

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

AUG - 1 2005

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity House

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 1129 University Avenue S.E. not for publication N/A

city or town Minneapolis vicinity N/A

state Minnesota code MN county Hennepin code 053 zip code 55414

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Britta L. Bloomberg 7/22/05
Signature of certifying official Date

Britta L. Bloomberg, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, MN Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Edson H. Beall 9.15.05

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structure
		objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/education-related

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/education-related

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19th AND EARLY 20th CENTURY AMERICAN
MOVEMENTS/Craftsman/Art Nouveau

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE
walls BRICK; CONCRETE

roof COMPOSITION

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Community Planning and Development

Architecture

Period of Significance

1912-1936

Significant Dates

1912

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Stravs, Carl B.

Madsen Bros.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity House
Name of Property

Hennepin County, MN
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property less than one acre

St. Paul West, Minn.
1967, Revised 1993

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1.	<input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="5"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/> <input type="text" value="8"/> <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="1"/> <input type="text" value="4"/> <input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/> <input type="text" value="9"/> <input type="text" value="8"/> <input type="text" value="0"/> <input type="text" value="6"/> <input type="text" value="6"/> <input type="text" value="0"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
3.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Carole Zellie		
organization	Landscape Research LLC for Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity	date	2/1/05
street and number	1466 Hythe St.	telephone	651 641 1230
city or town	St. Paul	state	MN
		zip code	55108

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name	Phi Gamma Delta Association (Dale Thornsjo, President)		
street & number	P.O. Box 14901	telephone	952 806 0498
city or town	Minneapolis	state	MN
		zip code	55414

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity House

Name of property

Hennepin County, MN

County and State

Section 7 Page 1

Introduction

Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity House was built in 1912 during a period of chapter house expansion at the University of Minnesota and is a unique example of early twentieth-century modern architecture in Minnesota. The building is located at the northwest corner of University and 12th avenues S.E. near the western end of the University of Minnesota's "Fraternity Row." Former chapter houses are located to the west and north, and Sanford Hall dormitory is located across the street to the south. The property occupies Lot 10 of Block A, Tuttle's Addition to St. Anthony.

The Phi Gamma Delta exterior is unlike any other chapter house built at the University of Minnesota, and there are probably no buildings in Minnesota with such reference to the principles of the Viennese Secession. The connection was more than architect Carl B. Stravs' distant admiration for European modernism, since he immigrated to Minneapolis from Vienna less than ten years before completing the chapter house design. Phi Gamma Delta was created during a period influenced by Prairie School practitioners of American as well as European ideas. Features that evoke the contemporary Viennese Secession include the crisp main block and thin rounded edge of the overhanging roof slab, pentagonal ground-floor window openings, and thorough integration of the concrete structure and decoration. These features are countered by the graceful ellipse of the entry portico and its iron and molded concrete decoration.

Exterior

Nearly every feature of the exterior retains a high level of historic integrity. The flat-roofed, three-story brick and reinforced concrete structure rests on a concrete foundation and raised basement. Structure and decoration are completely integrated, with almost no applied decoration. The exterior is clad in brown brick above a concrete foundation. The narrow brick is laid in running bond, with a pair of brick stringers laid vertically at regular intervals and creating a subtle checkerboard pattern. Smooth blocks of concrete trim the foundation and sill, and the windows and entry. The edge of the roof slab forms the cornice, and brick corbels are tucked under the deep overhang. Originally, small cast iron crowns were mounted on the cornice above each corbel. There is a subtle elliptical pattern at the frieze, where the brick veneer ends and reveals the concrete surface.

The south-facing main elevation has a striking central portico sheltering a single-leaf door framed by sidelights and a transom. The portico is constructed of molded blocks of concrete, with an elliptical arched lintel and curved roof. Decorative concrete panels at the frieze are filled with low-relief molded figures flanking a fraternity crest and festoons with incised Greek mottos. An ornamental iron balustrade with geometric panels supported by concrete piers with molded caps rests atop the roof and edges the sunporch roof at the east.

