

Thomas Cowan Bell

Dr. Joseph Cookman Nate, DD¹

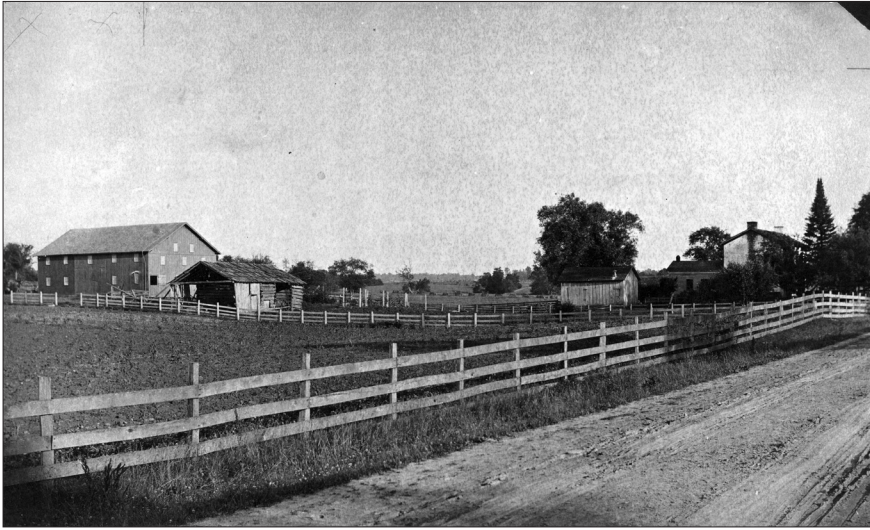
Among the Founders of Sigma Chi at Miami University, Thomas Cowan Bell was the oldest, except Daniel W. Cooper. At the time of the founding, Cooper was twenty-four years of age, while Bell was twenty-three. Both lived to a ripe old age and were the final survivors among the seven, the death of Founder Bell occurring on February 3, 1919, and that of Founder Cooper nearly two years later, on December 11, 1920. The other five Founders were considerably younger, Isaac M. Jordan at the time of the founding being twenty years of age, Lockwood, Runkle, and Scobey each eighteen, and James Parks Caldwell but fourteen. Bell, Cooper, and Jordan clearly exercised an influence in that first chapter circle in keeping with the fact of their being somewhat the older. Among the three, Thomas Cowan Bell was ever held in a certain marked respect because of his scholarly abilities, his dignity, and the broad and generous character of his judgments in the problems which confronted the new Fraternity.

Thomas Cowan Bell, Founder of Sigma Chi, soldier of the Republic, educator, and Christian gentleman, was born on [Monday] May 14, 1832, at Bellbrook, Greene County, Ohio. He was of sturdy pioneer stock, of those who in the early years came from Virginia into the Ohio valley, and whose labors transformed that then Western wilderness into fertile fields.

A somewhat later home of the Bells was in the neighboring Shelby County, Ohio, and near the town of Sidney. It was here that he had his boyhood schooling, in the typical log schoolhouse of pioneer days. The home was one of culture, and of an earnest religious atmosphere. Its church affiliations were Methodist, and its pride was to entertain the early itinerant preachers of that faith, many of whom became famous in their calling. It is of interest that Founder Bell's baptismal name was Thomas Coke, after Bishop Thomas Coke, famous early bishop and educator of Methodism in the Eastern states and Virginia. In mature years, probably subsequent to his graduation from Miami, he adopted the name Cowan, from a branch of the family, for his middle name.

The Bell family was a prosperous one for the times, and a remaining photograph of the old farm property, taken many years ago, conveys its own impressions of thrift and prosperity. The "L" portion of the house was that first built, and its enlargement, and the barns and granaries suggest the prosperous developments of the years. One of the "Uncle Peter," as they knew him, a recollections of Bell's boyhood, which he afterward related, was a breakfast-time in the farm dining-room, when

¹ Unpublished. Bell's biography would be included in Vol. VI of *The History of Sigma Chi*.



The Bell Homestead, Shelby, Ohio, circa 1900

there suddenly appeared in the doorway the figure of an old and dusty traveler with shining black face, an aureole of snowy wool, and a vast and radiant smile as he raised his hands aloft and shouted, “Bless de Lord, yo’ is all here!” It was former slave of the family before its migration from Virginia to Ohio, who had tramped the long journey to an assured welcome. Upstairs in that Ohio home, at the end of a spacious hall, was a family library unusually complete for the times. Included, were the works of [Joseph] Addison, [Oliver] Goldsmith, Christopher North, and the works of most of the famous English and American writers of the day. Easy it is to believe that here was the beginnings of Thomas Cowan Bell’s life-long love for the best literature, and his deep and lasting knowledge of it. He was a lover, also, of all the sports and games of the period. He learned baseball in its simpler form of “townball,” and always retained an interest in the game. He once said that modern athletics had produced no competition which was its equal when “played with vigor, animation, enthusiasm, and *noise*.” He was, in truth, one of those fortunate men in whom the spirit of play, the love of good fun, never ceased.

