

# DANIEL WILLIAM COOPER

*Joseph C. Nate*<sup>1</sup>

Daniel W. Cooper was the oldest of the seven founders of Sigma Chi. Born in Wayne Township in Knox County, Ohio, on September 2, 1830, he was in his twenty-fifth year when on June 28, 1855, the seven raised the banner of the White Cross at Miami University. He was one of the five sophomores who became members of the Miami chapter of Delta



*Birthplace of Founder Cooper  
Knox County, Ohio*

Kappa Epsilon in the fall of 1854, and, with Scobey, sixth of their group, refused to follow the chapter mandate as to their voting in the Erodelphian Society elections. Cooper, Jordan, Bell, and Runkle, all of the Miami Class of 1857, joined ΔKE early in the fall of 1854, Scobey having been initiated into the chapter in the year preceding. Lockwood, the seventh Founder of Sigma Chi, joined the group after the division in ΔKE.

The principle of action which governed all of the six was of a nature to weigh especially with Brother Cooper. More mature in years than the others, of sturdy religious training and a student for the ministry of his church, his alignment among the six perhaps reflected more fully his convictions for liberty of thought and action of the individual as against the



*Founder Cooper's boyhood  
grade school in Ohio.*

dictates of organization than the influence of active comradeship with his younger associates.

The parents of Brother Cooper were among the early settlers of Ohio, having come from New Jersey. The boy's early educational training was in the district schools and in the higher classes offered at Fredericktown, a few miles from his home. After teaching in the district school for several terms, he attended a preparatory school at Haysville, Ohio, following which he entered Miami University.

Among the seven who founded Sigma Chi, Brother Cooper held a place distinctly his own. Steady and sturdy by nature, and somewhat older than themselves, his colleagues came to call him "Old Dan." The name was a mark of their confidence and affection, due to his mature character,

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<sup>1</sup> Unpublished. Cooper's biography would be included in Vol. VII of *The History of Sigma Chi*.

reliable, upright, and kindly. As Isaac M. Jordan expressed it in his address at the first formal reunion and banquet of the Theta (Cincinnati) Alumni Chapter, December 22, 1881, in response to the toast "Early Recollections of our Fraternity", referring to the place held by Brother Cooper among his associates: "Cooper was a noble fellow. He was so manly I can hardly think he ever was a boy."

Another classmate, Benjamin P. Runkle, once said, though doubtless with unduly modest disclaimer for himself and the others, that as for the moral and spiritual foundations upon which the Fraternity is based, the quiet influence of Cooper was equal to that of all his associates together. "He was the Rock of Chicamauga, the sheet-anchor of the infant order." There is more than one suggestion among the tributes to Cooper by his fellow Founders of Sigma Chi, that it is difficult to account fully for his dominating spirit and influence in the early chapter. But this, Runkle seems to explain when he further said:

The little band was, if possible, over-stocked with physical courage, nervous energy, and the over-leaping ambition to place the White Cross high in the heavens. Cooper was calm, quiet, earnest, true, conscientious and faithful. He was as the shadow of St. Peter passing by. We all sought him in his modest quarters, and no one came away without better resolutions and stronger hopes. Many an hour did I pass in his room, and every minute was a benediction. Brother Cooper, in those days, though rich in spirit was poor in worldly goods, and his life and work contain a priceless lesson for such of us as think that the end of life is the attainment of material riches and worldly power. .... Different from every one of us, he walked among us honored, loved, looked-up to with perfect confidence. By common consent he was the head of the chapter, and no one thought of displacing him.<sup>2</sup>

At the first election of officers in the Alpha Chapter of Sigma Chi, Daniel W. Cooper was the spontaneous choice as the first presiding officer, or Grand Archocn, as the office was known in the original form of the Constitution and Ritual. The title was of the series adopted at the outset, under the name "Sigma Phi." The new working order with revised Constitution and the name Sigma Chi, and the title "Consul Primus," came into effect early in February, 1856. At the second election of officers for Alpha, on January 30, 1856, Isaac M. Jordan succeeded Brother Cooper as presiding officer for the ensuing term. But in the next college year, 1856-1857, Brother Cooper, then in his senior year, was again made head of the

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<sup>2</sup> An address at the banquet of the 31st Grand Chapter in Oxford, Ohio, August 9, 1913.

chapter, to guide its affairs until his graduation. Varying statements as to the foregoing titles, elections, etc., in later public addresses or writings of the Founders, are due to the uncertain memory of the exact events after the lapse of years.

