

Of New England ancestry, was born at Schenectady, New York, January 25, 1817, his parents moving to New York State from Westerly, Rhode Island. He was a brother of Thomas B. Stillman, for many years the head of the Novelty Iron Works, of New York, and of William J. Stillman, the well-known art critic and London Times correspondent, whose residence is in Europe. Dr. Stillman early showed excellent mental powers, and entered the sophomore class at Union College, where he was graduated in 1835 at the age of 15 years. He chose the medical profession, and removed to New York where for three years he was a student in the office of Dr. Delafield. He then entered the College of Physicians & Surgeons and was graduated therefrom in 1840. During the following two years, he was a physician in the New York Eastern Dispensary. In 1842 he established himself in his profession in Plainfield, N. J., where he continued to practice up to the time of his death, December 11, 1881.

He was married, in July, 1842, to Mary E. Starr, of Hamilton, N. Y. Settling in the city of Plainfield, at the age of 25 years, and taking at once an active part in public affairs, he filled a large place in the history of the town, outside of the circle into which he was called by his professional duties. As a physician and surgeon, he always had a reputation for learning and skill, which placed him in the front rank of his profession and gave him a large practice. No one comes nearer to the life of a people than a family physician, and a long experience of 40 years in a growing community like Plainfield must bring a physician so in contact with that life as to make him in an unusual sense part of its history. As a surgeon he was very skillful, and for many years acted in that capacity for the Central Railroad, and many doubtless remember his steady hand as a practitioner in an operation.

While his professional labors made his name a household word in many families of his time, the crowning work of Dr. Stillman's life was the public school system of Plainfield, which laid the foundation for all that has been done in New Jersey in this direction, and the public schools of Plainfield are still designated as "School District No. 1," showing that they were the first to be founded under school laws which he was instrumental in establishing. His disinterested and unbroken service of 34 years in developing that system

His services during all that time as school trustee and president of the board of education have won for his memory a most profound regard. Plainfield's school was the first free school founded in the State of New Jersey, and there was not even a law on the statute books of the State to provide for raising money to found and carry on such a

school. His first step was to procure the necessary legislation, and in this he met not only with the difficulties which always meet one in attempting the passage of important laws, but he ~~was~~ soon encountered the difficulties which are more stubborn, namely, those which come from the prejudices of the people. The project of a free school seemed to the citizens an invitation which ought not to be tolerated, and this prejudice had to be combatted. He secured at length the passage of a law appropriating \$100 to carry on the school for one year and the \$300 which the State had appropriated in past years for poor children was also secured through his agency for the school at Plainfield, making in all the sum of \$400 to begin work. The office of town superintendents were also established by this same law, and Dr. Stillman was elected to that position. The school was founded August 16, 1847, but as there was no suitable building in which to hold it, application was made to the Legislature and authority obtained to raise \$2,000 for the purpose of building a school house and defraying other expenses. It was not easy to accomplish this work, for it was necessary, in order to have the law passed, to present to the Legislature a petition from all the influential citizens of the community, many of whom were opposed to it, especially among the farmers. To these Dr. Stillman appealed, and it was one of the most trying experiences of his life, for he found them opposed to the scheme, deeming it the absurdest of things to give free schooling to anybody, but fortunately he obtained names enough to secure the passage of the law, and the appropriation was made, with the result that by the following fall a frame building was erected at the corner of West Fourth and Union Streets, (now Arlington Ave.), where the "Franklin" now stands. Chosen, in 1847, as township superintendent of schools, Dr. Stillman held that office for 20 years, or until the office was abolished. He was then elected, under the law, as school trustee, and held that position until his death. The success of his life work is best seen in our public schools, but he also held many other positions of trust and confidence.

He was elected Mayor of Plainfield in 1872 and served the city in that capacity two years. He was one of the founders of the City National Bank, and continued as director until his death. He was a member of the Seventh Day Baptist church and served as trustee therein for many years.

Surviving him are a widow and four children, one daughter and three sons.

FROM History of Union Co., N.J. pp. 115-116
Full page portrait.
F.W. Ricord, Ed
Newark, N.J.
1897.

U. A. M.
June 1927 1835

Of more than ordinary interest is an article appearing the April 27, 1927, issue of the Plainfield, N. J., *News*. The article claims that the first public schools, other than pauper schools, in New Jersey were established at Plainfield in 1847, and that the establishment of the schools was largely the work of Dr. CHARLES H. STILLMAN, M.D., who after graduation from Union and the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York City went to Plainfield in 1843.