The central bay above the entry is filled with a two-story panel containing windows that light the sleeping floor hallways. The panel is framed in concrete and is divided between the stories with smooth metal panels. The third-story window is intact, with slender vertical mullions and a leaded chevron band at the top. A diamond-shaped panel with chapter insignia appears to be a recent placement between the windows. The second-story window has modern replacement sash.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity House

Name of property

Hennepin County, MN

County and State

Section 7 Page 2

The brick surround of the principal windows at the lower story projects slightly, and each window has a peaked lintel and smooth concrete sill. Most of the rectangular upper-story windows originally had an upper sash divided into four vertical lights; some historic sash remains. Windows are symmetrically placed on all elevations except at the north.

The primary feature of the west elevation is the brick chimney mass flanked by two windows filled with slender lights, each with an angled transom. Unlike many "three-sided" fraternity houses of the period that feature utilitarian rear walls, Phi Gamma Delta has a handsome rear (north) wall, with a deep recessed bay abutting the interior main stair. A massive concrete lintel, which supports a third-floor catwalk, surmounts the bay. Three angled groups of multi-paned windows illuminate the stair.

The east entry is reached by two short flights of steps flanked by concrete piers with molded concrete caps decorated with narrow banding. Phi Gamma Delta's Greek letters are set into a concrete plaque edged with a chevron band on the wall above the landing.

The original site work at Phi Gamma Delta included a herringbone-patterned brick sidewalk leading from the entry to University Avenue. A similar walk still exists.

Interior

The interior plan is composed of a main block with a rear wing. The main block contains the principal rooms, including the basement dining and billiard room, and the first-floor living room and sunporch, and second and third floor sleeping rooms. The rear (north) wing contains the main stair that reaches three floors. On the first floor a library is placed at the end of the stair hall, and a coat room and a service stair are placed at the west. Below in the basement are the kitchen and laundry. On each of the upper two stories, four sleeping rooms are arranged along a central corridor. Each upper floor originally contained a toilet room in the west corner of the rear wing, and a fifth bedroom above the library. Servants were housed in the fifth bedroom on the third floor. Most interior partition walls throughout are hollow concrete tile.

From the central entry foyer, the focal point of the living room is a stone fireplace on the west wall, and the backlit, curved stair on the north wall. Stravs called the fireplace "the center of all the social life in the fraternity house."¹ The fireplace is built of rusticated limestone reportedly salvaged from Old Main in 1904 when the building was destroyed by fire. The mantel is a concrete slab supported by stone corbels, and the fireplace is framed by brick quoins, archaic columns, and a pair of angled windows. Niches contain the busts of Greek philosophers, features also salvaged from Old Main. A bronze plaque depicting Old Main was originally placed between the niches. It was replaced in ca. 1925 with an oak memorial plaque honoring chapter member Walter E. Yungbauer, who died in 1924 while a student at the University. The plaque was carved with the international

¹ Carl B. Stravs, "Phi Gamma Delta House, University of Minnesota," *The Western Architect* (September 1913).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity House

Name of property

Hennepin County, MN

County and State

Section 7 Page 3

fraternity crest and “Walter Yungbauer 1925” lettered on a carved festoon. It was executed by Walter’s father, William Yungbauer of St. Paul.²

In “Some Contributions to the Theme Modern Architecture” (1913), Stravs wrote that his design principle was “to provide the most economical, simple and substantial rooming for the use of the junior members of the fraternity, with the least amount of space wasted.”³ His choice of reinforced concrete was in keeping with both his design philosophy as well as the need for fireproof construction. His design philosophy is evident in the 35 x 30-foot central living room, where the heavy concrete girders and piers are treated honestly and without ornamentation. The original hanging light fixtures mounted between the beams—which Stravs did not specify and later criticized as “tasteless”—have not survived. Only one small light fixture in the foyer appears to date from earlier construction. Oak and pine millwork trim throughout the house has a simple profile. Paneling is confined to the sunporch walls. There is original high-backed oak window seating under the north windows and flanking the fireplace in the living room.

The glazed north wall dramatically illuminates the living room and was intended to also light the second and third floor hall before fire codes required enclosure. At the first floor, the open transverse stair retains its original ornamental iron rail, and is framed by large sashes containing multiple panes of divided glass. There is also a rear service stair and coatroom at the northeast corner. The west porch and northwest corner library are entered through three sets of French doors, and both rooms open to the east entry.

