



*Yours very truly
J. Hillman*

Most Worshipful Dr. James Noah Hillman

November 6, 1883 – January 8, 1959

Research Paper
Presented by
Worshipful Jonathan Mark Mills
Senior Warden

**James Noah Hillman Lodge of Research, U.D.
Instituted Under Dispensation by the Grand Lodge of Virginia
Ancient, Free & Accepted Masons**

Norton, VA
May 30, 2009

I was honored and humbled by the request of Brother Jason Wamsley to compile and present the first research paper for the James Noah Hillman Lodge of Research, U.D.

I thought it most appropriate to research the life and Masonic history of our beloved Most Worshipful Brother and Doctor James Noah Hillman whose name we have taken as our own in the formation of this Research Lodge.

As you will see, Most Worshipful Brother James Noah Hillman led a rich and rewarding life. He was a true scholar and student of history. His impact upon his fellowman and his Brothers in Masonry was unequaled in his time.

I would like to thank a few people that helped me in making this research paper a reality. Ms. Marie Barnett, Librarian for the Grand Lodge of Virginia, A.F. & A.M. answered my every request for Masonic information regarding Most Worshipful James Noah Hillman. Mr. Seth Hillman, great grandson of Brother Hillman provided me with many photographs and his family's genealogical information that they have compiled over the years. Mrs. Gay Hillman also provided me with several pieces of information to assist me in the compilation of my research.

Jonathan Mark Mills

The battle of Kings Mountain was the turning point of the Revolutionary War. The Southern States were almost completely dominated by the English armies when British Major Patrick Ferguson made his expedition into western North Carolina. It was a thinly settled country occupied by hearty pioneers accustomed to struggling for existence with wild beasts and savage Indians. Remote from the activities of the more heavily settled eastern sections, their time occupied with holding the frontier against the Indians, the population had not, up to that time, taken an active part in the Revolutionary War. The people were nearly all of English and Scots-Irish stock. Tories (colonists who sided with Great Britain against the revolutionaries) were practically unknown among them. They were Whigs and patriots practically to a man. Ferguson's expedition stirred them up like a nest of angry hornets, and down from the mountains of western North Carolina, southwestern Virginia, and eastern Tennessee swarmed these hardy mountaineers with their long rifles in overwhelming numbers; and Ferguson, finding himself suddenly confronted by an army of foes of which he had not dreamed, was perforce himself under the necessity of making a retreat. The swift-footed mountaineers overtook him at Kings Mountain, and, notwithstanding a valorous defense, inflicted one of the most crushing defeats of the war, annihilating his force. Among the men who won this victory, none took a more active part than Colonel Campbell and his Virginians. Down to the present time, southwest Virginia is occupied by the same stock. In these later days, the people go their way quietly, industriously and thriftily, but the fires of patriotism burn as brightly as ever, and only the occasion is required to bring out the virtues and the strength of these men who, in ordinary times, make no noise in the world.

A fine representative of this splendid stock is James Noah Hillman, of Coeburn, Virginia. A young man, yet in his early thirties, he is doing splendid work in his section, and setting an example worthy of emulation in every part of our country.

Mr. Hillman was born at Coeburn on November 6, 1883, son of Benjamin Franklin Hillman, who was a farmer by occupation. The maiden name of Mr. Hillman's mother was Greear. Mr. Hillman went through the public schools of Wise County, finishing with a High School course at Wise Court House. Thence he went to the famous old William and Mary College at Williamsburg, taking the A.B. and A.M. degrees. Leaving school, he became a school teacher, and his entire manhood life has been spent in that work, of which he has made a marked success. For the last five years he has been Division Superintendent of the Wise County Schools, and his work as Supervisor was so effective that, after serving one term of four years, he was re-elected for a second term of which he has (1916) served three years.

The progress that he has made is not the result of good fortune, or of any preferential treatment by those in power, but is the result of his own earnest labor. He is himself responsible for the statement that the first money which he ever earned was at the age of thirteen or fourteen when he chopped wood a half day for a neighbor, receiving the large reward of twenty-five cents, while his first dollar was earned as a day laborer on a public road. This statement needs no comment and illustrates the quality of the man.

He is prominent in fraternal circles, being a Mason, a Knight Templar, and an Odd Fellow, a member of the Junior Order of American Mechanics, of the Woodmen and of the Red Men. He has been honored by his brethren with the gift of every office in the subordinate lodges, and has served the Masonic Fraternity as a District Deputy Grand Master. In church matters he is an active Methodist, being Superintendent of the Sunday-school, Secretary of the Board of Trustees and Chairman of the Board of Stewards. Politically he would be classified as a Democrat.

