

## **Founder Isaac M. Jordan**

The third of the Seven Founder's Monuments to be erected by the Fraternity was dedicated at the Spring Grove in Cincinnati on June 16, 1929, thirty nine years after his death on December 3, 1890.

We attribute high ambition with his name and it is confirmed by Founder Runkle by saying: "playmate of my boyhood, schoolmate for seven swiftly flowing years, friend of a long and strenuous years of manhood, and always the incarnation of high resolves, boundless energy, lofty ambitions, gifted with untiring perseverance and ability that made success a certainty, how many dear and beautiful memories come into these sunset days, and make the life that is past seem not to have been lived in vain. Cut off in the prime of his manhood by what seems to us a cruel fate, he has set an example of what a strong will and determined purpose can accomplish. If ever there was a "self-made" man who had a high right to be proud of the making that man was Brother Jordan."

In another instance, Runkle recalled "In front of the Davis House - our chapter house, though we did not know it - was a gate five feet in height and solid. Someone told Jordan that he could not jump over it. He said he could, tried it, caught his foot, and was nearly killed. Not satisfied, he tried it again and succeeded. This was his character. Nothing was too lofty for his aspirations, nothing, to his vigorous mind, was impossible. He was wont to tell me in his working years that the burdens of life weighted heavily upon him. They do upon us all, but he showed no signs of faltering. He did everything with the same tremendous energy that he displayed when, during the siege of Cincinnati, I took him out of the trenches and put him on my staff. He showed that he would have made a splendid soldier, for he had all the qualities of a splendid man."

### **Background**

High ambition was also represented among the undergraduates at the time. In a letter from Grand Consul Herbert Arms on January 26, 1928, he wrote: "It is highly inspiring to me that the active members want to build the Jordan monument as their first exclusive tribute to a founder. The selection of the Jordan monument has a particular appeal to the active man because in our impressive ritual great emphasis is placed on the requirement of membership in Sigma Chi as defined by Brother Jordan. Because of the Jordan attributes all who have knelt at the altar of initiation, probably feel a little closer to him, in a way, than to the other six."

"Representatives of the Monument Commission recently informed his daughter, Mrs. Katharine Jordan Magoun, of the decision of the active men in the matter. Tears came to her eyes as she hailed it as one of the most wonderful moments of her life. The thought of a beautiful monument on her father's grave inscribed: 'Erected by 3,000 Undergraduate Members of the Sigma Chi Fraternity - 1928' is indeed a treasured sentiment."

In the campaign to raise the necessary funds, "The Monument Commission has gathered data which shows that there are slightly in excess of 3,000 active members and pledges in our 87 chapters. The small sum of \$1.00 each will make the Jordan monument a reality this spring. Surely no chapter nor individual will consider this contribution a burden - on the contrary, every undergraduate will consider it a privilege to participate in the cause."

"Every chapter, of course, is expected to respond 100%. A record of chapter standing will be published in each issue of the Sigma Chi Bulletin during the campaign. One dollar should therefore be collected by your Quaestor or other designated officer from each active brother and pledge not later than March 15 and forwarded to: Bolon Turner, Executive Secretary of the Founders Monument Commission."

### **Monument Construction and Cost**

A controversial change in contractors in favor of a Sigma Chi owned company was given to the Stotzer Granite company in Milwaukee owned by Sigma Chi brothers, Oscar G. Stotzer, Alpha Lambda (Wisconsin) 1907, and Rudolph G. Stotzer, Alpha Lambda (Wisconsin) 1904. They were to erect the Jordan and Caldwell monuments using a different stone, Barre Granite. Since the contract called for the use of Barre Granite instead of Dummerston, a provision was inserted to the effect that work should not commence on the Caldwell Monument until the Jordan Monument had been completed and workmanship accepted by the Commission.

The completed monuments 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. Since the size and design were to be identical we can assume each of the monuments' weights are similar. This monument is made from Barre granite. The cost of the Jordan Monument was \$2,475.00.

