

A Manual for Historians

by
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Barbershop Society Historian

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A Guide for All Historians

This manual is a helpful guide for historians of every level, Chapter, District as well as the International. Some of this information was gleaned from the 1987 edition of the manual and updated. We are indebted to two historians of the first order, **Dean Snyder** and **Wilbur Sparks**, for their service and contributions to this instruction manual.

There is a great deal of information here. All historians can find something of use. It is our hope this will point you in the proper direction and be a constant reference.

We are confident that, if the job is done right, your members will benefit from and appreciate your efforts of preserving our heritage.



Our Founder, OC Cash, and the article that started it all

The Historian

The Role of Society Historians at the District and Chapter Levels

A Pathway to the Future

The Importance of History

In a Society which has prospered for over 70 years, there is much to remember and record. The following three quotations provide a setting for continued renewal of historical interest.

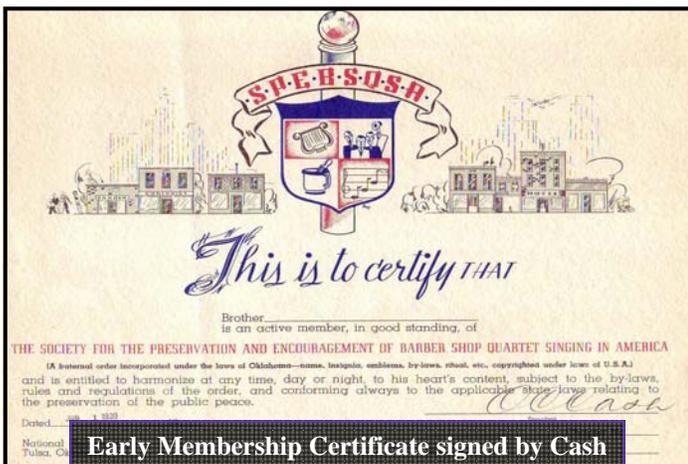
- *Those who will not learn the lesson of history are condemned to repeat it.* George Santayana (philosopher)
- *Any organization that does not have a remembrance of past history would be crippled as a man suffering from amnesia.* John Gardner
- *The force that holds us together is not our music alone. It is equally our sense of history.* Dean Snyder, BHS Historian-Emeritus

The Role of Society Historians

The International Historian, **Dean Snyder**, summarized the historian's role and function as follows:

"The role of an historian is more than being a mere recorder of events. If he is true to his profession, he is also an evaluator. His study permits him to distinguish trivial events from important ones. To recognize great 'turning points' and to form judgments regarding decisions made in the light of their effectiveness to meet the needs of the times. People make history and so, to some extent, the historian is also a biographer, describing and comparing the effectiveness of leaders and leadership. Thus we have three basic roles: Recorder, Evaluator and Biographer."

*"In a private membership organization such as this Society, the historian can limit his attention to these basics. Or he can go farther. He can include a role of **Promoter**. Even in a society with the key word, **Preservation** in its title, our history will never get the attention it deserves without promotional effort."*



Suggestions and Recommendations

Society history should be recognized as a program activity at all district and chapter levels.

- Each district and each chapter should have an historian. He should be recognized as a working member of the administrative team. His name and title should be included in the listing of district or chapter officers wherever such listing appears in print. He should be invited to attend administrative meetings on a regular basis. If there is a long-range planning committee, the historian should be asked to contribute, based on past experience or records of successful (or unsuccessful) programs. From time to time the historian should make either a written report of his activities or an oral presentation.
- The historian should hold an appointive office. He should be selected and willing to serve based on general interest and experience in society affairs. More importantly, he should possess *historical passion* – a love for the Society and its accomplishments. He should have more than ordinary curiosity and should have the collector's instinct. He should have writing ability. He should be research-minded – able to dig out, retain and organize historical facts. These ideal qualifications may not always be available, but they present a matrix against which to make a selection. (Note: some of our best historians have been past district and chapter presidents.)
- The historian who serves best has a continuing, and not transitory, appointment. The position should not rotate from year to year. Continuity is important. If the appointee has been selected well and is performing well, he should be appointed and reappointed as long as he is willing to serve.
- The historian should have a budget in support of his work. For this purpose, he should prepare and submit a work plan for consideration by the budget-making authority. He should have facilities for assembling and retaining historical facts and artifacts. Some travel expenses may be needed.
- The historian has many avenues for the presentation of his work. Much of this will be written material; some may involve the preparation of visual displays or exhibits. He should consider any or all of the following:

A column or page under the historian's byline as a continuing series in each district or chapter publication which reaches all members. A good example is found in each *Westunes* (FWD) with a page of history entitled *Before the Color Fades*.