The compact second-floor rooms were planned for efficiency along the central hall, and each was provided with built-in dressers flanked by closets; these features have been altered or removed. The basement rooms are utilitarian, with a paneled dining hall and billiard room and several utility rooms. Concrete floors were used throughout the building, with the exception of white oak in the living room and library, and linoleum in the basement.

The rear (north) halls on the second and third floors were enclosed in 1958. Renovations in the 1960s included some new windows and aluminum storm sash, tile floors in the basement kitchen and dining area, and upgrades of the heating system.⁴ The existing windows are a mix of historic sash and replacement units.

² William Yungbauer (1861-1935) was a native of Austria who trained in Vienna and Paris. He arrived in the U.S. in 1884 and executed woodcarvings at the Villard House in New York City. He moved in St. Paul in 1888 to complete similar work at the James J. Hill House. He later founded a successful St. Paul furniture and decorating firm (William Yungbauer and Sons), that is still in business. See Walter Yungbauer obituary, *Pioneer Press* 19 Nov. 1924; William Yungbauer obituary, *Pioneer Press* 1 July 1935, 1. Yungbauer research by David Smith, Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity.

³ Stravs, “Some Contributions to the Theme ‘Modern Architecture,’” *Western Architect* (September 1913), 80.

⁴ “Seventy-five Years at Minnesota,” *The Phi Gamma Delta* (October 1965), 23.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity House

Name of property

Hennepin County, MN

County and State

Section 8 Page 1

Statement of Significance

Introduction

The Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity chapter house is a “rare example of early European modernism in Minnesota” that has long attracted the attention of historians.¹ Built in 1912, it is also a unique example of early 20th-century chapter house design influenced by the Viennese Secession and created at a time when most Greek organizations at the University of Minnesota and their designers chose Classical and Period Revival styles. Viennese-trained architect Carl B. Stravs thoroughly integrated the reinforced concrete structure with many of its decorative elements. The publication of the house in the *Western Architect* of September 1913 and Stravs’ text explaining its principles of utility and decoration contribute to an understanding of its significance. The period of significance extends from 1912 to 1936, when the Depression halted three decades of new chapter house construction at the University. Phi Gamma Delta is locally significant under National Register Criterion A for its relationship to the development of chapter house construction and related community planning and development at the University of Minnesota, and under National Register Criterion C for its relationship to the work of Carl B. Stravs and early twentieth-century modern architecture in Minnesota. The property also reflects the Minnesota historic context, “Urban Centers, 1870-1940.”

The Greek Letter Chapter House at the University of Minnesota

The University of Minnesota began construction of its first building on its 25-acre campus on a Mississippi River bluff in 1857. This single stone building, later known as Old Main, faced what would become University Avenue. Student enrollment rose from 308 in 1880 to 3,235 in 1900, and to 9,027 in 1920. Private boarding houses provided most students with a home at the University, as did some clubs and societies. It was not until 1910 that the first dormitory, Sanford Hall, was erected at the University. It was located on University Avenue, across the street from the future site of Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity.

The creation of academic or social fraternities at Minnesota began in 1874 with the Alpha Nu Chapter of Chi Psi Fraternity, and continued a tradition of literary and secret societies at American universities and colleges.² Fraternities and sororities typically had constitutions, secret rituals, libraries, and opportunities for debate and oratory. A Greek letter name, Greek motto, and an insignia were standard features. Once a house was secured near the campus by the chapter student members could also be provided with meeting space as well as lodging.

¹ Paul C. Larson, draft for National Register of Historic Places Nomination, 1127 University Ave., ca. 1980. On file, Northwest Architectural Archives, University of Minnesota. See also David Gebhard and Tom Martinson, *A Guide to the Architecture of Minnesota* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1977).

