

From the Des Moines Women's Club Cookbook
Centennial Edition, 1885-1985

The Des Moines Women's Club
Remembers One Hundred Years
1885-1985

In 1885, five indomitable, foresighted women, their bustles in place, met in the old Plymouth Congregational Church, Fifth and Grand Avenue, to form what is now the Des Moines Women's Club. At that time, the population of Des Moines was 22,000, horses and buggies were the mode of conveyance, and streets were dusty, dirty and deep in mud in the wet seasons.

The club met in various places in the city, Central Christian Church, K.P. and Good Templar's Halls, Yeoman Hall, Savery Hotel, Women's Exchange and Y.M.C.A. At the latter they had the use of the stairs, all of the 5th floor, the elevator and the rest rooms.

In 1888, a rule was made requiring 25 cents for absenteeism. Horses and buggies got stuck in the mud. The attendance, however, did become better after the 25-cent fine.

The club grew to 22 members and these 22 would go down in history as charter members and be recognized as Iowa's largest women's club. Dues were \$1.00 annually and \$10.00 for a life membership.

In order to obtain dishes and silver necessary for carrying out social life, each lady was asked to give 1 cup, 1 plate, and 1 spoon. In October 1893, the chairman of the Property Committee made the following report:

40 cups	2 dishpans	1 dipper	1 broom
51 plates	1 tea kettle	1 tea caddy	2 large chairs
4 saucers	1 pail	1 mop handle	1 large table

In 1894, the records state there were 136 members, 96 present and there were 12 late. Dues were increased to \$2.00 a year.

The women had a great interest in art. It was decided by the club members that there should be a place for the exhibition for the advancement of art. In 1893, the first art purchases were made. A bronze statue of Joan of Arc by the sculptor, Lorado Taft, a souvenir of the Columbian

World Fair, was purchased and a marble statue of Dante which had been executed in Rome. Gradually through the years other purchases have been made and many

donations have been received. Hoyt Sherman Place thus started the first free art gallery in Des Moines.

In 1895, dues were raised to \$5.00 a year. During these years the women continued their interest in art and they purchased several pictures and there were many money gifts too. One husband of one of the members gave \$1000.00 and another gave \$500.00.

Among the early purchases was one, "Loading the Caravan" by Edwin Lord Weeks which is a very large painting and another purchase was "Entering the Harbor" by Quinier.

Hoyt Sherman Place was purchased by the Des Moines Board of Park Commissioners in 1907 from the heirs for \$14,500. Always in search of a permanent home to house these art objects and for a meeting place, the women approached the city park commissioners. An arrangement was made that the city would lease the property to the women on a 49 year lease for \$1.00 a year providing that they would build and maintain a free public art gallery open to the public at least three times a week and that the property would always be known as Hoyt Sherman Place.

Hoyt Sherman Place

The parents of Hoyt Sherman, Charles R. and Mary Hoyt, came from Connecticut to Lancaster, Ohio in 1811. Mary Hoyt rode horseback with baby Charles, the first born, on a pillow in front of her as she rode. Charles R. Sherman opened a law office and became a judge in the Supreme Court of Ohio. They had 11 children, 6 boys and 5 girls. At 41, Charles R. died of cholera and Mary was left to rear this large family.

She must have been a very courageous as well as an efficient woman. All of her sons became better than average citizens. Charles, the one who rode so far on a pillow on horseback, became a noted jurist, was a member of the Supreme Court of Ohio and of the U.S.

William Tecumseh was a noted general during the Civil War and was recognized as such throughout the world.

James became one of the leading merchants of Cincinnati and Des Moines. He laid out part of the city known as Sevastopol.

John was in the U.S. Senate from Ohio. He was U.S. Treasurer under President Hayes and a noted financier; a great statesman, diplomat and councilman in councils of all nations. President McKinley appointed him Secretary of State in 1898. He was suggested for President three times and was the author of the Sherman-Anti-Trust Law.

Lampson was an educator, editor and an historian and lived most of his life in Des Moines. He published a Whig paper known as the "Gazette."

