

*In the entryway of Sherman Hall, John Q. Sherman II poses beneath a portrait of his grandfather.*



LARRY BURGESS

# The Sherman family helped make Dayton greater

By Thomas M. Columbus

About the time that Wilbur and Orville Wright were mastering flight and Charles F. Kettering was revolutionizing how we start our automobiles, John Q. Sherman was putting holes in paper.

The University of Dayton was to be very grateful for Sherman and his holes. They helped save UD from extinction.

Sherman had come to Dayton in the early 20th century from Excello, a small unincorporated place in Ohio just to the south of Middletown. In the words of a corporate history of the company he was to lead, Sherman came to the “big city” of Dayton “to seek his fortune.” By day, he worked as a molder; by night, he studied. He opened a small real estate office,

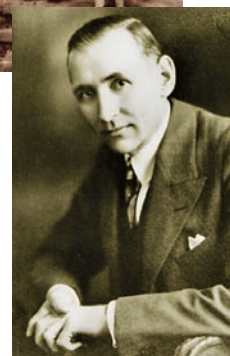
an endeavor he expanded into the buying and selling of various businesses.

A reader of one of Sherman’s newspaper ads misread it; he thought that Sherman, besides buying and selling businesses, also would advance money to a new business. Or perhaps that reader just hoped Sherman would.

For the reader, Theodore Schirmer, wanted to start a company. He was an inventor with an idea; he had created a machine; he was seeking funding. Some potential funders laughed at his notions.



*Right, John Q. Sherman; above, the family gathers for a portrait at the family’s home, ca. 1931. William P. Sherman ‘41 is at far left.*



And, at first, Sherman did not find Schirmer’s idea in line with his business.

Schirmer wanted to put holes in paper.

The industrial revolution had done quite well without holes in paper. Business and industry

indeed created a vast amount of paper records, and multiple copies were often needed. And certainly existing technology, which did not put holes in paper, was ad-

equate.

Schirmer didn't think so.

And Sherman became curious about the inventor's machine.

The concept was simple.

The current practice of making multiple copies of forms was to advance the forms and carbon paper through two friction rollers, turned by a crank. The drawback to that technology was that the forms tended to slip as they went through the rollers. Such slippage resulted in a lack of alignment needed for continuous, preprinted paper forms.

Schirmer's invention added small pins or studs to the end of the rollers. These aligned with holes punched at the edges of the forms.

Sherman's curiosity led him to have Schirmer build a working model, which Sherman helped refine. The result was a machine mating multiple copies of preprinted forms; it could be applied to thousands of applications.

Sherman found investors, and on May 11, 1912, the Standard Register Co. was chartered with Schirmer as president and Sherman as a member of the board of directors. Sherman's brother William was one of the original shareholders.

The young company encountered many of the problems of entrepreneurial endeavors. It had to buy machinery on credit. With Sherman heading to the West Coast to develop sales, it had to hold together a dispersed operation. It also had space constrictions, being located on a downtown Dayton alley in the run-down second story of the Callahan Power Building. (In the same building, John Patterson in 1882 had established the first office of the National Cash Register Co.; in 1892 a book of poetry, *Oak and Ivy*, was published by one of the building's elevator operators, Paul Laurence Dunbar.)

And then there was the flood. Being on a second floor in March 1913 when the levees broke was some help to the young company. But production was set back, orders were canceled and financial disaster threatened. John Q. Sherman returned from California to become president of the reorganized Standard Register. Expansion and success came quickly; even through the Depression facilities expanded

to meet growing sales.

And for the University of Dayton, that turned out to be a very good thing. John Q. Sherman had come to Dayton to make his fortune. He did, and he became a Daytonian. He cared for its people. His grandson and namesake, born too late to know the first John Q. Sherman, remembers hearing stories of his grandfather's kindness. "When someone on the street asked him for money," John Q. Sherman II said, "he'd stop for them.

"Of course, he'd ask them why they needed it."

