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One of Cleveland’s most philanthropic and transformative figures in the first half of the 20th century, A.C. Ernst left a legacy that still resonates today.

In 1903, he and his brother, Theodore, founded Ernst & Ernst, a small accounting business, and opened their first office at East 9th Street and Euclid Avenue, on the 12th floor of the Schofield Building. From the start, A.C. was the new firm’s driving force.

Fueled by hard work and innovation, among them the revolutionary idea that a company’s accounting information could be used in making business decisions, Ernst & Ernst grew from one office to an organization that spanned the United States and reached overseas.

A.C.’s vision and steadfast commitment to growth through quality is reflected in today’s EY. His determination to succeed — and have others succeed — has created opportunities for nearly a million people, past and present, and improved the lives of Clevelanders and countless people in communities around the world.

Alwin C. (A.C.) Ernst  
1881-1948





Photo of A.C. Ernst from the beginning of the 20th century.

## Timeless philosophy

"We can afford to lose time and money. But we cannot lose the confidence of those we serve."

A.C. Ernst  
1920



A.C. and his wife, Charlotta, host an office gathering at their Gates Mills home in 1917. A.C. Ernst is shown holding one of his young daughters, with Mrs. Ernst to his right.

## Humble beginnings

Before founding Ernst & Ernst, A.C. gained early experience working for the manager of Cleveland Twist Drill, where he learned factory operations, systems and management. Later, he joined the aptly named Audit Company, which provided general accounting services. When Ernst & Ernst opened, its first audit fee – \$25 – was billed to Cleveland Cap Screw Company, known today as TRW.

A.C. Ernst had no lack of confidence that his venture would succeed. "There's a 'win' in my first name and my initials spell 'ACE,'" he said. "Who could help but succeed with a name like that?"



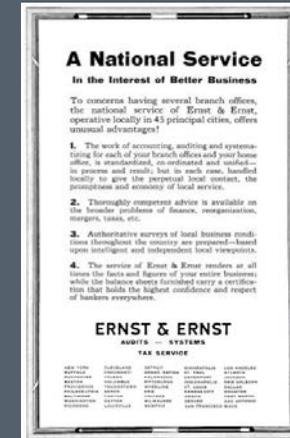
Accountants at work in the early 1900s.



East 9th Street and Euclid Avenue in 1918. Visible at left is the Schofield Building, location of Ernst & Ernst's first office. At right is the Hickox Building, on the site where PNC Bank now stands. The building on the near right would soon be demolished to make way for the Union Trust Building – later the Huntington Building – then the future home of Ernst & Ernst. Courtesy of the Cleveland Public Library Photograph Collection



Photo of A.C. Ernst from 1920.



In the 1920s, A.C. Ernst pioneered the advertising of accounting services, although most people then in the profession thought such promotion "unprofessional." When the American Institute of Accountants – now the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) – formally banned the practice, Ernst's response was to quit the organization in protest. He later relented, grudgingly.

## Cleveland's pride

Ernst & Ernst's early expansion was recognized in this editorial cartoon, which appeared in the *Cleveland News* in 1909. The cartoon, at right below, shows A.C., sitting atop the Schofield Building, with pennants depicting newly opened offices in Chicago and New York, as the city's namesake, Moses Cleaveland, proudly beams, "That boy of mine is certainly growing."



The Ernst family home on Fairmount Boulevard in Cleveland Heights.



Photo of Theodore Ernst from 1910.

## Theodore Ernst 1869-1946

Theodore, older brother of A.C. and an entrepreneur in his own right, nevertheless did not share his brother's vision in accounting's future and left the firm in 1906 to pursue other interests. Only his name remained connected to the business he helped create.

# “He was one of Cleveland’s most remarkable sons.”

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*The Plain Dealer*  
Editorial – May 15, 1948



# Great Lakes Exposition

The Great Lakes Exposition of 1936 and 1937 was one of A.C. Ernst's highest-profile contributions to the city.

A grand plan that challenged the depths of the Great Depression, the lakefront industrial fair drew 7 million people during its two-year run, entertaining visitors with a "Streets of the World" international shopping and dining exhibit, a Hall of Progress, a Marine Theater and a variety of specialty gardens.