Hoyt, the youngest, came to Des Moines in 1848, penniless, but with an active mind, full of energy, well educated, and he was admitted to the Bar in 1849. On Christmas Day, 1855, he was married to a Sarah Moulton. They came to Des Moines by way of Iowa City on the railroad and from there to Des Moines by stagecoach. Of this marriage, there were three boys and four girls, two of whom died in infancy. The boys were Frank, Charles and Arthur. The girls were Addie, who became Mrs. Wiborg and Helen, who became Mrs. W. O. Griffith.

Hoyt Sherman had many accomplishments. He was appointed postmaster and helped build the first and second post offices, was school fund commissioner, one of the leaders in establishing the first bank, first street railway, first public schools, first college, first waterworks, and first insurance company. In 1861 he became a member of the Iowa legislature. During the Civil War, he had the title of Major. He was a paymaster appointed by President Lincoln.

A large tract of land known as the Pursley estate was to be sold by order of the Court and was divided into lots of five acres each, which were to be sold at auction. By adding his fee of \$5.00, as clerk of the sale, to the amount he had to invest at that time, Hoyt Sherman secured the lot, which was located between Fifteenth and Sixteenth Streets north of the present Woodland Avenue for \$95.00. Here he built a frame house where the family lived until the mansion was built in 1877. They say that it took five years to be built. It was a showplace for many of the early day's social affairs, and had many distinguished visitors such as General Tecumseh Sherman, General and Mrs. U. S. Grant, Major McKinley who later became president. At one time there was a G. A. R. reunion and three Generals were there: Sherman, Sheridan and Grant.

Hoyt Sherman Place was a symbol of gracious living in the 1800s and still is today. It has very high ceilings, tall arched windows and many spacious rooms. The double doorways are arched and these heavy arched doors are made of five different varieties of hardwood-mahogany, cherry, walnut, maple and pine. There are marble fireplaces, a long staircase, with a landing, and intricately carved woodwork. The dining room has a superb parquet floor. At one time the house had a cupola, on it above the front entrance. There was a large brick barn with horses, several carriages and a sleigh. Before the removal of the cupola, the house very much resembled Terrace Hill, which had been built by B. F. Allen and sold to F. M. Hubbell, associates with Hoyt Sherman in Equitable Life Insurance Company. Terrace Hill is now the home of the Governor of Iowa.

Mrs. Sherman died in 1887 and for a while in 1893 the house was a Catholic Hospital. Hoyt Sherman was therefore, the first location of what is now known as Mercy Hospital. Mr. Sherman lived in the house until his death in 1904.

In October 1907, a beautiful warm day, the Des Moines Women's Club held their first meeting at Hoyt Sherman Place. The clubwomen sat on the front steps because the inside of the house was being renovated and restored. The women were proud and thrilled to be in possession at last of a clubhouse. They actually had 200 members, which was a far cry from the original count that started the club.

The women started to remodel immediately and spent about \$10,000. They moved in December 1907. The art gallery wing also served as a meeting room for the club.

What have the women done to earn money to maintain this Club and this building? Well, what haven't they done? They ran laundries; they ran industrial plants at so much a head. They sponsored concerts, they took over theaters, they operated stores, and they gave bridge parties. They cleaned houses, they shined shoes, shoveled snow, sold hand lotion, sold homemade cottage cheese, eggs, doughnuts, bread, marmalade, mats and aprons.

The women even ran the streetcars as conductors. Just think of that! Harvey Ingham, a well known editor of the Register, was behind the ladies and printed: "You will have the privilege of paying your fare this day to a sweet creation wearing a white duck cap, a pretty shirtwaist and trim skirt, and when you step aboard a crowded car, you will hear, 'Kindly step forward a little, please, and make room for others.' Leave your horse in the stable that day, relegate your bicycle to the basement and ride the streetcars for sweet charity's sake." Two hundred ladies were involved in this as conductors.

An indebtedness of \$1,300 was paid off in 1911. One of the first orders of business when Mrs. Gardner Cowles took office as president in 1917 was to have a good club motto. The one, which was suggested, was written in German and there was much discussion and criticism regarding it due to the beginning of World War I. The members decided they were either to discard it or anglicize it. The Club voted to anglicize it. The motto then and now is: "Discussion stimulates thought."