Sherman's detailed concern extended beyond individuals to institutions. In 1930, he joined the associate board of lay trustees of the University of Dayton; in 1937, he became president of that board, which aided the members of the Society of Mary who ran the University.

The 1920s had been good years for the institution that at the beginning of the decade has changed its name from St. Mary's to that of the city in which it was located. Expansion saw the construction of a men's dormitory (Alumni Hall), an athletic stadium (later named Baujan Field) and Albert Emanuel Library (now used by the division of enrollment management). In the 1930s, a nation struggling to put food on its tables, however, had some obvious difficulties in supporting private higher education.

John Q. Sherman II remembers older people telling him that "my grandfather would do everything he could to make sure this University was running efficiently." But even running efficiently, the University was, according to the *Dayton Journal*, running far below its capacity of about 850 students. So Sherman, the man whose marketing efforts helped build a successful corporation, took on leadership of an effort to market the University of Dayton.

A campaign for a Greater University of Dayton, launched in 1937, had two goals, according to the *UD Exponent*: "to awaken the civic consciousness of Dayton" and "to increase student registration."

The campaign stressed the benefits of a UD education. UD alumni's "employment record, surprisingly high, even through the Depression, bears witness to the thoroughness of its education process," Sherman told the community in a radio address over WHIO on March 21, 1937.

The campaign stressed costs. A Dayton high school graduate could stay in town and go to UD for one-third the cost of going out of town.

It stressed UD's traditions of tolerance and hospitality. Un-

*William stayed. He, too, served the University of Dayton. As the 1950s turned into the 1960s, he saw Sherman Hall dedicated to the memory of his father.*

like most Catholic schools, UD admitted women. Non-Catholics were welcome. Campaigners — local business executives speaking to myriad professional, fraternal and service organizations — were armed with statistics indicating 40 percent of UD's out-of-town enrollment and more than half of its in-town students were not Catholic.

The campaign also stressed the University's athletic excellence and vibrant social life.

The community heard, via a March 26 WHIO radio address by Father Francis Friedel, S.M., professor of sociology, of the commitment of UD to the broader community: "A university has a civic responsibility to the community in which it is located. It cannot simply be in the community; it must be of the community."

And the community heard of reasons for it to be committed to what was then often referred to as "the U of D." The *Dayton Daily News* in an editorial proclaimed the University's financial impact on the community through its expenses such as construction and maintenance. And the newspaper noted an "intangible civic asset of still greater significance," UD's students coming from "far distant lands" as well as other cities and states in this country, and its

graduates living in and serving the Dayton area.

Sherman had begun his radio address by proclaiming that "an education should be a right not denied to any young man or woman." A Greater University of Dayton helped assure that.

As the Depression drew to a close and the world edged toward war, William P. Sherman '41, son of and father to a John Q. Sherman, was beginning his education at UD. His father was again spending time on the West Coast as the business was thriving. Concerned for his children in his absence, John Q. Sherman I took steps to provide for them. For example, so that they might travel in safety, he provided use of a limousine. For William and his siblings, arriving in a limousine at places such as UD's campus, although doing so safely and comfortably, was cause for some discomfort.

But times were good.

Then in 1939 John Q. Sherman I died (followed in 1944 by the brother who helped him build the company). William was the eldest child in Dayton. War came and went. The company grew and then was buffeted by technological revolutions of data processing and computerization. The family grew, and many moved on to other interests and other places.

William stayed. He, too, served the University of Dayton. As the 1950s turned into the 1960s, he saw Sherman Hall dedicated to the memory of his father. From 1972 to 1981 William was on UD's board of trustees and, until his death in 2005, followed the Flyers.

"Dad was the ultimate fan," said John Q. Sherman II. He remembers some discomfort himself when, being a University of Cincinnati student and not having tickets for the biannual Flyer-Bearcat clash in Dayton, having to ask his father if he could join him at the Arena. His father welcomed the young Bearcat, reminding him, however, "to mind your manners. This is my University, the U of D."

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*Thomas M. Columbus also came to Dayton and became a Daytonian.*