

## Founder Thomas Cowan Bell

The seventh and last of the Seven Founder's Monuments to be erected by the Fraternity was dedicated at the National Cemetery at the Presidio of San Francisco on October 29, 1933, fourteen years after his death on February 3, 1919.

We attribute wisdom with his name and Brother Charles Townsend, in charge of erecting the monument for Thomas Cowan Bell, stated "Thomas Cowan Bell early displayed an ardent love for the acquisition of knowledge and demonstrated those scholarly tastes which, coupled with a genial disposition, distinguished his later life."

### Background

January 22, 1930 from A.P Thomson to Bolan Turner

...My statement was based on a statement made at the Grand Council Meeting in October at Chicago...it was to the effect that the Ohio Sigs would raise the money for the Scobey Monument and the New York Alumni would organize a movement to raise the money fro the Lockwood Monument in the East...I talked the matter over with some of the men from the West and we felt that the Pacific Coast and the Rocky Mountain states could raise the money for the Bell Monument if they were not called upon to contribute to the fund for the Scobey and Lockwood Monuments...I talked the matter over with Brother Charles Townsend, the Pacific Coast Member of the Monument Commission, and he stated that he was opposed to such a movement, largely basing his opposition on the fact that he had no information that substantiated my impression concerning the Scobey and Lockwood Monuments, and also upon his opinion that all the monuments should be erected by the whole Fraternity."

"Brother Townsend advised me that Founder Bell's body was cremated and that the Bell family does not own a lot in the Oakland Cemetery. This information was confirmed to me today by Donald J. Bell of Brawley California son of Thomas Cowan Bell. The ashes of Founder Bell are in a niche in a columbarium at the Crematory and Donald Bell stated that he did not know whether his mother would approve of the erection of a monument for his father in the Oakland Cemetery. I have requested him to communicate with his mother in that regard and advise me of her wishes."

### Monument Design

Feb. 6, 1930 to A.P. Thomson, Grand Consul from Mrs. Bell,

"Dear Mr. Thomson

In regard to the question of the monument to be erected to the memory of Major Bell by the Sigma Chi Fraternity, my son has written that you would like some expression of my preference. More and more I have felt, of late years, that his ashes should rest in some place where the respect and honor of the Fraternity could be expressed in some beautiful, notable and permanent way.

The idea of a suitable marble monument has always seemed in this case to be associated with some difficulty. But another thought has come to me in rather a persistent way from time to time, though I have never spoken of it to any one.

It is this: That a beautiful and stately memorial window with the colors and insignia of Sigma Chi might be erected in some suitable place, where its presence would have an art value as well as historic interest to be prized by any community, an enduring one, because, as we know, these treasures last for centuries.

The cost of this, I suppose, would not exceed that of a marble monument.

There is, I believe here at the Bay, near the University district, a place which would provide a splendid home for such a memorial, the new and classic Sunset Mausoleum, with its fine marble entrance, its wonderful lofty ground facing the sea, the mountains and the sunset, a place the Fraternity would like to visit and Sigma Chi visitors from other lands would not fail to see.

Now, dear Mr. Thomson, though I like this idea very much, it is, of course, only a suggestion. It may be that the Fraternity would rather carry the majestic idea of marble through all the memorials, if possible. I would be very glad to know of your preference.

I have never heard Major Bell say anything in disapproval of the idea of monuments to any one's memory.

It is true that he had very little of the hero-worshipper in his character, and he may at some time have said some epigrammatic thing about the danger of canonizing a man too soon.

I am sure that if he were here today he would stand long and reverently before the eternal beauty of that sacred marble which immortalizes the names of his loved brother in the Chapter Eternal, and there would not be a shade in his soul that did not honor the noble tribute from Sigma Chi.

I learn with pleasure that my dear son Donald has felt able to accept Sigma Chi's kind invitation to become an honorary member of the great Fraternity. Signed Lucia Chase Bell (Mrs. Thomas Cowan Bell)"

In response to the above letter, a letter was sent March 4, 1930 to Lucia Chase Bell from Grand Consul A.P. Thomson

"...Your idea of a memorial window is beautiful, but inasmuch as the memorials to the other six founded will all be uniform in style, being stately and massive monuments, of which I have asked Brother Cleveland to send you a picture, there might be some objection raised against honoring the memory of Major Bell in a different manner. However, that will be a matter of the Commission to decide and I have asked Mr. Miller to communicate with you regarding the same.

Was very much pleased to learn from your letter and also by letter from your son, Donald Bell, that he would be able to be present at Miami in June, there to be initiated into the Fraternity."

Further concerns arose when others learned about Mrs. Bell's proposal and the three following letters were written:

March 12, 1930 to A.P. Thomson, Grand Consul from Bolan Turner

"From the tone of Mrs. Bell's letter, I believe that when we get ready to take up the matter of erecting the memorial to Founder Bell, a monument similar to that placed over the graves of the other founders will be suitable and agreeable to her. The circumstances in this case are different from the others (the only surviving spouse) and I can appreciate her interest in the suitability of another type of memorial."