In 1918 a limit of 1,000 was placed on the membership list.

The club's art collection really started when a Major S. H. M. Byers gave his collection of Swiss carved furniture, paintings and other relics to the Women's Club. Major S. H. M. Byers and his wife had been close friends of the Sherman family, especially of General Sherman. During the Civil War, Major Byers had written the words to "Sherman March Down to the Sea." He was in the U.S. Consular services and in Switzerland and Italy for over 20 years and had a collection of many pictures and art objects. They had no immediate family left so he made a gift to the Des Moines Women's Club of this all of his acquisitions. Among frequent visitors in the Byers home were James Russell Lowell and Mark Twain. The Byers home was known as "St. Helen's" which was named for their daughter who passed away in early childhood at 8 years. This home still survives and is south of Grand on 27th across from Terrace Hill.

The collection includes a few of the following items of interest:

- A carved bookcase with fluted columns dated around the 17th century once owned by a Swiss pastor.
- A wedding chest with Swiss carvings.
- Portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Byers.
- A large carved cabinet, the date 1679 is carved on the doors. For over 100 years it held some of the archives of the city of Zurich. It was discovered by Major Byers in a barn being used as a grain bin. It is a very rare piece of beautiful carving.
- A Chillon table, made from a beam estimated to be over 1,000 years old and taken from the tower of the Castle of Chillon. This is the table at which Mark Twain and James Russell Lowell sat.
- A marble fragment from the Coliseum in Rome.
- A carved Roman chair from a convent.
- An Etruscan foot and hand from the Roman Forum.
- A Cinerary Urn-4th Century E.C.
- Two amphoras: the large one dates 500 B.C., the smaller one 325-350 B.C.
- A tall desk, which is solid mahogany. The desk part is ebony from Madagascar with rosewood inlay. It belonged to the Court Marshall of the King of Württemberg and later to a cousin of Prince Bismarck. It dates from the early 1600s. It has many secret drawers.

It was necessary to build a \$10,000 addition to the art gallery to house this collection in 1923. As the membership grew, with the growth of the city, it became apparent the women must have more room so they decided to build on an auditorium. This was done about the same time the Byers Room was added. This was to be east of their present house. The 49-year lease was not sufficient to warrant such a large program. So the women obtained a 99-year lease through legislative action and that would be good until the year 2019. In 1934 this building project was completely paid for. The auditorium has provided a means of culture for Des Moines for many years.

In the earlier days before the auditorium was built, the club founders fortified by petticoats and bustles were always dressed in their best for meetings. This meant gloves on their hands and hats on their heads. Every meeting was deadly serious. In fact, the women were not allowed to discuss or talk during a meeting.

Things are quite changed, quite different now. Today, few own a hat and a good many of the clubwomen appear in casual pantsuits. It is not uncommon to hear from their auditorium seats, "Can't hear," or "Louder, please."

The seating capacity of the auditorium is 1,400 with excellent acoustics. It has the first complete lighting board in a Des Moines theater. The Rococo plasterwork on the ceilings and the walls is to be noted. This kind of plaster design is often seen in the palaces of Europe but no longer done in the United States; in fact, this is the only one

of its kind existing in Des Moines. During the building of the auditorium, these forms were made in the basement and then brought up and molded into place. There is a two manual Kimball organ, which was installed in 1937 in memory of Mr. Henry B. Hawley given by his wife.

Many outstanding speakers and artists have appeared on our stage. Some of them, to mention only a few are Will Rogers, John Phillip Sousa, County Ilya Tolstoy, Edgar Guest, Edgar Lee Masters, Amelia Earhart, Emil Ludwig, Otis Skinner and his talented daughter Cornelia Otis Skinner, Clifton Fadiman, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Jan Struther, Agnes DeMille, Dorothy Thompson, Ernestine Gilbreth Carey, Eva LeGallienne, Amy Vanderbilt, Perle Mesta, Elsa Maxwell, Charles Taft, Vincent Sheehan, and Meredith Wilson.