A neighboring farm to the Bell homestead was that of Whitelaw Reid, who as Sigma Chi is aware, likewise found his way to Miami University some two years in advance of the coming of young Bell. The Reid family had found its way to Ohio from South Carolina. The final preparation of Reid for college was made in an academy at Cedarville in the home country, and it is probable that Bell’s final studies, before entering Miami, were made in that same school. Certain it is that Reid welcome him to Miami University, and into the fellowship of Delta Kappa Epsilon there.

Benjamin P. Runkle, fellow-founder of Sigma Chi, described Bell as he was then.

He was about twenty-one years of age, of medium height, with a frame well knit together and with an expression on his face that made one instinctively reach for his hand. He was one of the kindly and lovable sort, and came into the Sigma Chi movement as naturally as the bee seeks the flowers.

The words are from a sketch of Bell written by General Runkle while Grand Consul of the Fraternity, for the *Sigma Chi Quarterly* of May, 1896. We are familiar with the story of the schism in the Kappa chapter of Delta Kappa Epsilon, of the Winter of 1854–1855 which led to the founding of Sigma Chi. For Bell alone of the Founders it involved the breaking of the friendly ties with Whitelaw Reid cherished as being of the old home neighborhood and the associations of their boyhood. Runkle further said of him:

He was very studious and, while no schemer working for grades, stood well up toward the head of his class, which, for those early years, was very large numbering about forty. With him, as with the rest of us, the Fraternity was a Holy of Holies. If he was ever guilty of any breaches of college law—those at Oxford were frequent and sometimes startling—such departures from rectitude were kept separate and apart from fraternity life. Under the shadow of the cross there was a strict decorum, and business as well as social affairs, was conducted with manly dignity. This spirit prevailed in everything to the end. The first convention of Sigma Chi, which was a mass meeting without a single absentee, was a model for courtly propriety of behavior; and much of this was due to Brothers Bell, Cooper, and Lockwood. As for Brother Bell, he had as much dignity as Daniel Webster.

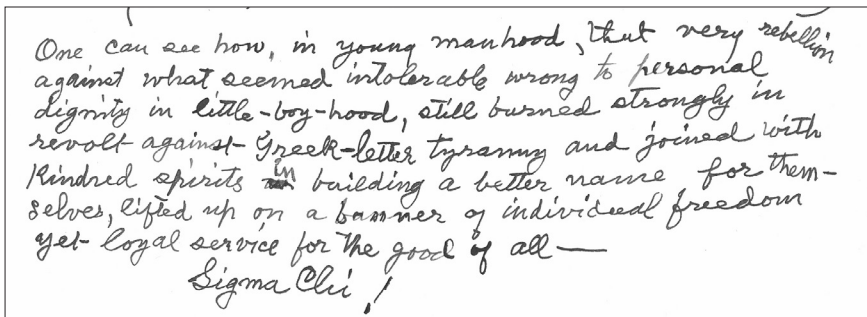
From the first he was one of the most earnest chapter workers – or, as it may be said *Fraternity* workers. For at the first the chapter was the Fraternity, just as it continued to be the Fraternity headquarters after the accession of the Gamma at Ohio Wesleyan, the original Epsilon at Nashville, and the other early chapters. Bell was the first “Iota,” or Annotator as later known, of the original organization.

In the closing half of his Senior year, Bell was chapter Kappa, or corresponding secretary. Interesting letters written by him are in our historical archives, perfecting arrangements with the Gamma and Original

Epsilon for the first Grand Chapter, of June, 1857. They are filled with discussions of chapter conditions among the five fraternities at Miami, concluding, "Among all these the Cross is honored—*Esto perpetua*."² The letter to Gamma, of January 21, 1857, reflects the early emphasis upon the historic literary exercises of our Grand Chapters:

We have thought it advisable that each of our chapters should be represented in Convention by a poet and orator chosen from their own acting members, and we have accordingly elected Ike Jordan orator and Ben Runkle poet, hoping that this arrangement will meet with your approval, and that you will do likewise in electing two of your members. These performances will of course be before our private sessions. Your badges will be sent as soon as they can be made in New York.

We expect to hold our Convention on the 18th or 19th of June. Will that time suit you? If not, tell us your time. What can your Chapter do for the cause financially? We expect to give \$125. Our fellows are all well known here, and we expect our lions to come from the other chapters. Do you want some of the stamped paper?