He was married in Williamsburg, Virginia, on June 28, 1906, to Ethel Lee Powell, a native of Williamsburg, born October 24, 1885, daughter of Floyd and Bettie Florence (Morris) Powell. Mr. and Mrs. Hillman have two children; James Noah Hillman, Jr., now (1916) nine years old, and Pauline Elaine Hillman.

As might be expected of a man engaged in his work, Mr. Hillman has found general literature, historical and biographical works of most interest to him. His whole soul is enthused with his work, he being a strenuous believer in a system of public education that will make possible an efficient and happy educated citizenship, a system which will give the same opportunity to the boy in the mountain hovel as is now afforded the boy living in the splendid mansions of our cities. He hopes to see the day when there will be nine months' public school in reach of every child, and a law in every State in the Union compelling attendance thereupon for a definite period. Himself a man of courage, not afraid of expressing his opinions, he is thoroughly convinced that the best interests of the State will be served when every citizen has the intelligence and courage to do his whole part, without hope of fee or reward, for the political, social and economic uplift of his fellows.¹

The following report was read by Most Worshipful A. Douglas Smith, Jr. (namesake of the A. Douglas Smith, Jr. Lodge of Research No. 1949). It was, on motion, adopted and ordered printed in the Grand Lodge of Virginia Proceedings for 1959.

Most Worshipful James Noah Hillman
Past Grand Master
Grand Secretary Emeritus
1883-1959

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind...Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself”. Thusly did Dr. James Noah Hillman, all the days of his life. This epitomizes our remembrance of him.

His greatness lies in his humility, for indeed, he “walked humbly in the sight of God”. Many, varied and far reaching were his contributions to our times, and yet each seemed to reflect his passion for those other indispensable characteristics of a “real Free and Accepted Mason”: that “he did justice and loved mercy”.

The good Doctor, so recognized by two outstanding colleges, was a brilliant scholar, careful historian and beloved educator. Though by intellect, personality and training, he could vie with the greatest in the fields of education, religion and fraternal endeavor, yet, he never lost the common touch, and the humblest was made to feel at home in his presence. He wrote well and spoke fluently. His diction was perfect, yet his approaches to the problems before him were simple and understandable to all. His addresses were “homey” and had a great warmth of expression.

Deeply religious, a devout preacher without a parish, he conscientiously practiced his faith, maintaining always a gracious tolerance for the beliefs of others. He was respected because he respected the rights of others to live their lives according to their own dictates, although they might be contrary to his own, and loved more, because he loved others in spite of their weaknesses and imperfections.

Our beloved friend erected many monuments of memory in the hearts of many people. Each will carry its own inscription, but foremost will be that of “Counselor”. The door of his office was always open. Here was a confessional and quiet chamber wherein the weary and confused unburdened the loads, which seemed betimes too heavy to bear. Here they found a sympathetic understanding and a challenge to face the future unafraid and with new perspective.

¹ *Makers of America – Biographies of Leading Men of Thought and Action – Volume II* published by B. F. Johnson, Inc. in the City of Washington, U.S.A., 1916, pages 80-83. The copyright has expired and the book is now in the public domain and has been digitally reproduced by Google from the original located in the University of Virginia General Library.

We, who saw him bear the crushing blow of the loss of his namesake; the unkind thrusts of the thoughtless; the accolades of men of every race, creed, color and station in life, found in him the character of an outstanding gentleman, a true nobleman of our time. A man of deep convictions, he fought for principles and would never compromise when they were at stake, although quick to accept the majority point of view, when basic morality was not involved.

Most Worshipful, Most Excellent and Illustrious Brother Hillman was proud to be considered a true fraternalist. To him, obligations were to be lived in letter and in spirit; full meaning of our philosophy was to be interpreted; our history was to be accurately recorded, but above all, brotherhood was the more important. Magnetic, he drew men to his heart, and sent them on with a new conception of brotherly love. Generous to a fault, he illustrated daily the deeper meaning of relief. Truth was a practice and not a theory in his life.

He lifted up his eyes unto the hills, whence came his strength. He loved the hills and as lofty were his ideals, and so, it seemed so appropriate that the mortal of him was laid tenderly to rest close by the college that he served so well in the mountain empire of Southwest Virginia, even as he willed it.

His whole life had been lived in preparation for that day when he would be called to the house not made with hands eternal in the heavens where he now resides, but he bequested to those of us who are in this mundane sphere for a time, a new conception of the potential of life.

