The Town of Sherman was formed in April 1832 from Mina. It was the second Township formed in Chautauqua County. The town was named after Roger Sherman who gave money to buy the bell which hangs in the belfry of the old Presbyterian Church—now Memorial Hall.

The first settler was Dearing Dorman. He was born in New Haven, Connecticut in 1797 and moved to Batavia, N.Y. in 1804. He was married to Huldah Perkins in 1818 and in 1823 came to Sherman and settled on part of what we know as the Theodore Skinner farm. They had 12 children. The second child, Archibald, was the first child born in Sherman.

The town was settled very rapidly. The Holland Land Company's books show that between the years 1825-1828 there were a greater number of purchasers than in any other town of its size in the county. (At this time it was part of Mina).

Some of these early settlers were: In 1823—Joel Cornish and Otis Skinner; 1824—Alanson Weed, Lester Dewey, and Hiram N. Gleason; 1825—Osmand Hall, Hazard Wilcox, Loran Park, and Charles Hawley; 1826—Barney Bradt, William Buss, and William Mayborn; 1827—Josiah Wait, Jesse Newell, and Isaac Willard; 1828—Gershom Wait, Loran Stebbins, and Josiah Wait.
During Dorman built a house 12 ft. x 16 ft. The floor was made of split logs as was the door. The roof was of elm bark. He raised the first acre of wheat in the town. This yielded 30 bushels. He planted corn by cutting into the ground and dropping the kernel in and pressing down the soil. This way of planting was called "Indian tucket".

The first marriage was that of Lester R. Dewey and Fanny Patterson. They were married on March 23, 1825 by Otis Skinner, the first Justice of Peace.

The first saw mill was built in 1825 by a Mr. Weed on land owned by Mr. Dewey. In 1827 or 1828 Elder Orange Spencer, and his son-in-law Elijah Skeels, built another saw mill 2½ miles below the Village. The first log sawed in this mill was for Loren Park. A year or two later Spencer and Skeels put in machinery for grinding grain and this was the first grist mill. In 1838 Benjamin Kipp, Otis Skinner, and Elijah Miller built the grist mill that was torn down when the condensary was built, and a good many of us remember it as the Bates and Hillberg mill.

About 1828 Josiah Keeler opened a store and ashery at Hemstreet's Corners three miles south of town (of course at that time there was no Village here). The making of black salts was a flourishing business and when I was a little girl and went to the Hemstreet's Corners school we could see in the
meadow this side of the Corners where the kilns had been. We could tell this by the very thrifty and green spots of grass. I can also remember people talking about "Keeler's Stand".

The first store in the Village was kept by James Barker and was located where the hotel is now. The first tavern was kept by Jeremiah Field in the house now owned and occupied by Mrs. Minnie Wood. Besides the men who established businesses early in the history of the town there were others who were outstanding in the development of the community: Otis Skinner besides being in business was Justice of the Peace and Supervisor for three terms; Henry Bliss a school teacher; Benjamin Kipp was Supervisor three terms; Hiram Gleason was among the most prominent and highly esteemed citizens. Mr. Gleason cleared 100 acres of land, was magistrate of the town for sixteen years, was Commissioner of deeds, and notary public. The records say of him "His general intelligence and knowledge of business fitted him for drawing contracts and other instruments of writing. For this he was much employed by his fellow townsman".

I have copied a few entries from my great grandfather Hawley's account book: June 1833-4 bu. potatoes $.80; 2 bu.
wheat $2.50; 2 yd. flannel $1.00; 1/2 bu. corn $.20;  
a cheese-12 lbs. $.84; 1 ham-17 lbs. $1.75; November 1834--  
3 lbs. tallow $.30; 6 lbs. butter $.48; July 1837--21 lbs.  
veal $.84; 12 lbs. flour $.75; 1 gal. soap $.20; 2 lbs.  
butter $.20--(and my great-grandmother used to take her  
butter to Mayville walking through the woods there and back.  

I never realized until reading up for this paper  
how short a time in the past all this happened. Many of the  
children of these people haven't been dead so many years:  
Lester Dewey, Jack Newell, Loren Park, Royce Park, Otis Skinner,  
Joe Skinner, Mrs. William Robbins, Mrs. Samuel Hall, daughter  
of Benjamin Kipp. These were all alive just a few years ago.  
It is hard to realize that the country and the way of living  
could be so changed in so short a time.  

Great-grandmother Hawley cried when she saw a white  
woman for the first time in six months. That woman was Clare  
Boyd's great-grandmother Newell. Great-grandmother walked to  
Mayville over a path through the forest. Now we can go from  
the old home to Mayville over improved roads in fifteen or  
twenty minutes. Then two neighbor women from the road east  
came to visit great-grandmother and stayed a little too late,  
and it got dark before they got through the woods to their  
homes. One of the women was Mrs. Vincent, the grandmother of
James and Stephen Vincent. She was a large, stout woman. The other, I believe, was a Mrs. Williams—a little slender woman. Well, they got scared and Mrs. Williams climbed a tree, which Mrs. Vincent couldn't do and she said "I 'vum': if I'll climb a tree if a bear does eat me". But a bear didn't eat her and they reached home safely.

Then Great-grandmother harvested her own flax, hackled it, carded it, spun it, and wove it. I have a tablecloth here today that she made.

Then a woman was old when she was forty. Now she isn't old at eighty. They they had families of 6 to 14 children. My grandmother Hawley had 13 brothers and sisters. Now four is a big family and it costs a great deal more to bring up the four now than it did the fourteen then.

And so times change and we ask "What will the next hundred years bring forth?".

Written for and read at the meeting of the Minerva Club October 25, 1939. Also read at the meeting of the Chautauqua County Historical Society at Sherman, N.Y. May 4, 1940.  

(Mrs.) Clara Hawley Casselman  

Sherman, New York