During the Expo's formative stages, Ernst personally financed the effort to keep the idea afloat. His vision and civic generosity resulted in one of the most successful public events in Cleveland history.

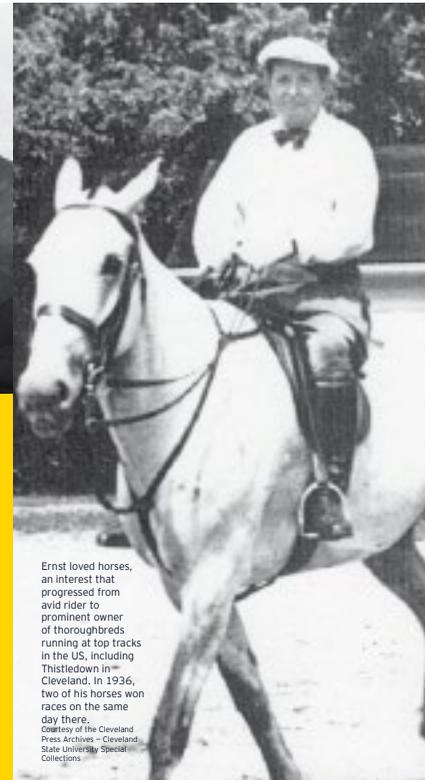


Plans for the Great Lakes Exposition are being discussed in this 1936 meeting at Cleveland's Stater Hotel. Taking part in the meeting are, from left, W.T. Holliday, president of Standard Oil of Ohio; Exposition President Dudley Blossom; and A.C. Ernst. Courtesy of the Cleveland Press Archives - Cleveland State University Special Collections.

## A great loss

"No matter what occasion in Cleveland called for a civic group to help out, you could count on Mr. Ernst to be in that group. The people of Cleveland will feel his loss greatly."

Mayor Thomas A. Burke  
Cleveland - May 14, 1948



Ernst loved horses, an interest that progressed from avid rider to prominent owner of thoroughbreds running at top tracks in the U.S., including Thistledown in Cleveland. In 1936, two of his horses won races on the same day there. Courtesy of the Cleveland Press Archives - Cleveland State University Special Collections.

# A Great Clevelander Passes

The years from the founding of Ernst & Ernst in 1903 to the death yesterday of the founder Alwin Charles Ernst were just about the span of Cleveland's great flowering as a modern city, culturally, industrially and financially. All of this, A.C. Ernst saw, and with great perception. Much of it, he was.

For there have been few community endeavors in that long span that needed energetic leadership and an open purse that did not have A.C. Ernst in the forefront.

He was a good right arm to the Cleveland Orchestra, opera and the Museum of Art. He had been a trustee of Case Tech, Wooster College, Connecticut College for Women and Hathaway Brown School. He contributed \$50,000 to Fenn College to purchase its skyscraper home, insisting only that Fenn start a course in business management to help Cleveland youth in commerce and industry.

He was one of the organizers of the Community Fund and set up its system and procedures. Boy Scouts and the Museum of Natural History shared his interest through the years.

In 1937, with Cleveland and the nation struggling to emerge from the Great Depression, Mr. Ernst was elected president of the Cleveland Chamber of Commerce. He revitalized it, enlisted the best brains in the city to help, and launched a frontal assault on despair and confusion. His regime marked a period of great expansion and new leadership for the chamber by busy men who made the city's business their business.

But Mr. Ernst was not alone a great civic leader and successful businessman. His greatest interest in life was his family - his wife, who preceded him in death by a few months, and his daughters.

His death closes a chapter of unique personal contribution and leadership. It will take the earnest efforts of many men to give to Cleveland in the future the equal of A.C. Ernst's devotion and service.

The Cleveland Press  
Editorial - May 14, 1948



A.C. Ernst in the 1940s.



Visitors flock to the 1936 opening of Cleveland's Great Lakes Exposition.



This futuristic fountain once graced the city's lakefront as part of the Donald Gray Gardens, north of the old Cleveland Stadium. A gift to the city from A.C. Ernst, and known as the Ernst Fountain, it was erected in 1936 as part of the Great Lakes Exposition. The fountain was dismantled in the 1950s, and the last remnants of the Gardens disappeared in the late 1990s to make way for the new Cleveland Browns Stadium. Courtesy of the Cleveland Press Archives - Cleveland State University Special Collections.