The Grand Architect of the Universe especially blessed those of us, who were permitted to walk a while with this great soul, and in his passing, earth will be poorer and heaven, the richer be.

Biography – James Noah Hillman

Nativity:

Born on a farm near Coeburn, Wise County, Virginia, November 6, 1883.

Education:

Attended one-room county schools.

Graduated Wise High School (then Gladeville College) 1902.

Entered William and Mary College, Williamsburg, VA, 1902.

Received L.I. degree in 1904.

Received B.A. degree in 1905.

Received M.A. degree in 1909.

LL.D. degree from Hampton-Sydney in 1926.

LL.D. degree from William and Mary in 1931.

Dr. of Humane Letters from Emory and Henry College, 1957.

Member of Phi Beta Kappa, national Scholarship Society, Alpha Chapter of William and Mary – his Alma Mater. It is the Mother Chapter in which the society was organized in 1776.

Experiences:

Instructor – William and Mary College 1905-1908.

Principal – Williamsburg High School 1905-1909.

Superintendent Wise County Virginia Schools 1909-1917.

Assistant State Superintendent of Virginia Public Schools 1917-1922.

President – Emory and Henry College 1922-1941.

Executive Secretary – Holston Conference Board of Education 1941-1944.

Executive Secretary – Grand Lodge of Virginia A.F.&A.M. 1944-1958.

Executive Secretary – Grand Chapter Royal Arch Masons in Virginia 1944-1958.

Grand Secretary Emeritus – Grand Lodge of Virginia November 6, 1958 until passing.

Honors:

Won Best Orator's Medal in high school.

Won Best Debater's Medal in College.

Editor-in- chief College magazine.

Past President of: College Library Society; Virginia association of School Superintendents; Virginia Council of Religious Education; Association of Virginia Colleges; Methodist Education Association of the South; Holston Conference Board of Education; Holston Conference Board of Lay Activities; Kappa Phi Kappa Education Fraternity; Abingdon Rotary Club.

Past President of Alpha Chapter – Phi Beta Kappa, William and Mary College, Williamsburg, VA.

Past Chairman – Honor Court, Bristol Boy Scouts.

President – Dominion Mutual Life Insurance Company, Bristol, VA.

Past Eminent Commander of Cyrene Commandery , Knights Templar, Norton, VA.

Member – Richmond Rotary Club, Richmond, VA.

Member – Virginia and Washington County Historical Societies.

Family:

Married Ethel Lee Powell, of Williamsburg, VA, whose ancestors came to Jamestown with Captain John Smith in 1607.

Son – James Noah Hillman, Jr., Captain in the Army Air Service, Shaw Field, Sumter, SC, B.A. of Emory and Henry College and one year of graduate work at Harvard University. Past Master Glade Spring Lodge No. 236, A.F.&A.M. Killed in service March 9, 1945.

Daughter – Pauline Elaine, B.A. of Emory and Henry College, and six years a high school teacher. Wife of John E. Allen who is a B.A. of Emory and Henry College and an M.A. of University of Virginia – at present a Director of Foreign Relations in the main offices of Dupont Co., Wilmington, DE.

Son – Franklin Powell Hillman, B.A. of Emory and Henry College, M.A. and Ph.D. George Washington University, Washington, DC, Lieutenant (S.G.) in the Navy. Now head of the History Department, Radford College, Radford, VA.

Son – Shelton Burns Hillman, B.A. Emory and Henry College and M.S. Virginia Polytechnic Institute. Sergeant in Finance Training Battalion during the war. Now operates his own business as a CPA in Bristol, VA.

Distinctions of which proud:

That he was privileged to sign and confer, as college president, a college degree on all four of his children, as well as on his son-in-law, his brother and his niece.

Hobby:

Local Historical Research and Family Genealogies

Masonic Data:

Initiated – Coeburn Lodge No. 97, September 9, 1905.

Passed – Williamsburg Lodge No. 6, January 9, 1906.

Raised – Williamsburg Lodge No. 6, March 19, 1906.

Past Master – Coeburn Lodge No. 97 (1910); Glade Spring Lodge No. 236 (1927).

Past District Deputy Grand Master – Districts 44 and 48.

Past Grand Master (1938)

Past High Priest – Coeburn and Highland Park No. 37.

