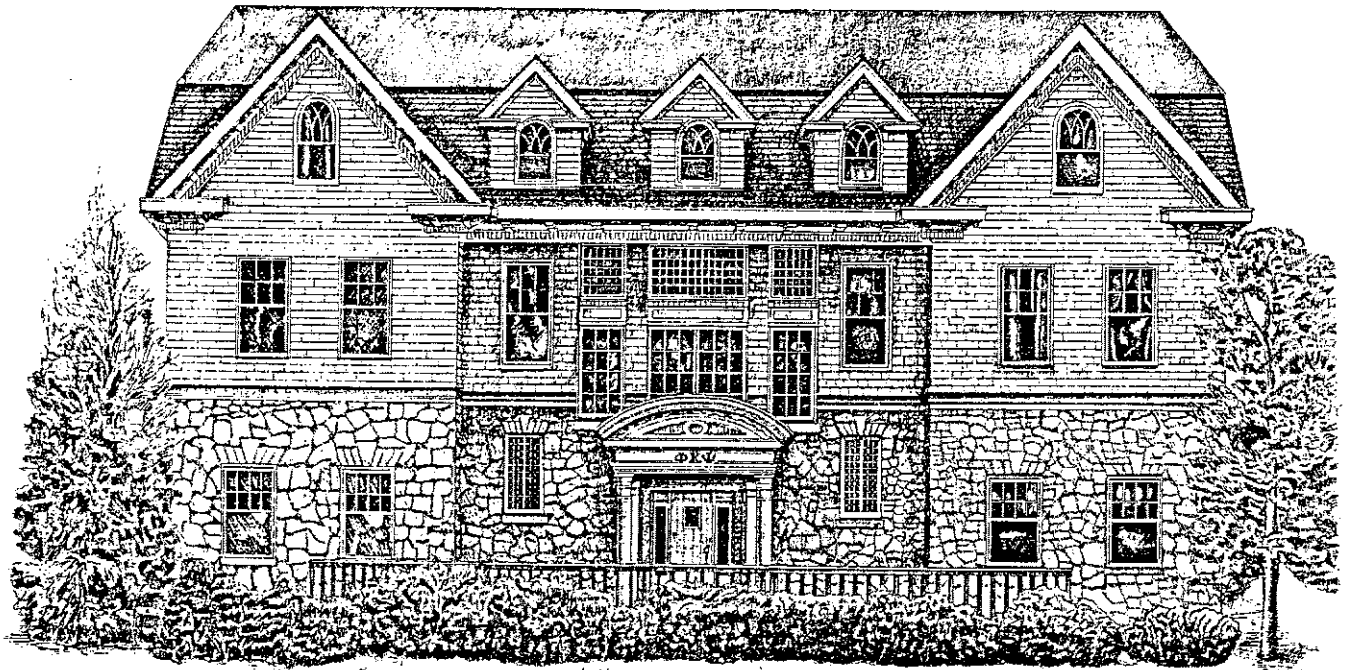


Historic Site and Structure Report

Phi Kappa Psi Fraternity House



"The Old Grey Barn"
Penn Theta Chapter of
Phi Kappa Psi
Lafayette College

Pennsylvania Theta Chapter

Lafayette College, Easton, Pennsylvania

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The Pennsylvania Theta chapter of the Phi Kappa Psi fraternity was founded at Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania, on March 15, 1869. The founders were Clarence G. Voris (Pennsylvania Gamma), and Dr. Edwin L Evans (Pennsylvania Zeta). Dr Evans was practicing medicine in Easton.

The first meeting place of the brotherhood was at Dr. Evans' home. The first official meeting place was in a small apartment south of Ferry Street on Cherry Alley. The namesake of our annual alumni dinner, 'Cherry Alley' is derived from the address of this first meeting place. One year later, the meeting place was moved to a house on the west side of Third Street near the Lehigh bridge.¹

The fraternity grew, and on January 1, 1878, the Pennsylvania Theta chapter was installed as the fraternities' Grand Chapter. At the time, the Grand Chapter was the governing body of the fraternity in the years when the Grand Arch Council did not meet. Today, the fraternity has an executive council to guide her in years that the G.A.C does not meet.

