

Worshipful Jason Wamsley's remarks at the Institution of the James Noah Hillman Lodge of Research.	May 30, 2009
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My brethren, ritual is what makes us Masons; but history and tradition is what defines us as such.

Southwest Virginia is rich in Masonic history and it is our duty to see that it lives on, not just in the minute books to be archived and forgotten, but in speeches, papers, and other forms of educational material so that the area lodges and brethren can benefit from it.

It pleases me today to stand before you as a small gear in this Masonic machine, this machine that is called a research lodge. The foundation of this research lodge is southwest Virginia Masonic history and events. The cornerstone is those brethren who stepped forward to help break new ground and help see this lodge through. I have no doubt that the charter members, this core group of brethren, which has assembled to be this lodge, is up to the task of preserving and researching that history.

Almost a year has passed now since the idea of forming this lodge was started. I stand before you as the Lodge's first Worshipful Master. Earlier this morning the Grand Lodge of Virginia convened and in this room instituted this Lodge and installed her first group of officers; Mark Mills, our Senior Warden, Jack Flanary, II, our Junior Warden, Kevin Marcus and Garret Jackson, our Senior and Junior Deacons, Jim Glovier, Secretary, Winston Terry, Treasurer, Brian Collins as Chaplain, and J.C. Schweingrouber, our Tiler. These brethren and the many brethren who stepped forward to be a part of this, without you this would not have been possible, and I thank you.

I must also thank our Grand Master, Most Worshipful Jeff Hodges, for suggesting the name, James Noah Hillman, to christen our lodge. I thank his family for giving us the permission to do so. I also would like to thank Right Worshipful Brother Paul Sleeper. A couple of years ago he afforded me the opportunity to be a member of the Grand Lodge Committee on Masonic Education and now it is my impetus for Freemasonry. I also want to thank my very understanding and loving wife. Without her patience and help some of this may not have been completed.

This morning you will hear the first two papers produced by members of the James Noah Hillman Research Lodge. The first paper, presented by Worshipful Garret Jackson centers on a punch ladle, once owned by Brother George Washington, our First President, and is now in possession of Abingdon Lodge, No. 48. The second paper, presented by Worshipful Mark Mills features our namesake, Most Worshipful James Noah Hillman.