

THE JAY SHERMAN FAMILY

*Nobles Sherman West*

The Sherman family which is of Germanic descent settled in England following the Norman Conquest of 1066 A. D. Henry VII bestowed upon Thomas Sherman (1480-1551) a coat of arms depicting a rampant lion, symbolizing superiority, surrounded by three oak leaves. The Sherman motto is "Conquer Death by Virtus." In 1632 Edmund Sherman took his family to Waterbury, Massachusetts, America. Later members of the family migrated to Connecticut and Vermont. In 1832, Isaac, apparently one of the first white men to settle among the Indians, settled in Knox County, Illinois, where many Shermans still live.

Jay, the patriarch of the Oklahoma Shermans, was born in Knox County, Illinois on March 8, 1846. Too young to be drafted in the Civil War, he enlisted and served as a non-commissioned officer under General Thomas in battles primarily in Tennessee and Texas. The truth of the matter is that he served in the place of a draftee and received an Illinois farm in return. Some time after the war Jay was sent to help settle Mexican uprisings. Strangely enough the soldiers traveled across what was then the desert area of Texas on camels. Whatever became of those camels is not known.

In 1866 Jay married Mirah (Maria) Upp in Illinois. She was the sister of Scott Upp, founder of the Purcell Wholesale Grocery.

Although Jay was an adventurer, he always thought and planned before making a decision; consequently he made several trips to Oklahoma to survey the land before he bought a farm one mile south of Lexington in 1894.

Despite a plea in the Galesburg Evening Mail newspaper urging him to remain in Galesburg, Illinois, as the "only reliable political sage" in the area, Jay and Mirah moved to Oklahoma on February 12, 1896. According to

the local newspaper, they brought with them a "thoroughbred herd of Holstein cattle, one of the few in these parts." They also brought four of their eight children—Scott, Clayte, Roy, and Arthur. Milt, Charles, Lillie, and Frank remained in Illinois for a time.

Among other business interests Jay farmed, raised cattle, bought more land, had an interest in the Purcell Wholesale Grocery, and served as U.S. Deputy Marshal. As a marshal he served in the Anadarko, Lawton, Wichita Mountain area where the business and housing quarters were in canvas tents. A brief manuscript recently found in an antique inkwell in his son Arthur's house gives the account of one posse expedition. While traveling toward the Wichita Mountains in 1897 to capture a band of outlaws, Jay received word that his wife was seriously ill and returned to Lexington. The attempt to capture the outlaws was unsuccessful; the entire posse was killed. Fortunately for those of us who loved and were influenced by Bopa (Boh'-pa'), he narrowly escaped death.

Jay contributed to all worthwhile projects both civic and church. According to a book called Genealogy and Biography, published in 1901, Jay, a staunch Republican, served as a delegate to territorial conventions, founded the Lexington Post of G A R, was mayor of Lexington, a bank director, a member of the Lexington School Board, and served in various other positions.

As to church activities, Bopa, affectionately known to most townspeople as Uncle Jay, was not a member of the Methodist Church as was his wife Mirah, but as one granddaughter stated it "he was a benefactor of all churches." However, the gifts he made to churches made workers of the congregations. On one occasion when the Methodists wanted a new church, he said, "You build the church, I'll put on the roof." He did. On another occasion when the church needed \$480 to pay off a loan, he said, "You raise \$330, I'll pay the

last \$150." (His son Milt paid the first \$150.) Still another time he gave an acre of land to a rural church near Slaughterville to remain the property of the church so long as the church functioned.

Uncle Jay's influence was felt in many ways. To many he was known as the person in town from whom needed money could be borrowed. When the bank would not lend townspeople money, they came to Bopa who usually gave them money saying, "They'll pay me back." They often did.

The Shermans have always been a close knit family. For many years the group looked forward to the two reunions held each year—one to celebrate Jay's birthday in March and one in August to celebrate the birthdays of Jay's wife Mirah and their eldest son Milt. At first the group attended dinners in the homes, then picnics in the yards; later the celebrations were moved to the Methodist Church and as the family grew, to the pasture at a farm. The last one was in the Park in Purcell.

When his children and grandchildren and even great grandchildren reached the marrying age, the chosen mate was always taken to meet Bopa. After giving the couple the third degree, he gave them one bit of advice. "I just have this to say, if you are to have a successful marriage, only one of you can get mad at a time."

Perhaps the two stories that happened much later in his life illustrate how he did or did not follow his own advice.