² Carole Zellie, *University of Minnesota Greek Letter Chapter House Designation Study* (Minneapolis: Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission 2003), 12.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity House

Name of property

Hennepin County, MN

County and State

Section 8 Page 2

Following Chi Psi, Phi Delta Theta was organized in 1881, followed by Delta Tau Delta (1883), Phi Kappa Psi and Sigma Chi (1888), Beta Theta Pi and Delta Kappa Epsilon (1889) and Delta Upsilon and Phi Gamma Delta (1890).³ The first academic sorority was Kappa Kappa Gamma (1880), followed by Delta Gamma (1882), Kappa Alpha Theta (1889), Alpha Phi (1890), Pi Beta Phi (1890), and Delta Delta Delta (1894). Professional societies, beginning with the medical fraternity Nu Sigma Nu in 1891, were also organized. Professional sororities appeared after the turn of the century, first in 1901 with Alpha Epsilon, a nursing sorority.

In 1910 Minnesota ranked first among U.S. universities in enrollment, with approximately 5,000 students; Michigan, Columbia, and Pennsylvania followed.⁴ Greek letter society membership was held by about one-fifth of the Minnesota student body. Fraternities numbered 18, with a total of 435 members, while nine sororities had 198 members. Professional fraternities numbered 14, with a total of 377 members. While membership would continue to expand until the 1930s, it would not keep pace with student enrollment. Individual chapter membership ranged from 11 to 33 members in 1896, to a range of 17 to 44 members by 1910.⁵

Minnesota's strong fraternity and sorority membership in this period reflected the national growth pattern. In 1905, 242,000 members in 1,686 chapters owned 317 houses. By 1912, when Phi Gamma Delta's new building was completed, there were 389,600 students enrolled in 2,524 sorority and fraternity chapters, and a total of 628 houses were chapter-owned.⁶

The Creation of Fraternity Row: Greek Letter Chapter House Construction

Chapter house construction at the University of Minnesota evolved through three phases. The first, before 1900, began with the early occupancy and adaptation of rented private houses. Next, a first generation of chapter houses, many executed in Beaux Arts, Classical, and Georgian Revival styles, were constructed between 1900 and 1917. (One much earlier exception was Chi Psi, whose first house was erected in 1883). Between 1921 and 1936 there was a second phase of Beaux Arts, English, and other Period Revival style building. A subsequent era included the remodeling of older houses and a new generation erected between 1949 and 1973. Fires, additions, and demolition have also been part of the pattern.

Between 1883 and 1936, 36 academic fraternities and sororities built 41 new chapter houses near the campus. Most were on Fraternity Row and west of 12th Ave. S.E., with a few built south of Washington Ave. Chi Psi Fraternity has had the longest ownership of a single site, occupying 1515 University Ave. in three successive houses since 1883. Phi Gamma Delta was the eighth house erected by a chapter at Minnesota, and was followed by ten more by 1920 and another 19 by 1930. Phi Gamma Delta was one of 12 new houses built between 1911 and 1920.⁷

³ Zellie, 13.

⁴ E. Bird Johnson, *Forty Years at the University of Minnesota* (Minneapolis: General Alumni Assn., 1910), 243.

⁵ *Minnesota Gopher*, 1896; Johnson, ed. *Forty years at the University of Minnesota* (Minneapolis: General Alumni Assn., 1910), 244.

⁶ "Statistics of Fraternities," *Banta's Greek Exchange*, vol. 1, no. 2 (March 1913), 178.

⁷ Of the 22 academic sorority chapters established at the University of Minnesota by 1936, eight chapters built a total of ten houses between 1912 and 1936. Between 1891 and 1930, at least 20 Greek letter professional fraternity chapters were established and maintained a chapter house for at least one year. Most were housed in former private dwellings.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity House

Name of property

Hennepin County, MN

County and State

Section 8 Page 3

The chapter house exterior usually evoked a large, stylish and comfortable domestic dwelling, but it concealed a well-published new building type refined by American architects through the early 20th century. As evident in the design of Phi Gamma Delta and its neighbors, and in publications such as *Banta's Greek Exchange* and Oswald Hering's *Designing and Building the Chapter House* (1930), a prominent entry and porch or terrace were among standard features of the chapter house. At the interior, the typical architectural program was organized around large reception and living rooms with large fireplaces, and a library. Billiard rooms, a dining hall, and chapter rooms were usually located on the first floor or in the basement, and the kitchen was usually placed in the basement. Individual or dormitory rooms were located on the upper floors. Servants' rooms were placed in the basement or on the upper floor.

