

Unexpected Histories

Volume 3

The Secret in Arlington

Edward Barnard

Unexpected Histories

Volume 3: The Secret in Arlington

Edward W. Barnard

This book is available at <https://leanpub.com/unexpected-histories-03>

This version was published on 2026-01-17



This is a [Leanpub](#) book. Leanpub empowers authors and publishers with the Lean Publishing process. [Lean Publishing](#) is the act of publishing an in-progress ebook using lightweight tools and many iterations to get reader feedback, pivot until you have the right book and build traction once you do.

© 2026 Edward W. Barnard

Also By **Edward W. Barnard**

Unexpected Histories

Unexpected Histories

Transcendent Patterns (инвариант): On Recognizing and Transmitting Mastery

Living Amongst the Wizards of Cray Research

From Capone to Cray: Where Computers Really Came From

Surviving Spring Break on the Mountain: The Power of Experiential Education

How to Create Masters and Mastery in a Classroom Setting

Transcendent Patterns: Teaching the Process of High-Tech Mastery in Student-Accessible Fashion

Large Language Model Architecture Patterns in PHP: No Mathematics Required

The Impossible Challenge Manual for Age 14 and Up, Even For Adults: How to accomplish what everyone says you can't

The Wizard's Lens: Learn to Think Like AI

Nobody but Us: A History of Cray Research's Software and the Building of the World's Fastest Supercomputer

Beyond Prompt Engineering

Billy Mitchell's Bombsight: Shaping the B-25 Mitchell Bomber

Contents

Chapter 1. The Secret in Arlington	1
The Photograph	1
Arlington	2
Hiding in Plain Sight	3
Coast Guard Unit 387	3
Summary	3
Chapter 2. Return With Honor	5
Alternative Approach	5
Pandemic	5
Korea	5
Code of Conduct	5
Tap Code	5
Disinformation and Deflection	5
Vietnam Experience	5
Victory Garden	6
Final Checkpoint	6
Concrete Implementation	6
Summary	6
Chapter 3. The Salem Trials	7

Chapter 1. The Secret in Arlington

There is a secret message in Arlington, hidden in plain sight, on the headstone of the founding cryptographer of the NSA (National Security Agency). For more than 40 years nobody noticed it was there. How is that even plausible? His widow, Elizebeth Friedman, was *that* good.

The Photograph

The opening page (frontispiece) of *The Woman Who Smashed Codes: A True Story of Love, Spies, and the Unlikely Heroine Who Outwitted America's Enemies* (2017) by Jason Fagone reads:

The king hath note of all that they intend, By interception which they dream not of. –
SHAKESPEARE, HENRY V, 1599

Knowledge itself is power. –FRANCIS BACON, SACRED MEDITATIONS, 1597

William and Elizebeth Friedman had, in 1918, [encoded a secret message in a photograph](#) (Figure 1.1, “[Encrypted graduation photo](#)”) using the Bacon cipher.



KNOWLEDGE IS POWE

Figure 1.1. Encrypted graduation photo

The NSA declassified and released, in 2014, [A Pioneer in Cryptology](#) which explains the photo.

Conveying a secret message, students and staff of the U.S. Army's cryptographic school in Geneva, Illinois, assemble for a graduation picture with their director, William F. Friedman (seated at center right), in February 1918. Friedman arranged his pupils and colleagues to form five-element groups in various combinations, as Morse code uses dots and dashes.

The message reads from left to right, beginning at the back row, where the letter “K” is enciphered as “dot dash dot dot dash,” and spells out “Knowledge is power,” an aphorism of the 16th Century English philosopher Francis Bacon. Alas, Friedman had four fewer people than he needed and had to serve by himself as the final “r”.

William and Elizebeth married 1917, and thus they jointly taught this cryptographic class during their first year of marriage. Each of the 76 persons in the photo is looking towards the camera, representing “A,” or away from the camera for “B.” Elizebeth is seated in the center of the five people, Fabyan seated leftmost.

