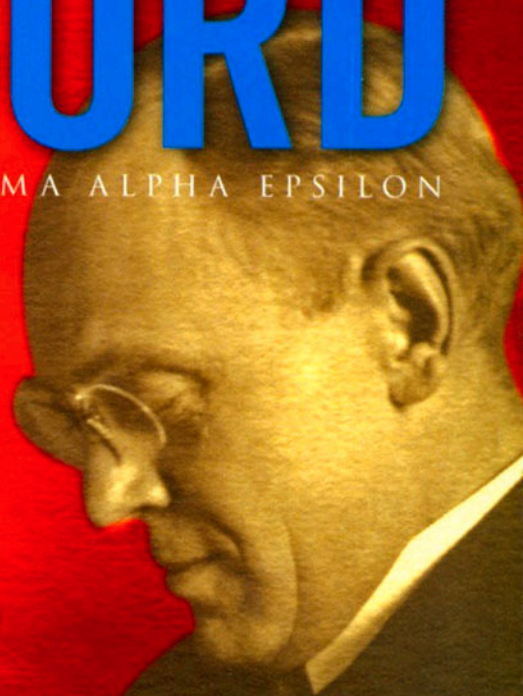


THE RECORD

OF SIGMA ALPHA EPSILON

MODERNIZING THE FRATERNITY

THE CONVENTIONS THAT BROUGHT US TO BUSINESS



OUR FOOTBALL REVIEW:
THE 2008 ALL-ΣAE
NATIONAL SQUAD

Q-AND-A WITH
FINANCIAL AND HOUSING

STEWARDS IN
THE COMMUNITY:
THE TRUE GENTLEMAN
DAY OF SERVICE

MODERNIZING THE FRATERNITY

THE CONVENTIONS THAT
BROUGHT US TO BUSINESS

by Nancilee D.V. Gasiel, archivist



The system was broken. Eminent Supreme Archon Don Almy (Cornell 1897) knew it now more than ever. Membership had soared in the past few years and more and more local fraternities were petitioning to become chapters of Σ AE, producing more work than could be handled. The Supreme Council was overwhelmed. Council members were finding it increasingly difficult to find enough time to dedicate to their regular occupations, family needs and their office in the Fraternity. Almy also knew that it would be nearly impossible to find good men to join the Supreme Council. No one with the executive ability and leadership skills necessary was going to want to take a volunteer position like that. The Fraternity had become a victim of its own success.

Brothers stand in front of the McKinley Monument in Buffalo, New York, at the 1919 convention.



Instead of decreased membership, as fraternity officers had expected, the Great War had actually increased the number of initiations and not a single chapter had closed. There had been 3,038 initiations since the last convention in 1916, nearly two and a half times as many initiations as were recorded between 1914 and 1916, the last reporting period. Now, on the eve of the 1919 national convention, the Fraternity was also about to report its largest-ever active membership with 83 chapters and 1,830 active collegiate members.

For the duration of the war, the War Department had imposed restrictions on college fraternities that included potential closure, if it were determined necessary. Military training stations were being set up in colleges across the country and some of the fraternity's chapters had to give up their houses for military use.

The McKinley Monument

In the center of Niagara Square in Buffalo, New York, stands a memorial to President William McKinley (Mount Union 1869), who was assassinated while attending the Pan-American Exposition in 1901.

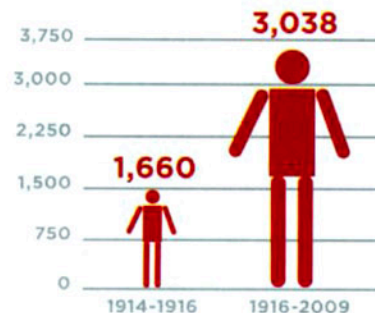
A. Phimister Proctor, a well-known animal sculptor who executed several pieces for the Pan-American Exposition, carved the sleeping lions, symbols of strength, and the turtles, emblematic of eternal life.

There are four lions, one each at the northeast, northwest, southeast, and southwest corners of the monument. It was fitting, then, for Sigma Alpha Epsilon to have one of its mascots so prominently displayed.