Jay Sherman was a determined man; he had a mind of his own, but he was willing to evaluate ideas of others. During his lifetime his smoking habits had progressed from the grapevine to big black cigars. In the 1920's Mirah said to him, "Pa, why do you smoke those cigars; they smell terrible." He took the cigar from his mouth, sniffed it several times, put out the ashes

and never picked up another one. What will power!

The other incident took place after Lillie and her family had moved in the big house on top of the hill in Lexington to help care for the "old folks." Bopa continued his habit of walking down the hill each day to visit friends and relatives and to select groceries. One afternoon after such an expedition the grocery boy appeared with a box of noodles. Mirah said, "Pa, why did you buy those noodles? You know Lillie always makes her own."

"Ma, I thought they were a new kind of cereal." But Mirah would not accept his reasoning and kept asking questions about the "store bought" noodles. Finally, Bopa took the box of noodles, put sugar and cream on it, and ate the contents of the whole box. Peace reigned, and no harsh words had been exchanged.

But let us move back to the early days when Jay first came to Oklahoma and his influence was felt by his children. He encouraged each of his heirs to gain a business of his own. Sometimes he lent them money, sometimes he went on a note, and sometimes he just worked in an advisory capacity. It is interesting that with one exception these early day purchases are still owned by the heirs or an heir of the original Sherman owner. He wanted each of his children to be near him but independent. Most of his children chose to be farmers.

The first of his sons to purchase Oklahoma land was Milt, the eldest son. January 8, 1898, Milt arrived by train from Illinois with his wife, Julia Woolsey Sherman, and their three young sons—Harold 7, Everett 6, and Clyde 4—to establish a home on a farm purchased from Mrs. Mamie Dorrance. This is the farm on which Carl Sherman still lives. Three children, Isall, Carl, and Mable, were born in Oklahoma.

The second child to acquire a farm in Oklahoma in 1898 was the only daughter, Lillie, who had married Charles Moses in Illinois. (See Charles W. Moses history.)

Next to secure a farm in Oklahoma was Scott. When Scott married Willie Haines of Lexington in 1903, Bopa helped establish them on a 159 acre farm north of Lexington, near Slaughterville. Scott and Willie's sons were Jay and Peyton.

The fourth child to choose farming as a profession was Clayte who married Anna (Dixie) Kienlan whom many remember as the Lexington correspondent for The Norman Transcript. They purchased a farm two miles east and three miles south of Lexington on which they lived with their two children, Floyd and Winona. When Clayte's health became impaired in 1922, they sold the farm and purchased town property and 50 acres from Charlie Williams. Recently Floyd and Winona deeded 10 acres of this property to the Methodist Church. It is the land on which the new church was built.

When Roy married Evelyn Parnell of El Dorado, Arkansas, in 1907, he operated a livery stable in Lexington and one in Purcell. Later they moved to Jay's homeplace a mile south of Lexington, a farm now owned by Roy's heirs. When Roy became Lexington postmaster, Roy, Evelyn, and their sons, Earl and Neil, moved to town. Earl and Neil now are president and vice president of the McClain County National Bank.

Unlike Jay and Mirah's other children, Arthur wanted to be a doctor, but his parents felt that because he was not physically strong, he might not be able to make all the housecalls and meet the demands of an early day doctor so he agreed to study pharmacy. A diligent student Arthur received his degree from Oklahoma University in pharmacy within two years. After graduating,

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he worked in the Owl Drug Store located where the First State Bank of Lexington now stands. The drugstore was owned by John Asbury. A few months later Arthur and H. H. Everett, the Methodist minister, purchased the John A. Bilan Drug Store then located on the south side of the street. They changed the name to Palace Drug Store. After prohibition they moved the business across the street to its present location. Arthur's nephew, Everett, began working in the Palace Drug Store in 1909, his senior year in high school. He worked for \$25 a month until his Uncle Arthur left the business in his hands for a short time while he went to Colorado to marry Metha Williams, a Lexington 1888 er who was attending business college in Colorado. At that time Everett's salary was raised to \$50. He saved \$250 to make a down payment to Preacher Everett for his interest in the drug store. The remainder of the money he borrowed at the bank. Bopa went on his note.

In 1912 Asbury traded his drug store for land in Texas. Everett bought the drug store shortly thereafter. For a short time he operated both stores, then he sold the soda fountain and merchandise to Frank Claunch and Dr. T. V. Hill. He combined the prescription department with that of the Palace Drug Store. Since that time there has been only one drug store in Lexington.

In 1913 Everett married Ora Beth Holland of Norman. In 1921 Ora persuaded Everett that their children would be more likely to get college educations if they moved to Norman, so Everett sold his interest in the Palace Drug Store to his Uncle Arthur and moved to Norman where he and his brother-in-law, Oscar B. Holland, established the Buster Brown Shoe Store.