By 1930, University Avenue was lined with fraternity houses between 15th and 19th avenues S.E. Many other fraternity and sorority houses, including Phi Gamma Delta, were located along University Avenue north of 11th St. S.E., on 10th Ave. S.E., and on adjacent portions of 5th and 6th streets. The Depression brought declining membership and an end to new construction. No houses were built between 1936 and 1949, and between 1936 and 1998, a total of 23 Greek chapters at Minnesota disbanded. However, at least seven fraternities founded before 1900 are still active, and all of the six sororities founded between 1880 and 1894.

Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity

Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity was founded at Washington Jefferson College in 1848 and the Mu Sigma chapter established at Minnesota in 1890. The chapter occupied rented quarters in a number of locations, moving from 1628 4th St. S.E. in 1890 to a location at Oak and Beacon streets, and then to addresses to 7th St. S.E. and 15th Ave.S.E.; 619 4th St. S.E.; 827 University, and 1110 6th St. S.E. Between 1908 and 1911 the chapter was at 1212 5th St. S.E.⁸

The Mu Sigma chapter followed the pattern typical to most. Plans were made for a permanent home, funds raised, and a lot finally purchased on University Avenue in 1906. Construction began late in 1910 and was completed in 1912 with Madsen Bros. as contractor. At the time of construction, Phi Gamma Delta's neighbor to the west was the just-completed Sigma Alpha Epsilon (1912, A.L. Dorr, architect). In 1916, the Alpha Gamma Delta Sorority built a new house just to the north (C. Brown, architect).

No major alterations were made to Phi Gamma Delta until 1958, when a block wall was added to the rear hallway on the second and third floors. It separated the upper floors from the open stairwell and its large windows. In the early 1960s architect David Runyon supervised a modernization that included aluminum windows. Today the building houses chapter members and continues to function as the center of chapter life.

⁸ "Minnesota Chapter Twenty-five Years Old," *The Phi Gamma Delta* (1915), 694; city directories.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity House

Name of property

Hennepin County, MN

County and State

Section 8 Page 4

Carl B. Stravs

Carl B. Stravs (1882-1958) was born in Yugoslavia and trained as an engineer at the Imperial and Royal Institute of Technology in Vienna, Austria.⁹ He arrived in the U.S. in 1902 and entered private practice in Minneapolis; he described himself as an "architect" in the 1910 census.

In 1906 he joined architect John Jager (1871-1959) in a brief partnership. Jager also studied in Vienna, reportedly with Otto Wagner, a leading proponent of the Viennese Secession, and graduated from the College of Architecture of the Vienna Polytechnicum in 1902.¹⁰ Like Stravs, Jager arrived in the United States in 1902 but it is not known if they had been acquainted in Vienna. Stravs and Jager collaborated on the *Plan of Minneapolis* (1906) with local engineers Edwins and Halden. This was the first of the city's comprehensive plans in the City Beautiful era in Minneapolis, and reflects what would become Stravs' long interest in city planning. Stravs became a U.S. citizen in 1908, and by 1909 was again in independent practice, while Jager had joined Hewitt and Brown of Minneapolis.

In addition to the Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity, in ca. 1911-12 Stravs had several restaurant commissions in downtown Minneapolis, including Café Grunewald and Shiek's Café (razed).¹¹ The tile and glass Affenkasten Restaurant was also illustrated in the *Western Architect* of September 1913, but its specific location has not been identified. The fraternity and restaurants were both published in the *Western Architect*, where Stravs served as foreign review editor for a few years. He also designed several distinctive automotive buildings for the Knoblauch real estate company, including 1112 Harmon Place (1915-16; razed), 1229 and 1315-17 Harmon Place (1923), and other commercial buildings on Hennepin Ave.¹²

Stravs served in World War I and then resumed his practice in Minneapolis, where he was on the Minneapolis Survey Commission (1929-31) and the Housing Commission (1935-6), and worked on the Sumner Homes housing project (1935).¹³ His residential work included the R.T. Giles House at 4106 Vincent Ave. S. (1908, with John Jager); the William Eurich House at 2322 Lake of the Isles Parkway (1914); two 25-unit apartment buildings at 4412 and 4418 W. Lake Harriet Parkway (1922), and the Arnulf Ueland House at 3850 Richfield Road (1925).¹⁴ His solo practice apparently continued into the 1950s.

