

# The New GHQ

Late in the 1930s, the General Council got into a discussion about a new and elaborate General Headquarters building in Oxford.

The Minneapolis Convention in 1940 initiated a building fund, and in August of 1941 the Fraternity acquired two choice corner lots directly across from the main entrance to the Miami campus. There were two houses on the property, which ran 123 feet south along Campus Avenue and 60 feet west on High Street.

One of those historic houses had a link to Phi Delta Theta. It was the birthplace of Carolyn Scott, daughter of Professor John Witherspoon Scott of the early Miami faculty. She became the wife of Benjamin Harrison and was the First Lady in the White House when she died there in October of 1892.

In 1942, the Scott house became the temporary headquarters until the new building could be erected. Naturally, that project was postponed until after the war.

*With snow on the ground, the ground-breaking ceremony was held December 15, 1945.*

*Among those wielding shovels were Admiral Cluverius (left) and George Banta, Jr. (right).*



As the war was winding down in the spring and summer of 1945, plans were drawn up to follow through on the project to build the new Memorial Library and General Headquarters in time for the Centennial Convention in 1948.

With snow on the ground on December 15, 1945, the Alpha chapter marched, singing Phi songs, to the campus gate where they met a distinguished alumni group for the ground-breaking ceremony.

In another of his many Fraternity activities, Admiral Cluverius turned the first shovelful of dirt. Cluverius had just taken over as president of the General Council from William Mather Lewis (Knox '00), who was among the speakers.

Lewis commented, "This will be a living Phi Delta Theta Memorial ... we shall have a memorial radiating a constant influence for the good. Here the highest ideals of the Fraternity will be cherished. Here policies will be developed and disseminated which will be worthy of the honored dead." The wintry ceremony was meant to put a positive spin on the Fraternity's wartime role and point to the needs of peacetime.

A cornerstone-laying ceremony was held July 6, 1946 by the same group of leaders involved seven months earlier. This time Admiral Cluverius deposited a copper box of memorabilia and laid the cornerstone.

One of the speakers at the luncheon that followed was Dr. John Edwin Brown (Ohio Wesleyan '84) who had coined the phrase "Miami Triad" when he was editor of *The Scroll* many years earlier.

The "Miami Triad" reference is to Beta Theta Pi, Phi Delta Theta and Sigma Chi, all founded before the Civil War at Old Miami. Today it is a well-known phrase in fraternity life everywhere.

There had been an urge by some to have world famous architect, Frank Lloyd Wright (Wisconsin '89), design a bold, innovative landmark. But in the end, it was decided to make the building conform to the existing architectural designs on campus.

The building, easily recognized by Phis from its pictures in *The Scroll*, was a light red brick, Georgian design with a sandstone base trim in the style of colonial Williamsburg.



*Retired Admiral Wat Tyler Cluverius, Fraternity president in 1948, places the cornerstone of the General Headquarters building.*

While awaiting the new headquarters, there was important work to be done with the discharged veterans coming back to campuses everywhere.

Their presence was boosted by the new low interest loans offered under the GI Bill passed by Congress to give veterans a start, not only on scholarships but in obtaining housing.

The 46th Convention in the first week of September 1946 found 300 Phis attending sessions at the historic Mackinac Island Grand Hotel, where Phi Delta Theta first gathered a dozen years earlier.

A number of the delegates were back from the war and made for a much more mature group of underclassman who wanted to be involved in the revitalization of the Fraternity.

New chapters were added for the first time since 1938. The new groups included Willamette University (Salem, Oregon), the University of New Mexico and Oklahoma A&M, shortly to become Oklahoma State. Existing local fraternities were absorbed in the new chapters at New Mexico and the Oklahoma school. The entire General Council attended the New Mexico Alpha and Oklahoma Beta celebrations.

But the installation at Willamette January 4, 1947, was a ground-breaking historical event. Chapters of the Miami Triad were installed in separate but related events on the same day. At a banquet, 600 members of the Betas, Sigma Chis and Phi Deltas listened to toasts from their leaders. George Banta, Jr. spoke on behalf of our group.