There are several items, which belonged to the Hoyt Sherman family, which are still in this house. There is a picture of a covered bridge at the fork of the Des Moines and the Raccoon rivers, the founding of Des Moines. This belonged to Hoyt Sherman. There are tiny ears of corn around the edge of the frame. This picture can be found in the art gallery.

Another item is the dining room furniture, which is in the President's Dining Room. The buffet and the table are solid mahogany but the chairs are cherry wood. The parquet floor is made of four different woods. The fireplaces are all the originals as are the shutters found in every window. Some of the lighting fixtures are originals. A framed certificate in the Mirror room shows Hoyt Sherman Place is on the National Register.

In 1926, the president of the board announced that the grounds of Hoyt Sherman Place would be landscaped by the members and so everyone brought wild flowers like silky dogwood, golden current, prairie roses, elder, privet, sweet William, sumac and snowberry. The ladies got down on their hands and knees in the dirt and planted.

The Women's Club possesses three Steinway pianos. One has been autographed by Mr. Henry J. Steinway who picked it out himself. In 1973, a 100-year-old Chickering piano was given the Women's Club.

In 1950, an extensive remodeling was done to make a more modern kitchen and also to add one upstairs as well as extra rest rooms. Then in 1956, the entire auditorium was renovated and a new lighting system and carpeting installed.

The people of Des Moines owe a great deal to these pioneering women who have had the courage and foresight to take on such a venture in building this wonderful establishment. It is the same type of women who make up our board today who have absorbed the same qualities of leadership and preserved their heritage.

The Des Moines Women's Club is proud of its organization and its lovely home. Through group effort it has been able to award cash prizes to many entries in the art exhibits held each year, given scholarships to worthy college students and raised thousands of dollars for maintenance of the house and public art gallery. The club enters into public civic affairs and works on many projects. Best of all are the friendships made with fellow members- friendships, which last a lifetime.

On April 29, 1925 the poet, Arthur Guiterman, stood upon our stage. He was greatly impressed with this historic house. He wrote a house blessing for us, which is framed and hangs in our hall vestibule.

"Bless the four corners of this house
And be the lintel blest;
And bless the hearts and bless the board
And bless each place of rest;
And bless the door that opens wide
To stranger and to kin;
And bless each crystal window pane
That lets the sunlight in;
And bless the roof tree over head
And every sturdy wall,
The peace of man. The Peace of God.
The peace of Love on All. "

{Credit for the following material to Sherman Hill-Doors to the Past, Windows to the Future.}

The site of Hoyt Sherman Place and surrounding property is now known as Sherman Hill. The river bluffs rising northwest of the confluence of the Des Moines and Raccoon Rivers have been viewed as an attractive development site since the late 1840s, when Des Moines was an Army Post and small struggling community of less than 200 persons. With the growth of the city and the prosperity, which came with being the state capital after 1857, Des Moines expanded to the west. By the mid-1870s, this city of almost 20,000 had grown westward to the bluffs and Sherman Hill's intensive period of growth began.

Hoyt Sherman was a significant figure in 19th century Des Moines. Sherman's rise in economic and social status was visually demonstrated in his home. On the land he purchased at 15th and Woodland, he built a Gothic cottage. According to a view published by A. T. Andreas in 1875 the house, although a modest dwelling, had grounds highly developed with ornamental and exotic plantings, an ornamental iron fence and even a three-tier iron fountain. Two years later, in 1877, the house was substantially enlarged with the Gothic cottage incorporated into a new Italianate mansion.

By the end of the 1870s the westward growth of Des Moines made the river bluffs beyond Hoyt Sherman's country seat an attractive area for development. While some minor areas in Sherman Hill had been laid out as early as 1856, most of the area was platted between 1877 and 1882.

Large houses, a few of brick but most of frame construction, rose on spacious lots, with outbuildings such as carriage houses and storage sheds set along the alleys. In keeping with popular architecture of the period, many of these houses featured porches or broad verandas, projecting bays or wings, and elaborate exterior decoration. They varied in size from relatively small to quite large, the latter usually being the most "stylish." American architectural styles, of course, changed over the years. These changes were reflected in Sherman Hill, where elaborate Victorian jigsaw work, brackets and spindles gave way toward the end of the century to the simpler lines of classical columns, pediments and plain, molded cornices.