Arthur managed the drug store alone until his nephew, Floyd Sherman,

graduated from the O. U. School of Pharmacy in 1929. Floyd purchased the drug store from his Uncle Arthur in 1940 when Arthur retired at the age of 55. However, it was only a short time before he accepted what was perhaps a much more trying "volunteer" job as Chairman of the Cleveland County Draft Board which position he held for many years.

In 1963 Floyd enlarged the drug store by combining it with the building on the east. The days of the druggist measuring and rolling pills and of combining ingredients to fill tiny capsules were gone forever so much of the old equipment that had been stored for years was hauled away. Much of the picturesque tradition disappeared; the fountain was removed as were the high stools on which I had sat intrigued watching Daddy and Uncle Arthur measure and fill tiny capsules in my preschool days. Like many other early day Cleveland County businesses, the drug store was changed to meet the demands of the modern world.

As times have changed and the interior of the drug store has changed so have the interests of the people. The third, fourth, and fifth Sherman generations participate in many walks of life. Some are pharmacists and farmers, but others are teachers, carpenters, doctors, merchants, ministers, bankers. Like many early day families the Shermans have had representatives in various branches of the service in the Revolutionary War, Civil War, World War I, World War II, and others. They have served in capacities from private on up.

The later generations are quiet, unassuming people who do not seek public office but are ready to serve as the need arises. Sherman names appear on lists of founders of the Lexington Lion's Club, Farmers' Union Coop Exchange, Farmers' Union Coop Gin, and others. Some serve on the

Cleveland County Board of Health, Red Cross, school board, and other public service organizations. Others have been city treasurer, postmaster, church treasurer, lay leader of the church. Two donated the land on which the Methodist Church now stands. Some are Shriners and Woodmen of the World.

In Norman the Sherman name appears as president of the Norman Retail Credit Association, member of board of directors of the Chamber of Commerce, member of the Campfire Council, and the like. In fact, the Sherman family might be said to be a typical early day Cleveland County family.

Jay and Mirah's family consists of approximately one hundred forty direct descendants most of whom have at one time lived in Cleveland County. When the husbands and wives, who are a very important part of the family are added, the number increases greatly. Jay and Mirah had only one daughter and there were only two girls in the next generation so there are many relatives bearing the Sherman name. However, the number who live in Cleveland county have dwindled considerably. In Norman, Everett Sherman, Jay's grandson, lives at 802 Classen. His daughter, Nadine Wiest, teaches at Norman High School and lives at 1224 Camden Way. Her daughter, Ann, and Ann's husband, Cecil M. McLaury, who live at 1615 Normandie, teach at Oklahoma University where they are working on advanced degrees in mathematics. Everett's son Warren operates the Quality Service Station on West Lindsay. He and his daughter Karen, a student at Oklahoma University, live at 222 East Frank. Warren's son, Mike, and his wife, Charlotte, reside at 1117 East Lindsay.

Robert Jarboe, Jay's great grandson, lives at 1007 Garver, with his wife, Neva, and their daughters, Paz, who is an interior decoration student at O.U., and Marla, who attends Washington School. Robert is an employee



at the O.U. Physical Plant. Robert's sister, Mildred (Mrs. Richard Hall), her husband, and daughter, Vicki, live at 1217 Westlawn. Vicki attends Jackson school.

Another great grandson, Tommy, his wife, and infant son live at 125 Ridge Road, while Tommy attends O.U. Tommy's brother, Charles lives in D.U. housing.

Living in the Lexington Rest Home is Mrs. Arthur Sherman. Mrs. Roy Sherman also lives in Lexington.

Jay and Mirah's grandchildren living in Lexington are Milt's children, Mrs. Isal Jarboe; Mabel, whose husband, George Clark, is retired; and Carl, who lives with his wife, Sibyl, on the home place south of Lexington. Also living on the farm are their son, Carey Lynn, his wife, Kay Ward Sherman, and their son, Kyle Ward Sherman. Carey Lynn, a pharmacist, works at the Sooner Discount Pharmacy in Norman and R. X. Pharmacy in Oklahoma City.

Another grandson is Clayte's son, Floyd, who with his wife, Sue, operates the Palace Drug Store.

The other grandson living in Lexington is Sherman Moses. (Charles Moses History)

Perhaps if Jay, the patriarch of the Sherman family, could come back he would be pleased with his big family—like many early day Cleveland County families big in number, big in humility, big in modesty, big in respectability. I suppose there is not a really famous personage in the Sherman family. They like many early day families are the great middle class that quietly build and shape a democracy.