A page of historical information in the annual district or chapter directory. A good example is found in the Central States directory under the heading *Historical Highlights*.

A one-or two-page capsule history as a handy reference. An example from the Northeastern District is on page 6.

Preparation of more elaborate historical books or brochures at significant intervals such as *A Ten-Year History* coming from a more recent chapter. The most extensive district history is in three volumes covering the Mid-Atlantic District from 1945 through the mid-1970s. The most extensive chapter history covers the period 1948-1983 of the Alexandria, Virginia *Harmonizers*. Another excellent history covers the 20-year record (1955-1975) of the San Antonio *Chordsmen*.

At the district level, each district function (including HEP schools and Leadership Academies) should feature some form of historical display. For example, in one district (NED), this display is housed as a traveling exhibit in a permanent trailer which is parked outside the meeting place.

History can be recalled and made vivid with scrapbooks containing pictures, programs, bulletins, news clippings, correspondence, etc. These are excellent items of display on an *historical table* at Society functions. Also in this category are free-standing exhibit panels.

Oral presentations are also within the province of the historian, such as at orientation sessions for new members which are usually scheduled apart from the weekly chapter meeting. Another opportunity can be a program segment at "old-timers" or "alumni" special meetings.

- Both district and chapter historians should be alert to search out and discover historical items or artifacts of unusual interest or significance to the International Society and its members. Old songs are always welcome to increase our collection in Harmony Hall, but many other items await discovery. For example, the daughter of one of the Bartlesville Barflies (1939 Quartet Champs / our first) donated some artifacts including her father's miniature Landino Trophy, his name badge AND his **1939 GOLD Medal**. It now resides in a custom frame in the lobby of Harmony Hall in Nashville.

A Final Word

The work of the historian in his district or chapter can be lonesome and unrewarding if not fully recognized and supported by district and chapter leadership. In past years, the Society at large has too often given meager attention to our historical record. That attitude is now changing for the better.



A "How To" For Chapter and District Historians

So you've been appointed Historian! A few days (weeks? months?) have gone by and you're wondering what to do about this assignment. You have no particular experience as an archivist/historian, no training in gathering facts which future generations of barbershoppers will find fascinating and not even any talent (you think) for writing as a historian should.

Oh, you may have been a bulletin editor, may have written press releases for your chapter and you may have some memory of grammar or rhetoric from your school days. But your inclination is to say, "Really, Mr. President. You've selected the wrong fellow." Don't do it!

Writing history is no more than getting facts and putting them down in presentable style.

You'll feel more affirmative, we hope, after studying this little discussion of *how to do it*. The first thing to realize is that *history* does not spring forth in gripping form the first time around.

Before any narrative can be written, the necessary *research* must be done. This doesn't take a trained archivist or even a writer with a background in history. It takes only a systematic, thorough, persistent person who will follow this outline, step by step, to produce a basic archive.

When the facts have been collected, you or another writer will find it much easier to produce the "history".

Search Out Those Facts

You really have two projects. The first is to dig out facts from the past and, perhaps, place them in a narrative showing the history of your chapter or district from its beginnings. The second is to gather facts about current events and personalities

for use in producing a one-year history, not necessarily for immediate publication or distribution at the beginning of the next year.

The facts you need are essentially the same, whether you are writing a 40-year history or whether you have just succeeded a historian who has already produced a history "from the beginning."

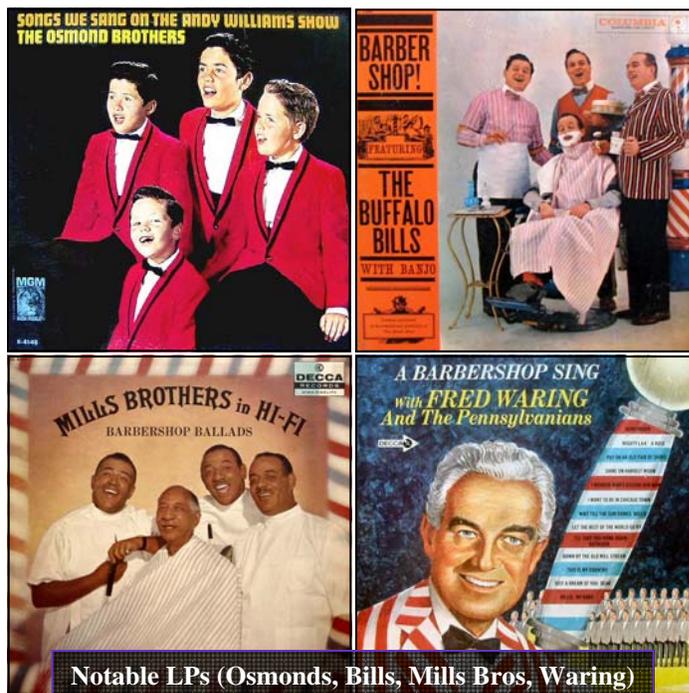
The research you need will be the same and it really should be done every year if your chapter/district wants a good archive from which history can be written.