A pensive A.C. Ernst, recently elected president of the Cleveland Chamber of Commerce, is interviewed in 1937 by the Cleveland Press for a story headlined "Ernst Maps City's Progress." Courtesy of the Cleveland Press Archives - Cleveland State University Special Collections.



A.C. Ernst arrives with family at Cleveland Public Hall in the late 1930s for a performance of the Metropolitan Opera.



A.C. Ernst, at right, receives an honorary doctorate from Kenyon College.

# Arthur Young

1863-1948

Arthur Young, born in Scotland in 1863, was a graduate of Glasgow University. He dreamed of becoming a trial lawyer, but congenital hearing loss forced him to choose another career.

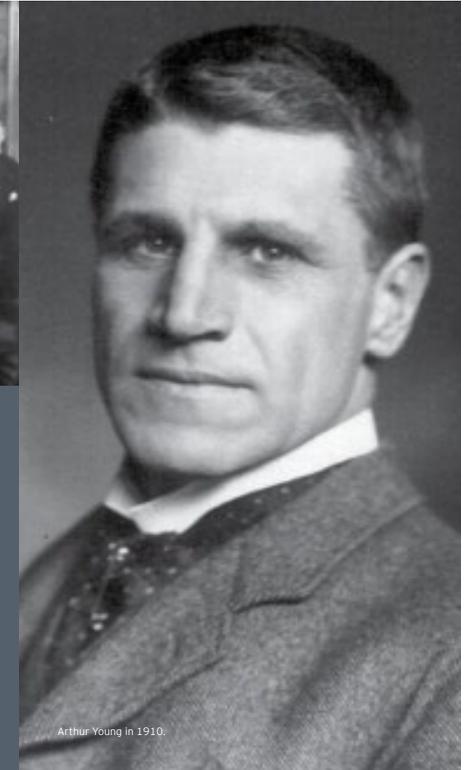
As fate would have it, he developed a strong interest in investments and banking, which eventually led him to accounting as his life's work. He eventually came to the United States and settled in Chicago. In 1906, he joined with his brother, Stanley Young, to found Arthur Young & Co.

Arthur Young shared A.C. Ernst's obsession with service quality. Young's staff people were always among the profession's best trained and best prepared. Profoundly interested in the development of young professionals, Young originated a dedicated staff school to accelerate learning and advancement. In the 1920s, his firm was the first to begin recruiting new talent off college campuses.

Also like Ernst, Young's personal generosity was legendary. Following the loss of two nephews to combat in the First World War, he donated his entire life savings to Scottish charities, leaving only his personal belongings and his capital in the firm. Young, who never married and passed away in 1948, willed most of his estate to his firm's employee pension fund



Arthur Young & Co. partners gather in New York in 1933 to honor Arthur Young's 70th birthday and retirement from active leadership of his firm. Arthur is seated at right, in front of the man standing.



Arthur Young in 1910.



## A gentle man

"His face combined ruggedness and kindness, and his plentiful gray hair had a wave to it like the smoke from his pipe."

### Garrison Norton

Describing his life-long friend Arthur Young in *Arthur Young And The Business He Founded: Personal Reminiscences*, 1948



The only known photo of the Young brothers, Stanley (standing) and Arthur, taken in 1906 at the founding of Arthur Young & Co.



Arthur Young strolls along Fifth Avenue in New York City in the early 1940s. He remained close to his firm's new leaders in retirement, but offered advice only when asked.

## Two men – One vision

Except as business competitors, A.C. Ernst and Arthur Young appeared to have little in common. They evolved from vastly different cultural backgrounds. Where Ernst was animated and gregarious, Young was soft-spoken and reserved. There's no record that the two ever met.

Yet, in the ideals that form the culture of today's EY, the two melded perfectly. Both men were obsessed with quality and value – or as Young put it, "Giving clients more than they pay for" – and with surrounding themselves with the best possible people. Both believed that success be shared through civic and charitable involvement.

While neither man in his time could have envisioned the eventual merging of their two great firms, both A.C. Ernst and Arthur Young would surely be proud of the result.