

# Acceptance on Behalf of Lewis B. Gunckel on his Induction into the Dayton Walk of Fame

September 29, 2006

Good morning. I am Merle Wilberding, a member of the law firm of Coolidge Wall, and I am here to accept on behalf of Lewis B. Gunckel as he is inducted today into the Walk of Fame in the Wright-Dunbar business district. Thank you for giving me this opportunity and to talk about his legacy.

There is an old adage that “Success has a 1,000 fathers, but that failure is often an orphan.” It is the opposite for Lewis Gunckel, for it seems like he has had a 1,000 sons – 1,000 organizations that look to him as their founding father.

In her wonderful book on local history, *Some Dayton Saints & Prophets*, Charlotte Reeve Conover included a portrait on the life of Lewis B. Gunckel. In describing him, she quoted the Latin phrase, *si monumentum requiris circumspice*. I may not be good in my Latin pronunciation, but the general meaning of that phrase is that “if you seek his monument, look around you.”

That same Latin phrase is found in the epitaph of Christopher Wren, the architect, in St. Paul’s Cathedral in London. *Circumspice* - - - look around you and you will see his real monument, the cathedral itself. Charlotte Reeve Conover applied that phrase equally well to Lewis Gunckel.

And, it was true. Lewis B. Gunckel served, of course, in the Ohio Senate and served as a United States Congressman from 1872 to 1874. He was a practicing lawyer, but, more than anything, he was a community builder. Here are just a few of the monuments Lewis Gunckel created:

- ❖ He fought in Ohio and fought nationally for a facility that would house the soldiers returning from the Civil War. Thanks to his efforts, Dayton was chosen as one of three locations, and it was chosen as the national headquarters for the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers. As Nancy Horlacher said in her reading of the citation for Lewis Gunckel, the Dayton Soldiers Home, as it was commonly called, served the nation well and served the Dayton community well. Over the years, its mission has changed but it has continued to serve the needs of our nation’s soldiers. Now it is known as the Dayton Medical VA Center
- ❖ In 1896, Lewis Gunckel was a founding-father of Associated Charities of Dayton, an organization that continues today as Family Services Association.

- ❖ Lewis Gunckel and his father-in-law, Valentine Winters, were instrumental in the creation and development of the Winters National Bank. Lewis Gunckel filed the organization papers, served on the board of directors and as an officer of the Winters Bank. In 1983, Winters National Bank became Bank One, N.A., and, more recently, became JPMorgan Chase Bank.
- ❖ Lewis Gunckel and his father-in-law, Valentine Winters, led the community fund drive to start the public library in Germantown, a library that is still a wonderful resource to the Germantown community. Lewis Gunckel was born in Germantown; indeed, his grandfather was a co-founder of Germantown.
- ❖ On March 8, 1853, Lewis Gunckel and Hiram Strong started the law firm of Gunckel & Strong, a firm that has evolved over the years into its present name of Coolidge Wall. (His first partner was Hiram Strong, who left the practice of law to head the 93<sup>rd</sup> Ohio Regiment in the Civil War before being mortally wounded at the Battle of Chickamauga.) I am a partner in Coolidge Wall and I am proud of our connection to Lewis Gunckel.

As Lewis Gunckel said in his 1896 speech at the creation of Associated Charities of Dayton, “When a man dies, too many people ask ‘What did he have?’ but the real question should be: ‘What did he give?’” Lewis Gunckel gave much to the Dayton and Germantown communities.

So, *Circumspice*. Look around the Dayton community, and you will see the living monuments of Lewis Gunckel – monuments that he started more than 100 years ago that are still thriving today. Thank you for remembering Lewis Gunckel and the monuments he created.

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