Doing the Research

Here's a list of the facts and items you should be gathering as an archivist or history researcher. When you obtain them, put them away in retrievable form. Use your own system; scrapbooks, file folders, manila envelopes or three-ring binders. The mechanics are not nearly as important as simply being systematic and thorough. You should gather:

1. Written records: minutes, books or files of Board of Directors, inactive files of officers and committee chairmen and file chapter bulletins (for district histories corresponding materials)
2. Chapter scrapbook containing clippings, photos, programs and chapter memorabilia
3. Directory with names and addresses of officers, committee chairmen and other officials, together with a list of all members. If you are a district historian, the district directory will be fine.
4. Lists of quartets, with personnel, and list of appearances made during the year. Contest score sheets should be included.
5. Photographs of officers and quartets, together with a good photo of your chorus, are a chapter history. All persons in each photo should be identified, left to right, and this list pasted on the back of the photo. Do not write or type on the back of a photograph.
6. Biographies of officers and other VIPs. These are useful not only for writing history, but also for obituaries when death occurs.
7. Music history
 - a. Musical leadership (director, assistants, arrangers, section leaders, music and stage presence committee.
 - b. Songs which were sung; binders of arrangements for the files, with dates they were sung in public.
8. Principal events
 - a. Annual show: script, theme, programs, tickets, posters and photos.
 - b. Appearance in contest: photos (with names of all singers), score sheets, what songs were sung.
 - c. Package shows: where and when, photos.
 - d. Special events: ladies' nights, program features, special visitors, chapter visits.

9. Ladies' auxiliary: officers, projects, chapter assistance, photos, contributions of money or services.
10. Harmony Foundation: chapter projects, amount of contributions, education of chapter, including new members.
11. Other community service projects: public appearances, attendance, programs, results.
12. Acquisitions: new uniforms, risers, show equipment such as scenery, PA system or flood lights.



Writing the History

If you are writing a 25-year history, the time to start is as soon as possible after the research has been accumulated. Chances are it will take several months to complete, even a year or so. Therefore, it is imperative that you get started. If you have succeeded another historian who brought the project up to speed and turned it over to you after publication of history, your job for the first year or so may simply be an archivist. You may decide to only collect the research and file it for future reference. Or you may decide to write a one-year narrative at the end of the year, either for future reference or annual publication.

Whenever you start writing, be sure to produce an outline before the composition begins. You may wish to cover the subject in a series of chapters: *Our Show*, *Going To Contest*, *Sing Outs for The Public*, *The Chapter Program*, *Our Leadership And How It Worked*, etc. Within each chapter, an outline of what is covered should be written.

When the outline is produced, circulate it among knowledgeable members. Get their reactions and suggestions. You'll probably find you've left out important aspects of the

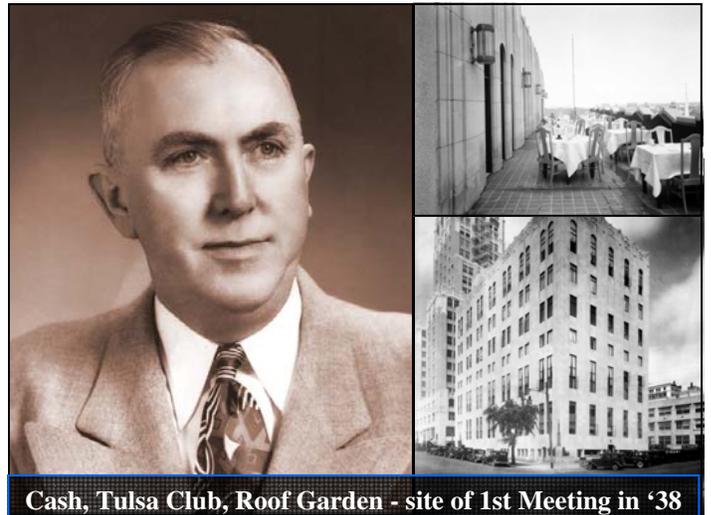
year's events. Obtaining photographs will be difficult if delayed. Make it a habit to obtain photos, even taking them yourself, as events occur.