Past District Deputy Grand High Priest - No. 11 (1913); No. 4 (1920).
Past Commander – Cyrene Commandery No. 21, Knights Templar, Norton, VA.
Past Grand High Priest (1947).
Knight Commander of the Court of Honor – Scottish Rite, Southern Jurisdiction, (1948).
33rd Degree Inspector General Honorary, Scottish Rite, Southern Jurisdiction, (1951).
Member – Dalcho Consistory and Acca Temple.
Past Secretary – W.J. Hubard Memorial Loan Fund, Royal Arch Chapter.
Chairman, Grand Lodge of Virginia Committee on Education.
Former Secretary (1907) and Junior Deacon of Williamsburg Lodge No. 6.
Master – Virginia Research Lodge No. 1777 (1950-1958).
Member – St. Polycarp Chapter Red Cross of Constantine.
Member – Royal Order of Scotland.
Honorary member of Lodges numbered 6, 66, 97, 207, 216, and 236.
Honorary member of the Legion of Honor, Order of DeMolay.
Namesake of the Seven State Workshop Class, DeMolay, November 15, 1959.
Author – *History of the Lodge at Port Royal; History of Glade Spring Lodge No. 236.*

Died at Richmond, VA, January 8, 1959; Memorial Service held there on January 10; funeral service at the Chapel of Emory and Henry College on January 11, 1959, with interment in cemetery at Emory and Henry College by the Grand Lodge under the direction of Most Worshipful Earl Stanley Wallace.²

Masonic schools and awards named after Most Worshipful Brother Hillman:

James Noah Hillman Area Ritual School – 48th, 49th, and 50th Masonic Districts – Held at Catlett Lodge No. 35, Gate City, VA

James Noah Hillman Memorial Award - The James Noah Hillman Memorial Award was established in 1971 to recognize superior performance, not only on the part of Lodge Officers, but also the general membership of the Lodge. Special recognition is given to those Lodges which exhibit program excellence by undertaking various activities that support, enhance, and build this great Fraternity by meeting minimum prescribed requirements as well as participating in additional activities that achieve a superior performance level.

² Reprinted from “*The Proceedings of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of the Commonwealth of Virginia Annual Grand Communication*”, Richmond, VA, Feb. 10-12, 1959, pages 31-34.

Remarks of the Reverend E.W. Rawlings at the funeral service of James Noah Hillman in Richmond, VA January 10, 1959.

James Noah Hillman died as he lived, in the faith. Many words have been spoken, and many more will enter the record. All the words spoken could not explain him to one who never had his friendship, and to those who knew him no words are necessary or adequate. But it is not fitting that the going home of a soul so gentle should go unmarked.

We grieve not for him, but for ourselves in our loneliness, for he has already walked before us the luminous road to the house of God. I can picture him already in some bright far off corner of heaven, seated with the great asking questions to satisfy his constant insatiable thirst for knowledge.

Or perhaps in some other corner seated with Solomon King of Israel, Hiram King of Tyre and the widow's son, asking them questions concerning the craft. Knowing the real meaning of things but dimly felt here in the beautiful ritual of his craft.

Christian, gentleman, scholar, he lived in a house by the side of a road helping the race of men that went by. Confused and discouraged students, Councils of his church and his loved Virginia received the benefit of his gentle counsels.

He went always in the language of his church "The second Mile", and in the language of the craft he ever journeyed the "Cable Tow's length" to fulfill his task to God and man.

There comes to out of the East a legend of Enoch. The story goes that in the cool of the evening God came down to walk and talk with Enoch. As they walked they held sweet converse on the things of life and eternity. One day as they walked their conversation was particularly earnest. In sweet converse they were unaware that as they walked the long shadows of the evening had lengthened into the shades of night. Then God looked up and said, "We are nearer my home than yours tonight Enoch, you come on and go home with me tonight."

And Enoch was not, for God took him. Just as simply, just as beautifully, last Thursday night as the shadows lengthened, James Noah Hillman went home to be with God, there to await the coming of those who he loved and has lost but for awhile.

The record is ended, the book is closed and on its white pages no stain appears. His name has been transformed to the "Lamb's book of life."

In the company of the spirit of the living God he has approached the East for the last time. He is now at home.

The following letter was provided by Mr. Seth Hillman, Great Grandson of Most Worshipful James Noah Hillman. The letter was written to Mr. Seth Hillman's father...



JAMES N. HILLMAN
GRAND SECRETARY
MASONIC TEMPLE
RICHMOND, VA.