March 13, 1930 to A.P. Thomson from Joseph Miller

"To be perfectly frank, I have no sympathy whatever with the idea of erecting a monument to major Bell in the form of a stained glass window just as I had no sympathy whatever with the idea of Charles Alling in one of his flights of fancy to the effect that we pay someone to create a music symphony."

March 14, 1930 from Joseph Miller to Charles Townsend,

"As you no doubt know, our friend, Charles Alling, in his enthusiasm sometimes butts in on a situation and breaks up the best laid plans. This happened, I think, through his correspondence and connection with the collection of portraits and his consequent contract with Mrs. Bell..."

"He talked very vehemently to me about having the Monument Commission take the money which would be spent for the Bell monument to hire some musician to write a symphony in memory of Founder Bell which could be played by orchestra at certain specified times at certain gatherings. I believe he mentioned this also to Mrs. Bell."

"Recently Grand Consul A.P. Thomson received a letter from Mrs. Bell in which she suggests that when it comes to our acting for Founder Bell that we depart from our adopted plan, to which we are so everlastingly pledged, and erect a memorial window in Sigma Chi colors and with our fraternity insignia in some suitable place. She evidently has a place in mind as evidenced by

the following quotation from her letter of February 6th: "There is, I believe, here at the Bay, near the University District, a place when would provide a splendid home for such a memorial, the new and classic Sunset Mausoleum, with its fine marble entrance, its wonderful lofty grounds facing the sea, the mountains and the sunset, a place the fraternity would like to visit and Sigma Chi visitors from other lands would not fail to see."

"It seems to me we are under a positive obligation to make good on our representations to the members of the fraternity and to the policies and plans heretofore adopted and that we must in accordance therewith erect identical monuments at the graves of each of the seven founders. We are pledged under the money received to carry out this program and I want you to undertake the job of ambassador of the fraternity and particularly the Monument Commission to Mrs. Bell to secure here consent to the original program and do this in the most diplomatic way possible giving her all the facts of the case and making plain to her that the fact that Brother Bell was cremated would necessitate no change in plan for the reason that that proposed monument is so large and so heavy it can easily be chambered to contain his ashes and to also contain the ashes of other members of the family at a future date if these are their desires. She should be made to understand that when the monument is set, the urn containing the remains of Brother Bell can be placed in the chamber and later when and if such another interment is to be made of similar ashes, the monument can be raised and another container placed inside the chamber. The chamber can then be resealed and the monument reset or, if she does not intend to have here remains cremated, they could be interred at the side of the monument with a proper inscription appearing on the monument."

"I consider this matter of the greatest importance and trust that you will be able to accomplish my purpose with Mrs. Bell and secure here approval and consent to the completion of the fraternity program to which the fraternity is so absolutely pledged from the beginning of the movement. I rather gather from her letter to Brother Thomson that she was not taken a positive fixed position, but is still an open mind and I think when acquainted with all the fact, she will be glad to carry on to the end that the work may be finally accomplished as originally planned."

Four days before the above letters, a letter from Lucia Chase Bell, to Mr. Cleveland, Editor, March 10, 1930 was received,

"Since it is now, as Mr. Thomson informs me, the clearly formed desire of the Fraternity to erect a series of monuments to their Founders, corresponding in character all the way through, I regret that I have expressed any personal preference in regard to a different kind of memorial, to succeed the old idea of a memorial in music."

"There never was a thought in the Major's mind, nor in my own, that would not be in harmony with your present noble and generous purpose. It would grieve me very much to cause any debate or embarrassment in this matter by any suggestion of mine."

"Since the desire of the Fraternity is to erect a monument, I will provide a lot in beautiful Mountain View Cemetery in Oakland, and at the proper time, will have Major Bell's ashes sealed and interred in that place."

"Hoping this will meet the approval of your Grand Consul and the Committee.  
Mrs. Thomas Cowan Bell"

Two days prior on March 12, 1930 to Chester Cleveland from Mrs. Bell,

"...Of course, the idea of the beautiful memorial window has been very attractive to me, but I would never have suggested it except as a tribute in place of the memorial in music which was formally planned and did have some lovely features, though probably not practicable. Now that I know your plan is to erect enduring monuments to the memory of your Founders which will be nearly identical in design, I have no thought but one of gratitude, and admiration for their virile and beautiful expression of the Fraternity's love for its Founders."

Furthermore, on April 17, 1930 - A letter from Lucia Chapter Bell to Joseph Miller

"Dear Mr. Miller,

Your kind and interesting letter of March 14th was received with much pleasure. The noble and beautiful program of the Sigma Chi Fraternity in honoring all your Founders with identical monuments moves my heart with more admiration and gratitude that I can express for the wonderful spirit of the Fraternity not only in refusing to permit a long monotony of failing remembrance through the years, but in this whole generous effort finding a kindling inspiration toward life, loyalty and service.