When Penn Theta took over, things were not going well for the fraternity. The fraternities' treasury was empty, and in addition there were no records of transactions occurring from 1874 to 1878. Also, there was the matter of two unpaid bills for the publishing of the quarterly newsletter to deal with.² Pennsylvania Theta responded to

the task and the fraternity flourished under her guidance. Eight new chapters were chartered³ and the first issue of "The Shield," which to this day is the fraternities' quarterly newsletter, was published, in November of 1879.⁴ In 1881, Ohio Alpha succeed Pennsylvania Theta as the Grand Chapter.

From 1881 to 1903 no recorded history has yet been uncovered. Further research must be conducted in an attempt to shed some light on the events involving the fraternity in these years.

In 1903, two Pennsylvania Theta alumni purchased a piece of land off Sullivan Lane on the Lafayette campus. These Alumni were Pennell Evans, initiated in 1869, and Dr. Edgar M Green, initiated in 1881. The men acted as trustees, deeding the lot to the chapter.⁵ Two architects were contracted, John T. Rowland jr., and Frank Eurich jr. Both men were members of the New York Alpha chapter of Phi Kappa Psi at Cornell University.⁶

Frank Eurich, jr., graduated from Cornell University in 1899. He received a Masters of Architecture degree in 1908. He worked with John T Rowland, jr., in Jersey City, New Jersey, and Hackensack for ten years. Eurich moved to Detroit in 1920, where he became the H.O.L.C. regional supervisor. He died in 1942.

John T. Rowland, jr., graduated Cornell University in 1890, and formed the firm John T. Rowland Architects. Their



Aerial View of Lafayette College

taken from a postcard (date unknown) showing the original location
of the house on the Quad

offices were located at 30 Journal Square, Jersey City, New Jersey. Rowland worked for the Jersey City Board of Education for forty-seven years, and designed twenty-five of the city's schools. In addition, he designed the Public Service Building, the Labor Bank Building, the Jersey City Journal Building, and the Hudson County Hospital for Mental Diseases. Rowland sat on the Board of Directors of the Trust Company of New Jersey.⁷ These two men donated the beautiful stained glass window that can still be seen today above the hearth in Pennsylvania Theta's chapter house.⁸ The house was completed in the spring of 1909

It seems that Woodrow Wilson, a Phi Psi from West Virginia, may have made a visit to the 'Old Grey Barn' during his term as president. Buried deep in a trunk in our brothers' room, we discovered a guest book containing Wilson's signature. The signature is dated December 25, 1916, and is followed by "Phi Psi Forever!" It could not be determined whether Wilson did visit the Phi Psi house or whether the guest book visited Wilson. It is possible that Wilson did stop in Easton because we discovered from a reliable source that the president had relatives in Bethlehem, Pa. Much of our uncertainty is based on this alleged visit's lack of appearance in the local papers.

During World War I, the house was occupied by Lafayette's Student Army Training Corps. The floors, stairs, and wallpapering suffered extensive damage during their stay.

The Chapter sought compensation for the damages, and a paper war ensued. First, the chapter petitioned the college for reimbursement, but the college felt no responsibility. The college suggested seeking funds from the government. The chapter asked the college to demand that the government pay for repairs. As far as our records show, the college left it to the chapter to secure the funds.⁹ A prominent Easton attorney, T. Mckeen Chidsey, initiated at Penn Theta in 1900, handled the correspondence between the chapter and the college. Chidsey went on to become Attorney General of Pennsylvania.¹⁰

Once again, while trying to learn about life at Phi Psi from World War I into the 1930's, we hit a wall in our research. Due to the great lack of written records and the low number of Alumni from this period alive today, almost no written record of this period in Pennsylvania Theta's history exists.

There are some things we do know about this era however. Bridge was the popular recreational game in the house. The room now known as the library was the most popular spot for Bridge. It was in this room that intense, all night bridge games would be played. One of the most devoted players was Dick Stewart. Tragically, Dick became ill of a brain tumor and died as an undergraduate in 1936. Dick's parents and the entire brotherhood wished to leave some memory of the great loss, and the Card Room was therefore dedicated to the memory

of Richard Harry Stewart, and a plaque was placed in his honor.¹¹ Ironically, this plaque has made it's way upstairs and now adorns a bedroom door.

This period was also a time of change. Change for the brotherhood in the face of prohibition and change for the Phi Psi house brought on by the economic upheaval of the day. During this time, the chapter's meeting room was moved from it's central position on the third floor to a space in the basement. The move was meant to increase revenue by adding two bedrooms that could be rented to brothers.

