HOYT SHERMAN PLACE HISTORY

HOYT SHERMAN

1827 – 1904

Born in Lancaster, Ohio, in 1827 Hoyt Sherman is the youngest in a family of six boys and five girls. He and his brothers accomplish much in business, finance and government:

» William T. Sherman, famous Civil War General
» John Sherman, author of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act, Ohio US Senator and Secretary of the Treasury
» Charles Sherman, Justice, Ohio Supreme Court
» James Sherman, successful merchant in both Ohio and Iowa

In 1848 Hoyt arrives in Des Moines at the age of twenty. The population of the city stands at 127.

In 1849 Hoyt passes the bar and accepts the position as Postmaster. He is involved in the first and second post office buildings, first bank, first street railway, first public school, first college, first waterworks and the first life insurance company west of the city of Des Moines, with nearly two years while they plan and construct a permanent hospital north of downtown Des Moines.

In 1850 Hoyt purchases a parcel of land at 15th and Woodland Avenue for $105 at the Hugh Pursley estate auction.

In 1855 Hoyt travels to Ohio to marry Sara Molton on Christmas Day. They raise five children in Des Moines.

In 1860 Hoyt is appointed Union Paymaster with the rank of Major by President Lincoln. He remains in that position until the end of the Civil War.

In 1867 Hoyt joins with other community leaders to form Equitable of Iowa Life Insurance Company. He serves fourteen years as President.

In 1893 Hoyt Sherman rents his home to The Sisters of Mercy from Davenport, Iowa. Within the walls of the home, the sisters create the first Mercy Hospital in Des Moines. The six nuns operate out of the home for nearly two years while they plan and construct a permanent hospital north of downtown Des Moines.

In 1897 the Des Moines Women’s Club, founded in 1885, builds Des Moines’ first public art museum at Hoyt Sherman Place.

In 1907 the Des Moines Women's Club, founded in 1885, builds Des Moines’ first public art museum at Hoyt Sherman Place.

The city rents the home to the Des Moines Women’s Club for $1 per year and stipulates that it be maintained and forever called Hoyt Sherman Place. The DMWC builds a gallery which becomes the first public art museum in Des Moines.

In 1912 the Des Moines Women’s Club begins raising funds for the construction of a 1,400-seat theater. World War I is declared in 1914 and all plans are put on hold.

Construction of the theater begins. The Des Moines Women’s Club also begins construction of another gallery called the Byers Room to house the art collection presented to them by Major S.H.M and Margaret Byers in 1912. Major Byers served under and became a close friend of Hoyt's brother, General William T. Sherman.

In 1923 The 1,400-seat theater is complete. Many luminaries come to Hoyt Sherman Place to entertain.

Among the honored speakers and performers in its first two decades are Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan (1925), Will Rogers (1925), John Philip Sousa (1925), Amelia Earhart (1933), Otis Skinner (1935), Edna St. Vincent Milay (1938), Grant Wood (1939), and Agnes de Mille (1940).

In 1977 Hoyt Sherman Place is listed on The National Register of Historic Places.

In 1995 The Hoyt Sherman Place Foundation is created to preserve and enhance the 1877 landmark.

In 2004 Phase one of a $5.5 million dollar restoration project is completed to restore the spaces to their original grandeur. Additional enhancements include air conditioning, state-of-the-art lighting, 1,252 refurbished historical seats in the theater and interior upgrades in the galleries.

In 2011 Restoration efforts continue as all floors on the main level of the mansion and stairway are restored to their original luster, and the faded and damaged stencil on the stairway walls is recreated.

In 2015 Hoyt Sherman Place is inducted into the Iowa Rock 'n' Roll Music Association Hall of Fame.