In addition to the war, the worldwide Spanish influenza epidemic was taking its toll on the fraternity. Initially, in the spring of 1918 the flu hadn't been that severe. But that fall and winter it reemerged with unexpected severity. At the end of the outbreak, more than a half-million Americans would die from the disease and 28 percent of the population would be infected. Some universities tried to stop the spread of the Spanish flu by quarantining the campus and not delivering or sending mail. Almy and other national Fraternity officers grew frustrated that they could not get the information that they needed from some chapters. The epidemic had become so severe that the local health inspector refused to issue a permit for the December 1918 national convention to meet, as scheduled, in St. Louis. At the last minute the convention was postponed and later rescheduled for June 1919.

To make the situation even more complicated, Eminent Supreme Recorder Billy Levere (Northwestern 1898) was off serving his country and homesick American GIs in a mud-soaked YMCA cantina in France. No one had realized just how much work Levere did for the Fraternity until he went away. He had worked out a complex system that kept the central office running and made Evanston, Illinois, the heart of the Fraternity. At great personal sacrifice, former ESA Marvin Holderness (Vanderbilt 1902) had assumed Levere's responsibilities and done a yeoman's job as acting ESR while Levere was away. Miss Mullen, the office clerk, had been working so much overtime that Almy feared her nerves would snap. No one was conducting chapter visits. Almy advertised in the *Phi Alpha* for someone to temporarily fill this role, but no qualified candidates appeared. Even when Levere returned from France, there was too much work now for one man to handle, even if that man was as capable as Billy Levere.

The system had to change. The Fraternity had long passed from a volunteer-run organization to a large national fraternity with chapters across the country. It had become a business like any other. This was the 20th century, the modern era, and Almy intended to implement modern business practices and office efficiency. It would take two national conventions and countless hours to implement the centralization plan. It would be nothing short of revolutionary.



A Period of Growth

There had been 3,038 initiations since the last convention in 1916, nearly two and a half times as the 1,660 initiations recorded between 1914-1916.

The Levere Memorial Temple

The proposed memorial building and central office was officially renamed the Levere Memorial Temple in honor of Billy Levere after his death on February 22, 1927, by the 1928 Miami Convention. The 1930 Evanston convention inaugurated the newly completed building and dedicated it to Levere.



A Flu Epidemic

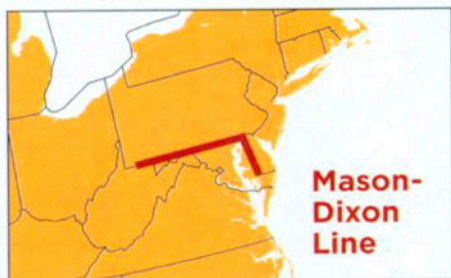
At the end of the outbreak over a half million Americans would die from Spanish influenza and 28 percent of the population would be infected.



The four men who brought us to business: Almy, Holderness, Tuttle and Levere.

Establishing Chapter Names

Originally, chapter names did not contain the name of the state that they were located in. Alabama Mu was simply Mu, Georgia Beta was called Beta and Virginia Kappa was only Kappa. The 1884 Athens Convention changed this system by adding the state name and established the naming convention still used today.



Northern Expansion

From the earliest days of the Fraternity, it was debated whether or not to expand north of the Mason-Dixon Line. Permission to establish chapters in the North was formally granted by the 1869 Athens, Georgia, Convention. The 1870 Memphis Convention then withdrew this permission. Northern expansion was permanently established by the 1885 Nashville Convention.

The Founders at Convention

Only two of the eight founders of Sigma Alpha Epsilon ever attended a national convention. John Webb Kerr went to the 1896 St. Louis Convention and John Barratt Rudolph attended the 50th Anniversary Convention in Atlanta in 1906.

THE FIRST CHANGE: 1885

Changing the governing structure of the Fraternity was not a new practice. It had been done once before in 1885 when the Fraternity moved from the Grand Chapter system to the Supreme Council system. The Grand Chapter was a collegiate chapter that was elected at each national convention to serve as the head of the Fraternity and conduct all necessary executive tasks. But as the Fraternity grew, the work of the Grand Chapter increased. When Eminent Grand Archon James A. Glass (University of the South 1880) called the national convention to order in the Tennessee State Capitol on October 20, 1885, administration of the Fraternity was about to pass from collegiate members to alumni. Glass stated the problem: "To do the work of the Grand Chapter, as the fraternity now stands, would require the entire time and undivided attention of the officers ... We, therefore, believe that even could a chapter be found ready and willing to undertake this work, it would be wrong to allow her to assume so great a responsibility." Glass was right. It was unfair to ask a handful of college students to run a 35-chapter national fraternity. All but a few national fraternities, Alpha Tau Omega, Phi Delta Kappa, Psi Upsilon and Delta Kappa Epsilon among them, had already dispensed with the Grand Chapter system. Since at least 1883, rumblings about Σ AE doing the same had been heard.

