

## Mary Hoyt Sherman

Mary Hoyt was born December 28, 1787 in Norwalk, Connecticut to Isaac and Mary Raymond Hoyt. Her mother's family had been instrumental in the founding of Norwalk and her father was a prosperous merchant. At a time when schools were scarce, private and very expensive, girls seldom were given the opportunity for a formal education. But Mary was fortunate to have parents who strongly believed that girls as well as boys should be educated. They sent her to Harlem Female Seminary in Norwalk that was modeled after the fashionable English finishing schools. Classes were taught by two elegant English sisters, M. E. and A. Sketchley. After a while the Sketchleys decided to open a boarding school in Poughkeepsie, New York. Mary was allowed to follow the sisters to New York and enroll in their school as a boarding student.

At Sketchley School Mary was taught the usual academic subjects as well as music, dance and fine embroidery.

After she completed her schooling she went back home to live. On May 10, 1810 Mary married her neighbor and childhood sweetheart, Charles Robert Sherman. She was 22 years old and he was 9 months younger. His parents were Judge Taylor Sherman and Elizabeth Stoddard Sherman. It is likely that Charles studied law under his father. Charles was admitted to the Connecticut bar.

His father owned 1280 acres in northern Ohio and Charles was eager to go west and explore the idea of settling on that land and open a law practice there. He left his new bride shortly after their marriage and headed for Ohio. When he reached Ohio he learned that relations between the white settlers in northern Ohio and the various Indian tribes were very tense and that it was not safe to travel there at that time. He'd already come a great distance so he decided to then go south, instead and follow Zane's trace to see what the land was like in that area. He liked Zanesville but decided to follow the trail to Lancaster. A few settlers had arrived there in the late 1790's and the town had been laid out by 1800. Charles admired the beauty of the hills and the great promise he saw in Lancaster with its several already established attorneys. He decided that was where he wanted to settle.

Charles arrived home just in time for the birth of their first baby. Charles Taylor Sherman was born February 3, 1811.

The Shermans purchased a team of horses and a wagon and began to prepare for their journey west. When the baby was only a couple of months old, they loaded all their possessions in the wagon and began the western journey with several other families who were heading in that direction. After a long and difficult journey, they arrived in Lancaster and settled in a little brown house on Main hill that was almost new. There were only a few streets that had been settled and the population was only about 500 at the time. The dirt street in front of their home was the main east west street and located on the mail route from Washington D.C. to Cincinnati.

Mary adapted quickly to her new home and loved entertaining the intellectual people from the east who came through Lancaster. Among her guests for tea or for dinner were Henry Clay and

New York Governor DeWitt Clinton. She was the best-educated woman in Lancaster and always eager for news from back home. She never again was able to go back to Connecticut

The Shermans' first daughter, Mary Elizabeth was born in their Lancaster home on April 21, 1812. Charles' law practice was growing rapidly and their family continued to grow too. Their second son, James, was born December 12, 1814. The baby was only a few months old when Charles' father died unexpectedly in Connecticut. Charles' mother and his sister came to live with Charles and Mary. Mary was glad for the help but their little four-room home was full so they added a parlor and a law office downstairs and two bedrooms upstairs.

In 1816 Mary gave birth to another daughter, Amelia. Despite their joy with their new baby and their added space in their home, 1816 was a disastrous year financially for the Shermans. Charles had been appointed by President James Madison to supervise deputy collectors of Internal Revenue for the Third District of Ohio, a position he would hold for four years. But in 1816, the U. S. Government suddenly decided that it would no longer accept paper currency issued by local banks as payment for taxes. Charles' deputies had already collected payment in local bank notes which was all people had. Charles might have pleaded with the government for relief but instead he mortgaged their home and borrowed money on his future earnings to pay the taxes in acceptable legal tender. Charles soon had to declare bankruptcy and the Shermans lost their home. The Shermans' friend, attorney Philomen Beecher, bought the home and allowed the Shermans to live there and to pay for the house as they could. They were never again in a good financial situation and Charles spent the rest of his life trying to pay off those debts.

In the next 15 years the Shermans had 7 more children. They were Julia Ann, Tecumseh, Lampson, Susan, Hoyt and Frances (Fanny).

Mary's best friend was Maria Ewing and they often visited back and forth even before the Ewings built their new, large home on Main Hill just beyond the Sherman Home. Mrs. Ewing helped Mary with her other children when new babies were born. When their 6<sup>th</sup> child was born, Maria wondered about his Indian name. Mary explained to her that Charles had insisted that they name this one after the Indian Chief Tecumseh whom Charles admired. Mary wasn't keen on it but she agreed to name him William Tecumseh Sherman. The family first called him Tecumseh but Mary's little children could not say "Tecumseh" so they called him "Cump" and he was known by that name by his family and friends for the rest of his life.

