

The life and career of Jacob Morton, whose activities had a significant influence on the development of New York from the late eighteenth century through the first third of the nineteenth century, remain insufficiently studied and are only marginally represented in the scholarly literature. This gap served as the principal motivation for the present study.

Based on the findings of this historical-biographical investigation, the following conclusions may be drawn:

1. One of the key factors in understanding Jacob Morton's personality is the influence of his family background and the historical environment in which he was raised. His worldview was profoundly shaped by his parents' immigrant heritage, their social standing, their participation in the American Revolutionary War, and the atmosphere surrounding the birth of the new American nation. Despite inheriting a complicated estate burdened by debts and scattered property, the young Jacob Morton demonstrated remarkable responsibility and foresight by restoring his family's financial stability, settling its obligations, and securing the future of his younger brothers, thereby revealing the strength of his character.

2. Jacob Morton received an excellent education and achieved distinction in several fields. He established a successful legal career while simultaneously demonstrating exceptional ability as a military officer and influential civic leader, leaving a lasting mark on the history of New York and its militia. His life and professional career were closely intertwined with the defining events of his era, including the American Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, and the formative years of the United States of America.

3. In public life, Jacob Morton emerged as a distinguished statesman and civic leader who made substantial contributions to the political and municipal development of both New York and the United States. His career was characterized by steady advancement through public office, active participation in political affairs, recognition of his public service, and a consistent commitment to improving the lives of the citizens of New York.

4. Jacob Morton also played a significant role in the development of American Freemasonry. He was not merely an ordinary member but one of the leading Masonic figures of his generation, serving in such high offices as Grand Secretary and ultimately Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of New York. During his administration, the fraternity continued to strengthen its institutional structure, although his tenure also coincided with the emergence of internal tensions that foreshadowed later divisions within New York Freemasonry.

5. Between 1796 and 1810, General Jacob Morton personally commanded one of the independent Knights Templar encampments in New York. Known by several names, including the "Grand Encampment," this body exercised considerable influence because its membership included many of the state's most prominent citizens. Although no centralized Grand Encampment yet existed, the organization functioned in many respects as a *de facto* governing authority for Templar Masonry in New York. In 1816, the first centralized General Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the United States was established to unify and regulate Templar bodies throughout the nation. In 1823, an encampment bearing Jacob Morton's name was chartered; it later became known as *Morton Commandery No. 4*, thereby permanently commemorating Jacob Morton within the history of American Freemasonry.

6. Jacob Morton's personal life reflected both his social standing and his public influence. He enjoyed considerable financial prosperity, occupied a prominent place in New York's elite society, and raised a large family whose children pursued distinguished professional and public careers. Even in his later years, Morton remained actively engaged in public affairs, underscoring his lifelong commitment to the civic life of the city.

In conclusion, Jacob Morton emerges as an outstanding and remarkably versatile figure whose achievements encompassed a broad range of activities—from restoring his family's fortunes and establishing a successful legal practice to serving as a military commander, public official, and leader of American Freemasonry. His contributions to the development of New York and to the institutional growth of American Masonry deserve substantially greater scholarly attention and recognition.

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