One can see how, in young manhood, that very rebellion against what seemed intolerable wrong to personal dignity in little-boy-hood, still burned strongly in revolt against Greek-letter tyranny and joined with kindred spirits in building a better name for themselves, lifted up on a banner of individual freedom yet loyal service for the good of all —
Sigma Chi!

Letter from Lucia Chase Bell, Founder Bell's wife, describing him as a student, circa 1933.

Actually, the Convention was finally held on June 12, 1857, and the "lions" who came from Delaware included the entire chapter membership. The college home of Bell, in the earlier period, was in "Old Southeast," the rooming place also of Cooper, Whitelaw Reid, and others of those who figure in the Sigma Chi story. Later on, he made his home with an aunt who resided in Oxford, Mrs. Lizzie Davis. Out of this circumstance grew "the first chapter house" of Sigma Chi, when all the members of Alpha moved into the Davis home, or neighborhood, and lived in luxury at the well-furnished table of this good and generous friend of the early Sigma

² "Let it be perpetual."

Chi. The interesting story of the Davis house, and its associations, is found in the first, or William L. Lockwood Memorial, Volume of this *History*.³

Bell was graduated with the Miami class of 1857, and among his classmates were four of his fellow-founders, Caldwell, Cooper, Jordan, and Runkle. All had the honor of being among the speakers of Commencement Day, Bell's theme being the somewhat serious one, "The Pathetic." His residence as given by him for the printed Commencement program was Chicago, Illinois. The possible explanation of it is that he was then looking toward that coming metropolis of the Great Lakes for the beginning of his life work which, in fact, following the Civil War was in the great Northwest.

Following his graduation, Brother Bell entered upon his life-work of teaching, a vocation which he was destined to honor in long and useful service. Upon the outbreak of the Civil War, he enlisted in the Seventy-fourth Ohio Volunteer Infantry. His promotion was rapid, and his gallant service is related in a former Volume [II], in the story of "Sigma Chi in the Civil War."⁴



THOMAS C. BELL—HERO AT STONE RIVER



Major Thomas Bell

The military career of Thomas C. Bell was equal in interest and gallantry to that of any soldier in the war. He entered the service with the Seventy-fourth Ohio Volunteer Infantry as a private. The regiment was organized at the camp at Xenia, Ohio, in October, 1861, and was completed early in the following year at Camp Chase, near Columbus. The colonel of the regiment was the Rev. Granville Moody, a well-known minister and popular orator of Ohio. Thomas C. Bell was made first lieutenant of his company almost at the outset, on October 24, 1861. On November 2, 1861, he was promoted to captain. These promotions were the first to those ranks listed upon the roster of the regiment.

On April 20, 1862, the regiment was ordered to report with the Union forces then at Nashville, Tennessee, and went into camp near that

³ Nate, Joseph Cookman. *The History of Sigma Chi*, 1855-1925. Vol. 1, 274-277.

⁴ Nate, *The History of Sigma Chi*, vol. II, 32-35.



Turn of the 20th century Postcard showing the Stone River Battlefield at Night.

city on April 24. During that summer, large forces including the Seventy-fourth Ohio Regiment were sent over the Cumberland Mountains and were in minor actions which sought the control of railway and other communications leading southward. Early in September, the regiment returned to Nashville, where it became a part of the forces under General George H. Thomas. In these events, Captain Bell had so demonstrated his mettle as a soldier that on November 22, 1862, he was promoted to the office of major of his regiment, this being the second promotion to the rank noted upon its roster. When, late in 1862, General William S. Rosecrans made his movement against the army of General Bragg, lying at Murfreesboro, the Seventy-fourth Ohio marched with him. On December 29, these forces went into the memorable Battle of Stone River. Major Bell had meanwhile been breveted lieutenant colonel.

It was at the Battle of Stone River, or Murfreesboro, Tennessee, that the heroism of Colonel Bell found its climax. The battle was fought from December 31, 1862, to January 3, 1863. The field of operations was, for the most part, some two miles west of Murfreesboro, intersected by sharp turns of the Stone River. At this point the river was crossed by both the Nashville Pike and the Nashville Chattanooga Railway. Various bridges and fords aided to make the whole scale of operations intricate and the outcome uncertain until the end. As the Union forces gained control of Kentucky, General Braxton Bragg had moved his army southward through Knoxville to Chattanooga and to Murfreesboro. By the end of November, General Rosecrans had concentrated all his forces at Nashville. His men numbered about 47,000, as against 38,000 under Bragg. The latter attacked

on December 31 and forced certain lines of Union troops out of their positions. The second and the third days were similarly inconclusive as to the final result. On the final day, General George H. Thomas having forced the center of the Confederate line, the latter fell back on Tullahoma, and Rosecrans entered Murfreesboro. The losses in killed and wounded had been about a fourth of those engaged in each army. Yet, even with such great carnage, the Battle of Stone River is written down in history as indecisive.