Unconsciously, he was the influential head of the chapter, and during most of the two years was its actual presiding officer. In the reverent nature of Cooper, the selection of the White Cross as the badge of the new Fraternity met with a deep response, and as the official head of the chapter he steadily held the younger men to its highest meanings. In Sigma Chi, as perhaps in all of the Greek-letter chapters at Miami there were some infractions of the strict rules of the college against "attending upon the public dancing-schools and dances, theatrical exhibitions, taverns, gaming, horse-races, and the places of similar resort," which held open door for the susceptible student of the fifties. A member of old Alpha has related that after an episode which found some of their number forgetful of these rules, Cooper sternly charged the chapter: "If you will go where you ought not to go, *leave off the badge*." And the seriousness of the admonition was never forgotten.

The sole remaining badge of the original bearing the letters "ΣΦ" is his own, treasured and preserved through all the years. To Cooper, more largely than any other, is to be ascribed the birth and early growth of a kindly and generous spirit among the Founders which served rapidly to heal the breach between themselves and their former associates in Delta Kappa Epsilon. It was one of the interesting conditions of the time that, as the men who had so positively differed at the founding of Sigma Chi came to their graduations in Miami, it was with a re-established spirit of comity, courtesy, and good will which deepened with the after years.

After his graduation from Miami with the class of 1857, Brother Cooper entered the Western Theological Seminary at Allegheny City, Pennsylvania, completing his course in that institution with the class of 1859. He was licensed by the Richland Presbytery in 1858 and ordained by that body in 1859. His first pastorate was at Olivesboro, Ohio, where he served for seven years. He next had charge successively of the Presbyterian church at Ottawa, Ohio, from 1865 to 1872, and of that at West Point, Indiana, from 1872 to 1878. During the next four years he was in special missionary service of his church. In 1882, Dr. Cooper entered upon his conspicuously successful pastorate of the First Presbyterian



*First Presbyterian Church at McComb, Ohio  
as it looks in 2009*

Church of McComb, Ohio, a ministry of ten years,<sup>3</sup> closing in 1891. In 1872 Dr. Cooper received from his presbytery the honor of representing it at the General Assembly of the Presbyterian denomination held at Detroit that year. This distinction was again accorded him in connection with the Presbyterian General Assembly which met at Cincinnati in 1885. The honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred upon him by Miami University, his *alma mater*, in 1914. Following the McComb pastorate the active ministerial work of Brother Cooper was interrupted by seriously impaired health, which led to a residence of some years in the South. His health did not permit a renewal of the labors of the pastorate, and Brother Cooper thereafter gave himself to literary pursuits and the privileges of a well-earned retirement. Returning to Ohio from the South in the later



*Home in Marion, Ohio*

nineties, he resided at McComb, Ohio, until 1915, when he removed to Marion, Ohio, where his home was with his son, James G. Cooper, Gamma '02.

