



Headquarters

Located in Town and Country, Missouri, Headquarters supports the full Pi Phi member experience. Through strategic work with every chapter, alumnae club and more than 2,000 volunteer leaders, Headquarters serves our members to ensure our sisterhood remains a premier organization for women for generations to come.

The History of Pi Beta Phi Headquarters

Pi Beta Phi has had its Headquarters (HQ), also called “Central Record and Supply Office,” “Central Office,” or “CO,” located in several cities and three states. Each of these physical transitions was made with the intention of continuing and supporting the growth of Pi Beta Phi, and the naming transition from “Central Office” to “Headquarters” demonstrated Fraternity growth by its ownership of a building.

After legislation passed at the 1925 Convention, the Central Record and Supply office was set to be located at 60 Woodrow Street in West Hartford, Connecticut. This location was the home of cataloguer **MABEL SCOTT BROWN**, D.C. Alpha. Mabel soon became Director of the Central Office, and a proper office was found. Located at 175 Broad Street in Hartford, Connecticut, this location consisted of two large offices on the third floor of

this building; the structure was owned by the Hartford Women’s Club, and rent was \$50 per month. On June 1, 1931, Central Office moved to the American Industrial Building, located at 983 Main Street in Hartford, Connecticut.

In the September 1926 issue of *The Arrow*, Mabel was praised for her splendid success in establishing and conducting Pi Beta Phi’s first Central Office and Supply Office. “It’s difficult to

conceive the vast amount of time, hard work and thought which have gone into making the first year of the Central Office a successful one....” the article wrote. “Grand Council believes this non-executive office of Pi Beta Phi is developing the ideal solution to the problem of heavy clerical work of the Fraternity.”

With that success, Mabel was officially named Director of the Central Office, and bigger office space was needed. Two large rooms on the third floor of the Hartford Women’s Club in Connecticut were leased and consisted of tiers upon tiers of wooden card catalogs—including Fraternity chapter records, member lists and correspondence from coast to coast. Mabel was heralded as the Pi Phi who not only created Central Office—but made it thrive. The job demanded constant attention and long hours, but as *The Arrow* noted, she had “the capacity for accomplishing things in the most efficient way and no better person could have been found in the Fraternity to undertake this new work.”

By 1928, Mabel’s Central Office responsibilities and Pi Phi’s membership had grown exponentially. In addition to her regular clerical work, she edited and published the Fraternity directory, served as alternate to the National Panhellenic Congress (now Conference) and made two official chapter visits. As chapters, alumnae clubs and Pi Phi membership grew, the Central Office expanded

from one part-time assistant to two full-time secretaries and increased its budget to meet the Fraternity’s ever-growing needs. When Mabel resigned in 1932, she left behind more than just catalogues and letters; she left a legacy that laid the foundation for decades of progress.

In January 1933, Illinois Zeta **BEATRICE STEPHENSON** was named Director of Central Office. Central Office was moved to the Durley Building Bloomington, Illinois, to make it more centrally located to the east and west coasts. This was especially efficient regarding the national mailings that were sent on a regular basis. Another time Central Office moved was after Beatrice married Carson Mayer Purdunn on October 21, 1933. This time, it moved to three rooms in the National-Dixie Building in Marshall, Illinois.

In September 1943, Central Office was relocated to 206 National Bank Building located in Decatur, Illinois. Illinois Zeta **ADELE MURPHY** became the new Director of Central Office. Adele served as Director until 1944, when Illinois Zeta **LOUISE BRESEE SHAPPERT** became Director in 1944 and held the office for one year. She was followed by Beatrice, who served her second term until 1947 when Oklahoma Alpha **GLADYS SCIVALLY** was named to the position.

In September 1948, the Central Office moved to 410 Standard Office Building in Decatur, Illinois. The CO contained a Graphotype and an Addressograph, which were used in the making of



address labels for *The Arrow*. The Addressograph could take up to two and a half days to run the updated labels. These machines were also used for general mailings. CO consisted of a membership records department, a bookkeeping and jewelry department, mailing department, duplicating, supply, chapter and club order and a Magazine Agency. Illinois Eta **JANET PATTON** took over the role of Director in May 1952 and served until 1957, when she resigned and was followed by Illinois Zeta **MARGARET DICK**.