With the needs of their family growing as the children grew, Charles accepted more legal cases and in order to earn even more money he took on the added job of serving as a circuit-riding attorney. In 1823 he was made a Justice in the Ohio Supreme Court, an appointment that also required that he often be away from home riding the circuit, leaving Mary at home to attend to the children. With Mother Sherman and Elizabeth to care for the children while she traveled, Mary could sometimes get away and ride with Charles so they could have some time together.

In June of 1829 when baby Fanny was only 7 weeks old, Charles was to hold court in Lebanon. He had ridden there from his last assignment in Cincinnati and after riding for hours in the hot sun, he caught a fever and a chill. He managed to open court the next morning but became so ill he had to cancel the afternoon session and go to bed. He was desperately ill for about 6 days.

When Mary got word that he was ill she started immediately for Lebanon, a 100-mile ride from Lancaster. By the time she reached Washington Court House she was met by a messenger with word that her husband had died. It was probably typhoid fever.

Mary returned home in a stupor. She was now a young widow with 11 children. The oldest was not quite 18 and the baby was only 7 weeks old. The house was mortgaged and there was no money. After a brief time, Charles' good friend, attorney Thomas Ewing visited Mary and said he wanted to do something for the family in appreciation of Charles' having helped him set up a law practice during the early, difficult years of his career. He asked her to let him help her by taking one of her boys to raise and educate as he was educating his own children. It was extremely difficult for her but Mary sent 9 year old Cump with him. Her oldest son, Charles was almost 18 and near the end of his studies at Ohio University He went to live with an uncle who was an attorney in Mansfield and to "read law" under him. Seventeen-year old Mary Elizabeth married attorney William Reese that fall and they took 10-year-old Julia to live with them. After a few years they built the mansion next door to Mary's home. Jim was already working in Cincinnati and living with friends there. Over the next few years Mary was forced to give over most of her children to loving relatives and caring friends to raise. John, who was only 5 when his father died, stayed with Mary for a while and then went to live with relatives in Mt. Vernon and later with Charles' sister and her attorney husband in Mansfield. They had already taken in Charles. Mary was able only to keep 3 year old Susan, 1 year old Hoyt and baby Fanny with her. During that time she did everything to make ends meet including taking in boarders.

When Cump was 16 he received through Senator Thomas Ewing an appointment to West Point Military Academy. After he graduated and began serving in the Army he faithfully sent Mary half of his Army pay each month. John also helped her when he could. She did, with their help, finally pay off the house. After all the children except Fanny were living on their own, Mary's son John, who had become a successful attorney persuaded her to go and live with him in Mansfield. By then, several of her children were living in Mansfield so she left Lancaster to live with him.

Mary had always loved to travel. Just before her 65<sup>th</sup> birthday she decided to celebrate her birthday early by going to Cleveland to the Ohio State Fair that was being held there that summer. She had a wonderful time and was able to see many old friends. But in her travel she caught a cold that lingered for some time. The bad cold turned into pneumonia. Mary died in John Sherman's home in the summer of 1852 just a few months shy of her 65<sup>th</sup> birthday. Her body was returned to Lancaster to the Ewing home for calling hours. She was buried beside Charles in Elmwood Cemetery.

Mary didn't live to see her "Cump" recognized following the Civil War as one of the two most distinguished generals of his time and his subsequent advancement to Commanding General of the U.S. Army. It was two years after her death that her son, John, was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives where he served for six years before he was elected to the U. S. Senate. He served there for 30 years. He was author of the Sherman Anti-trust Act and the Sherman Silver Purchase Act. He was appointed Secretary of the Treasury in President Rutherford B. Hayes' cabinet and Secretary of State under President William McKinley.

Her tenth child, Hoyt, became an attorney in Des Moines, Iowa, was elected Clerk of the Polk County District Court and was appointed by President Zachary Taylor as postmaster of Des Moines. After a career in banking he was one of the organizers of the State Bank of Des Moines. As a major in the Civil War, he was appointed paymaster of the Union Army by President Lincoln. He was elected to the Iowa House of Representatives and was President of the Equitable Life Insurance Company of Des Moines.

Mary's other eight children were also special. All lived to adulthood. Her daughters married well and her other sons became successful attorneys, businessmen and politicians. Mary had given them great heredity and encouragement. Her son, General Sherman, was profoundly moved at the news of his mother's death. He wrote his wife, Ellen, "Poor Mother! She has had hard times and nothing but the kindest, most affectionate and simple heart could have borne up under her varied fortunes.