

The Galleries of Hoyt Sherman Place

The Des Moines Women's Club was established in 1885 with its primary purposes to develop and maintain a free public art gallery in Des Moines. In its early years, the Club raised funds to purchase an art collection and hosted temporary exhibits. Its first exhibition was held in the Governor's Office at the State House.

In 1907 the Club moved into Hoyt Sherman Place (HSP) and built the gallery room to house its growing collection. HSP was rented by the Club from the City of Des Moines for \$1 a year. The Club agreed to provide an art gallery open to the public in HSP. They restored the house and built on the art gallery at a cost of \$10,000. Twelve paintings from the original collection can be seen in the gallery today.

The early collecting by the Club was guided by two men who were directors of the Des Moines Academy of Arts: C. E. Baldwin, and C. A. Cumming. Both of these artists are represented in the collection. Cumming was instrumental in helping the Club with several major painting purchases.

In 1909 the Club established an annual art exhibition of local artists. From 1921 to 1931 the Club purchased the top painting to add to the collection. These paintings may be viewed in the theater mezzanine. The Club continues to hold the annual art exhibition each February.

In 1921 the Club built the auditorium and the Byers Room addition to the gallery to house the painting and Swiss carved furniture collection bequeathed to the Club by Major and Mrs. S.H.M. Byers. This collection was acquired during the twenty years Byers was Consul in Italy and Switzerland. Thirteen paintings from the Byers Collection and the furniture can be seen in the galleries today.

In 1995 the Club formed a separate nonprofit Hoyt Sherman Place Foundation to manage and support the house, theater and all of the art and artifacts collection. The Foundation is currently supporting conservation work on most of the painting collection through the *For the Love of Art* campaign.

Lorna Truck
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