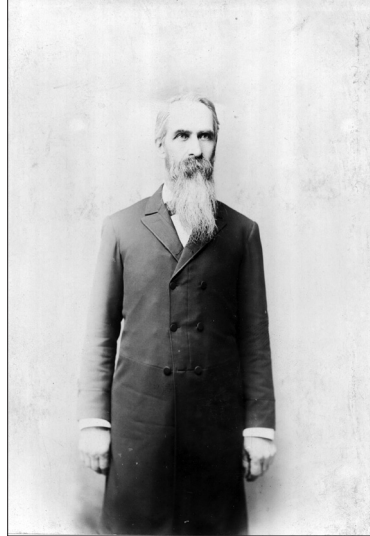
It was in connection with the semi-centennial celebration of Sigma Chi, at Oxford, Ohio, in 1905, that the Fraternity first realized its wealth of privilege and opportunity in the fact that four of its Founders then survived, all of whom could bring fresh currents of inspiration from the past for the rapidly developing tides of new life in Sigma Chi. The coming to that celebration of Brothers Bell, Caldwell, Cooper, and Runkle marked an epoch historically in the Fraternity. It was a glorious reunion for the four. And for the half-thousand men present, young and old, of the fraternity they had founded, the occasion furnished a new revelation of the faithfulness and of the enduring work wrought by these men in the early days of the White Cross. Among the fine inspirations of the occasion were the responses of the four at the semi-centennial exercises in Bishop Chapel at Miami University, at Oxford. Characteristically, Dr. Cooper found a fitting analogy of the situation in a lesson from the Bible:

“As Jacob of old, in early youth, setting out to make his fortune, crossed the Jordan with no possession but a staff, but at length, after many years returned with great abundance of what constituted the riches of that day; so we, the seven without even a staff, left our *alma mater*, and lo! we return today, rich, not in

<sup>3</sup> N.B. This church is still standing and used for worship. It was organized in 1848 and chartered in 1854. On an historical marker 9-32 at church, posted in 1984, are these words: “The oldest Presbyterian church building in continuous use in Hancock County, the sanctuary was constructed in 1855-56. Members of the congregation included first Congressional Medal of Honor recipients John R. Porter and William Bennsinger, honored for their exploits as members of Andrews Raiders during the Civil War.”

flocks and herds, but in the inconceivably higher, better riches of enlightened, earnest manhood and brotherhood.”

With the semi-centennial celebration it became the established plan of the Fraternity that every national gathering should be honored and strengthened by the presence of the surviving Founders as long as any of them should remain among us. Many of the finest incidents and most inspiring communications for later Grand Chapters Resulted from this custom. When unable to attend in person, the messages of the Founders have regularly been sent to inspire these gatherings. For such purposes, under the processes of administration at Fraternity headquarters, the surviving Founders of Sigma Chi were regularly kept informed of significant events in the affairs of the order. Among the veritable literary and historical treasures of Sigma Chi are messages written under such circumstances by Dr. Cooper. They have had the quality which he alone fully exemplified among the Founders, of a prophetic utterance which was rightfully his as a minister of God. At the Twenty-ninth Grand Chapter at Chicago, 1909, Brothers Cooper and Runkle were the honored guests. The response of the former at the Convention banquet struck a lofty note of the noblest meanings of Sigma Chi as a brotherhood:



*Founder Cooper about the time of the  
1905 Semi-Centennial Celebration*

Brothers, you wear the cross, that emblem to me above all things the most worthy of reverence and love. See to it that you never do aught to dishonor it. Let your character be as pure and white as the enamel of which it is composed. Let your every word and deed be as rich and golden as the gold that surrounds and ornaments it.

It never became possible after 1905 for the four Founders of Sigma Chi who had so graced and honored the semi-centennial convention all to meet together again. The expectation that there would be another such reunion at the dedication of the Founder's Memorial House at Oxford, on June 28, 1913, was prevented by the death, shortly before, of Brother

James P. Caldwell and by the distance of the journey for Brother Thomas C. Bell. But Brothers Cooper and Runkle were there, and the words of each in appreciation of the memorial were most worthy of the occasion. Brother Cooper spoke especially to the younger men, upon the new Ritual in use since 1909, relations of comity with other Greeks, and like themes:

