

Lucy Orme Morgan (1858-1944)

Lucy Orme Morgan was born on January 21, 1858 in Bloomington, Illinois. She was the third of four children born to William Ward Orme and Nannie McCullough Orme Dyson.¹ William came to Bloomington in 1850 where he continued to study to become a lawyer. After passing the bar exam in 1852, he married Nannie in 1853 and formed a law partnership with Leonard Swett. Through his work in the law, he became friends with many prominent lawyers in Central Illinois including future President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln and Orme became friends while working on the Eighth Judicial Circuit in Central Illinois.

When Lucy was four years old, her father, paternal uncle (Joseph Orme), and maternal grandfather (William McCullough), joined the Union Army upon the outbreak of the U.S. Civil War. William was instrumental in the founding of the 94th Illinois Volunteer Regiment and was elected Colonel of the regiment. He distinguished himself in battle at the Battle of Prairie Grove which resulted in President Lincoln promoting him to the rank of Brigadier General. However, at the Battle of Vicksburg in May of 1863, William contracted tuberculosis from which he would die in 1866. Because of this illness and its affect on his health, he could no longer fight on the battlefield and was transferred to command the Union prison camp, Camp Douglas, outside of Chicago, IL. His poor health continued to hinder his ability to serve so he resigned his commission in 1865. Just one short year later, he passed away when Lucy was only eight years old. Her grandfather and uncle were also killed during the War: her grandfather at the Battle of Coffeyville in Mississippi, and her uncle was killed by friendly fire a short time after her grandfather. Lucy's mother, Nannie, remarried ten years later to Dr. Dunbar Dyson, who had been an old friend of William's.

Not much is known about Lucy's life before she married. She did attend and graduate from Monticello Ladies' Seminary, in 1877 and was Salutatorian of her class. Monticello Ladies' Seminary was established in 1833. It was a finishing school near Godfrey, IL where girls would receive training that emphasized cultural and social activities to prepare them for a life as a wife and mother. Today, Monticello Ladies' Seminary is known as Lewis and Clark Community College and is a co-ed school.

Three years after graduating Lucy married Edward R. Morgan on November 1, 1880 in Bloomington. They resided at the family home at 202 Locust Street. Edward (often referred to as Ed) was born in 1855 and was the son of Richard Price Morgan Jr., co-founder of the town of Dwight, IL.² His father was a noted civil engineer and was a builder of the Chicago and Alton Railroad. Lucy and Ed were married at her mother's Locust Street home in Bloomington and the wedding was attended by a few close friends and family. Her dress was described as an elegant dress of brocade satin. After the simple ceremony, the couple took the train to St. Louis for their honeymoon.³ Lucy and Ed had three children: Richard (Dick), Nan, and Frank. Each of their children married and raised families, though only Nan remained in Bloomington.

Ed spent his childhood in Dwight. He was sent to Riverview Military Academy in Poughkeepsie, New York where he studied civil engineering. After graduating, he worked with his father on some of the construction work for the Jacksonville branch of the C and A railroad in Kansas City, Missouri. Ed's father then moved his family to Bloomington when he became the first general Superintendent of the C and A railroad. Upon his arrival, Ed began his career by

¹ "Mrs. Lucy Orme Morgan Dies," *The Pantagraph*, February 29, 1944

² J.O. Evans. "The Morgans: Lives and Legacies over four Centuries." December 1, 2004

³ "The Marriage of Mr. Edward R. Morgan to Miss Lucy Orme," *Daily Pantagraph*, November 2, 1880

becoming one of the incorporators of Harbor Brothers Co., wholesalers of farm machinery, and also made buggies and wagons. He was then made secretary and treasurer of the company until it dissolved. Because he had established himself as a successful businessman, he was elected the first Commissioner of Finance in Bloomington, serving from 1915-1923. Through work in local government he was credited with reorganizing the accounting methods of the City of Bloomington and with the initiative “in acquiring the Wochner tract of land” which became Highland Golf Course located on South Main Street in Bloomington.⁴

Like Ed, Lucy was very active in the community as well. Her passion was social service and she hoped to help others, especially young people, to become independent and successful. She was a charter member of the McLean County Chapter of the Red Cross which was founded in 1915. Lucy was a member of the Bureau of Social Services, a history club, and served on the Brokaw Hospital board.