On January 1, 1958, Central Office was moved to Room 264 of the Citizens Building, located at 250 North Water Street in Decatur, Illinois. By spring of 1961, Illinois Eta **DOROTHY ALLEN BURNS** was named Director. Ohio Beta **MARGARET LESUR HEAD** then served as Director from 1963 until 1965.

On April 3, 1964, Central Office opened in the new Midvale Building at 112 South Hanley Road in St. Louis, Missouri. At that time,

St. Louis was one of the largest cities in the middle of the United States and had a major international airport. It was centrally located, with a large alumnae base for potential employees, and was home to the Grand President at the time, Missouri Beta **ALICE WEBER JOHNSON**. In 1965, Missouri Beta **RUTH ANN BANDY EDWARDS** served as Director. Arkansas Beta **SALLY PERRY SCHUELENBERG** took over Director of Central Office in August 1967. There were eight full-time employees in 1964. Fraternity records, various Pi Phi supplies, jewelry, the archives, the historical room and regular Pi Phi mailings were all housed or took place at Central Office. There was also a Magazine Agency Corner, an accounting department and a stock room at this location.



The grand opening of the office featured a candle lighting ceremony, luncheon and tea and included an Arrowmont® display.

On April 1, 1974, after outgrowing its Hanley location, Central Office moved around the corner to Suite 333 at 7730 Carondelet.

This office started at 5,675 square feet and housed nine full-time and six part-time employees. Over the years, more office space was rented until the Fraternity, and the newly created Foundation, took up most of the floor. In 1981, Tennessee Beta **VIRGINIA BLAND FRY** became the Director of Central Office. When Virginia retired in 1996, Iowa Zeta **RENEE ROSS MERCER** took on her duties.

With careful strategic planning and a needs assessment, it was determined that a new space was needed for Central Office. Pi Phi purchased a plot of land in Town and Country Commons office park in January 2000 and under the leadership of Grand President **SIS MULLIS**, South Carolina Alpha, Pi Beta Phi broke ground on a new Headquarters location.

Doors opened on November 3, 2002, and included a ribbon cutting, facility tours and a reception.



The Headquarters building at 1154 Town and Country Commons Drive in Town and Country, Missouri, was designed to house the Fraternity, Fraternity Housing Corporation and the Foundation, staff offices and support rooms, a board room for Grand Council and other formal meetings, a training room and larger archives for Pi Phi history. The trees planted around the building are known as “Founders Grove.” The walkway has bricks with inscriptions purchased and written by individual Pi Phis, chapters, clubs and friends of Pi Beta Phi. Headquarters Task Force Chairman **LOU ANN MONTGOMERY CARTER**, Oklahoma Alpha, wrote about this new space that the “... goal was



to have a building our membership would be proud of and that would also be an efficient, functional office for all our employees and visiting officers. We wanted the style to be classic and timeless. I believe we accomplished that.”

In 2006, Iowa Beta **JULI WILLEMANN** became Executive Director of Pi Phi Headquarters. In 2016, an addition of 4,200 square feet was completed, and retired Executive Director **RENEE ROSS MERCER**, Iowa Zeta headed up the Renovation Task Force. This renovation was approved by Grand Council to fulfill the ever-evolving needs of the membership and to

accommodate the increasing size of staff with additional offices, meeting spaces and a larger shipping and receiving room, as well as doubling the size of the archives and expanding the kitchen. The Fraternity, Foundation and Fraternity Housing Corporation continued to serve the membership throughout the process. What began as meticulous record-keeping has evolved into international communications, marketing, event planning, data management, housing and so much more.

In 2021, **JULI WILLEMANN** announced her retirement as Executive Director. Following an extensive

search, Grand Council named Shawn Eagleburger as Executive Director of the Fraternity and Fraternity Housing Corporation.

From our humble beginnings in Mabel’s New England bedroom to today’s 11,516 square foot facility, more than 50 employees—in-office and remote across the United States—support the full member experience. Through our strategic work with every chapter, alumnae club and more than 2,000 volunteer leaders, Headquarters serves our members to ensure our sisterhood remains a premier organization for women for generations far into the future. ✨