### Monument Symbols

Mrs. Katharine Jordan Magoun, daughter of Founder Jordan, advised, Bolan Turner, Executive Secretary of the Founders Monument Commission, in a letter that they did not care to have a family coat of arms on the monument. In another letter to the Memorial Commission, it states, "It is perfectly agreeable, of course, to omit the family coat of arms and to see the Sigma Chi emblems in its place. There is one practice however, that I wish very much we could continue and that is having one of the shields represent the profession of the founder. In the case of Brother Runkle, we had the military shield, and on the monument of Brother Cooper, a clerical emblem was used. I am just wondering if it would not be possible to get hold of an acceptable emblem of the legal profession to use on the Jordan Monument. If we do make this substitute, we will of course, have to act in a hurry in view of the fact that we are planning to have the monument completed and in place by June 16."

As a result, none was found so the Sigma Chi coat of arms or crest was used on each side and the Sigma Chi badge used on the front and rear of the monument.

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

On Sunday afternoon, June 16, 1929, members of Sigma Chi journeyed to Spring Grove Cemetery to dedicate a massive granite monument to Brother Jordan. The very elements were in sympathy with the occasion, as the heavens wept copiously. The ceremonies, therefore, were held in the chapel at 3 o'clock.

It was fitting that the president of the Cincinnati Alumni Chapter, Roger H. Feger, Phi Phi (Pennsylvania) 1916, should preside at the services, as this Chapter was founded in 1881 by Honorable Isaac M. Jordan with the aid of Judge Howard Ferris, for the purpose of establishing an Active Chapter at the University of Cincinnati.

The chapel at Spring Grove was well filled, even though the rain was coming down in torrents. When Brother Feger held up his hand for silence, he seemed inspired. A great hush settled over the audience. The steady pit, pit, pat of the rain could be easily heard and the chapel became a temple and shrine of Sigma Chi.

The invocation was given by Rev. Russell H. Bready, Alpha Pi (Albion) 1902.

Then Brother Ferger spoke of the lofty ideals of Founder Jordan, and that his memory will always be revered and everlasting, as before any man is passed for membership into the Fraternity he must be considered up to Founder Jordan's standards. 'A Sigma Chi should be a man and a student, possessed of fair ability, good character and ambitious purposes, which causes his other qualities to function and lead him to success.'

Mrs. G.B Magoun of Chicago and Mrs. H.W. Kinney of Cincinnati, daughters of our Founder, with a granddaughter, Mrs. Elizabeth Kinney Koehler, thanked us profoundly for the monument to their illustrious father and grandfather.

The dedication ceremonies were closed with a prayer by a warm personal friend of Brother Jordan - our incomparable Grand Historian, Joseph C. Nate.

After the dedication rites all went to the grave of our Founder, and with bared heads to the drizzling rain, silence prevailed. Then, the elements seemed to take cognizance of us, for the sun for one moment shone forth in all its splendor, then was curtailed by the clouds, the heavens again poured forth their contents, cleansing the monument of Isaac M. Jordan - All honor to his name.

### *The College Days and beyond*

Founder Runkle recalled, "He came to our little home village when perhaps fourteen years of age. His father was one of that matchless class of workers, an American mechanic. He was a cooper, and he taught his boys to make barrels, and the best of barrels, and so they learned to honor labor - not as the canting politician honors it - but in their hearts."

"When a new boy came to town of course, after the manner of boys, we hunted him up to find out what stuff he was made. I found little Isaac near the cooper shop and challenged him to play marbles. He informed me that he only played "for keeps." We played, I with confidence, he with skill. He won all my marbles, lent them back again and again and won them again and again. At last he told me "to go somewhere and practice," and we never played together any more. Then we tried boxing. It was without gloves - naked fists - give and take. Ikey had long arms, and in due season we both had nose bleed. We ceased to fight one another, and took to the field as companions in arms and fought every other boy we could find. While at Geneva Hall - a strict covenanter academy - we fought many a terrific battle with the "townies," and more than once we carried Ike Jordan home after he had fought, almost literally to the death, some bully, twice his weight. In the classroom and literary halls at Geneva and Miami it was the same story, rivals with one another, allies against the rest of the world."

