

## Billman Monument Company

Founded: 1889

Location: 85–87 South Sixth Street, Logansport (1889, 1926); 1137 Pleasant Hill (1937, 1998)

In 1889 Charles Daniel Billman established a monument company on Sixth Street in Logansport. Carl H. Billman joined his father in the business sometime after the beginning of the twentieth century. The father and son team designed and crafted granite, marble, and limestone monuments as well as mausoleums. Carl took over the business after he returned from active duty in the navy in 1918 or 1919.

A devastating flood that hit Logansport in the 1930s forced the Billman Company to move to higher ground. They relocated to a spot directly across from the Mount Hope Cemetery. After World War II the company began cutting limestone for commercial buildings, but the operation did not prove successful and the venture ceased after only a few years.

The company's operators were continually recognized in trade journals for their innovation, and the firm was one of the first monument companies to use indoor displays. At one time the American Automobile Association designated the company as a travel touring site because of its several unusual stone works, including an eight-foot Minute Man statue and a large limestone sundial, as well as Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and the Last Supper. The sundial and the Gettysburg Address remain on site. The granite recreation of Da Vinci's *Last Supper* took seven months of labor and was first shown to the public on Easter Sunday 1949. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s schoolchildren and tourists from outside the United States traveled to the Billman Company to see the pieces.

The Billmans were among the first monument dealers to experiment with sandblast glass and were instrumental in designing one of the industry's first automatic sandblast machines. Carl Billman passed on the business to his son Lionel, an Indiana University graduate, in 1957. Lionel's brother, Marc, left the company in 1965. Lionel sold the family business after his retirement in the mid-1980s to Terry D. and Lysbeth Smith. The Smiths held on to the company until 1993 when they sold it to Charles and Jean Gaumer. The Gaumers made several improvements to the business and continued to operate the company in 1998.