

Early Conventions

Through its first two decades, Phi Delta Theta was neither strong enough nor big enough to do much about setting up an administration.

But the earliest Phis realized the importance of keeping lines of communication open and conventions provided this vehicle.

The first Convention in Cincinnati in 1851 was called by Ohio Alpha at a time when there were only four chapters. Six of the seven who attended were from Miami and the other from Indiana Alpha.

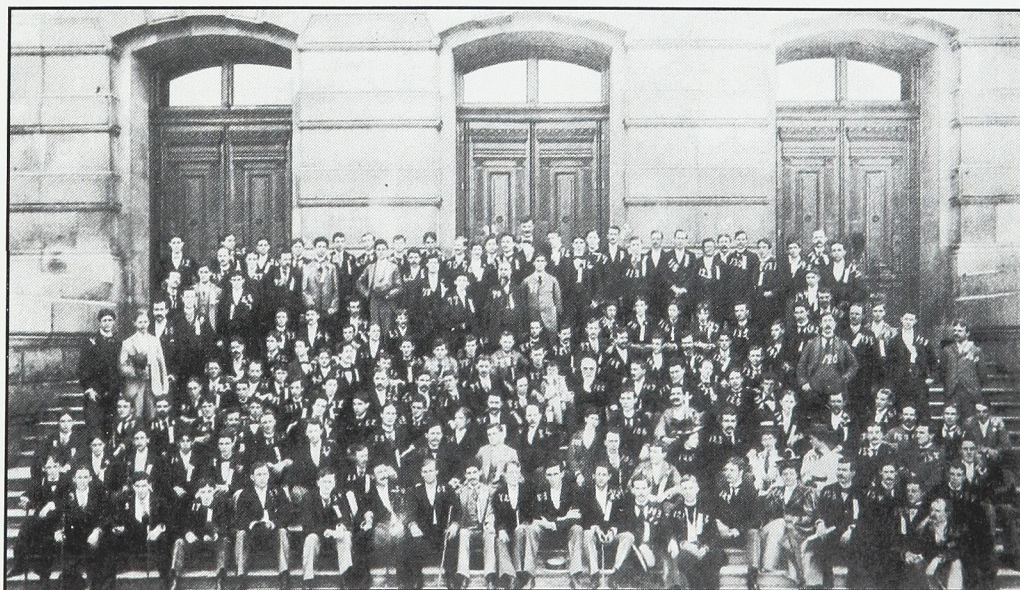
The two positive steps taken included a committee to establish new chapters — using the term “colleges” — and the designation of Ohio Alpha as Grand Chapter.

The next gathering five years later also was in Cincinnati and again only seven Phis were present but from four different “colleges.”

There were Conventions in 1858 in Bloomington, Indiana; Danville, Kentucky in 1860; and again in Bloomington in 1864. Most of those in attendance were from the host school.

The first steps toward an overall administration were taken at the 1868 Convention in Indianapolis. Recognized as our first

Indianapolis was a favorite meeting place. This is the 1894 Convention there.





The 1898 Sesqui-Centennial Convention was held in Columbus, Ohio. Among the attendees were John E. Brown, Frank D. Swope, Walter R. Brown, Mrs. John E. Brown, Dwight N. Marble and "towering above the rest of us" Hugh T. Miller

National Convention, 29 This representing seven (out of nine) chapters attended the sessions in the Senate chamber of the old state capitol.

Permanent Convention rules were established with National Convention officers elected. Each chapter would have one vote and an official delegate. An executive committee was created to have general supervision of chapters in its own state. Illinois Beta was designated Grand Chapter.

Another Convention was called a year later in Chicago which produced a serious challenge to Fraternity unity that was to repeat itself for many years.

The Hotel Majestic in New York City was the site of the November 1902 Convention.



The resolution in question was submitted by H. C. Guffin of Indiana Gamma (Butler):

Whereas men and women have been endowed by their Creator with the same mental, moral and social powers, and Whereas the ablest thinkers and most moral and patriotic citizens of this country, to say nothing of others, favor the co-education of the sexes, therefore be resolved that we hereby commit ourselves to the principle and policy of admitting women to Phi Delta Theta Fraternity.

The proposal took many delegates by surprise and touched off a fierce debate. In the end, the motion was tabled but the issue was a long way from being resolved.

Considering that women did not gain the right to vote until 41 years later, this was considered a radical idea for the time. It also needs to be remembered that the concept of fraternity members living in their own house had not come into practice.

For the 1870 gathering, the Fraternity returned to its birthplace and convened in Oxford May 11-12. Thirty members, including nine chapter delegates, gathered in Ohio Alpha's new meeting hall, a parlor on the third floor of the Mansion House.

The literary readings of the Convention were held in the Miami chapel and drew a large audience of non-members. The Convention concluded with a banquet and dancing in the Oxford House — another indication of the growing trend toward making social life more a part of the Fraternity.

*A festive Convention meets
at Chicago's Hotel La Salle,
January 1, 1913.*

