March 28th, 1938.

Mr. Claude Webb,
Ottawa, Kansas.

Dear Mr. Webb:

Pi Kappa Delta was founded twenty-five years ago. The first local chapter, the first state chapter, and the National chapter, were all organized at Ottawa in 1913.

The National chapter was formally launched at a dinner at my home, 920 Cedar Street, in January, 1913. A few weeks later chapter No. 1, now Ottawa Alpha, was organized, also at a dinner at my residence, the charter members being Leland H. Jenks, Chas. T. Battin, Sam Marsh, Jesse E. Elder, and myself. The Kansas State chapter was organized in Philal Hall at O. U., just twenty-five years ago today, with C. Benj. Franklin of Washburn as president.

The Ottawa charter members hold the first five membership certificates and the first five numbered keys of the fraternity; I understand the key numbers now run well over 25,000 and the total membership about twice that, and that there are local chapters in over 150 colleges. I shall write to some of the boys and ask them to send you the figures. At any rate, Pi Kappa Delta is now inter-national in scope, the largest, most extensive and most influential forensic organization in the world.

Pi Kappa Delta did not "spring full-panoplied from the head of Jove," but was the crystallization into concrete form of a nebulous idea that had been floating about the country for two or three years and had found expression in local debating clubs in several colleges.

College public speaking was at a low ebb during the first decade of the century; about 1910 there was a marked revival of interest in it. That year was the beginning of a very successful era of debate and oratory at Ottawa. The Literary societies did not afford adequate opportunity for the special study and training required for winning debates, and out of the study and practise meetings of the debaters grew "Deinon Legein" -- the Greeks had the word for it, meaning "Terrible Talkers." It was quite informal, for two or three years it had no officers and no stated meetings; the boys would gather at my room at 831 South Poplar whenever they had time and felt like it, and would discuss whatever was on their minds. It was sort of a glorified reincarnation of the old-time country-store forum. Whether the debaters made "Deinon Legein" or it made the debaters, is an open question. At any rate, the next half-dozen years was the golden age of public speaking at Ottawa, and most of the speakers were "Deinon Legein;" it was the fore-runner of Pi Kappa Delta.

E.R.Nichols, of Franklin College, fresh from Harvard, had recently arrived to head the English department at O.U. He had ideas about a forensic fraternity which struck a responsive chord in "Deinon Legein." As early as 1910, at Omaha, I met with half a dozen college men from surrounding states and talked it over with them, but with no tangible results. In April, 1911, I brought up the idea in a meeting of Inter-State Oratorical men at Sioux City, but again it did not get beyond the dream stage.

Meantime, Prof. Nichols had joined the faculty at Ripon College, spreading his idea there. We had aroused local enthusiasm in several colleges, such as Morningside, Alabama Polytechnic, Iowa Wesleyan, Morningside, Illinois Wesleyan, Monmouth, and Cotner, and several Kansas colleges. In 1912 I revived the idea at the annual meetings of the two Kansas Oratorical Associations, at Winfield and Manhattan; (I was president of one, vice presi-

dent of the other, and president-elect of the Inter-State). I secured the cautious endorsement of both, with a carte blanche to proceed as I saw fit. In the next few months I visited several colleges in the middle west, from Alabama to Minnesota, while Prof. Nichols corresponded with others. Eventually, more or less by common consent, ten men from as many colleges agreed to become National Founders of the proposed fraternity; however, so far as I know, not more than three of them ever met together at any one time or place; most of the work was done by correspondence; I acted as General Secretary, "chief promoter," and "financial angel."

The first draft of the constitution was prepared by E.A.Vaughn of Alabama Poly and myself, meeting at Ottawa during Christmas holidays, 1912. During the few weeks immediately following, it was shuttled back and forth by mail, among Nichols, Vaughn, and myself, and was substantially re-written five times. The other Founders paid little attention to it, further than to endorse the final draft.

When the constitution was satisfactory all around, the formal launching of the National chapter took place. This opened the way for local chapters, and we promptly organized at O.U. This was followed by similar organizations in Kansas and other states. Soon we attempted sort of an inter-state conference in Topeka, to accommodate the organization to a number of local chapter members who were eligible to state and national membership, but this was not successful; Fourteen "delegates" appeared, all but one or two from Washburn, and no National Founder but myself was among them; so, after a pleasant visit, we "faded away" without action. I then called a State organization meeting at Ottawa for March 28, 1913, when the Kansas state chapter was formed. By provision of the constitution, chapters in other states were permitted to attach themselves to nearby state chapters when they were located in states without state chapters; thus, for two or three years the Kansas state chapter

was the mother chapter of the whole organization.

The National Founders were: E.R.Nichols, Ripon College, Pres; E.A.Vaughn, Alabama Polytechnic, Vice Pres; John A. Shields, Ottawa University, General Secy; J.H.Kremmyre, Iowa Wesleyan University, Historian; C.J.Boddy, Kansas Wesleyan University; Frank P. Johnson, Morningside College; A.L.Crookham, Southwestern College; P.C.Somerville, Illinois Wesleyan University; H.C.Pritchard, Cotner College; Dan C. Lockwood, College of Emporia.

You may find pictures of some of the boys, and stories of the movement, in the files of the Campus, and in the Ottawan 1913, 1914, and perhaps other Year Books. It is quite possible that you have files of the Forensic Magazine in the University library.

Sincerely yours,

John Shields