I have not yet seen M. Townsend. He is a very busy man but will doubtless find time for an interview some day. In the meantime, you may like to know that I will certainly wish to select a site for the monument that sees to the Fraternity suitable and beautiful and will be glad to have it approved by any members whom you may select, before finally secured. I have not thought of any other cemetery than Mountain View in Oakland, which is considered I believe the most beautiful one here.

With grateful appreciation for your kindness and that of the Fraternity,  
Very sincerely your, Lucia Chase Bell (Mrs. Thomas Cowan Bell)"

### Campaign

Sept. 29, 1930 to Bolan Turner from Charles Townsend,

"So for considering another drive now, I think it would be a mistake. The financial situation is not such as to create enthusiasm with most people when they are asked to contribute for anything (one year since the stock market crash). What I think you should do is to have the Monument Fund taken care of by annual dues from the undergraduates \$1.00 each from every undergraduate and new initiate would soon collect a fund and there would not be any expense for campaigning. Perhaps this is a belated suggestion already covered by the general fraternity policy."

"Our boys here in Berkeley - particularly the Alpha Beta Alumni, have just been through a grind of remodeling the Berkeley Chapter House, at an expense of \$30,000, and we have done about all the contribution we feel like doing. Stanford has had a similar remodeling, although not on such a pretentious scale, while the Los Angeles Chapter is carrying a tremendous burden with their new house. There are some two hundred, or more, USC alumni who are in arrears on pledges and face suspension, at least so I am told."

### The Graveside

January 11, 1933 to W.J. Atwell, SF Alumni President from Patrick Hurley, Secretary of War and Sigma Chi,

"Acknowledgement is made of your letter of December 20, 1932, relative to the interment of the ashes of the late Thomas Cowan Bell, in the San Francisco National Cemetery and the erection of a suitable monument at his grave."

"From the meager information given in your letter, the Department has been unable to identify the service of the late Thomas Cowan Bell as an officer in the United States Army. If, however, he served honorably with the Federal forces and Mrs. Bell has in her possession the necessary papers to substantiate this fact, arrangement for the interment of the ashes in the San Francisco National Cemetery may be made with the Superintendent."

"In connection with the erection of the monument at the grave of this decedent in the San Francisco National Cemetery, existing National Cemetery regulations prescribe that the Quartermaster General must approve the design, finish, size, etc., of the monument before its erection can be authorized. For your information, there is enclosed a circular on Arlington National Cemetery in Section 2 of which will be found detailed instructions relative to the erection of monuments. These regulations pertain to all the National Cemeteries."

"The Monument to Colonel Runkle in Arlington National Cemetery was placed there in 1923 and complies with existing regulations with the exception of the carving and a portion of the inscription on the rear face. The carving on this monument is raised and under existing National Cemetery regulations no raised carving is permitted. The inscription on the rear face of the monument shows that it was erected by the Sigma Chi Fraternity in 1923, and under existing regulations inscriptions showing by whom a monument is erected, are not permitted. Therefore, a monument along the lines of the one erected to Colonel Runkle, amended to agree with existing regulation, will be approved for the erection in the San Francisco National Cemetery. In this connection you are further advised that authority for the erection of the monument cannot be given until after the remains are interred in the national Cemetery."

May 5, 1933 to Charles Townsend from Colonel Richard Ellis, Quartermaster Corp. and Sigma Chi,

"In view of the photostatic copy of service record of the late Thomas Cowan Bell, as shown to the undersigned on May 3, 1933, this officer is entitled to burial in the San Francisco National Cemetery and arrangements for the interment of the ashes should be made with the Superintendent of the cemetery. It is requested that a photostatic copy of the service record be furnished this office for record purposes."

"In connection with the erection of a monument, authority will be granted for erection of a monument of the same design as that now at the grave of the late Benjamin Piatt Runkle in the Arlington National Cemetery. The carving may be the same as that on the Runkle monument, which it is understood is slightly raised. The inscription on the front face of the monument should, in accordance with existing regulations, consist of the name, rank, branch of service, and dates of birth and death. In addition, such other part of Major Bell's military service, in accordance with the official records, as may be desired may be included in the inscription on the front face. The places of birth and death may also be included in this inscription if so desired. On the rear face of the monument an inscription may be placed similar to that on the rear face of the monument of General Runkle."

May 10, 1933 from Bolan Turner to Joseph Miller,

"I am happy to report that all matters pertaining to the design have been cleared up in the War Department and the Monument can now be erected according to the same design and specifications as the other six."

"Brother Townsend spent the greater part of last week here and during his stay he and Ben Fisher were able to get the matter cleared up in the War Department. Their success was largely to Col. Ellis, who is from the Ohio State Chapter. He has charge of much of the work pertaining to National cemeteries, and through him we were able to get a letter properly signed, authorizing the erection of the Monument according to our plans and specifications."

May 16, 1933 to Walter Blaesing from Charles Townsend

"Re - Bell Monument

I have just returned from Washington where, with the assistance of Bro. Ben Fisher and Col. Ellis, a good Sig in the War Department, we obtained official permission to duplicate at the Presidio here in San Francisco the monument already erected to Gen. Runkle in Arlington Cemetery; that is, raised insignia but of course with the sunken lettering as in all the other monuments. In other words, we can now go ahead as we originally planned with the original design so that all seven monuments will be uniform in carving. There was very strong opposition manifested by numerous members of the Fraternity to any change."