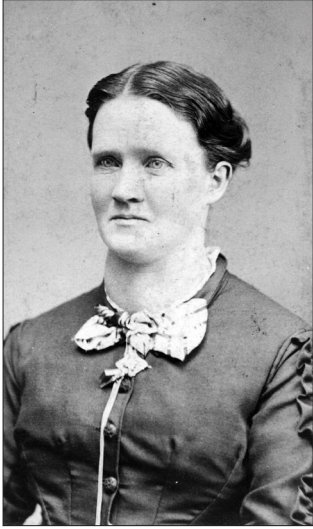
“It has been my privilege here to be present at the initiation of a candidate into our Fraternity and listen to the beautiful, instructive, and inspiring words of our Ritual, bringing to the mind of the initiate only what is elevating and ennobling, teaching him to seek the highest degree of manhood capable of being attained. I trust that this grand ceremony will never be belittled or disgraced by any unbecoming ‘stunts’ or low, mean performances which endanger limb, life, or morals. It is too good and splendid to be mingled with anything low or debasing, and I trust that everyone entering our Fraternity will feel it to be his duty and obligation to exemplify its teachings in his life. . . And, while there must, of necessity, be partitions or walls between the different fraternities and orders, they should not be so high that we hurt our elbows in shaking hands over them. . .

“From some journeys we may return to cross again its threshold and rejoice in the pleasures of the home from which we set out, but in the journey of life there is no return. Each day is a step forward, and each year sets a milestone farther on toward that bourne from which there is no return. Ah, yes! old age is inexorable. But while those who became the Founders are near our journey’s end and must soon go the way of all the earth, we rejoice that as we leave other interests to the safe keeping of those who will cherish them, so we can leave those of Sigma Chi in the hands and minds and hearts of those who will watch over them with zealous care.”

Dr. Cooper was married on October 6, 1859, at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to Miss Jane Skinner, daughter of George Skinner, Esq., of that city. Mrs. Cooper died some years previous to him, and three of their children passed away in earlier years. Two sons, James G. Cooper, Gamma ’02, and H. Boyd Cooper, and their daughter, Sarah Jane Cooper outlived Dr. Cooper. The latter was the companion of her father in all his later pilgrimages to the general gatherings of the Fraternity, winning the encomiums of the brotherhood for the care and devotion which made the journeys possible.

The later years of Dr. Cooper, in ripe old age, were those of peace and beauty. The serene light of his life in the eighties realized the ideal of



*Jane Cooper*

Wordsworth of “an old age serene and bright,  
And lovely as a Lapland night.”<sup>4</sup>

The death of Thomas C. Bell occurred on February 3, 1919, and left Brother Cooper as the last of the seven Founders. The death of Bell was a peculiarly sad one for the aged survivor of the seven. In the Miami days Bell was probably the most intimate in fraternal association with him. And as Founder Cooper yet lingered in the quiet of a deepening twilight, all the goodness of the years gone by, all the fealty to the Cross he had so long served and honored, radiated out from the Marion home to “the boys” of nearly fourscore chapters and among their alumni in all the lands of earth.

And brave Dan Cooper, the man of God,  
Who walked in the ways that the prophets trod,  
Upright and manly, fearless and true,  
A Christian gentleman through and through,  
A comrade in joy, a friend in distress,  
A preacher of God and His righteousness.  
As Olaf, the king, held high his sword,  
To Beersaker chiefs 'round Christmas board,  
So brave “Old Dan” counts the gain and the loss,  
And holds heart and soul by the great White Cross.<sup>5</sup>

Founder Cooper, last survivor of the seven Founders died at his home at Marion, Ohio, on December 11, 1920. He was in his ninety-first year. Brother Cooper had been in his usual health until a short time before his final illness. During the past summer he had pursued his customary activities about the little city of Marion, honored and loved by neighbors and many friends as he quietly came and went upon the streets, with a constant interest in all its public affairs.