By the end of the convention, a new governance structure was in place. On November 15, 1885 the Grand Chapter would hand control of the fraternity over to the Supreme Council. The six-member board, which required all members to live in the same city, would be led by the Eminent Supreme Archon. The ESA was the official head of the fraternity, treasurer, and national secretary. The remaining five Council members did not have any defined roles. The Realm would be divided into provinces, with a Grand Chapter to head each province. Adjustment to this system would be made by national conventions over the next three decades. The Supreme Council would soon include the positions of Eminent Supreme Deputy Archon and Eminent Supreme Treasurer. The 1909 convention would change the title of the Past Eminent Supreme Archon to Honorary Eminent Supreme Archon. The position of Eminent Supreme Recorder was officially created at the 1912 national convention. And, the provinces would no longer be governed by Grand Chapters but by Province Archons.



The 1920 convention, the meeting that brought Sigma Alpha Epsilon into the modern era.

The 1920 convention official photograph. Billy Levere is visible in the middle of the front row.



THE SECOND CHANGE BEGINS: 1919

The 1918 national convention, which was now the 1919 Buffalo, New York, "Victory" Convention, would lay the groundwork for significant restructuring of the Fraternity's governing structure. The Victory Convention was a time of celebration. Far from the somber wartime affair that had originally been planned, the Victory Convention included a smoker as an opening party and tours of Niagara Falls. But, on the eve of prohibition, the nation's Great Experiment, the convention was dry. The Buffalo alumni had pulled out all the stops in planning the convention. The war was over and America was ready to celebrate. To top it all off, Levere had returned from France just weeks before the convention began. The conventioners were thrilled to have him back. After all, convention would not be the same without Billy.

In his opening remarks and report, Almy presented the case for refining Fraternity operations and developing a central office at Evanston. He told the convention that the Fraternity, and college fraternities overall, had long passed from being "boys' play." The Fraternity "has demonstrated that it has a serious educational function to perform, a function as unique as it is useful ... The College Fraternity then, is now, and, as time goes on, will the more be serious business." During his two terms as ESA, Almy had studied how other fraternities operated. He observed that those fraternities which had one or more men who had made the fraternity their life's work fared the best. Sigma Alpha Epsilon needed to adopt a modern business model, have a centralized office with full-time staff to provide continuity and a board of directors with members that would slowly change over time. In short, ΣAE had to act like the business it had become. Almy believed that it was the only way for a modern fraternity to reach its full potential.

Instead of accepting the basic elements of the Centralization Plan that were proposed in revisions to *The Fraternity Laws*, the convention voted to form exploratory committees to report at the December 1920 convention in St. Louis. One committee would present a fully developed plan to centralize fraternity operations. Another committee would report on the creation of a memorial to the brothers who had fought and died in WWI. In the end, both committees would be encompassed by the same plan.

Two terms as ESA had been enough for Almy. He retired from the position, and Honorary ESA Judge Arthur J. Tuttle (Michigan 1892) was elected. Tuttle was a federal district court judge and was entirely too busy to serve as ESA. However, with "good old Billy" as ESR, he was persuaded to accept the position. Tuttle was in agreement with Almy's plan of modernization. After all, while Almy had promoted the idea for the past several months, it was the combination of Tuttle, Levere, and Almy who had developed the idea and possessed the skill to see it through. In the early spring of 1920, Tuttle appointed Almy as chairman of the committee for central office efficiency. The remainder of the committee was composed of Tuttle, Levere, Marvin Holderness, Lauren Foreman (Emory 1901), Arthur Cook (Washington 1909) and George C. Keech (Michigan 1895).

The committee members corresponded through the spring and met in Evanston in late June of 1920 to hammer out their final proposal. A special edition of the *Phi Alpha* was released in November 1920 to provide convention delegates time to look over the 23-page restructuring plan that would modernize the Fraternity.