It has also been discovered that animosity between the chapter and the Lafayette administration existed in the thirties. This animosity is illustrated in a letter received from G. Robert Saunders '37, he states: "We were paranoid about the college wanting our property and they wanted to tear down the house several times."

There were many changes regarding the repeal of prohibition. This feeling of change as well as the fact that the prohibition law was not a formidable opponent for the men of Phi Psi is summed up best in Mr. Saunders' letter, it reads "the last cadillac with mason jars of corn whiskey came up from the south, the last of the applejack still was dismantled when prohibition was ended. Beer was \$3.00 a quarter."

On the lighter side of life, in October of 1938, Charlie Adams brought a mascot for the Lafayette football team to the

house. It was a leopard named "Chiquita." Chiquita was from South America, and it is unclear how long he/she stayed or what his/her ultimate fate was.

The World War II era marked some interesting happenings at Phi Psi. As a result of enlistment, membership dropped to dangerously low levels. In 1944, the chapter consisted of only two brothers - Wats Maget and Kay Shoemaker. As happened with many fraternity houses on campus, the 'Old Grey Barn' was converted into a dormitory.¹²

Another gap appeared in the post WWII era. Hopefully, with further research this one will be the easiest to fill, judging from the number of living alumni from this period.

In the 1960's, the college administration and the chapter's Alumni Association began to discuss plans for the slowly deteriorating chapter house. Many options were discussed, from a new house either on March Field or near Zeta Psi to renovation of the house on its quadrangle location.¹³ Interestingly a poll of the Alumni received mixed results. Many wanted to simply give the house up to the college. Those who favored renovation were highly vocal however. A few anonymous comments: from the class of '54 "fight for survival" and "Save the Old Grey Barn," and finally, "any more ideas like let's give the House and land to the college could bring about an impeachment of the whole damn board!!!" These sentiments were echoed by the National fraternity who thought any choice which led to a loss of

independence would be a mistake. Another factor was the cost. The two choices that involved a new chapter house were the two most expensive choices.¹⁴

During this turmoil, Penn Theta celebrated it's 100th year, 1969. In the same year the 1000th Lafayette Phi Psi was initiated.¹⁵ It was finally decided that the original house would be moved to a March Field site and renovated. The move was completed in 1971. This move meant many changes to the structure of the 'Old Grey Barn'. A three story fire tower was added to the back of the building providing a second stairway and extra bedroom space. Also, a recreation room was created in the new basement, the former site of the kitchen which was moved upstairs.¹⁵ Tragically, the fine porch which was such a beautiful part of the house on it's quad location was lost. However, It was replaced by a spacious concrete porch with a rail that soon became infamous.

The following is an account of the move written by an undergraduate and published in a booklet about the event:

"Take a left at the corner, then a right, and keep on going straight; you can't miss it." *everything you always wanted to know about moving a fraternity house, but were afraid to ask . . .*

During the summer of 1971 Phi Kappa Psi's 62 year old chapter house was moved approximately 1000 feet to its new location on March Field. The move of the "Old Gray Barn" marked the end of a long era of uncertainty and the beginning of a new chapter in the fraternity's history. After years of negotiation with Lafayette College the Alumni Association of Phi Kappa Psi accepted, with the overwhelming support of the undergraduate brothers, a proposal that would satisfy the interests of all concerned. The "Old Gray Barn" would be saved and renovated and the college would have the tract of land needed for the future expansion of Skillman Library. Only one problem was left unresolved: Could the house indeed be moved? It is said that one bidder drove past the house and from the window of his car yelled, "No way, no way." Needless to say everyone had a degree of doubt. Everyone, it seemed, except C. Van Howling Co. of Wallington, New Jersey. They approached the task with the kind of confidence a surgeon might exhibit on a routine tonsillectomy. It was simply another building that had to be moved. And while it is

true that each building has its own unique problems there was never any deviation from the rather simple approach and procedure designed to move the 550 ton structure.

In mid-May of 1971 the preparation began for the move. All appliances, furniture and chapter records were transferred from the basement of the house to safe storage. With this completed the interior walls of the basement were demolished. At the same time a trench was dug around the perimeter of the



Brothers Art Stoumbelis, Bob Chace and Darb Duryea (all '72).

house and the land in route of the building's journey leveled. By mid-June the house was ready for Van Howling to begin work. On a rainy day nine workers, including three undergraduate Phi Psi's hired by the movers, began drilling holes into the foundation of the house; two large holes on each side of the house and fourteen each on the back and front. Through these holes were placed I-Beams to support the weight of the house and eventually act as a flat bed for the house to move on. When the I-Beams were set into place and shored, wheel assemblies were moved under them and

hydraulic jacks secured between the wheel assemblies and the beams. Finally, on a hot June day, pumps began to move the jacks and a crack appeared along the bottom of the house. A crack that said Phi Kappa Psi was no longer sitting on precious ground next to the library but was now a 56 wheel vehicle temporarily parked in front of Markle Hall.

