

4-19-1898

Gerald Harrington Beard correspondence to Phi Sigma

Phi Sigma

Gerald Harrington Beard

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.colum.edu/phisigma_letters



Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#), and the [Social History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Phi Sigma and Beard, Gerald Harrington, "Gerald Harrington Beard correspondence to Phi Sigma" (1898). *Selected Letters*. 5.
http://digitalcommons.colum.edu/phisigma_letters/5

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Phi Sigma Collection at Digital Commons @ Columbia College Chicago. It has been accepted for inclusion in Selected Letters by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Columbia College Chicago.

South Norwalk, Conn.
April 19, 1898.

Dear Friends of the Phi Sigma Class:

I suppose that, if I could be with you at the Banquet next Friday evening, nearly all your present members would eye me with curiosity, and ask what might be the name of that old fossil. And that would be so strange an experience for me in the Phi Sigma that I should at once begin asking myself whether I were I or some other fellow. But, like the boy's jackknife which, though all the blades were put in new, and the old handle finally replaced with a new handle, was still the same old jackknife, the Phi Sigma, I like to think, is still the same old Phi Sigma, and all its members are my friends, whether they know me or not.

"1878 - 1898". That makes me feel old. For, in my own judgment at least, I was of considerable size in '78. And now, though I am not so big by cranial measurement as I was then, yet I am two decades older:- a genuine Phi Sigma antique.

I remember, almost as if it were yesterday, the first meeting called to discuss the proposed organization. The place was the rear of what was then Beard Brothers' store, No. 458 West Madison Street. After business hours, about nine o'clock, we turned out the front lights, set half a dozen chairs in two rows, with one facing the rest for the first august chairman; and, with a motion of Henry Wilson's, I think, that Herbert Small should fill that position, the Phi Sigma - or the nameless group that afterwards became the Phi Sigma - was launched on its successful voyage. Let's see: I may forget one or two: but there were present Herbert Small, Henry Wilson, John Mabbs, my brother Harry and I, Will Hulin and Rob Jensen were there then or a few weeks later. Fred Temple was one of our best men, too, in those first years. He was a splendid fellow, and it is hard to think of him gone without any good-bye to the old friends that knew him so well. Frank Whitman took hold with us and helped much a little later: also Potts and Sawyer, and probably others whom I ought to remember. Whitman came to see me the other day, and is still the same old pin. "Our Esteemed Friend" Ballentine blossomed, if I remember rightly, a little later, with the girls. But, at the beginning, we thought we could get along better without the girls. We learned better later. However, it was well as it was at the start. It made us careful and appreciative. Some girls would have turned the Class into a mere social club and wrecked it within a year. But - what girls we did choose! Who should be congratulated the more it is hard to say:- the Phi Sigma girls for their character and ability, or we boys for our good taste.

From '78 till '84, when I left Chicago, the Phi Sigma was a great help to me. I shall always be grateful to it. My first real knowledge of many things in history, literature and science; my first intimacy with many thoughts and ideals, and some of the best friendships of my life, I owe to the Phi Sigma. Whether for good or bad, I probably should not be here today if it were not for the Phi Sigma. My college years grew out of it. It helped me succeed at the University in things I might otherwise have failed in. The stimulus it gave me led me, only a couple of months ago, to tell some of my young men here in the Church about it; and now, every two weeks, a similar society is meeting here, to do for others, as I trust, what the old Phi Sigma Class once did for me. And often the memories of Phi Sigma days are with me still. In the hurry and worry of the larger work, or in some happy dream at night, the old ways and the familiar faces come back to me; and, for the time, I am talking in fancy with Henry Wilson or Hattie Tanner or Carl Sawyer about Phi Sigma

schemes, at "the store"; or I am presiding over some exciting debate that would put the present Senatorial discussion of Cuban matters into the shade; or we are all off for the annual picnic, and I am going with Alice Hinchliff, or Grace Hyde, or Jennie Farr. Well: it's a wee bit sad, sometimes, to wake up and realize that those good times have all gone by; until one calls ones self back, with a frown and a smile, to the happy, busy, present, packed full of opportunity, and remembers that some day, perhaps twenty years hence, these days, too, will have their halo thrown around them, and will be seen to be, not so freshly beautiful and eager and confident perhaps as the Phi Sigma days, but richer and deeper, and I hope better, - in part because of the experiences that came before.

Pardon my somewhat personal retrospect. How I wish I could throw aside work for a few hours, clear the thousand miles between us at a bound, and sit down with you all at the banquet Friday night! I know you will have a glorious time. Here's health and happiness to the Phi Sigma Class for many years. And God bless us every one.

Yours as in '78,

Gerald H. Beard -