A favorite pilgrimage was the mile walk from the home of himself and children, James G. Cooper, H. Boyd Cooper, and Miss Sarah Cooper, to the residence of Senator Warren G. Harding upon the occasions when visiting delegations were addressed by the Senator upon the issues of the

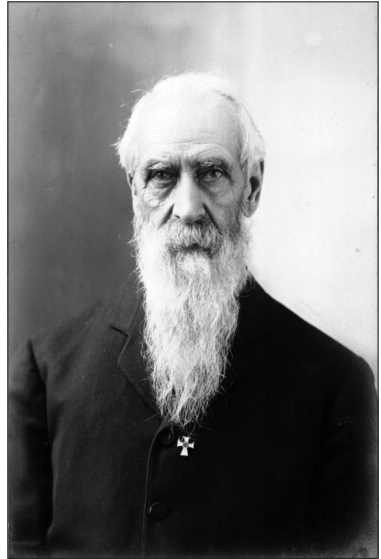
<sup>4</sup> William Wordsworth, “To a Young Lady.”

<sup>5</sup> From the poem “Summer Days of '56 at Old Miami,” written in honor of his fellow-founders of the Fraternity by Benjamin P. Runkle, and read at the Twenty-second Grand Chapter, Cincinnati, Ohio, July 25, 1895.

national presidential campaign. The many delegations which visited the home of President-elect Harding at Marion during the national campaign of the previous summer, together with representatives of the press, included numerous Sigma Chis. Such visitors, while in the city, frequently paid their respects to Founder Cooper, and were always inspired by his kindly greetings and inquiries as to their own work, former chapters, etc. Executive Committee Chairman John Weaver, Lambda '98, especially recalled the keen interest in the present welfare and progress of the Fraternity expressed by Brother Cooper, during such visits of Brother Weaver at Marion.

On Tuesday night, December 7, Brother Cooper was poorly, and was thereafter confined to his bed until his death on Saturday morning, December 11. There was no suffering, just a gradual weakening, and the final hours so beautifully peaceful that his loved ones about him scarcely knew when the end came.

It was the privilege of Sigma Chi to offer homage upon the passing of the last of the Founders in ways that had not been possible with those of the seven who had gone before. This, especially, under the circumstances by which the funeral



*Founder Daniel William Cooper at the time of his death in 1920.*

services at Marion were followed by a gurney with the precious remains to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, for the final internment at the Allegheny Cemetery, Pittsburgh, where rest also the wife and three previously deceased children of Dr. Cooper. Brother James G. Cooper thoughtfully notified the officers of the Fraternity of his father's death, and by Saturday night all plans were complete for such offices of co-operation as Sigma Chi or any of her chapters could render in the plans of the family. The funeral services at Marion were held at the residence, 468 Delaware Avenue, on Sunday afternoon, the Rev. Dr. L. L. Strock of the Presbyterian Church officiating. The entire membership of the Gamma Chapter came from Delaware for the services, and six of their number acted as pallbearers. Later that same evening the members of Alpha Gamma chapter, with local alumni, met the funeral party at the railway station in Columbus, and assisted in making the change of trains en route to Pittsburgh. The circumstances attending the funeral services in the latter city, at the beautiful new chapter house of Beta Theta chapter and at the cemetery, are best stated in the words of then Grand





*Brothers of Gamma Chapter from Ohio Wesleyan University acted as pallbearers at Founder Cooper's funeral on December 13, 1920*

Trustee Joseph T. Miller, Beta '93, for whose own painstaking care of all the final arrangements at Pittsburgh, the Fraternity was greatly indebted. It was indeed an unusual thing that to one of the youngest chapters in the Fraternity should come the opportunity to render its tribute of appreciation to one who had made their being possible, and to give to one of our great Founders that honor, respect, love, and devotion which were so manifest in this instance. Every man was impressed to the highest degree with the privilege that had fallen to the lot of Beta Theta chapter, that it was theirs to do honor and to pay the last tribute to such a man.

On December 13, 1920, in the darkness and gloom of the early morning in a great industrial center, the body of Daniel William Cooper, the last of the seven Founders of the Sigma Chi Fraternity, reached Pittsburgh. The funeral party was met at the Union Station by a committee of the Beta Theta chapter of the University of Pittsburgh, whose members were Donald E. Walker, Consul, Ralph C. Schlegel, J. F. Regis Toomey, and by Joseph T. Miller, Chairman of the Board of Grand Trustees, representing the Grand Officers.