Up to about 1900, Sherman Hill, with its single-family houses spaced neatly along well-tended lots, was not unlike neighborhoods in many other Iowa cities and towns, and even entire small towns. Early in the new century, however, increasing urbanization of Des Moines, with a corresponding pressure on housing, resulted in construction of multi-family units.

The first of these in Sherman Hill were double houses, or duplexes, and unlike most earlier residences in the neighborhood were of brick, rather than frame, construction. By the 1920s, apartment buildings, also of brick but larger than the duplexes, were scattered throughout Sherman Hill, bringing with them an atmosphere of urban, rather than suburban or small town, living. Often displaying handsomely embellished exteriors, these apartment blocks also offered the latest in urban amenities: fireproof and soundproof construction, elevators and electric lighting.

Continuing population growth after World War I, fostered by industrialization and an influx from rural areas, brought still more people to the city center and thus to Sherman Hill. Its relative nearness to factories and other workplaces made it attractive to workingmen and by the same token, increasingly undesirable to its wealthier inhabitants. By World War II, duplexes were being divided into "fourplexes," and a sizeable number of the large late 19th century dwellings partitioned into apartments and rooming houses. Absentee ownership and increasing poverty of the inhabitants took their toll on Sherman Hill, which suffered neglect, vandalism and, in the 1960s unsympathetic "modernization" and introduction of still more apartment blocks. Many of these were in form, scale and quality quite out of keeping with the neighborhood's late 19th and early 20th century architectural heritage.

Sherman Hill offers perhaps the greatest concentration of late 19th century residential architecture in Des Moines. With its origins in the post-Civil War "Gilded

Age," Sherman Hill's earliest houses, Hoyt Sherman's included, illustrate picturesque styles popular at the time.

Whether large or small, these houses have in common a verticality emphasized by steeply pitched gable roofs, irregular plans that invariably include porches or verandas, and roofscapes enlivened with dormers, projecting gables and even towers. Most of these 19th century houses are of wood frame construction, and even the smallest generally display decorative shingling and millwork on porches and gable ends.

The larger houses are the most "stylish," reflecting their original owners' attention to then current fashions in architecture, which derived from a variety of European traditions. For example, the Stoner House with its steep roofs, gables, corner tower and massive masonry form is an adaptation of the French Chateausque. The Italian Renaissance, expressed in America in the Italian Villa and Italianate styles, and identified primarily by shallow hipped roofs and bracketed eaves, inspired a number of houses in Sherman Hill.

The Maish house is an example of the American Queen Anne, once enormously popular and characterized by irregular silhouettes, textured wall surfaces and often exceedingly elaborate porches. Such porches were termed Eastlake when their millwork came from the lathe as rounded posts, curved brackets and ornate balustrades.

Toward the end of the 19th century, architecture turned to the neoclassical, often deriving inspiration from America's own colonial past. The Rosenfield house illustrates this transition from the Victorian picturesque, its irregular form, asymmetry and textured wall surfaces looking back to the earlier age, while its columned porch with triangular pediment is fully in keeping with the subsequent Colonial Revival. The Samish house is also an example of this phenomenon. Illustrating the turn of the century neoclassical in another way are fairly large, four-square dwellings, best described as "hipped boxes," with their shallow roofs and wide eaves, in which the symmetry of the Georgian colonial period is reasserted over the late Victorian enthusiasm for irregularity of forms.

Sherman Hill's architectural heritage is thus richly diverse, ranging from the picturesque, complex and embellished forms of its Victorian era houses, large and small, to the urbane simplicity of its early 20th century apartment blocks. In the relatively small area of Sherman Hill, changing fashions in urban domestic architecture over a 40-year period (c. 1880-1920) are vividly illustrated. This variety within a neighborhood is unique in Des Moines, and rich with possibilities for the future.