Of the part of Brother Bell in the battle, we have the fine statement of his college classmate, General Runkle:

He rendered much valuable service, but to have fought and distinguished himself as Colonel Bell did at Stone River when the Confederates doubled up, and rolled back the right wing of Rosecrans' army, with terrible slaughter, is enough glory to have satisfied the proudest soldier. The Union army had been well-nigh defeated and crushed, when the corps of that incomparable soldier, General George Henry Thomas, checked the tremendous onset of the confederates with a mighty effort, saved the Union army and changed defeat into victory. Colonel Bell's 74th Ohio was a part of Colonel John F. Miller's Brigade of Negley's division, which broke through the enemy's lines at a critical moment. The Confederates had made, as they always did, a magnificent struggle, had fought with stubborn determination and unshrinking courage until at last the fierce combat reached its crisis. Negley's division was holding a position on the banks of Stone River when Breckenridge's Confederates advanced with a heavy column in a final effort to overwhelm the Union left. Miller's Brigade was in front, the 74th Ohio holding the advance. "Colonel Bell, let us charge them," said Miller. "Forward! 74th," commanded Bell, and the division charged with the bayonet in splendid style, driving the Confederates in confusion over and through their works, capturing several pieces of artillery, a number of battle flags and a large body of prisoners. This charge insured the Confederate defeat. Colonel Bell received honorable mention in the official report of the brigade and division commanders, and as a special rank of honor led the advance column of the victorious army into Murfreesboro.⁵

Major Bell had been transferred to the field and staff and was

⁵ From a sketch of Founder Thomas C. Bell written by General Benjamin P. Runkle for the *Sigma Chi Quarterly*, Vol. XV, No.3, May, 1896, while Founder Runkle was Grand Consul of the Fraternity. A most painstaking helper upon our records relating to Founder Bell has been Mrs. Lucia Chase Bell, of Alameda, California, the widow of Brother Bell.

in actual command of his regiment on the critical final day and in the historic charge of General Thomas. The losses of the regiment in that action in killed and wounded were 109 men, and in prisoners taken by the Confederate forces, forty-six. The years of army service had told heavily upon the health of Brother Bell, and all of his campaigning while in the South was done despite increasing conditions of illness. The regiment was reorganized while at Murfreesboro, in February, 1863, and Bell's broken health compelled his resignation at that time. This became effective on June 7, 1863.



His heroism as colonel in command of his regiment at the Battle of Murfreesboro is a part of one of the great records of the war, and won honorable mention in the official reports of the battle. His years of army service, however, had told heavily upon the health of Brother Bell, and the entire campaign which culminated at Murfreesboro was carried on against increasing conditions of illness. The regiment was reorganized following that battle, in February, 1863, and Bell's broken health compelled his resignation at that time. This became effective on June 7, 1863. Weakened in body but never in spirit, Colonel Bell returned to civil life, and to continuing patriotic endeavors in Ohio. Until his death he always preferred the title of "Major," which was his last rank actually attained and exercised in the service prior to his final action at Murfreesboro.



*Confederate Monument at
Murfreesboro, Tennessee*

Following the war, Founder Bell re-entered the educational field, as a teacher in the public schools of Nobles County, Minnesota. From 1872 to 1877 he was a county superintendent of schools. There was a period of official and journalistic labors as registrar of deeds for Noble County, 1873—1877, and editor and publisher of *The Journal*, of Worthington, Minnesota, 1878—1885. In the latter year he entered upon the successive presidencies of institutions which so fittingly crowned his life as an educator: President of Philomath College, 1885—1886; Principal of La Creole Academy, Dallas, Oregon, 1887—1892; President of the Central Oregon State Normal School, 1892—1896. These responsible offices were filled by Professor Bell, as he was then best known, with high credit to himself as teacher, administrator, and public leader. Something may here be said of Thomas Cowan Bell's work as an

educator, and as to those qualities of learning for which he will ever be honored in Sigma Chi. A marked quality of his educational work was the way in which he attracted and influenced the young men and women of his classes. One who knew his work well has described him thus:

He was a superb teacher. His discipline in school, college or academy was, I think, after the same fashion as that of his army life. It was the magnetic difference between a leader and a martinet. Yet the smallest infraction of rules or propriety brought immediate and distinct correction. His power over the typical bad boy or nearly grown youth was peculiar. He appeared to grapple them mysteriously to himself with hooks of steel. It is good to know that some of these almost despaired of boys are now officers of high rank in our army and many of them in civil life are holding honorable positions.