"We feel here, just as they did back East, that with approximately \$2000.00 in sight, although not yet in hand, your Company, considering the times and all other things (the Great Depression), could possibly see its way clear to take this job for the sum that we are able to pay, which

is approximately \$2000.00. Unless some concession is made we will possibly have to delay the building of the monument indefinitely because we will not do anything until we can pay cash for it and we would rather have your outfit do the work that anyone else, other things being equal.”

In a letter from the War Department, San Francisco National Cemetery, Superintendent's Office, Thomas Stangier, May 24, 1933

“...re: erecting monument and internment of ashes of the late Thomas Cowan Bell, please be advised that graves #3 and 5, A, Officers Section, San Francisco National Cemetery, have been set aside for this purpose.”

From Charles Townsend to Ben Fisher, May 26, 1933,

“On Tuesday, May 23, 1933, our committee met and accepted the proposal of the Bleasing Granite Company.”

“The next day we went out to the cemetery and rounded up Col. Hugh T. Smith, a Sig in the Judge Advocate's office, and interviewed the Superintendent of the cemetery and had allotted to us a perfectly beautiful location right in the central portion of the older part of the cemetery in the midst of Generals and Admirals and monuments of all degrees of elaborateness. It is a marvelous site and the dedication will be something for us to look forward to with pride and we hope to look back with the same.”

“Right back of the Bell site and on the gentle slope facing the Golden Gate are two column monuments - one of 1881 and one of 1887 - both of which bear inscriptions and alongside of which the Bell monument will show up in splendid dignity and yet not be detracted from by these two older and very beautiful sentinels.”

### Monument Construction and Cost

The following proposal of Bleasing Granite Company of May 18, 1933, was read to the Committee: “Accept your proposal to build and erect Bell Monument in Raymond granite for two thousand dollars if contract can be secured this month and work completed in July.

July 13, 1933 to Bolan Turner from Irving Roemer, Treasurer, Bell Monument Fund  
Herman Bleasing of the Bleasing Memorial Company called to see me yesterday and told me that the foundation for the Monument has already been poured and that the stone has been purchased and is to be cut here in San Francisco.

The completed monument are made of one solid piece of granite weighing approximately eight tons produced from an approximate fourteen ton monolith and quarried with great care in order to avoid flaws. The monument is made from Raymond granite from the Bleasing Granite Company. The cost of the Bell Monument was \$2000.00.

### Monument Symbols

A letter to Bolan Turner from Joseph Miller, April 1, 1930, “I am writing Mrs. Bell to learn if there is a Bell family coat-of-arms. Provided there is no family coat-of-arms, we will use the fraternity crest.” It was later learned that the Bell family does not have a crest.

To Bleasing Granite Co, May 26, 1933 from Charles Townsend,

“Re: Family Coat of Arms: Just what will go on the place indicated in the end view of the family coat-of-arms we do not know at present. It may be either the coat of arms or military insignia or a duplicate of the fraternity symbol shown in the upper right hand end view on this blueprint.”

“Re: Niches: Since the body of Major Bell was cremated it will be desired to place his ashes in

the monument and likewise to have a niche into which Mrs. Bell's ashes may be placed after her death. It was suggested by the Superintendent of the cemetery that a pair of these niches could be put into the concrete foundations underneath the soil and capable of being sealed and completely hidden. In other words, the niches would not enter into the cutting of the stone at all."

In a letter July 19, 1933 from Bolan Turner to Charles Townsend about Bell's military insignia, "I would be glad if arrangements could be made to have military insignia appear on the Bell Monument. As you know, he received his commission as Colonel but desired to be known as Major, in which capacity he saw his most active service."

"Months ago I wrote Washington a number of times, endeavoring to get the insignia of the Major's corps. I was not successful. I never found out his corps insignia. I did receive from Mrs. Bell a photograph of his epaulets, which carried the "oak leaf" There certainly could be no objection, there seems to me, in placing this oak leaf where the military insignia have been placed on other monuments."

"I am sending you photograph of these epaulets and trust if the insignia of the corps cannot be obtained by Brother Turner, that this leaf may be used."

"I will call this to the attention of Washington members of the Commission again, asking them to see what can be accomplished concerning this corps insignia in the next ten days. It seems to me with a definite knowledge that Founder Bell was a member of the 74th Ohio Volunteer Infantry it ought not to be hard to run down."

August 7, 1930 to Joseph Miller from Lucia Chase Bell (Mrs. Thomas Cowan Bell)

"I am glad that you will be able to secure a copy of the Corps Badge to be used in a shield design, with the decorations on the major's epaulets."