Early on June 30, steel cables attached to three large winches mounted on heavy trucks were connected to the beams and the "Old Gray Barn" moved its first inches down a road of wood. "Corduroy Road" became the nickname for the bed of planks positioned from the original site to March Field. Teams of workers picked up the "road" as the house traveled over it and laid it again in front for the next segment of the journey. In all it took only three working days for the house to move the 1000 feet. On July 8, the new site was completed and the house was set in place for its new domain on March Field. A monumental feat had been completed and a new life for an "Old Gray Barn" began.



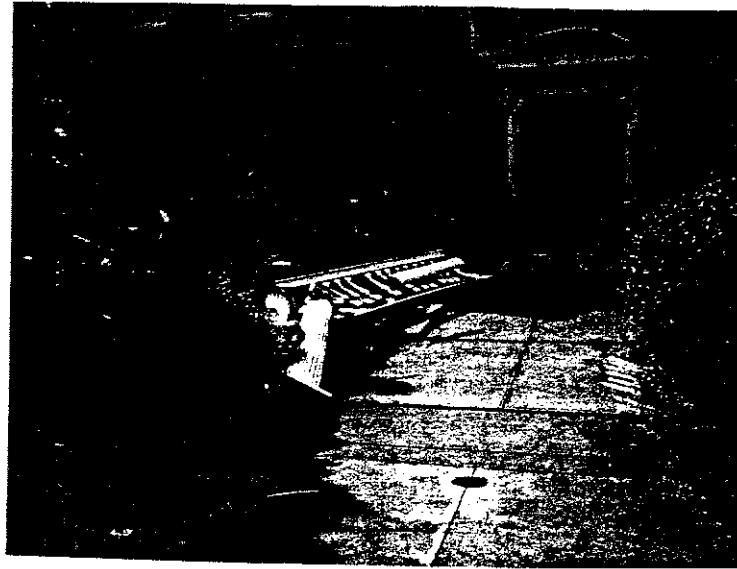
A detail of the original front entrance.



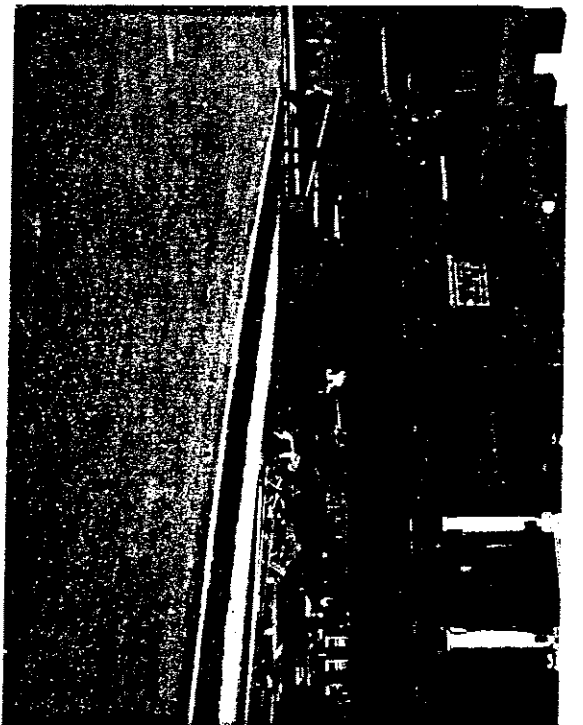
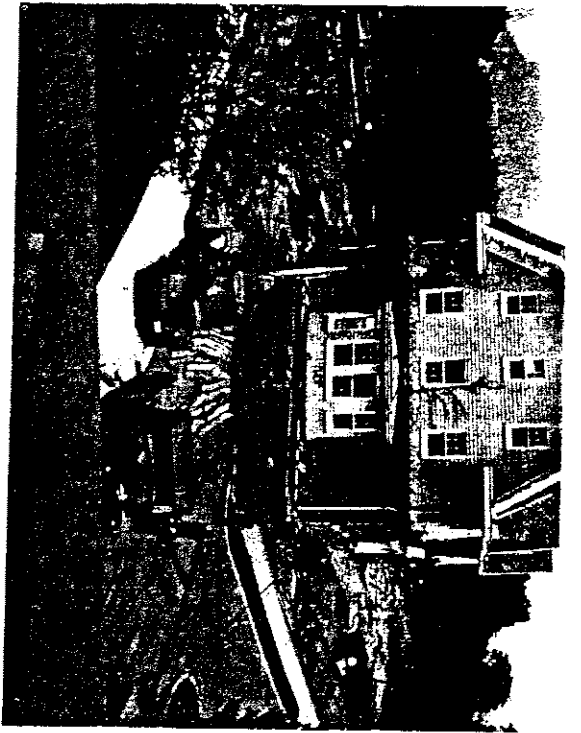
The kitchen as it was prior to the move.
The meat slicer shown in the picture on the left is still used today.