Changing the Grip

Because the hand positioning of the earliest Fraternity grip could be easily seen by bystanders, the 1870 Memphis convention changed the grip to be more hidden.

A Finalized Constitution

What is the most important document in the Realm? Billy Levere asserted that it was the constitution adopted by the 1869 Athens, Georgia, Convention. After the Civil War the Fraternity was in shambles. What chapters remained did not have identical or complete copies of the Sigma Alpha Epsilon's constitution. Some even passed by-laws that conflicted with the constitution. All chapters were issued complete, identical copies of the constitution, and the convention declared that all previous copies were considered null and void.



From Blue to Black ... and Back to Blue

Because the enamel tended to chip, the background of the badge was changed from Nazarene Blue to black by the 1858 Murfreesboro, Tennessee, Convention. The materials used to make blue enamel were improved over time and the badge was returned to the original blue by the 1926 convention in Boston.

The Foundation Matures

The Levere Memorial Foundation was created at the 1926 Boston Convention. The Foundation's name was changed to the Sigma Alpha Epsilon Foundation at the 1993 New Orleans Convention.

CONTINUING THE PUSH: 1920

In December 1920, for the first time in 16 years, St. Louis finally got its chance to host a national convention, and what a historic convention it was. The delegates knew it even before they arrived. They were about to embark on an exhausting journey of debating, discussing and voting. They were asked to consider 133 significant amendments to *The Fraternity Laws*. Through the centralization plan, the convention transformed the Supreme Council from a working board to the executive board of directors of the Fraternity with the task of setting Fraternity policy subject to the actions of the national convention. The Supreme Council positions of Eminent Supreme Treasurer and editor of *The Record* were eliminated. Two new Council positions were created, an Eminent Supreme Warden who provided financial oversight and an Eminent Supreme Herald who had no specific duties. The ESR would remain a Council member and be the chief executive officer of the central office in Evanston. To assist him, the positions of Grand Treasurer and General Secretary were created.

The convention also restructured the membership structure of the fraternity. There would now be four divisions of fraternity members: the Chapter Collegiate, Chapter National, Chapter Quiescent and the Chapter Eternal. Alumni would belong to one of the last three chapters. Those alumni who paid annual dues of \$3, a lifetime membership fee of \$50, or became one of 25 Founder members by donating \$1,000 to the National Endowment Fund were members of the Chapter National. Chapter Quiescent members did not pay any of these fees and in turn they were not permitted to hold office or be a representative at either a national or province convention. Certainly, there was some opposition to this plan. Some delegates felt that it was an effort to tax the alumni. Far from a tax, the intent of the \$3 alumni dues were to maintain alumni involvement, to provide capital for financial stability and to finance expanded services to collegiate and alumni members. The last major component of the centralization plan was the establishment of the National Endowment Fund into which the annual and lifetime dues and the Founder memberships were paid. The fund allowed Sigma Alpha Epsilon, for the first time, to ask alumni for financial support of the fraternity. Funds collected were to be used to help finance the construction of chapter houses, the construction of a building or memorial for brothers who lost their lives in WWI and to help Diomedian clubs to construct chapter houses. After much debate, discussion and a few minor changes, the convention unanimously accepted the plan, and the Central Office in Evanston — the first official national headquarters in the Greek-letter world — became a reality.

The 1920 St. Louis convention was a watershed moment for the development of ΣAE. Almy, Levere, Tuttle and the rest of the committee for central office efficiency developed a plan that would position the Fraternity ahead of other organizations of the age. By adopting a modern business model and practices it professionalized the Fraternity. The creation of the National Endowment Fund paved the way for the building of the Levere Memorial Temple, creation of the Sigma Alpha Epsilon Foundation, and the creation of the SAE Financial & Housing Corporation. While it was a short-lived program, the Diomedians served the important function of beginning a serious and continued effort on the part of Sigma Alpha Epsilon to retain alumni interest and engagement in the Fraternity. Most importantly, the convention laid the foundation for the Fraternity that we know and understand today. 🌟



The Fraternity's leaders at the St. Louis National Convention in 1920. Left to right: Eminent Supreme Recorder William. C. Levere, Eminent Supreme Warden George D. Kimball, William W. Brandon, member of the Centralization Committee Marvin E. Holderness, Chairman of Interfraternity Conference Don R. Almy and Eminent Supreme Archon Arthur J. Tuttle.