The George C. Marshall Foundation, holder of the William F. Friedman collection, published a [five-minute video about the Knowledge is Power photo](#). The narrator explains that the Friedmans had a copy of the wide photo hanging at home, and that William always had a second copy of that photo under glass on his office desk. The photograph, with its Bacon cipher, was his constant companion.

Arlington

Widow Elizebeth Friedman, in designing their headstone, surely reflected back on how they met her first day at Riverbank. Their project was to determine who was the “real” author of the Shakespeare plays. The “Knowledge is Power” photo hung above her desk at the time of William’s funeral in 1969.

Elizabeth commissioned their headstone to read KNOWLEDGE IS POWER at the bottom. This was her reference to how they first met, and to Friedman’s message of 50 years earlier, the Francis Bacon quotation that had been encoded in the Francis Bacon biliteral cipher.

Elizabeth lived another ten years. She gave the (classified) oral history interview during that time, her husband long since interred underneath that headstone. So, among those who knew, the source and significance of KNOWLEDGE IS POWER would be known. The 1918 photo was itself no particular secret; visitors to their home saw it on the wall. Visitors to Friedman’s office would have seen it on his desk.

Now, after 50+ years of marriage, she’d lost her husband. Knowledge is power, sure, but she was undoubtedly evoking the foundation of their relationship, carved in granite forever. [Figure 1.2, “William F. and Elizebeth Smith Friedman,”](#) depicts William F. and Elizebeth Smith Friedman in an exhibit at the National Cryptologic Museum at Fort Meade, Maryland.



Figure 1.2. William F. and Elizebeth Smith Friedman

Hiding in Plain Sight

This content is not available in the sample book. The book can be purchased on Leanpub at <https://leanpub.com/unexpected-histories-03>.

Coast Guard Unit 387

This content is not available in the sample book. The book can be purchased on Leanpub at <https://leanpub.com/unexpected-histories-03>.

Summary

This content is not available in the sample book. The book can be purchased on Leanpub at <https://leanpub.com/unexpected-histories-03>.

Chapter 2. Return With Honor

This content is not available in the sample book. The book can be purchased on Leanpub at <https://leanpub.com/unexpected-histories-03>.

Alternative Approach

This content is not available in the sample book. The book can be purchased on Leanpub at <https://leanpub.com/unexpected-histories-03>.

Pandemic

This content is not available in the sample book. The book can be purchased on Leanpub at <https://leanpub.com/unexpected-histories-03>.

Korea

This content is not available in the sample book. The book can be purchased on Leanpub at <https://leanpub.com/unexpected-histories-03>.

Code of Conduct

This content is not available in the sample book. The book can be purchased on Leanpub at <https://leanpub.com/unexpected-histories-03>.

Tap Code

This content is not available in the sample book. The book can be purchased on Leanpub at <https://leanpub.com/unexpected-histories-03>.

Disinformation and Deflection

This content is not available in the sample book. The book can be purchased on Leanpub at <https://leanpub.com/unexpected-histories-03>.

Vietnam Experience

This content is not available in the sample book. The book can be purchased on Leanpub at <https://leanpub.com/unexpected-histories-03>.

Victory Garden

This content is not available in the sample book. The book can be purchased on Leanpub at <https://leanpub.com/unexpected-histories-03>.

Final Checkpoint

This content is not available in the sample book. The book can be purchased on Leanpub at <https://leanpub.com/unexpected-histories-03>.

Concrete Implementation

This content is not available in the sample book. The book can be purchased on Leanpub at <https://leanpub.com/unexpected-histories-03>.

Summary

This content is not available in the sample book. The book can be purchased on Leanpub at <https://leanpub.com/unexpected-histories-03>.

Chapter 3. The Salem Trials

This content is not available in the sample book. The book can be purchased on Leanpub at <https://leanpub.com/unexpected-histories-03>.