The basement recreation area prior to the move



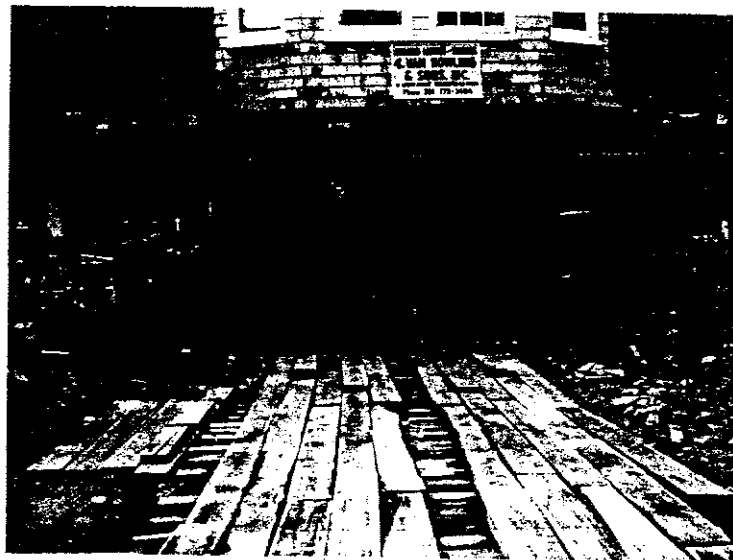
The remains of the original porch that was demolished in preparation for the move



The house enters Sullivan
Road, 1:00 p.m. 6/30/71



The wheeled assembly used to move
the house



A detail of "corduroy road"

At the outset of this project, the expectation was that the research would uncover longstanding trends about the composition and character of the membership. However, it was discovered that the history surrounding the chapter is one of varied personalities living, learning, and working together to perpetuate the chapter, it's ideals, and it's history.

ENDNOTES

1. Campbell, Duncan, Centennial History of Phi Kappa Psi Fraternity 1852 - 1952, vol. 1, Vail-Ballou Press, inc., Binghamton, 1952, pp. 116-117.
2. Ibid, p. 192.
3. Manual of Phi Kappa Psi Fraternity, last revised by Brian Cain, 1983, p. 48.
4. Campbell, p. 78.
5. Submitted by Boyer L. Veitch, 21 OCT 1988.
6. Taken from "Memorandum for Pennsylvania Theta Chapter of Phi Kappa Psi Fraternity," by J.F. Magee, 19 FEB 1952.
7. Courtesy of Cornell University Archives.
8. "Memorandum for Pennsylvania Theta Chapter of Phi Kappa Psi Fraternity," J.F. Magee.
9. Taken from correspondence between T. Mckeen Chidsey and John H. McCracken, 18 DEC 1918.

10. Taken from Testimonial Dinner program, Northampton County Bar Association, 23 MAY 1947.
11. Taken from interview with Dr. Donald McCluskey, 11 FEB 1989.
12. The Shield of Phi Kappa Psi, March 1944, p. 24.
13. Taken from "Minutes of a Meeting of the Board of Directors, Penna. Theta Alumni Assn. of Phi Kappa Psi," 16 FEB 1963.
14. Taken from a poll of all living alumni, conducted by the Board of Directors, Pennsylvania Theta Alumni Association, in 1965.
15. Taken from Phi Kappa Psi (Pennsylvania Theta) Rush Booklet, 1969.



The house as it appeared before the move