It was a pleasure to visit one of his large classes during recitation. Faces which had seemed dull and stolid in the weeks before had taken upon them now a new light, a beautiful, awakened attention, and throughout the class there was a general expression of confidence, initiative and freedom. It would be hard briefly to explain the insight his students gained, through daily contact with his personality and teaching, into the real meaning of world events and real character. Historical characters came to be real flesh and blood, events things of human passion, heroism of ambition. Yet with his sort of incidental and ethical teaching, there was no lack of "getting down to business" in his classes, and there they were definitely fitted for practical life.⁶

He was a lover of good order and of an attractive appearance for the schoolrooms and grounds where he taught, and also for these as a community asset in connection with all the homes, streets, parks, and public buildings. Often, his students were enlisted for these objectives, and school awards which had been given over to roughness and weeds were transformed into beauty and order. In one instance an entire community was inspired to a new ideal of municipal comeliness by his example and tactful public suggestions. He was one of the first, if not the first, among school superintendents in the West to institute the fire drill for pupils, this being during the years of his educational work in Oregon.

Other qualities of that lovable character must here be recorded. He was a great lover of little children, of nature, and of music. Beautiful are the memories of the children of his own home, and also those of neighbors

⁶ Source unknown. Dr. Nate made the notation in his manuscript that the source would have to be located.

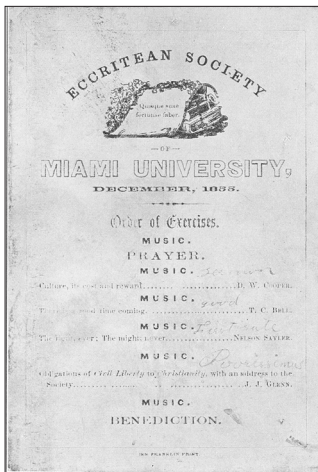
and friends, of his joy in sharing in their playtimes, and of the contributions which he added of story, and songs, and games, and it was so even until his closing years. It was not widely known in Sigma Chi that Major Bell was the possessor of a fine baritone voice, and was well trained in music. The popular old ballads were ever in his memory, and later years the brave songs of the Civil War, and then those of the *Songbook* of Sigma Chi. Both little folks and their elders delighted in his singing of old Virginia folk-songs of his family, and such famous ballads as “The Low-Back Car,” “Twickenham Ferry,”⁷ “Edinboro Town,” “Flow Gently Sweet Afton,”⁸ singing “le Marseillaise” in French and other numbers such as made home-life lovely in his day.

Again, the love of nature, God’s world about him, permeated his whole being. After his removal to the beautiful Bay Region at San Francisco in 1907, the glories of the views of mountain, ocean, and sky were his constant delight. So, also, were the pursuits of horticulture a joy of those later years. There he cultivated the many fruits which flourish in that favored climate, and enjoyed to the full the quiet surroundings of his beautiful home. In a characteristic letter to the author of this *History*,⁹ of July 28, 1914, he described these pursuits and said, “I have somewhat extensive premises—apple, pear, peach, plum, apricot, cherry, and English

walnut trees—and a buckeye which is from seed which I procured at my old home in Shelby County, Ohio. Did you ever notice that the limbs of the buckeye tree start on opposite sides, cruciform—fit symbol for Sigma Chi!” On one of the last days of his life, he called the family into the garden to marvel with him in the glory of the clouds in their formation and coloring as they floated out above the Golden Gate.

There was an emphasis upon literary work in the old-time college in which the whole student body shared. At Miami University all of the Founders were proficient in such work, and each made distinctive records. The rich accomplishments of Thomas Cowan Bell, however, especially in the realm of English

literature and in the classics, made him something of a mentor among them all in this domain. His literary productions were always scholarly.



Cooper and Bell were elected as orators for the Eccritean Literary Society, 1855.

7 Written in 1878 by Theophile-Jules-Henri “Theo” Marzials.

8 Music written by Alexander Hume, poem by Robert Burns. The tune is used also for the Christmas carol “Away in a Manger.”

9 Dr. Nate.

His letters written to the other early chapters reveal the literary riches of his mind even in college, and his personal contributions of volumes to the chapter library of old Alpha were among its choicest treasures. His mind was a storehouse of the finest things in English speech. [Thomas] Gray's "Elegy," "The Chambered Nautilus,"¹⁰ "Thanatopsis,"¹¹ favorite Psalms, and quotations from the Latin classics were instantly at his command as long as he lived. The volumes nearest at hand in his very last days were those of his beloved Oliver Wendell Holmes.