Dr. Stillman was troubled by the amount of ignorance he found not only among the grown-ups but with the children, and soon began a work of betterment. The first act of the doctor was to have the Legislature cut off Plainfield Township from the Township of Westfield, which was done by act of legislation February 4, 1847.

On April 13, 1847, and again on May 24, 1847, he called meetings of the voters to make arrangements for the opening of two small schools. Dr. Stillman's first board consisted of eight men, one from each church, and two teachers were engaged at \$26 per month each, they to furnish firewood, pens and ink.

The doctor, assisted by his friend James Wilson, a well known lawyer of his day, drafted a law and placed it in the hands of Elston M. Marsh, the Assemblyman from the district, who enthusiastically pushed it through the Legislature. This law gave the voters of Plainfield the right to raise by tax at their annual meeting a sum not exceeding \$2,000 for school purposes without limiting it to the poor. By persistent effort and intimate contact with families the sum of \$1,200 was voted and with this and other money, they built a frame school-house.

This law of 1848 is the first law establishing a free school, open to all and supported by taxation, that one will find in the New Jersey statutes.

Stillman, Charles H., 1835
Pearson Diaries V.4, p.748

Stillman, Charles 7/9/1835
"..of Schenectady..son of a machinist who has several other sons, all ingenious workmen. Thomas is superintendent of the 'Novelty Works' New York, and Alfred, who until lately has been engaged with his father in Schenectady, has just returned from England wither he was sent by Dr. Mott upon business relative to his steam boilers. Charles has considerable taste for mechanics..modest, unassuming..extremely bashful. As a scholar he has few superiors. He has an impediment in his speech which his diffidence greatly increases..chosen profession of medicine, studies under Dr. Joslin Pearson Diaries V. 2, p.143.

CHARLES H. STILLMAN, '35.

was born in Schenectady, January 25th, 1817.

In College, he was a member of the Fraternal Society, received the second honor in his class and election to the Phi Beta Kappa. He went to New York City, was graduated from the College of Physicians and Surgeons in 1840, and was Physician and Oculist of the Eastern Dispensary until May, 1842. He removed to Plainfield, N. J., where he remained in the active duties of his profession (physician and surgeon) until his death. In 1847, he was elected member of the School Board and inaugurated the first "public school" of New Jersey under the new law. He remained President of the Board until his death. He was at one time President of the Medical Society of Union Co. He was Mayor of the city in 1872, and was a Director in various Banks and other corporations.

His political sentiments were Republican

He was a member of the Seventh Day Baptist church.

His sterling personal qualities, thorough professional culture and enthusiasm, placed his practice eventually among the largest and most valuable in the State.

He died of heart disease, Dec. 11th, 1881, leaving a wife, three sons and a daughter.

CLASS OF 1835

CHARLES H. STILLMAN

Physician and ex-Mayor of Plainfield, N. J., was born in Schenectady, N. Y., January 25, 1817. The family is of English descent, the ancestor having emigrated to Massachusetts in 1680. His father, Joseph Stillman, was widely known as a ship-builder.

Dr. Stillman graduated at Union College in 1835, and in the year 1840 took his medical degree at the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York.

In 1842 he removed to Plainfield, N. J., where he has since resided, actively engaged in the practice of his profession. His advance to the front rank of medical practitioners was rapid and brilliant. He was for many years surgeon of the Central Rail Road of New Jersey, and his great skill as a surgeon has won the cordial recognition not only of the community at large but of all in the profession. Next to his devotion to his profession is his practical earnestness in forwarding the educational interests of the community in which he resides (see schools). He was a member of the State Medical Society, and president of the Medical Society of Union County. He was also a director of the City National Bank, of the Washington Fire Insurance Company, the City Savings Institute, and various other corporations. In 1872 he was nominated by both political parties for the office of Mayor of Plainfield, and elected to the position, and administered the duties of the office for two years.

He was married in 1842 to Mary E. Starr, of Hamilton, N. Y. His eldest son, Thomas H. Stillman, was for a time assistant professor of chemistry in Stevens Institute, Hoboken, N. J.; his second son, Charles F. Stillman, M. D., examiner in Mutual Life Insurance Co., now practicing in New York City; his third son, William M. Stillman, counselor-of-law in city of Plainfield.

FROM History of Union & Middlesex Cos., N. J. p. 128
W. Woodford Clayton
Everts & Peck
Philadelphia 1882.

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History of Union & Middlesex Counties, N.J. p. 128
W. Woodford Clayton
Everts & Peck
Philadelphia
1882.

Charles H. Stillman A.B. 1835

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1835
H.B.