From the Station the body was conveyed with loving care to the house of Beta Theta chapter at 153 North Dithridge Street, Pittsburgh, where from eight o'clock in the morning until three o'clock in the afternoon it lay in state beneath the tablet dedicated by the men of Beta Theta to the memory of those of their brothers who made the supreme sacrifice in the

world war. In this room, made a bower of floral beauty, the body rested, guarded by ten men who had only recently pledged their faith, honor, and lives to Sigma Chi. The tributes of flowers were many, and among them rested our own beloved brother, a monarch in his sphere, a man born to command and to serve, the dignity of a king in his person, and the peace of God in his countenance.

The services at three o'clock on Monday afternoon were in charge of the Rev. Robert Nelson Meade, Mu Mu '00, and the Rev. John Arndt Yount, Tau '01. The *Service in Memoriam* of the Fraternity was followed as appearing in the Ritual. As the words, "When thou art in tribulation, if thou turn to the Lord, thy God, He will not forsake thee nor forget the covenant of thy fathers" were spoken, followed by the Twenty-third Psalm, the significance, the sanctity, and the privilege of the occasion were deeply impressed upon every hearer.

The Ritual service was conducted by Dr. Meade. The central events of the life and career of Brother Cooper were recounted by Dr. Yount. The formal address of the occasion was delivered by the Rev. Dr. Samuel B. McCormick, Chancellor of the University of Pittsburgh, and a brother minister with Founder Cooper in the Presbyterian faith. The able and high character of the utterance of Chancellor McCormick was greatly appreciated by all present, the theme being the value to society of the life and works of such a man as Daniel W. Cooper.

Founder Cooper wore his original Sigma Phi badge from June 28, 1855, the first day the badges were worn in public, and on through 65 years of his life with the same unswerving veneration for its meaning, often attesting to it at Sigma Chi gatherings and in his writings. At the time of Founder Cooper's death, the original Sigma Phi badge, the only remaining of the original seven badges, was pinned on his coat throughout his funeral services. The chapter organized a special memorial to the seven Founders and the planting of seven oak trees in the back yard of the property.

It was agreed, in consultation with the Cooper family, that the Sigma Phi badge should be removed and preserved for the Fraternity. A light lunch was served for those in attendance at the chapter house. In the early afternoon the chapter organized a fitting service during which Consul Don Walker removed the Sigma Phi badge, replacing it with his own badge. Brother Walker then presented the Cooper badge to Joseph T. Miller who in turn gave it to the General Fraternity for safekeeping.

Brother Walker believed that in removing the badge, he was acting for the entire active chapter, and it was he who realized how great a loss Sigma Chi would sustain if the badge had been buried with Founder Cooper. The Cooper badge is the most significant historical treasure of the Fraternity. Soon after the passing of Founder Cooper, it became the symbol

of the office of Grand Consul, and is pinned on the new Grand Consul, during the Grand Chapter installation of officers.

Specially selected music was rendered by a leading city quartet of male voices. The numbers were Dr. Washington Galdden's hymn, "O, Master, Let Me Walk with Thee," and "Jerusalem the Golden," the latter a favorite of Brother Cooper.