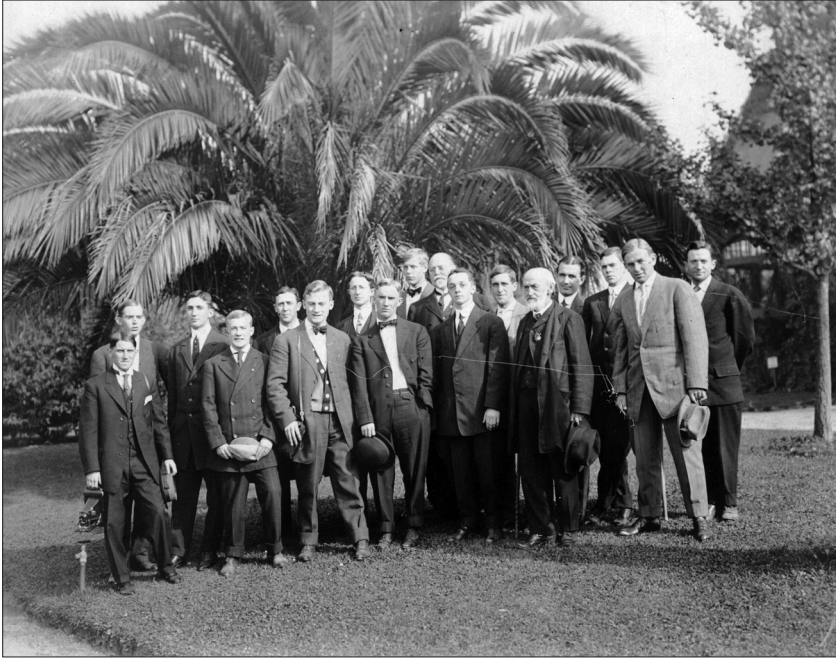
One of the good offices of Founder Runkle while he was Grand Consul, 1895—1897, was to communicate to the three other Founders then surviving, Bell, Caldwell, and Cooper, news of the Fraternity and of its great progress since any of the four had been actively associated with its affairs. He also prepared biographies of the other three for the *Quarterly* in order that the Fraternity itself might better know the men who had founded it. Founder Bell had then retired for the time from his active educational work in Oregon and was living at Portland. When the fiftieth anniversary of the Fraternity was celebrated at Cincinnati and Oxford, Ohio, June 27—30, 1905, the four surviving Founders, Bell, Runkle, Caldwell, and Cooper, met after the separations of half a century amid the surroundings of their college days. The throng of younger men present could observe, but perhaps not comprehend, the joy of the four in that reunion. And, be it said, the spirit of none was younger amid the bright sunshine of the undying Anniversary Day at Miami than was that of Thomas Cowan Bell. His personal response to the greetings then extended to the Founders was a classic utterance characterized by a dignity worthy of the occasion, while including a vein of humor which was often revealed in the writings and addresses of Brother Bell. He said, in part:

The elements of success of Sigma Chi are: First, beauty. Nothing among badges of fraternities equals ours as a thing of beauty. Second, loyalty—there is the "grip" that holds. Third, there is brotherhood. And, Fourth, there is equality. . . Only such institutions as are founded on good principles survive . . . I am an optimist. I believe that the world is growing better day by day. May we so live and labor that it may be said of each of us, that the world is better for his having lived.

The first chapter in the farthest Northwest, the Upsilon Upsilon, University of Washington, was established in 1903. It was visited by Founder Bell, then still residing in Portland, Oregon, on November 4 and 5, 1905. It was an initiation occasion at which Paul K. McMillin, son of Past

10 Oliver Wendell Holmes

11 William Cullen Bryant.



Founder Bell on one of his visits to an undergraduate chapter.

Grand Consul John S. McMillin, Xi, DePauw '76, was among the initiates, and his father was also among the honored guests. The Oregon chapters were not yet established, and there were not many further opportunities for renewals of his contacts with the Fraternity until his removal to Fruitvale, California, in 1907. Thenceforth, his associations with the active and alumni chapters of the Golden State, and especially with those of San Francisco, were to be many and happy.

It was not long until Sigma Chi, which had so claimed the loyalty of his earlier manhood, again became the great joy and passion of his life. The reunions of Sigma Chi in San Francisco always counted upon his presence. At such times the younger men in the Alpha Beta at Berkeley and the Alpha Omega at Stanford gathered from his inspiring utterances the high ideals in which the Fraternity was founded. A memorable meeting of the kind was a dinner of the San Francisco Alumni Chapter on September 7, 1908. On that occasion the plan for the Founders' Memorial House at Miami was presented by Grand Consul Charles Alling, Jr., Chi, Hanover '85, and Theta Theta, Michigan '88, and Past Grand Consul Joseph C. Nate, Alpha Iota '90, who were then making their trip to the Pacific Coast in the interest of that project. The visitors also explained the place which the Founders would thereafter have in the new *Ritual* of the Fraternity as then undergoing the revision completed in 1909. Brother Bell, as he made

the closing address of the night, was profoundly moved by the appreciation thus expressed. Imagination must picture the scene as he closed with a broken, "God bless you all, my dear boys!" It was an hour of benediction, long to remain a memory for those who were present.