THE MOST WORSHIPFUL GRAND LODGE
OF ANCIENT, FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS OF
THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
March 18, 1957

Dear Shelton B.:

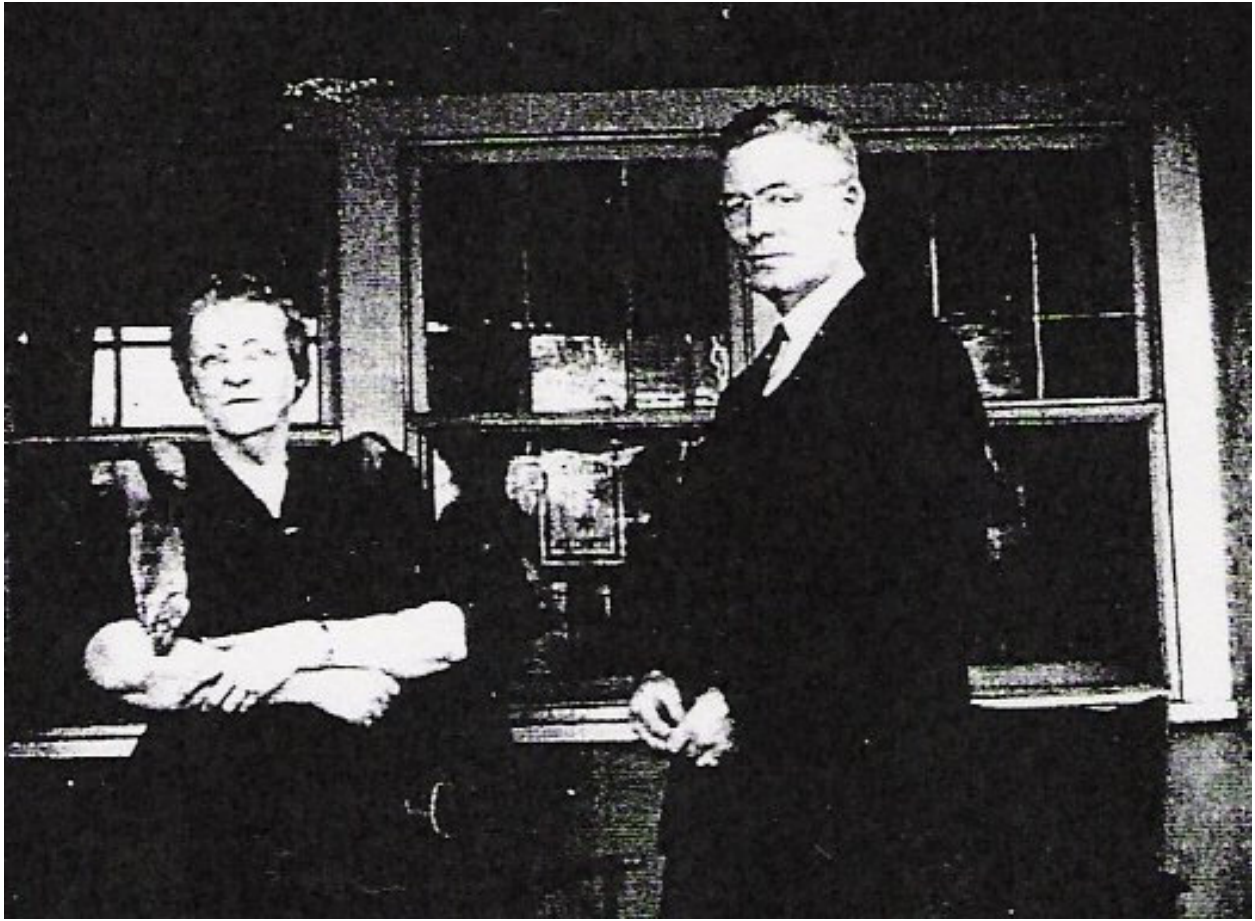
You are 13 years old today, and I am enclosing a little check which I hope you will be able to use for some personal gift which you would like to have. I am also enclosing a check for your mother, whose birthday I almost forgot. I remember of course that her birthday is on the 14th and yours on the 18th. In other words, both of you miss St. Patrick's day.

I hope your sports program for the spring and summer will be entirely successful, and I am sure you will continue to do well in school.

Give my love to all the members of the family and keep a big portion for yourself.

Daddy Doc

The pictures were provided by Mr. Seth Hillman, great grandson of James Noah Hillman.



MW James Noah Hillman and his wife Ethel



Sheldon B. Hillman (son), Nancy, Sheldon B. Hillman, Jr., James Noah Hillman



Sheldon B. Hillman and James Noah Hillman circa 1943-1944