In a letter August 16, 1933 from Charles Townsend to Blaesing Granite Company regarding the acorn,

"Re - Bell Monument

Acknowledging receipt of yours of August 14, 1933, with drawing, most of us here think that the drawing looks like a grenadier's cap with a chin strap more that it looks like an acorn. It may be and probably is true that you correctly reproduced the little drawing sent and that drawing may look like an Ohio acorn, but if the monument is to be put up here in California and is likely to be here for a long while the representation ought to speak for itself and not call for criticism which, if made, would reflect not only upon the Fraternity but upon yourselves."

"The acorn cup seems to be out of proportion to the acorn body not only as we are used to our form of acorns but as they are shown in most cuts of acorns in the books that we have run across."

"I am holding the drawing that you sent and would ask if you will not see if you cannot make a closer approximation to the real thing."

As a result, the four side of the monument are as follows: the front has the Sigma Chi badge, the Sigma Chi coat of arms or crest on the sides, and an Ohio acorn representing XIV Corp of the Union Army in Ohio on the back of the monument.

This corps's distinctive badge was in the shape of that of an acorn. The acorn was chosen to remind the men of their tough times in late 1863 when they were left in the wilderness without supplies and forced to survive on acorns.

In a speech from Charles Townsend at Founder Bell's dedication:

"It is fitting that his monolith should have been carved from the everlasting granite of our Sierra

as a symbol not only of the lofty ideals of Sigma Chi, but of the solid permanence of the Fraternity through the ages to come; its own encircling emblems typifying the chain of friendship which links our membership around the world.”

### Dedication

While the flag he loved so bravely waved above him and the silvery mists from the Pacific formed a shroud, the mortal remains of Thomas Cowan Bell, soldier, editor, educator, forever to be remembered as a Founder of the Sigma Chi Fraternity.

With impressive ceremonies the last monument to the Immortal Seven Founders was dedicated to the requiem of the United States Army rites and the beautiful ritual of the Fraternity he helped create from his youthful dreams and love of his fellow man.

The monument of California Raymond granite rests on the green slopes near Yerba Buena where the first Spanish military post was founded in 1776, and a few feet from Major Bell's tomb lie the remains of his wartime commander, Major General Irwin McDowell, and his Sigma Chi brother, Brigadier General John Thornton Knight, Sigma Sigma (Hampden-Sydney) 1880.

The scene was inspiring as 400 members of Sigma Chi and friends and relatives gathered to do final honor to the beloved Founder. Army airplanes from Crissy Field thrummed overhead and, at the foot of the slope, the battle fleet of the Pacific swung at anchor. The stately cypress trees swayed gently as the dedication ceremonies began under the guidance of Charles A. Gray, Alpha Omega (Stanford) 1899, the presiding officer.

After the Divine blessing had been asked by Major James L. Blakeney, chaplain of the United States Army, undergraduate choristers from Alpha Beta and Alpha Omega chapters sang “The Fellowship Song.” Then Brother Gray read the following impressive letter from Major Bell's widow, living at nearby Alameda at the age of 85, who was unable because of poor health to attend the ceremonies:

“Among all the messages which have come to me from Sigma Chi bringing the sunshine of gracious remembrance from time to time, none will be more prized than the greeting received today from your Grand Council assembled in annual session at Chicago, expressing joy in the consummation of your great purpose to erect a stately and beautiful memorial to each one of your Founders, and in the dedication of the noble monument in memory of your Founder, Major Bell, in the national cemetery at the Presidio.”

“The assurance from them, that they in spirit will share in the observances of this day, is characteristic of the warm, living brotherhood of Sigma Chi...”

“Looking upon the shining beauty of the monument, its honored name chiseled in everlasting stone, we think of the Fraternity with its emblem of the enduring Cross and there comes to mind that thrilling old symbolism of the great knight, Sir Galahad, ‘whose strength was as the strength of ten, because his heart was pure.’” With grateful appreciation always, Mrs. Thomas Cowan Bell

The Seven Founders were then greeted in spirit and as each name was called by Brother Gray, representatives of the California and Stanford Chapters placed a White Cross of flowers at the foot of the monument. Before the unveiling Mr. Gray remind those present that the total number of brothers subscribing to the erection of the monument was 600 from 30 states and three foreign countries.

Brother Gray then read the following message from Bolon B. Turner, Executive Secretary of the Sigma Chi Founders Monument Commission:

“Please extend to the Sigs of the West my congratulations upon the splendid manner in which they are concluding our Founders’ memorial program. Please say to Mrs. Bell that we are happy to build and dedicate this monument as a token of the love and esteem we hold for the last of our Seven Founders, but that he built for himself a monument more enduring in the hearts of Sigma Chis throughout the world.”

Then, as the members of Sigma Chi and their friends stood with bowed heads, Frederick Van Sicklen '34, Consul of Alpha Beta Chapter, hoisted the flag, which had veiled the monument. At this point Brother Gray introduced Charles E. Townsend, Alpha Beta (California) 1890, with the following words:

“The man particularly in charge of the duty, obligation and pleasure of Sigma Chi in seeing that this monument has finally obtained its proper place is Brother Charles E. Townsend, member of the chapter at Berkeley, Alpha Beta. He is one of our oldest members and certainly one of our most honored members. Brother Townsend, will you present this monument to the Fraternity and to the United States?”