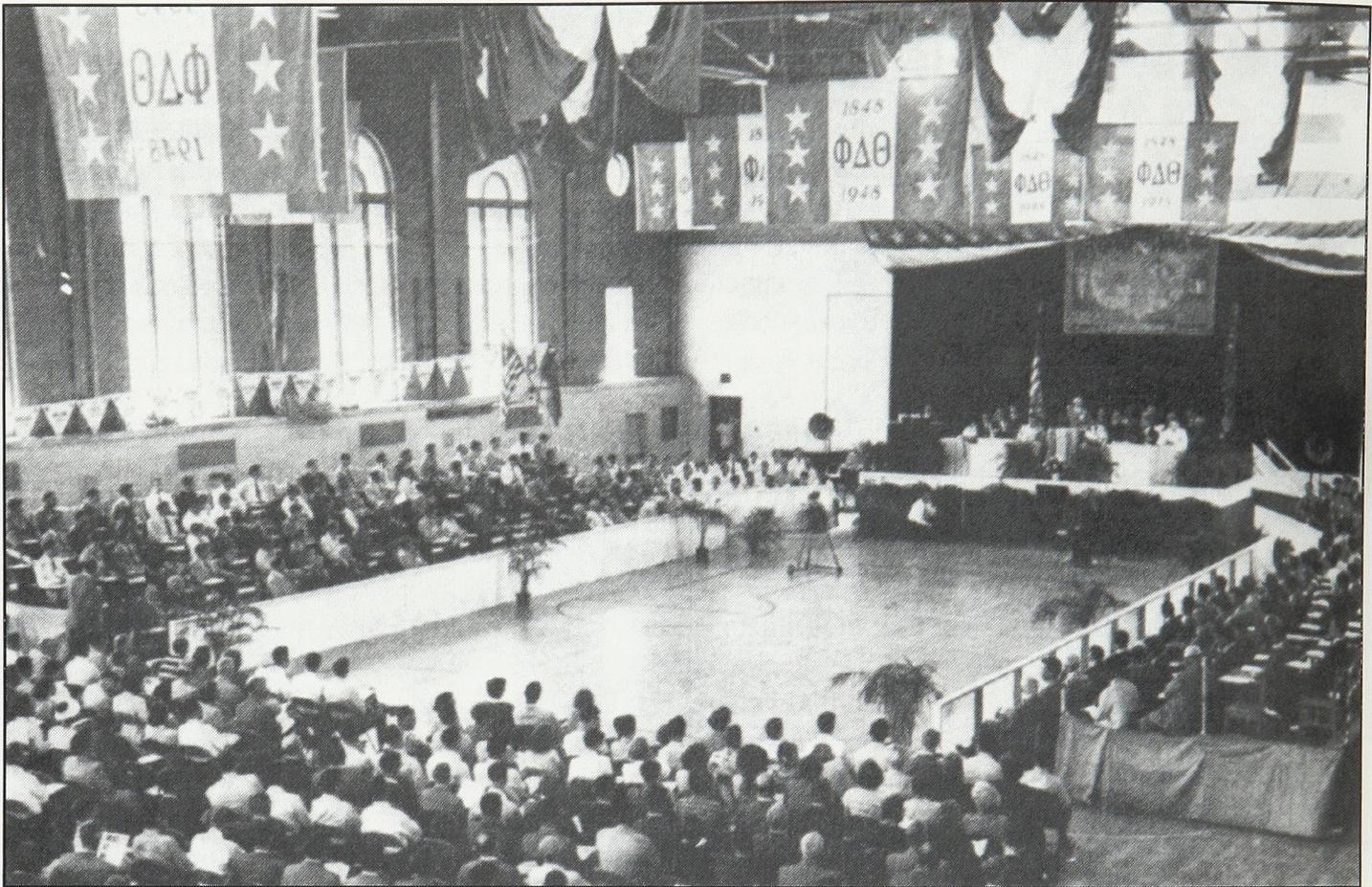
Willamette is an historic school, privately founded in 1843, long before Oregon became a state. Oregon Gamma is still going strong today, as are the other Triad chapters.

Months of planning went into the Centennial Convention which coincided with the newly-finished General Headquarters.

A record turnout of 1,268 Phis were registered September 1 at Ogden Hall, a scant 50 paces from the old North Hall, and were assigned rooms in various Miami dormitories. An information booth was manned by Verlin Pulley (Miami '25), mayor of Oxford, to answer questions.