She was also a member and co-founder of the Bloomington Women’s Club, founded in 1897. Lucy and Mrs. J.T. Lillard founded the club because they felt that even though there were other women’s clubs in town, there was not a club devoted to “the social welfare” of the community. So, these two women and nine others organized the Women’s Club in Bloomington to promote social welfare of the community. When the women would meet, they would discuss such topics as women’s suffrage (of which Lucy was a firm believer) literature for children, domestic science, home economics, sanitation at home, juvenile delinquency, and child labor laws. Eventually the club began other projects such as supporting free Kindergarten in Public schools, a day nursery, appointment of a police matron to the city, sewing training classes for girls, city-wide cleaning days in every ward, traveling libraries, and supporting the establishment of a County Tuberculosis Sanatorium. Lucy was also the first recording secretary of the Women’s Club. Although these philanthropic activities were of great importance to Lucy, her passion (and what would become the most distinguishable effort in her life) was the Girl’s Industrial Home.⁵

The Girl’s Industrial Home (first known as the Women’s Industrial Home of McLean County), was founded on March 12, 1889 in Bloomington and was located at 807 West Market Street.⁶ The Industrial Home was not a school for delinquent children, rather it was a home for dependent children who were neglected or had no one to care for them. The Home was a place where they could have both a place to live and a place to get some education. The girls would be also be taught “useful things” to prepare them “for a life of independence” when they were of age.⁷ Thirty residents of Bloomington and McLean County made up the first board which helped to secure funds to operate the Home. Judge Thomas Tipton was elected the legal adviser of the school, five trustees were elected to manage the funds, and Dr. Louise Crothers was elected physician at the Home. The first officers of the board of the Home were: Mrs. Ellen Light, President; Mrs. Lydia McCoy, Vice President; Miss Mattie Marble and Mrs. Louise Woods, secretaries; Mrs. Mary White, treasurer and Mrs. Edmond O’Connell, auditor.

In the beginning, no woman or girl who was helpless, homeless, or in need (both temporary and permanent), was turned away. The oldest woman who resided at the home early

⁴ “E.R. Morgan Dies At Home,” *The Pantagraph*, May 21, 1935.

⁵ Clara Kessler. *Hometown in the Cornbelt, A Source History of Bloomington, Illinois, 1900-1950*, Volume V. (Bloomington: self published, 1950) p.106-112

⁶ This location later became the site of Edwards School. The site is currently the location of Mt. Pisgah Baptist Church.

⁷ “Industrial School for Girls,” *The Daily Pantagraph*, June 11, 1877

on was 87 years old while the youngest were infants. The home quickly outgrew its first location on West Market Street, so a new location was secured on the south side of Phoenix Avenue, two east of Franklin Park.⁸ In 1891, the new president of the board, Mrs. B.S. Potter, decided it would be in the best interest of the Home and the women residing there to secure a permanent location. A new piece of property located at 1024 East Grove Street (corner of Grove and State Streets) was purchased and 60 of the 150 who had resided at the home since its opening were welcomed to the new location. By 1895, the board voted that in order to maintain the Home better they would “confine the work of the home to the relief and protection of orphans, destitute and dependent children.” The name was then changed to “The Girls Industrial Home,” although young boys were sometimes allowed to stay at the Home if the need was great enough.⁹

By 1906 when Lucy was elected president of the Home, it had once again outgrown its location so the house was physically moved to 403 South State Street (corner of Taylor and State Streets). The home now was situated on five acres, had a garden, a pasture for cows, and a playground for the children who lived there.¹⁰ It is not known exactly why Lucy became involved in the Girl Industrial Home, but it could have been because of her philanthropic work with the Women’s Club of which she was a longtime member. During Lucy’s 33 year long tenure as president of the Girl’s Industrial Home she accomplished many things which not only benefited the girls who lived at the Home, but benefitted the whole community.