Founder Bell in 1910.

Brother Bell had anticipated making the trip to Oxford, Ohio, in 1913, for the Thirty-first Grand Chapter and the dedication of the Founders' Memorial House, but was prevented by the conditions of advancing years. His words of greeting sent to the gathering, as upon many other such occasions of recent years are worthy of preservation in the literary annals of the Fraternity. Nothing could surpass his joy when it was determined that the succeeding Grand Chapter, of 1915, would meet in his own Golden West and even near his own home, at Berkeley. He followed the deliberations of that gathering with the

same care and appreciation which doubtless had characterized him when, in young manhood, he was one of the little group which constituted the First Grand Chapter of Sigma Chi at Cincinnati in 1857. Equally were the social features of the convention a joy to him. Upon being presented at the Grand Chapter banquet on the night of August 5 he was given an ovation, and his response to the toast was a realization of the theme assigned him from *Hamlet*: "Forty thousand brothers could not, with all their quantity of love, make up my sum."¹²

During the few remaining years, failing health largely prevented Brother Bell from participation in Fraternity events. His home, however, became increasingly a Mecca for active and alumni members in the West, who frequently brought him greetings and received from him good cheer. Charles E. Townsend, Alpha Beta, California, '86, long a leader for Sigma Chi on the Pacific Coast, was the fairly near neighbor of Brother Bell, residing in the Bay city of Piedmont. Through all the years he was unfailing in his visits and attentions to Major and Mrs. Bell, and often his personal escort for Sigma Chi events. During the World War, Brother Townsend made it a point to bring to the Bell home our Sigma Chis who had enlisted for service in that war, and for whom San Francisco became a stopping place. They were youths who were renewing the experiences which had been Major Bell's own at the opening of the Civil War, and his greetings for them were ever warmly affectionate. In those months, also, and until the end he renewed the great memories of his own army experiences, and related thrilling incidents of camp and battle. Among Sigma Chis he often spoke of the first reunions of our members of the North and South after the

¹² Act V, scene 1, line 272.

Civil War, at the Sixth Grand Chapter at Washington, 1866, and referred to it as the greatest national event of the time, as he believed, because of its influences then set in motion among the college men of North and South.


In those last years, also he came to cherish in a very deep way the memories of the other Founders, and to rejoice in the messages which would come to him from them, from Runkle until his death on the birthday of the Fraternity, June 28, 1916, and from Doctor Cooper, who alone was to survive him. Almost his happiest days were those which brought the successive issues of the *Sigma Chi Quarterly* to his home. When only "Brother Dan," as he called him, was left of the seven, Bell spoke of him often and of the influence of his fine Christian character among them all at Miami. Ever in sight from his favorite corner for rest, reading, and a study was the large photograph of Caldwell, Cooper, Runkle, and himself which had been taken at the Semi-Centennial of the Fraternity at Cincinnati-Oxford in 1905. After he passed on, Mrs. Bell wrote of those last years: "When he thought of Sigma Chi, *he wondered*. The great, noble Fraternity had become to him a miracle. And so it is to those of us who loved him best; a divine miracle of loyalty and love, which kept his spirit uplifted and comforted in all his fading years."

Those later years, at Fruitvale, on San Francisco Bay, were saddened by the death in 1916 of the gifted son of Major and Mrs. Bell, when just in his prime and in the midst of a brilliant and steadily building record as a lawyer at Portland, Oregon, and later San Francisco. It was definitely observed that in the times of depression which followed this loss, the associations of Sigma Chi, and perhaps especially with its younger members, came to mean more to him than ever. It was though he was transferring to those groups of younger men coming on for their life work, something of that same affection and inspiration with which he had been privileged to enrich and guide the life of his own boy, and the other young people of the home.