Today, residents take great pride in the history and architecture unique to Sherman Hill. Building owners are busy restoring properties in the neighborhood, which is reflected by sheer numbers. In 1978 when the Association was formed, 18

properties were undergoing extensive renovation. Today over 100 buildings and apartments are getting major overhaul, and over %-million dollars was invested in the area during 1984. The visual impact on the neighborhood has been tremendous.

The Association is developing a historic street lighting program, major tree planting project and area wide improvements that in turn, will continue to spur private development and investment.

We have come a long way-from an "inner-city slum" to a proud and unique neighborhood experiencing a renaissance.

You are invited to visit Hoyt Sherman Place with its splendid art and beautiful antiques. Guided tours can be arranged by calling 515-243-0913. Meals are served for groups by reservation.

Sherman Hill Historic District offers walking tours with several of the restored homes open to the public spring and fall. Special activities are featured during Preservation Week in the spring.

Come and visit Hoyt Sherman Place and tour this historic district whenever you are in Des Moines.

Hoyt Sherman Place, 15th & Woodland, Des Moines, Iowa 50314

From the Kitchens of Hoyt Sherman Place

The Des Moines Women's Club and Hoyt Sherman Place have long been known for good food and gracious dining. For years the ladies have arrived on "club day" (Wednesday) dressed in their best, anticipating stimulating and entertaining programs and a tasty luncheon.

As they ascend the stairs from the lower level "guard room" where they leave their wraps, they sniff to catch the first tempting aroma from the kitchens.

The tables are attractively set with appropriate seasonal touches. An appointed club member is a gracious hostess for a table or two seeing that everyone is comfortably seated and that tea and coffee are served.

Waitresses in white uniforms hurry in with the tempting plates thus carrying on the tradition of many years.

Some of the menus became favorites with the ladies and were served over and over. As is always the way they would beg the "cook" for the recipe. Since these were recipes serving several hundred, they had to be pared down to "family" size. Thus began a collection of recipes, which in 1920 was published in a slim, drab green book-not much more than a pamphlet compared to our modern cookbooks of today.

It included signed recipes from members, favorites of past presidents, and club favorites with advertising on almost every page for the products from Knox Gelatin suggesting financial help with the printing from that company. This was customary in early cookbooks.

There was an ad for Flynn milk picturing the "Flynn" baby and reading "Flynn Milk is perfectly pasteurized in *Glass*." There were also ads for mattresses, spices, and printing: and beauty shops.

One page was devoted to "Favorite Food for Wild Birds," proper care of birds with lists appropriate for year around feeding; and even plantings to attract the birds.

Three pages were devoted to "Household Hints." For example: "If you would first dip knife in water, you can cut hard-boiled eggs without breaking yolks." Also "If silverware becomes tarnished, place in potato water, let stand one hour, take out and wash. It will look like new." "To prevent milk from sticking to the bottom when boiled, rinse the pan with a little hot water first." "Clean your rugs thoroughly with vacuum and then wipe up with cloth wrung out of water in which is a little ammonia, and see how new they look."

This little book became a family treasure in the homes of club members, families and friends and to this day is used with fond memories. Note the selected recipes reprinted in the "Old Favorites" section and marked from the "1920 Cook Book."

Over the years a number of excellent cooks have reigned over the kitchens at Hoyt Sherman Place. One of these is Edith Davidson. She was food manager for 19 years. She is known to have run "a tight ship," producing outstanding food, attractively served: everything had to be perfect. She insisted that the plates have "eye appeal," taste as good as it looked, and all portions uniform in size. She believed strongly that meals for large groups should taste as delicious as those cooked for a small family in the home.

Due to the popularity of her good food, there were constant requests for the recipes. The editor of the monthly bulletin began printing these requests as a regular feature titled "From the Kitchens of Hoyt Sherman Place." This was the beginning of a series of cookbooks published in 1956 revised in 1957, another in 1963, and again in 1969. All of these editions were passed around, dog-eared, spilled on, and treasured as old friends in the kitchens of members and their friends.

So what better way can we celebrate One Hundred Years than compiling yet another cookbook filled with favorite recipes of our present members along with selected recipes from our past cookbooks. We present it to you with love, Happy 100th Birthday to the Des Moines Women's Club and its "Kitchens"