At the annual board meeting of the Home in January of 1911, Lucy reported that “one phase of our work that appeals to me strongly is the helpfulness we are able to extend to unfortunate mothers” who were left to care for their children completely on their own. The Home became a temporary option for those mothers so their children would have a safe and secure place to live until the mothers were able to get back on their feet. Lucy was also proud of the activities they were able to have for the children such as a summer picnic, a Christmas program put on by the children, as well as presents donated by members of the community.¹¹ She was also proud of the improvements which had been made to the Home such as an enlarged garden which the girl’s who lived there would help care for.

By 1915, the 75 year old building had become too small to fit the growing needs of the Home. It was in desperate need of repairs and the fire marshal said the building was not up to regulation with current fire codes.¹² Under Lucy’s direction as president, a committee was formed and the board voted to build a larger home and begin a campaign to raise the necessary funds to construct it. Well known local architect Arthur Pillsbury was contracted to design the new building. In the fall of 1917 the new home (still located at 403 S. State Street), was ready and opened its doors to welcome the girls who have lived there before and to also welcome new residents. The new home was built for a cost of \$23,000 (which today would be about \$507,000). It was a “large square building of three stories” facing the east with “a large porch opening from all three floors” on the front. The new building also featured “magnificent and large windows” allowing plenty of light and ventilation.¹³ The first floor housed a large dining room (which could feed 100 children), a spacious kitchen, and a laundry facility complete with

⁸ Chas. Ebel, compiler. *Bloomington and Normal City Directory for 1891*. (Bloomington: Pantagraph Printing and Stationary Company, 1891) 39.

⁹ Kessler, *Hometown in the Cornbelt Vol V*, p.166-168

¹⁰ Kessler, *Hometown in the Cornbelt Vol V*, p.168

¹¹ “Years Work of Girl’s Industrial Home,” *The Daily Pantagraph*, January 6, 1911

¹² “Industrial Board Chooses it’s Leader,” unknown newspaper, 1915

¹³ “The New \$23,000 Building of the Girl’s Industrial Home,” *The Daily Pantagraph*, January 22, 1917

electric dryers and washing machines. On the second floor, there were play and sewing rooms and three rooms with bath facilities for the attendants who lived at the Home. There was also a hospital room and a boy's dormitory which housed up to nine boys at a time.¹⁴ On the third floor were three dormitories for girls which were separated by age. At the north end of each dorm, each girl had her own dresser for clothing and a mirror for dressing.¹⁵ The children who lived in this new and "modern" home were taught to help with everyday chores including ironing, baking, gardening, and general cleaning. When the new home opened in October of 1917, the public was invited and encouraged to come and "inspect" the building to see how the community's contributions were used. It was reported in *The Pantagraph* that "those who had visited the home, had pronounced it one of the most inviting, commodious and convenient places of its kind in or near Bloomington" and many felt that the children who would live in it would enjoy their new home thoroughly.¹⁶

Just two years after the new building was opened, the idea for a separate home for boys began to circulate because of the fact that 26 boys were housed at the Girl's Industrial Home and that, totaled with the number of girls living there, had filled the new building to capacity and was on the verge of outgrowing it as well. It was clear from this that there was a great need for a separate home for boys. "By separation of the boys from the girls, and housing the former in a separate institution, the problem would be solved."¹⁷ Just like the girls, they were not delinquents, they were just boys who needed someone to care for them and teach them how to care for themselves when they became old enough. Lucy, as president of the Girl's Home (and upon advice of Judge James Riley), called upon three of her friends and asked them if they would be willing to "undertake the organization of a home for dependent boys similar to the one for girls." Lucy and the other members of the Girl's Home board would not be able to manage both institutions so it was necessary to find other interested people. Lucy's friends agreed and a campaign was set underway to secure funds to build the new home for boys.¹⁸