On the night of February 2, 1919, Founder Bell attended the mid-year initiation event of Alpha Beta at the Chapter House in Berkeley, and was in unusually good health and spirits. As the evening passed he complained of some faintness and several of the alumni and active members accompanied him home, and into the house, to make sure that all was well with him. So it seemed to be, as he sat quietly by the fireside, in quiet conversation about the ceremonies of the evening. In the morning he was found still peacefully asleep, and an hour or so later, in the glory of the golden sunshine, his spirit fled. Two days later, the service "In Memoriam" of Sigma Chi was rendered at his funeral by members of the San Francisco Alumni Chapter and active members of Alpha Beta. There was also given the impressive service of the Grand Army of the Republic. Then all these

comrades of the years, and his surviving dear ones found their way from the quiet place, leaving him at rest among the banks of flowers, near him a great, fragrant White Cross of Sigma Chi, and white roses, the gift of Alpha Beta, and with the colors of his country on his breast.

Brother Bell was married following his graduation at Miami to Miss Sigourney White, one of the Oxford girls of the old Alpha days, and a devoted friend of early Sigma Chi. Her death occurred in the early years of the Civil War. At the close of the war, in 1865, he was married to Miss Lucia Chase.¹³ It was the founding of a home which was to continue through long years of bright and happy content. The children of the home were five sons and two daughters.

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EXECUTIVE SECRETARY SIGMA CHI FRATERNITY 208 SOUTH LA SALLE ST
CHICAGO ILL

MAJOR THOMAS COWAN BELL FOUNDER DIED EIGHT THIRTY OCLOCK THIS
MORNING YESTERDAY HE ATTENDED ALPHA BETA INITIATION IN GOOD
SPIRITS AND HEALTH HIS PASSING WAS PEACEFUL AND SERENE
FUNERAL PROBABLY WEDNESDAY OR THURSDAY

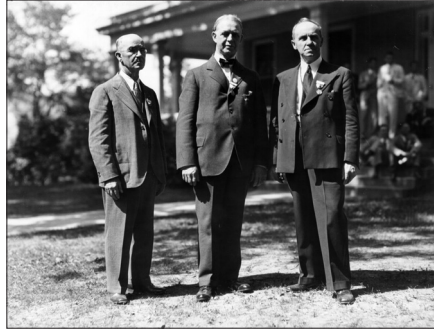
CHAS E TOWNSEND.

Notice that Founder Bell had passed to the Chapter Eternal, February 3, 1919.

One of the fine, abiding stories of Sigma Chi, and of Founder Bell, relates to the son, Donald J. Bell. When the Diamond Jubilee of the Fraternity was celebrated at Oxford, Ohio, on June 27 and 28, 1930, it was known that Mr. Bell and William L. Lockwood of New York City, surviving son of Founder Lockwood, were both college men, but not members of

¹³ Lucia Chase Bell was a writer of some renown. Two of her works were published in 1910: "Obil, Keeper of the Camels, Being the Parable of the Man Whom the Disciples Saw Casting out Devils" and "Slumber Sea Chanteys," both probably books for children. The American Bookseller lists Mrs. Lillie's "Story of English Literature for Young People" and "True Blue" by Mrs. Lucia Chase Bell (Sept 2, 1878, 245). Two short stories by Mrs. Bell are "Little Cissy McGlorian's Surprise Party: Part 2" and "The Little Left-over Doll."

a college fraternity. The national rule of Sigma Chi as to honorary membership had been established, but a consistent plan was developed by which the initiation of the two into Sigma Chi was made possible as recognized worthy exceptions to the established usage. On the Seventy-fifth Anniversary Eve and upon the campus which their fathers had known in youth, they were initiated together into the Fraternity as members and alumni of Alpha, the chapter of their fathers. Grand



Sons of Founders and Brothers! Left to Right: James G. Cooper; Ohio Wesleyan 1902, Donald J. Bell, Miami (Ohio) 1930, and William L. Lockwood, Miami (Ohio) 1930.

Consul A. P. Thomson, Alpha Upsilon, Southern California, '97, presided at the ceremony, and was assisted by other Grand Officers and members of Alpha Chapter, as related in the story of the Diamond Jubilee at Miami.

During these years intervening since the death of Founder Bell, also, the entire Fraternity came to know of the literary gifts of Mrs. Lucia Chase Bell, the widow of the Founder. Her letters appeared from time to time in the *Magazine*, being her gracious responses to greetings sent to her by Grand Chapters and other gatherings, or acknowledgements of *History* volumes which recounted the stories of Major Bell and the other Founders and of Sigma Chi from the beginning. So beautiful was her insight into all the ideals and purposes of Sigma Chi, as thus revealed, that a special plan for a message from her was developed in connection with the Thirty-ninth Grand Chapter which met at Portland, Oregon, June 26—29, 1929. The city had been the home of the Bells for many years, and in Oregon she had long shared in the work of her husband as a teacher and college administrator. In the records of that Grand Chapter may be found the poem which she sent, entitled "Sigma Chi—Today and Yesterday." Inspiringly, it gathered up the memories of the seventy-four years since the founding, and bespoke the greater tomorrow.