"When Jordan was in the village school some three years, his was a hard life. Rising every morning before the sun he worked in the cooper shop making barrels, and there Saturday found him pounding away like a veteran. When we went to Geneva his elder brother Jackson Jordan, of Dayton, came to his aid, and stood by him until he graduated at Miami. He was worthy of the confidence placed in him and he lived to return the kindness a hundred-fold."

"We went together to Geneva and from thence to Old Miami and were roommates of about a year. My father - a stern Presbyterian elder - who approved of Jordan, took us both there and placed us in a boardinghouse which made us long for the flesh pots of West Liberty. Our first efforts in the Erodolphian Literary Society - Jordan's an oration, mine an essay - brought us each a proposition to join the Delta Kappa Epsilon of which Whitelaw Reid was "it" with a big I. Jordan's bid came first, and I knew nothing of it. One evening Isaac got out an old single-barreled pistol, of which he was the owner, and preceded to load it with ball. He then told me that he must take some sleep for he was going out about midnight. Alarmed at this announcement, and

wanting to be in any scrimmage that might be coming, I begged him to tell me what was in the air. He only said, 'If anything happens to me you will hear of it,' and out he went. Nothing happened and in due season the rest of the founders walked the same path to the old Negro church, piloted by the able Reid, and began our fraternity experience."

"A few months after this the election of the Junior orator and poet, the highest honors in the gift of the student body, came on, and the trouble that made Sigma Chi began. We, the future founders, had no comprehension of such a thing as a ticket set up for us to vote. As long as we were in college each one of us followed the dictates of his own will or conscience and voted for just the one that suited him, barbarian or Greek, brother or not. The following year, when the same election was held for our class, Jordan and the writer hereof were the leading candidates for orator and I beat him for the coveted honor by one vote. He was chairman of the committee that managed the ceremonies."

After the death of Founder Jordan, this was written of him by Hon. James W. Newman, Gamma '61: "He was in life and character the very personification of the Order he has done so much to establish — of its governing spirit, of its tendencies, and of its conscience. He put honor above all else, and in his friendships he was pure, unselfish, and enduring. He loved the companionship of his friends and always held up to them the sunny side of life. He loved his fellow man, and rejoiced in making others happy. He was loyal to every conviction of duty, whether in his profession, in politics, or in the social and home circle. His share was broad and true, and decked with Christian graces."

### *Sigma Chi*

Founder Jordan attending a Grand Chapter stated: "In my judgment our Fraternity has grown to be what it is, by adhering to the principle with which we started in the beginning, of admitting no man to membership in it who is not believed to be a man of good character, of fair ability, of ambitious purposes, and of congenial disposition. In a word, be the admission of none but gentlemen; and in no other way can such a society be continued. It is much more important that we should have but few chapters and have them good ones, that we should have but few members and have them honorableness, that to have many chapters or many members. The decadence of other societies can be traced to a violation of this principle, and to an ambition to have many chapter and a large membership."

"And let me here give a word of advice and admonition to the members of every chapter. Whenever you find an unworthy member of your society, expel him at once and without hesitation. Evil communications corrupt good morals, and one dishonorable man will bring reproach and dishonor upon your chapter and upon the whole Fraternity. The amount of mischief which one abandoned and dissolute you man can do is incalculable; he destroys everything around him; avoid him as you would a pestilence. One drop of poison will defile the purest spring. Avoid by all means the poison, the virus, the hemlock of bad associations."

"Brother Sigmas, we belong to a society worthy of our highest regard and warmest affection. We are united in the strong and enduring bonds of friendship and esteem. Let us each and all so do our duty and conduct ourselves that we bring no dishonor upon our society or each other. And we may have the high and proud satisfaction of knowing that our beautiful White Cross, at once the badge of our society and the emblem of purity, will never be worn over any breast which does not beat with pure, generous, and noble emotions, and by no man who not a man of honor."

...all honor to his name.