In 1919, the home for boys was completed and located at 904 Hovey Ave. in Normal. The home was named "Victory Hall" in honor of the end of World War I and "with the earnest hope that in the case of each boy who came to [the home] there would be a victory in helping him become a valuable citizen in whatever community he made his permanent home."¹⁹

Much like the Girl's Industrial Home, the boys who lived at Victory Hall attended school in the surrounding community, attended local churches, and assisted in the daily work of the house and grounds. At Victory Hall, there was a gymnasium where the boys could play basketball and volleyball, a craft room, a playground, a dormitory, a large garden, and the superintendent's residence. The boys who lived there ranged in age from six to sixteen years of age. Victory Hall was equally well supported by the community as the Girl's Industrial Home was.

The Girl's Industrial Home was able to provide young women not only with the skills they would otherwise lack without a stable home, but also with the special memories that come from a family. For 25 years the Rotary Club entertained the "family" of girls at Christmas time with a turkey dinner. They also provided a large tree and gifts for each girl. In the summer, the

¹⁴ "Reception at New Industrial Home," *The Pantagraph*, September 1917.

¹⁵ "Reception at New Industrial Home," *The Daily Pantagraph*, September 1917

¹⁶ "Reception at New Industrial Home," *The Daily Pantagraph*, September 1917

¹⁷ "Need of a Boy's Home Considered," *The Daily Pantagraph*, January 15, 1919

¹⁸ Kessler, *Hometown in the Cornbelt Vol V*, p.184-185

¹⁹ Kessler, *Hometown in the Cornbelt Vol V*, p.185

Rotary Club also sponsored the girls from the Home to attend summer camp. The birthdays of the girls who lived there were celebrated with parties attended by school friends. The girls went to local schools and became members of Girl Scouts and 4-H Clubs. On Sundays, they were required to attend church services and also took part in the junior choir.²⁰ With the board's help, these girls had rich, full and happy childhoods like any other child. To the girls who lived at the Home, those who ran the Home, like Lucy, were their family.

Lucy was an almost daily visitor at the Home and she knew each girl personally. Lucy told a reporter from *The Pantagraph* that she liked the girls to "feel that they can come to me at any time with special problems." Her hobby was to make the Industrial Home a "home" and keep it as far as possible from being an institution.²¹ She also stated that what contributed to the success of the Home was keeping the number of girls low so that each girl could get more individual attention and feel like someone actually cared about them.²² Proof of this can be found in the lives of many of the girls who lived at the Home after they had grown up and moved away. It was reported by *The Pantagraph* that "girls from the Home have gone out to such useful careers. Many are teachers, several are librarians, one is in the War Department, and a large number are wives and mothers in happy homes." Hundreds of girls had lived at the home and they had Lucy to thank for much of their success.²³

In 1929 the board of the Home honored Lucy for her twenty four years as president of board and for her faithful service to the Girl's Industrial Home by renaming it as "The Lucy Orme Morgan Home."²⁴ In an article published in *The Pantagraph*, a local Kiwanis Club leader who had visited the Home recently remarked that "no one [could] take girls from this home without being proud of them...It is [Mrs. Morgan's] years of love and effort with that of members of her board which has made the home what it is."²⁵ There was also a second reason for renaming the home at this time. Unlike in 1889 when the Home was founded, by 1929 "industrial home" held negative connotations and implied delinquent or incorrigible to some. This was not the case with the Lucy Orme Morgan Home as it was only for dependents and never took in any delinquents.²⁶

The Home continued to flourish under the watchful eye of Morgan even weathering the harsh economic climate of the Great Depression in the 1930s. By sacrificing, cutting back on recreational activities for the girls, canning extra fruits and vegetables from the Home's garden (that was not necessary to consume on a daily basis), and stretching every penny to its furthest extent, the Home remained open. Even during these lean times, the girl's at the Home continued to flourish because of continued support from the community and because of Lucy's keen management of the Home.²⁷