⁹ Carl B. Stravs file, Northwest Architectural Archive, University of Minnesota. Stravs' papers do not seem to have survived.

¹⁰ John Jager file, Northwest Architectural Archive, University of Minnesota. According to United States Census, 1910, Thirteenth Ward E.D. 11, Sheet 4. Jager's wife Selma and younger brother Rudolph were also part of the household. Rudolph, age 24, was a mechanical engineer.

¹¹ *Western Architect* (September 1913), 87-92; Shiek's was apparently a restaurant interior commission.

¹² Carole Zellie, Landscape Research, "Harmon Place Historic District Designation Study." Prepared for the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission, April 2001.

¹³ Carl B. Stravs file, Northwest Architectural Archive, University of Minnesota.

¹⁴ 4106 Vincent Ave S. Minneapolis Building Permit #B76642; 2322 Lake of the Isles Parkway in *Western Architect* (October 1915); 3850 Richfield Road Minneapolis Building Permit #B187058.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity House

Name of property

Hennepin County, MN

County and State

Section 8 Page 5

The 1910 census listed Stravs as a single boarder at 818 18th St. E., Minneapolis.¹⁵ In this period he seems to have used the name “Charles,” later using “Carl.” By 1920 Stravs and his wife Josephine, who was of Swedish parentage, and children Franz and Mary Ann resided at 4649 York Ave. S., Minneapolis.

The Viennese Secession and Stravs

Phi Gamma Delta’s Yugoslavian-born designer was an engineering student in Vienna during the early years of the Viennese Secession, and launched his Minnesota practice with several buildings that reflected its influence. The Secession was part of a larger international design reform movement that swept Europe at the turn of the century. The movement took different forms—such as Art Nouveau (in France), the Jugendstil (in Germany), and Modernismo (in Spain)—but all shared a general rejection of earlier styles. An interest in art and design appropriate to modern life and the utilization of modern materials as well as ornamentation derived from natural forms were among common architectural and decorative themes.

Otto Wagner (1841-1918) was Vienna’s best-known architect and engineer and influenced many young architects, particularly with his ideas about city planning.¹⁶ Although he would not have known the later work such as the Kirche am Steinhof (Church of St. Leopold. 1903-07), he would have seen examples of Wagner’s work that showed his preference for flat roofs and horizontal lines as well as an often unadorned exhibition of construction methods and materials. Most notable is the flat-roofed Majolica apartment building (1899).

Stravs likely witnessed the 1897 “Secession,” which was the departure (or “secession”) of Viennese artists from the *Künstlerhausgenossenschaft*, a conservative artists’ society at the Academy of Fine Arts. The Secession embraced both organic, plant-based motifs as well as the cubic and geometric motifs of the English Arts and Crafts movement. The architectural monument of the movement was the Secession Building (1898) designed by Joseph Olbrich. The motto at the lower story was inscribed *Der Zeit Ihre Kunst, Der Kunst Ihre Freiheit* (To Every Age Its Art to Art its Freedom). With his departure for the United States, Stravs just missed the founding in 1903 of the Wiener Werkstätte (Viennese Workshop).

In Minnesota, Stravs saw the work of Prairie School architects who embraced principles that echoed some of his own developing ideas. Few practitioners of the Prairie Style, however, had such first-hand experience with European modernism. Stravs showed great zeal for explaining his Secessionist principles, and became a contributor to the *Western Architect*. In addition to describing his own work—including Phi Gamma Delta, restaurant commissions, and a grammar school design competition—he wrote of the peril of following historical styles, and noted “according to Otto Wagner, the modern architecture of our times endeavors to get the architectural forms and motives from the purpose of the structure, the construction, and the materials used.” He wrote that the forms and motives of buildings should be of “the utmost simplicity, well balanced as to good proportions expressing the vigor and strength upon which alone the beauty of our

¹⁵ United States Census, 1910, Fifth Ward E.D. 103, Sheet 1A.