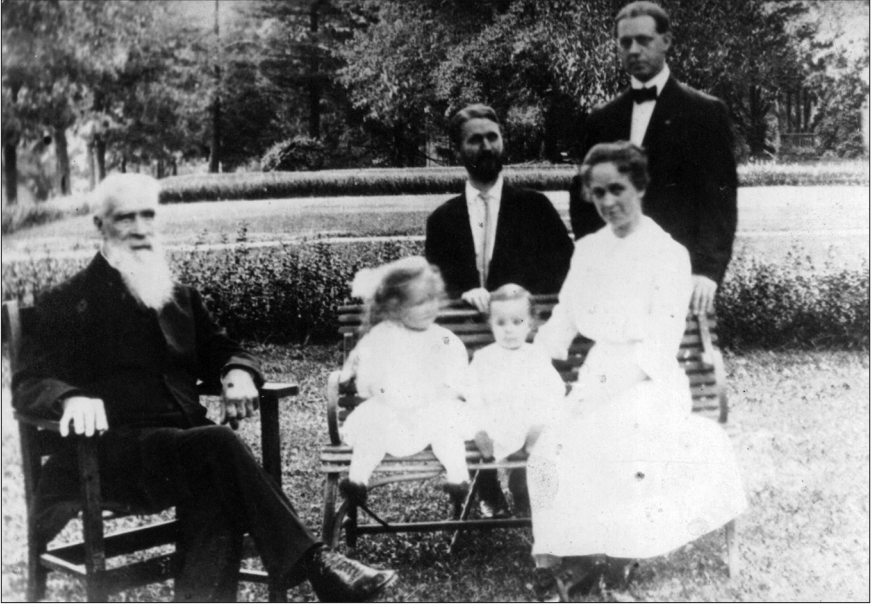
The closing of the Service, as ever, was most beautiful and impressive. The ritualistic hymn, "With Sacred Circle Broken," was rendered as a solo by Brother J. F. Regis Toomey, of Beta Theta. The half-hundred members of the Fraternity present, each wearing his white rose, were led in the processional past the casket by Grand Trustee Miller<sup>6</sup> and Brother James G. Cooper, son of the Founder. Tenderly, the blossoms were laid upon the casket,

Sweet roses as a sign  
Though earthly love is fleeting,  
Its spirit is divine.

It was the comment of many present that the service as a whole was inspiring and beautiful beyond expression. At its close, the funeral procession was formed, the pallbearers appointed by Beta Theta being W. G. Curtis, R. C. Schlegel, R. J. Walkinshaw, G. C. Rutledge, Joseph H. Bingaman, and Gerald H. Brady. At the cemetery, Brothers Yount and Meade pronounced the ritualistic service. The Cooper lot is one of the most beautifully located upon a hillside looking northward over the city and across the Allegheny River. Fifty-two members of Sigma Chi were numbered as present in these scenes, historic for the Fraternity, together with Brother James G. Cooper and Mr. H. Boyd Cooper, the sons of the Founder, and Miss Sarah Jane Cooper, his devoted daughter. The family home of the late Mrs. Daniel W. Cooper was at Pittsburgh, and several of her family circle were present at the services. It was also one of the fine courtesies of the occasion that the general fraternities, Delta Tau Delta, Sigma Alpha Epsilon, and Phi Delta Theta, were officially represented at the obsequies. There were many telegrams of sympathy and regret from Grand Officers, active chapters, and alumni, of the Fraternity.

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<sup>6</sup> Brother Miller modestly omitted from these writings, however, almost all mention of his own indefatigable labors as in charge of all arrangements at Pittsburgh, his use of the long-distance phone in reaching parties in all other cities at interest, and the various other prompt and thoughtful measures, in conjunction with his associates at Pittsburgh, which made perfect all the plans for the services. Among other measures, was the taking of certain photographs by Mr. S. E. Bingaman, chief staff photographer of the leading journals of the Pittsburgh daily press, and the father of Joseph H. Bingaman, of Beta Theta chapter, and intended for preservation in the historical archives of the Fraternity.



*Founder Cooper with members of his family, circa 1920. Family members are not identified, but possibly they are sons James G. Cooper, Ohio Wesleyan 1902, H. Boyd Cooper, & daughter, Sarah Jane. Sarah Jane was an active supporter of Sigma Chi until her death decades later.*



Fifty-three years had passed when Brother Cooper died, since the going away, in 1867, of the devoted William L. Lockwood, first of the Founders of Sigma Chi to pass to his reward. In the interim occurred the crowning of Franklin H. Scobey, in 1888; Isaac M. Jordan, in 1890; James P. Caldwell, in 1912; Benjamin P. Runkle, in 1916; and Thomas C. Bell, in 1919. Daniel W. Cooper, eldest of the boyhood group at Old Miami, survived them all. And now:

The stars are again seven,  
The circle is complete.