Every registrant had a 46-page program crammed with background information and a schedule of the days' events. At breakfast each morning were copies of the *Centennial Daily News*, a Six-Star Extra.

The delegates ranged from 17-year-old recent initiates to distinguished Golden Legionnaires, Chief Justice Vinson and two United States Senators. The Senators were Harry P. Cain (Sewanee '29) of Washington and Elmer Thomas (DePauw '00) of



Oklahoma. Business sessions were in Withrow Court, the home floor for the Miami basketball team.

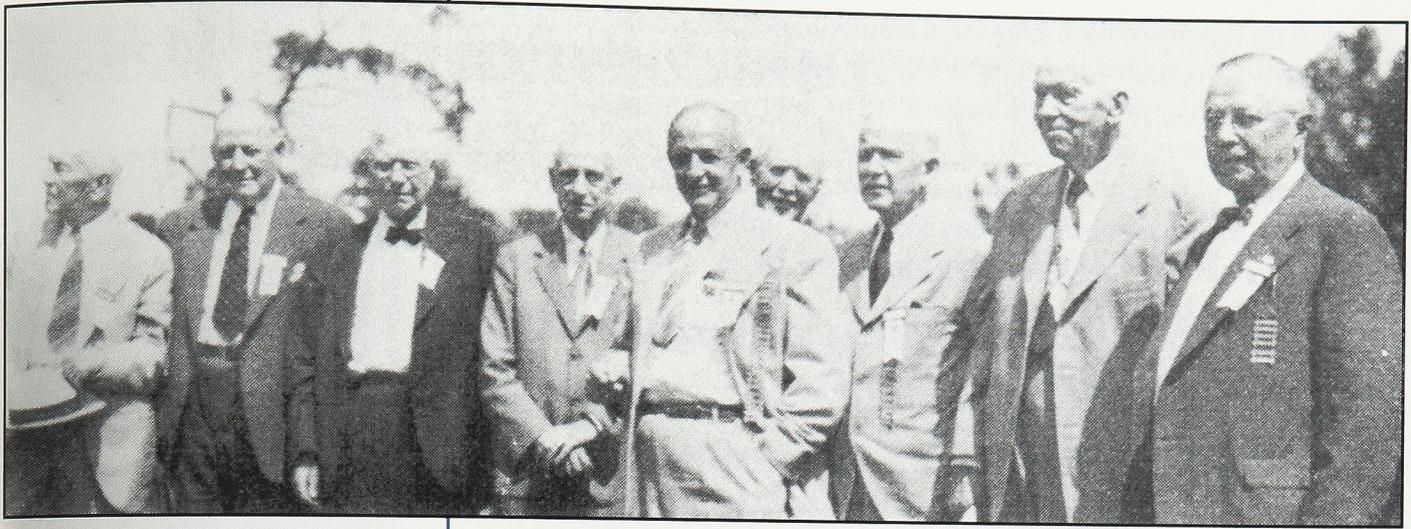
Miami University and the state of Ohio had gone all out to make the Phi Delta visitors welcome. Miami president Ernest H. Hahne and Lieutenant Governor Paul Herbert joined Dr. Paul R. Hawley (Indiana '12), the General Council president, in the welcoming speeches.

The Fraternity presented the University with the Robert Morrison Seminar Room in the new arts and sciences building. The facility, to accommodate meetings of 15 to 20 persons, was attractively furnished. A bronze plaque on the wall read, "The Robert Morrison Seminar ... presented by Phi Delta Theta to Miami University as an expression of esteem for Robert Morrison, principal founder of the Fraternity 1848-1948."

During the business sessions, it was a serious affair. But in the evenings, and sometimes intervals during the day, there were songfests, stage shows, concerts and a memorable re-enactment of the founding by a cast from Ohio Alpha.

Performed on the stage of Benton Hall, the play portrayed college life as it was a century earlier with five episodes covering the first two years of the Fraternity. Costumes, scenery and

*The Fraternity's Centennial Convention was held at Oxford with business sessions in Withrow Court.*



*Phi Delta Theta elder statesmen (top and bottom) attended the 1948 Centennial convention at Miami and participated in a career clinic.*

dialogue were of the earlier era, many of the lines being taken from letters and documents.