Mr. Townsend’s presentation address was as follows:

“Turning back the pages of history to the year of our Lord 1832, a span of 101 years, to the day when Thomas Cowan Bell was born in the little town of Bellbrook, Greene County, Ohio, we find the greater part of our broad country still a vast wilderness.”

“The birthplace of the Founder whose memory we are here today to honor was not far distant from the city of Cincinnati, then the metropolis of the West and boasting a population of about 25,000.”

“The ground whereon we now stand was then foreign soil; and our great, proud city, known only as Yerba Buena, was a settlement of a few hundred captive Indians under the discipline of the Padres centered about the Mission Dolores; and here, within a stone’s throw of this spot, was a walled Presidio or fort, housing and protecting a few whites and presided over by a Mexican official and a handful of soldiers.”

“He entered Miami University at Oxford, Ohio, then famed as the Yale of the West, and graduated in the class of 1857. His part in the inception and establishment of Sigma Chi is known to all of you and has been alluded to already today by Brother Gray.”

“Brother Bell was 29 years of age at the outbreak of the Civil War. He immediately enlisted in the Union Army as a private in the 74th Ohio volunteer Infantry and rose through successive ranks to become a full commissioned major and to be breveted a lieutenant colonel on his retirement in 1863 by reason of ill health.”

“Brother Bell distinguished himself in the service as he later did in civil life. This is illustrated by an incident on the battlefield when his colonel, a gruff old army officer, rode up to him and, despite a long-standing dispute between them, generously extended his hand and said, ‘Bell, you have done nobly. I watched you all this day. No man could have done better. Let us be friends.’

“Following the war his life was dedicated to the cause of education and he built for himself and for the Fraternity and enviable name as an educator. His reputation as such rested not alone on his success as an inspirational teacher but as an organizer of school systems and as administrator of the various schools and colleges to which he was called.”

“Moved by that pioneer spirit of unrest which he inherited from his colonial forebears, he took up his residence in Minnesota, and became in 1872, at the age of 40, county superintendent of schools of Nobles County in Southern Minnesota, continuing there until 1878. During that time

his fame as an educator spread beyond the confines of that state.”

“Contemporaneously he also gained eminence as a journalist and editor; publishing The Worthington Journal at Worthington, the county seat of Nobles county, a paper which acquired a wide and desirable influence throughout the state.”

“Brother Bell, through his newspaper, became one of the nation’s pioneers in forest conservation in a forest-less, prairie country, and in commemoration of the nation’s centennial in 1876, stimulated the planting of forest seeds and trees over large stretches of the Western plains.”

“So beneficially did Brother Bell impress his character and works upon the community that there was universal regret throughout the State of Minnesota and adjacent regions when, in 1878, he was called to Oregon.”

“Brother Bell established himself and family at Eugene where the new Oregon state university had just been opened; and where there had been erected a fine new building for their public schools, awaiting to be organized into a modern system.”

“Brother Bell took charge of this public school work with enthusiasm and vigor and from a condition of backwardness and general demoralization, characterizing the public schools of the Northwest at the time, he established a new and up-to-date educational system with himself as principal; a system which became the model for many other communities in that state.”

“After a few years he moved to the garrison town of Vancouver, Washington, on the Columbia River, and there continued his educational work until the health of his family required him to move from that rigorous climate.”

“Successively and successfully Brother Bell was president of Philomath College, at Philomath, near Corvallis, Oregon; president of the Oregon State Normal School in Douglas County; and finally president of the Dallas Collegiate Institute, at Dallas, Oregon, near Salem, the capital. In each of these places he left the imprint of his character and brought each institution in turn to a high state of standing and efficiency. The Dallas Institute was famed for carrying on the traditions of the best history of vigorous old Oregon. The Major fostered and developed a patriotic spirit and a practical and classical curriculum, which stamped that college as a real institution of higher learning.”

“Here he continued most happily for several years until a breakdown in his health caused his retirement in 1899. He resided for a few years in Portland, Oregon, and in 1907, shortly after the San Francisco fire and earthquake, he moved to Oakland, California, across the Bay where he continued to live in well deserved peace and contentment until his passing in 1919, at the ripe old age of 87.”

“I first met Brother Bell at the 50th anniversary or semi-centennial celebration of the Fraternity in 1905, at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, together with General Runkle, Dan Cooper and Jimmie Caldwell.”

“During the later years of Brother Bell’s life here in the Bay region, he was able to spend much of his time with his brothers in Sigma Chi and to inspire chapter meetings by his frequent attendance.”

“Those of us who knew him so well in those days were always gladdened by his appearance at these gatherings.”

“Many of us were privileged to visit with him at his home in Fruitvale and to sit and chat over old times with him in his garden among his trees and flowers, a home graciously presided over by

his helpmate and life companion, dear Mrs. Bell, whose absence today, because of ill health, we so sincerely regret.”

“It was his rare fortune to have seen this Order grow from a little group of seven boys banded together for a principle, to an international fraternity of nearly 100 chapters and over 25,000 members. Imagine his feelings of paternal pride and satisfaction of foundership and fellowship.”