When officers are elected, gather them in a group for a shot, and then get individual shots. When a quartet is formed get a shot as soon as possible. If it is a good photo, the quartet may want one, but at least *you* have a photo of that group. Write name and office (if officers, board of chairmen) or names and parts sung (if a quartet), showing left to right identification. Paste this on the back of the photo. You will be amazed how soon names fade from memories.

Consider placing some of the research you have done in an appendix. Officer names, quartet personnel, dates and places of sing outs all go well in tabular form.

If you are writing an annual narrative, start work on it in September and try to have a rough draft record of the whole year by December 31. Then set February 15 as your goal for the finished writing. If this is to be published annually, it should be ready for distribution by April 1.

Your chapter or district may desire to publish a history every five years rather than every year. Work should begin at the beginning of the fifth year, with a goal of completing it by July 1 of the sixth year.



Cash, Tulsa Club, Roof Garden - site of 1st Meeting in '38

Publishing the Narrative

When the narrative has been completed, duplication should begin. Obviously the most effective and readable history will be one with photos and line drawings to perk up the reader's interest. If it is to be a district history, the intent may be to sell it to members. They are not likely to purchase it unless there are plenty of photos of people they know or knew. Word will spread rapidly on this point and you will find sales either boom or flop depending on how much interest is generated.

Desktop publication has made it easier to reproduce books today but be sure you produce a top-quality reproduction, use lots of high resolution images and a readable layout format.

When the finished history is ready for distribution, don't neglect to furnish a copy to the International Office and the International Historian. If yours is a chapter history, your district historian will also appreciate a copy and you just may find your words resting in *his* prose someday. After all, he has to keep up his own research, too!



First Society Logo

How to be a Successful Chapter Historian

by Grady Kerr – Society Historian

The historian is too often overlooked and considered unimportant in the life blood of the chapter. Truth is this job is one where a member can easily exceed expectations, gain a great deal of personal satisfaction and provide a wonderful service to the members past, present and future.

The common misconception is to appoint or expect this position to be filled by one of the more veteran members. This is NOT a requirement and, truth be told, the chapter may be better served if this is done by a member with little or no barbershop experience. There is also no term limit to this position. The longer one person serves, the better he becomes at it and the better served is the chapter.

The job of historian has several layers and areas of responsibilities. These tasks are, but not limited to:

**Observing / Recording / Reporting / Researching /
Collecting / Gathering / Promoting / Reuniting /
Perpetuating**

The chapter historian often determines the priorities of the list above and customizes the job based on the needs of the chapter. He can make this position as much or as little work as he can handle. In a perfect world ALL of these areas need to be covered and there is no need to force oneself to do ALL of this without help. Don't be afraid to delegate. In most cases, those who help will appreciate being a part of this and enjoy learning and helping.

Observing / Recording / Reporting / Researching

This is the easy part of the job. Just sit back and watch. Take note of who does what and when. Mentally record the names and faces and events. We all do this but as historian, the exercise takes on a new dimension as the memory needs to be accurate. Members need someone to be the point of contact for the FACTS. Often the memories fade and history gets revised by those who swear their version is the real truth. This is a continuing battle and being an accurate observer is key.

Collecting / Gathering

Facts are better presented when you can accurately back up your statements. This is where creating and maintaining a chapter historical archive is very helpful. One should consider gathering Show Programs, Photos, Chapter

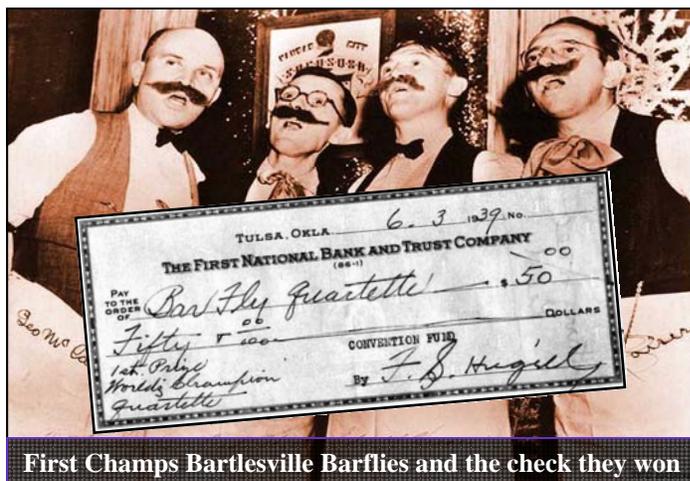
Bulletins, Photos, Score Sheets, Photos, Awards and, of course, Photos.