¹⁶ Werner Oechslin, *Otto Wagner, Adolf Loos, and the Road to Modern Architecture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity House

Name of property

Hennepin County, MN

County and State

Section 8 Page 6

buildings should be based.”¹⁷ In 1914, he illustrated an article in the *Western Architect* with Josef Hoffman’s work in Vienna, Joza Gocar’s in Prague, and L.A. Wesninj’s in Moscow.¹⁸

After the construction of Phi Gamma Delta, chapter house architecture at Minnesota continued on its traditional course, with two exceptions. Perhaps Phi Gamma Delta contributed to the inspiration for the austere design for Sigma Nu Fraternity at 915 University (J.A. Ecklund, 1912; razed), and the Prairie Style Pi Beta Phi Sorority at 1019 University (Marion Alice Parker and Ethel Bartholomew, 1916).¹⁹

Local evidence of Art Nouveau—as opposed to its later and flashier cousin Art Deco—is scarce. Examples such as an apartment house façade at 908 Grand in St. Paul (1922) only hint at the ideas developed at Phi Gamma Delta. With the exception of John Jager, no other Minnesota architects seem to have shared Stravs’ particular interest in European modernism. The *University of Minnesota Greek Letter Chapter House Designation Study* (2003) analyzed the chapter-built houses around the campus. The study cited the Phi Gamma Delta chapter house for its unique design.²⁰ While more costly chapter houses were erected in the same period, none exhibited the earnest originality of Stravs’ modern ideas.

Conclusion

Phi Gamma Delta is a nearly unaltered and early example of European modernism in Minnesota, and is among the most architecturally significant chapter houses at the University of Minnesota.²¹ Adhering to the modern architectural principles that Carl B. Stravs carefully described in the *Western Architect*, the building program was carefully developed for the needs of the chapter. The architect resisted over-decoration of the reinforced concrete construction and relied on simple, graceful geometry to enliven the exterior. The result uniquely evoked the Viennese Secession, with no comparable buildings at the University or in the state.

Phi Gamma Delta is included in the University of Minnesota Greek Letter Chapter House Historic District designated by the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission in 2003. The property is locally significant under National Register Criterion A for its relationship to the development of chapter house design and community planning and development at the University of Minnesota, and under National Register Criterion C for its relationship to the work of Carl B. Stravs and early 20th-century modern architecture in Minnesota.

¹⁷ Stravs, “Some Contributions to the Theme Modern Architecture.” *Western Architect* (September 1913), 75.

¹⁸ C.B. Stravs, “Department of Foreign Review,” *Western Architect* (March 1914), 31-33.

¹⁹ Zellie, Chapter House Designation Study, A-47.

²⁰ Zellie, Chapter House Designation Study, 25.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity House

Name of property

Hennepin County, Minnesota

County and State

Section 9 Page 1

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity House

Name of property

Hennepin County, Minnesota

County and State

Section 9 Page 2

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity House

Name of property

Hennepin County, MN

County and State

Section 10 Page 1

Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity House occupies Lot 10 of Block A, Tuttle's Addition to St. Anthony.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the city lot that has historically been associated with the property.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity House
Name of property
Hennepin County, MN
County and State

Section 10 Page 2



PHI GAMMA DELTA HOUSE, UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA. C. B. STRAVS, ARCHITECT

The first floor coat room and second floor toilet are sufficiently separated to exclude all of the objectionable noise from the balance of the rooms.

The rear stairs are the service stairs for the help. The sleeping quarters for the help are located in the rear part of the third floor. The corridor, shown in the rear elevation, serves for connecting the help bedrooms with the rear stairs.

The representative and assembly room of the house is the big living room on the main floor. The size of the same is 34 feet 10 inches by 30 feet 5 inches. The carrying, reinforced concrete girders extend the shortway and rest on the front wall and on the two reinforced concrete piers at the main stair hall, which construction is typical for all floors and also roof.

The main stair hall opens from the living room and leads to the basement, dining and billiard room and to the second and third floor bedrooms, and was made as one of the features of the house.

The large fire place, located at the west side of the living room, with the group of windows on each side, is really the center of all the social life in the fraternity house.

The material for the fire place is limestone and is a relic of the old and burned down main building of the University of Minnesota, and represents as such the sentiment and devotion of the fraternity members to their Alma Mater to erect to the memory of one of the oldest buildings of the campus a fitting monument.