“He remained vigorous in mind and active in body to the end. His passing was sudden and followed his attendance at an Alpha Beta initiation, so that, as it were, his last thought were of the Order which he helped to found.”

“Such is briefly the life of one of the seven men who made and fashioned this great Fraternity, and from whose ranks have come so many other distinguished men identified with the progress and development of science, government, industry and the arts and letters.”

“And now, brothers, on behalf of the Founders Monument Commission of Sigma Chi, it is my proud privilege to deliver into the keeping and custody of our Fraternity and of the United States Government, this last memorial to the name of our dear Friend and Founder, and who was also Soldier and Patriot, Major Thomas Cowan Bell.”

“It is fitting that his monolith should have been carved from the everlasting granite of our Sierra as a symbol not only of the lofty ideals of Sigma Chi, but of the solid permanence of the Fraternity through the ages to come; its own encircling emblems typifying the chain of friendship which links our membership around the world.”

“So here today, with consecrated purpose, beside the Golden Gate, at the foot of yon guardian mountain, sacred sentinel of the ancient Tamals, we dedicate this monument to the memory of our comrade who has been received into the Chapter Eternal.”

Grand Trustee Hubert H. Martin, Mu (Denison) 1913, then accepted the monument on behalf of the Fraternity:

“...We are here to pay our respect, to show our devotion to a good man. A man whose life exemplified the ideals for which our Fraternity stands. A man to whom we are indebted for inspirations which have made us better and nobler than we otherwise would have been.”

“Founder Bell’s life from first to last is an exemplification of fortitude and service. Born in Ohio of sturdy, pioneer stock, that stock which made the Buckeye state the mother of Presidents, his youth was spent in what at that time was the frontier of American civilization. Educated in a small college, the type of institution that has contributed so much, not only to our own beloved Fraternity but to the nation at large, Founder Bell’s life was one of continued service to his fellow man. Soldier in time of war, educator in time of peace. What nobler work exists? How could one better emulate those ideals for which our great Fraternity stands?”

“When our nation was torn asunder, he attained high rank in the army of the Union. Was this his greatest achievement? I think not. Almost before maturity he had already become one of the Noble Seven who have given us our heritage. Though our country was rent with strife, though the bright star of liberty and union was sinking beneath the horizon, seemingly never to rise again, the fruits of his labors, our beloved Fraternity, lived on in the North and in the South, a comfort and an inspiration to its members both in Blue and in Gray.”

“The war over, this sturdy pioneer pressed on in his chosen task, that of unlocking the secrets of learning. True to his forebears who had pushed over the Alleghenies, he continue on toward the setting sun, furnishing inspiration and learning to youth as he went, until arriving at the last frontier, he reached the broad expanse of the Pacific, beside whose waters he now rests - a life

well lived, a journey finished.”

“The fruits of his labor live on. They have multiplied many thousands of times. They will continue to live on and multiply so long as we hold those ideals which inspired him to noble service uppermost in our hearts.”

The official representative of the Government to accept the monument in behalf of the United States was Colonel Hugh C. Smith, Theta Theta (Michigan) 1894:

“...In this cemetery there lie nearly 14,000 soldiers.”

“Thomas Cowan Bell was a volunteer soldier in that great internecine strife. Our Fraternity has erected this memorial to him and by doing so has evidenced the great honor that it shows him as one of the Seven Founders of our Fraternity. It is fitting, therefore, that his ashes rest in a national cemetery.”

Grand Consul Hamilton Douglas Jr., Alpha Psi (Vanderbilt) 1908 paid the following tribute to the memory of Founder Bell:

“The erection of this memorial is a most momentous occasion for Sigma Chi. Many years ago the leaders of our Fraternity thought that it was just and proper that we should no longer permit the last resting palace on earth of our Founders to be forgotten and unmarked; that we should undertake to mark the graves of each of the Immortal Seven.”

“It was decided that money for this purpose should be raised not by levying a tax or tribute upon our active and alumni members, but that it should be raised as a voluntary expression of our appreciation of the ideals which the Founders gave to us. We have many men within our Fraternity who could individually have given a monument of this type. But our leaders said “no”, the money must come from each of the individual members in small amounts, one dollar, two dollars, ten dollars...We erect here a monument of everlasting granite for the public to see.”

...”To me the dedication of this stone is also emblematic of the unselfishness which characterized these Seven Founders, which has characterized all of our individuals and which characterized our Fraternity. It is one of the beautiful features of Sigma Chi as an organization that no one is in it for what he can get out of it. He joins not to take out in a material way; he joins to put in, he joins to render service to others, he joins for the purpose of being “big brother” to the little brothers in the organization. This prompted the donations of the four to five thousand individuals who have made the monuments to our Founders possible. Most of the donors did not know any of the Founders nor did they have the privilege of meeting them...And yet what a hold these Founders have on your heart and mind that five thousand of us should make this donation - should make a donation which to me is symbolic of the unselfishness which characterizes our organization.”