The script, written by Professor Harry Williams of the Miami theater faculty, did contain some unexpected lines.

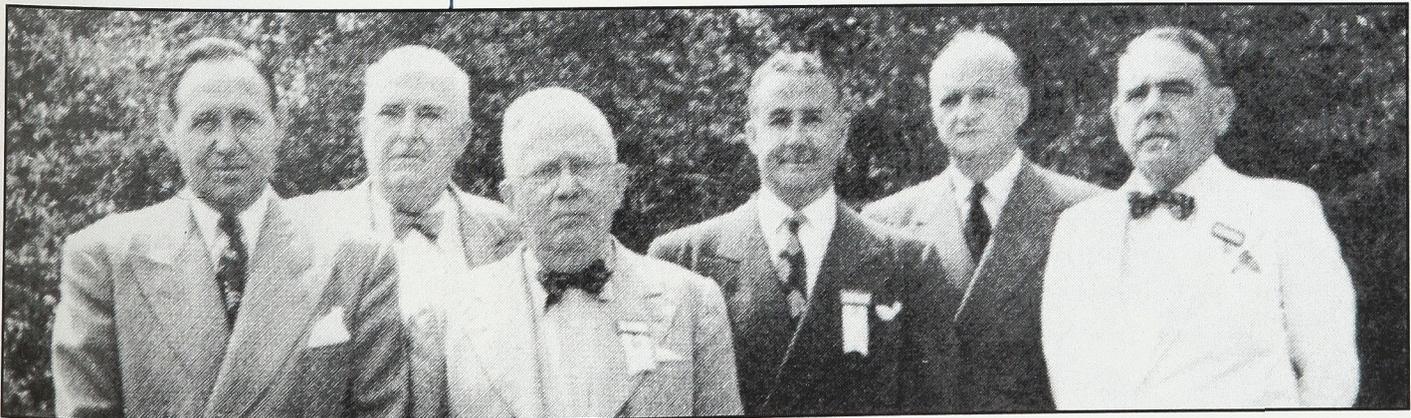
In a scene representing the trial of the first two members expelled for excessive drinking in 1851, one defender said of Prosecutor Benjamin Harrison, "Why you'd think he was President of the United States."

A new event at the Convention was a career clinic in which Phis of achievement in "the real world" described the opportunities, requirements and responsibilities in their respective fields.

Fourteen past General Council presidents attended, including John Edwin Brown (Ohio Wesleyan '84) who presented a Centennial message entrusted to him by Founder Morrison at the half-century convention in 1898.

The gist of Morrison's message was, "We are happy to have been privileged to be a founding part of Phi Delta Theta which has so far played a worthy part in American college life."

The Saturday night banquet was attended by 1,500 people in Withrow Court. Leaders of other fraternities on campus were invited guests, swelling the turnout to capacity.



Sunday morning there was a Centennial church service in the beautiful Norman Chapel of Western College for Women. That school was then adjacent to the campus but later became part of Miami.

The final event was an academic procession Sunday afternoon. Led by General Hawley in military uniform, the University marching band set the cadence for the marching Phis in their caps and gowns.

The procession ended at the campus gateway across Campus Avenue from the new headquarters.

After brief remarks by past presidents Hilton U. Brown and John Edwin Brown, Admiral Cluverius, as chairman of the Centennial Committee, presented the building to Phi Delta Theta.

Incoming General Council president Emmett J. Junge (Nebraska '26) accepted the deed.

As this is being written, the General Headquarters is still a very attractive building. It was dedicated when Phi Delta Theta had 108 chapters and nine staff members. Today, with more than 180 chapters and 24 Fraternity and Foundation staff members, Phi Delta Theta has clearly outgrown the structure. Half of the staff works in a building several blocks away which creates costly inefficiencies. Plans are on the drawing board to renew and expand the venerable old building.

Upstairs in the Banta Memorial Library, the shelves are lined with enough books by Phi authors to fill a small town library.



*Emmett Junge, incoming General Council president, accepted deed to the new headquarters building.*

*Dr. John E. Brown (Ohio Wesleyan '84) presented a message entrusted to him by founder Morrison (left). Second General Council president Hilton U. Brown (Indiana '80) with fifth generation George Banta III (below).*