The two busts set in the niches of the fire place, representing two Greek philosophers, all smoked up, are also relics, and were rescued with great risk by members from the top of the burning main building.

The center of the fire place, showing at present the crest of the fraternity is reserved for a bronze memorial relief of the old main building.

The east side of the living room opens towards the library porch, which can also be entered from the library and from the street.

The decorating and furnishing of the several rooms were done by different decorating firms, who never consulted the architect regarding the colors, ornaments, light fixtures, etc., and which decorative firms never grasped the meaning of the design of the building, leading to abnormalities like the wood chopping bowl with glued on plaster paris ornaments,

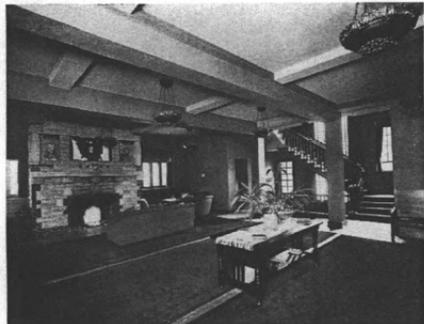
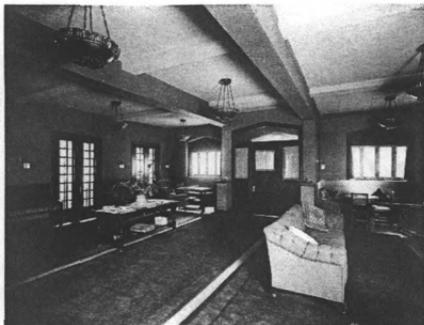
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity House

Name of property
Hennepin County, MN
County and State

Section 10 Page 3



INTERIORS PHI GAMMA DELTA FRATERNITY HOUSE, UNIVERSITY
OF MINNESOTA. C. B. STRAVE, ARCHITECT, MINNEAPOLIS □ □

THE WESTERN ARCHITECT
SEPTEMBER □ 1913

Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity House Interior. *Western Architect* (September 1913, 84).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

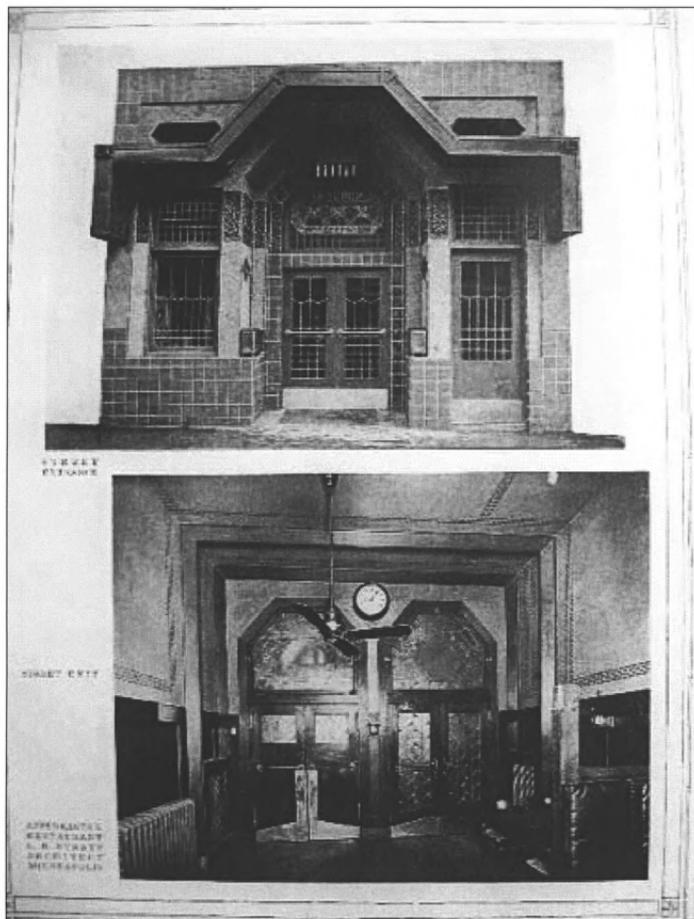
Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity House

Name of property

Hennepin County, MN

County and State

Section 10 Page 4



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