“And if we ask the reason why there is this unselfish devotion, why all of us want to do and work for Sigma Chi, after all it is because of the ideals that the Immortal Seven have given us.”

“Sigma Chi was organized nearly eighty years ago by seven boys little more than children, and yet I tell you, and I speak in all reverence, that the Hand of God was present when Sigma Chi was organized. And to me it was no mere accident that the seven boys produced for us that wonderful masterpiece that exists today as our Ritual; and it was not chance by which they took the Cross, the White Cross, the Cross of Jesus, as their emblem. Other fraternities have their badges. Many of them have a shield, which is an emblem of defense. The defense of the weak is of course, a noble purpose. At the same time, Sigma Chi is not on the defensive. Our emblem is an emblem of inspiration, for the Cross, through the ages, has inspired men to do that which is highest and noblest and best. We have an emblem not of defense, but of inspiration.

Sigma Chi has received from these seven boys not only the White Cross but all that it stands for. It is the only fraternity emblem which has never been imitated.”

“These seven boys had a vision, and it was that same vision which has inspired all great and holy men since time began. Constantine had the vision as surrounded by his enemies on the eve of apparent destruction, Jehovah appeared to him and gave to him the White Cross with the words, “under this sign thou shalt conquer.”...These seven boys of Miami had the vision, for the source of the light that shines in the shrine of Sigma Chi is the same as that which had shone in the tabernacle of the wanderings,...

“Our Cross is made of one upright, one arm which points upward; with a cross arm which points outward. Let us, my brothers, get the vision that came to these boys and which they have transmitted to us; for as long as Sigma Chi has the upward look and the outward vision, Sigma Chi as an organization will go upward and outward and onward, forever.”

Brother Gray then introduced Mr. Fred Chase Bell, son of Founder Bell, who represented his mother, Mrs. Thomas Cowan Bell, and accepted the monument in behalf of the Bell family. He said:

“It is with great regret on our part that our mother and our brother, Donald were unable to be here today when this great honor is being done to the memory of your Founder, our father, Thomas Cowan Bell. We who are left feel that he could have left us no greater heritage than that he so lived that he deserved this memorial.”

“I remember hearing him say at one time when mention was made of someone being invested with a foreign honor, that no greater honor could come to a man than that he was a Founder of the Sigma Chi Fraternity.”

The ceremony was brought to a close by the singing of the Founders’ hymn, the benediction by Chaplain Blakeny, and the sounding of taps by a bugler from the Presidio.

Later in the afternoon Alpha Omega Chapter of Stanford university held its initiation in the William Taylor Hotel in San Francisco.

### *The College Days and beyond*

From Runkle - “Thomas Cowan Bell, great hearted and good hearted in civil life and a hero in battle, believe in securing the good things of this life and immediately dividing the same with his companions. He was a born expansionist, full of enthusiasm as a crusader. Naturally he was a leader and teacher of men. He was ambitious, but in no way disposed to push his aspirations at the expense of his fellows. With restless energy, he had no sooner received his diploma than he commenced his life’s work only to be interrupted by the thunder of the Confederate guns. Laying down his books he took up the sword and we find him, like well-nigh all good Sigma Chis, in the forefront of battle leading his command to victory and receiving the highest reward, recognition for gallantry on the field.”

“The war ended, this young colonel laid aside his sword, turned his face toward the setting sun and we next hear of him as the president of a college on the Pacific slope - a sort of “ground scout” of the advance guard of the Sigma Chi. Colonel Bell contributed his full share to the work and to the ruling spirit that gave the order its first impetus. He and Cooper for some reason, hidden in their secret souls, were closely knit together. They entered the Delta Kappa Epsilon together and side by side, left that order to become founders of the Sigma Chi. They were members of the same literary society. In thought and sympathy and in the deep foundations of their being they were much the same sort of men, though in outward expression of the inward character they differed widely. They were distinct varieties of the same good fruit.

## *Sigma Chi*

Bell said, "I need not tell you how proud I am of Sigma Chi. It has grown mightily. You have built a memorial house at old Miami in honor of the founders and you have embalmed our names and our merits in your ritual."

From Runkle - I have been asked about the Davis House — our first chapter house. Mrs. Davis was the aunt of Brother Bell and, being invited to her table, we soon learned that Bell was living on the fat of the land. Arrangements were accordingly made; two cooks were imported from Cincinnati, and we filled the house with as many Sigma Chis as it would hold, the others camping round about among the neighbors. Board at that time was from one dollar and a half to two dollars per week, two dollars and a half being charged in one house where they boasted that the table conversation was "highly intellectual." The bare cost of our table was near three dollars per week, and we lived high. The Sigma Chis have never got over the love of such living.

From Cooper in a letter after hearing of Bell's death - "It is with deep sorrow that I think of his death. He was a good student; an accomplished scholar; a brave and fearless soldier and patriot as his advancing titles of Captain, Major, and Colonel attest; a successful educator; a gentleman of the highest type, and an unfailing friend, and in his death the Country has lost a noble Son and our Fraternity a noble Brother.

...all honor to his name.