In January of 1939, Lucy declined re-election as president of the board of the Home. She had served as president for 33 years and most likely felt that she had served long enough and felt

²⁰ Kessler, *Hometown in the Cornbelt Vol V*, p.168-170

²¹ "Girls' Home Name Changed," *The Pantagraph*, August 20, 1929

²² "Girls' Home Name Changed," *The Pantagraph*, August 20, 1929

²³ "Industrial Home Trains for Practical Womanhood," *The Pantagraph*, 1923

²⁴ "Girls' Home Name Changed," *The Pantagraph*, August 20, 1929

²⁵ "Kiwanis Club Visits Home," undated and unknown newspaper

²⁶ "Girls' Home Name Changed," *The Pantagraph*, August 20, 1929

²⁷ "Many Sacrifices Made to Maintain Morgan Home with Lower Budget," *The Daily Pantagraph*, November 25, 1933

comfortable in the fact that the Home would continue to flourish without her. Because of her service to the Home and community, she was made president emeritus for life.²⁸

Though most of Lucy's life was filled with her duties as president of the Girl's Industrial Home, she always had time for raising a family and traveling with her husband Ed. During the summer of 1913, she and Ed went on a tour of Western Europe and the British Isles. Lucy had pushed Edward to go on this trip. Ed was reluctant to go as he would miss out on an entire summer of golfing at the Country Club (which was his favorite pastime). Lucy and Ed wrote letters back to their children describing all of the wonderful sights and sounds they experienced on their trip. Even though this was supposed to be a vacation of sorts, the plights of the needy and less fortunate were never far from Lucy's mind. While they were in Oxford, England, one evening after dinner, Lucy engaged "a trio of poor children in a conversation on the street while" Ed was in a chocolate shop. One of the little girls whom Lucy had been speaking with continued to follow Lucy and Ed down the street. Lucy stopped her and asked her where she was going. The little girl stated she was going to get some cooked fish for her and some of her brothers and sisters at home because they had nothing to eat. Lucy and Ed followed the girl to a shop where they sold the fish and saw a line of poor women and children waiting to buy the fish which was being cooked in a vat of grease. Lucy and Ed took pity on the poor little girl, bought some fish for her, and sent her home with the fish.²⁹

After Lucy and Ed had been married for 58 years, Ed passed away on May 23, 1938 from complications after contracting the flu several weeks before.³⁰ After his death, Lucy moved in with her daughter Nan Evans and her family at their home located at 1007 Broadway Street in Normal, IL. Lucy lived in a studio apartment in her daughter's home which had been converted from a playroom for her. After Ed's death, she continued to work at the Girl's Home for another four years and remained with her daughter Nan and her family until her own death nine years later.

On February 28, 1944, Lucy died at her daughter Nan's home, after a short illness. A small funeral was held at her daughter's home in Normal following which she was buried at Evergreen Memorial Cemetery next to her husband, Ed. According to her grandson, J.O. Evans, he remembered Lucy as "person-one totally devoted to social justice, decency, and improvement of the human situation."³¹ He described her as very influential within the community and family and she was a great influence on his life as well.³² Certainly a force to be reckoned with, Lucy was very accomplished in her life's work. She provided a home and family to thousands of children in need, never did she turn one away. Her work in the community left a lasting legacy which continues to be remembered to this day.

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²⁸ Kessler, *Hometown in the Cornbelt Vol V*, p.171

²⁹ J.O. Evans. *The Morgans*, "Letter to Mark and Nan from Ed and Lucy," August 1, 1913, p. 42

³⁰ "E.R. Morgan Dies At Home," *The Pantagraph*, May 21, 1935.

³¹ J.O. Evans, "The Morgans: Lives and Legacies over four Centuries," p. 2-3

³² Evans, "The Morgans: Lives and Legacies over four Centuries," p. 2-3