Having a place to keep this material is important. It is strongly suggested these NOT be kept in a garage or attic as they should be cared for in a climate controlled environment. File cabinets are best for organization. This seems to be obvious but you'd be surprised how many keep this historical material in less than ideal conditions and when it's time to use them, they are ruined and / or useless.

Of course, one of the toughest parts of this job is to be detail oriented and diligent. This is where the historian can shine. Maintaining this material includes IDENTIFYING the faces and dates of the items in the collection. How often does one see photos with no note of who is in the photo, the event or even the year it was taken. A good historian tries to record this information during the gathering process. It pays off in the end.

Promoting

Now that one has been observing and collecting it's time to promote. The historian is the perfect person to write articles for the chapter bulletin and be sure there is a historical presence in the chapter show program and website. The members always enjoy learning about the past and especially the story of their fellow members and what they did in the early years of the chapter. They also depend on the historian to write something about those who pass on. This is one of the honors of being historian. Displays at chapter meetings or shows is another great way all the collecting and researching can be put to use.



First Champs Bartlesville Barflies and the check they won

A Sample Capsule History



**NORTHEASTERN
DISTRICT**
BARBERSHOP HARMONY SOCIETY

By **Richard Ellenberger**

International Board Member and District Historian 1971



The formation and early history of the Northeastern District of SPEBSQSA was due primarily to the efforts of **Harold (Hal) B. Staab**, one of the truly great barbershoppers of our Society.

Hal founded the Northampton, MA chapter, first in the east, in 1941 and promoted the formation of many others. These include Springfield, MA in 1942; Troy, NY and Terryville, CT in 1943; and Hartford, CT, Holyoke, MA, New Haven, CT and Schenectady, NY in 1944. Hal served as Society president 1942-1944, international board member 1941-1946 and 1947-1949, and International Historian 1947-1949. He organized the Northeastern District in 1946, serving as its first president until 1948.

He started *Harmonizer*, the Society's national publication, in 1942. No new chapters were formed in 1945 but with the end of World War II, seven new chapters were chartered in 1946. They were New Bedford, MA; Bridgeport, CT; Conway, MA; Middleburgh, NY; Pawtucket, RI, and Fredrickton and Harvy Station, N.B.

Ten chapters were in existence when the district was formed in 1946. A year later there were 24 chapters, and by 1952, sixty. Growth in the number of chapters then settled down to a modest pace and in 1971, there are 73 chapters in the district.

The first chapter parade held in the district was a Northampton, MA in April 1945. Later in the year, Schenectady held theirs (they are the originators of awarding music scholarships from the proceeds of an annual show).

How to be a Successful Chapter Historian

Continued from page 6

Reuniting

Another joy is promoting and taking part in organizing a chapter reunion. This is always a special event and doesn't have to necessarily be done in anniversary years divided by 5. Of course, the big ones (25th and 50th) are a MUST.

Perpetuating

One of the end results of all the work of a successful chapter historian is increasing awareness and educating the members. It's important to show there were members (and wives) who came before and made all this possible today. Today we have a tendency to live in the present and near future. Looking back give us all a stronger sense of purpose and focus.

A chapter historian can accomplish much and serve today's members, while honoring those who went before, in a very special way.

Hartford held its first parade in November 1946 and received nationwide attention by donating \$3,150, the entire proceeds, to the Shrine Hospital for Crippled Children. Throughout the years, the Hartford Chapter has donated many thousands to the Shrine Hospital.

The first district quartet contest was held in Northampton, MA in 1946 and the first district chorus contest was held in 1950. The Northeastern District pioneered many of the features of district organization and operation which have since been adopted by the entire Society. It instituted a lieutenant governor form of organization which grew into our present area counselor form, now standard throughout the Society.

A resolution was passed at the 1948 International Convention commending the district for its pioneering work in district organization and operation, and recommended adoption by other districts. **Stub Taylor** of Schenectady was chairman of an international committee which formulated the first standard district constitution.

The first pocket-sized district directory was published by the Northeastern District in 1947 and served as a model for all Society district directories. Publication of the *Nor'Easter* district bulletin started in 1947 and except for a brief period from 1948 to 1952, it has been published ever since.

There have been many notable district quartets but a number of them should be mentioned. Northampton's *Peerless Quartet* was organized in 1912, 26 years before the Society was started.

The Rambling Four from Northampton started in 1937 and aided the formation of district chapters by accompanying Hal Staab on his trips to promote new chapters. They were finalists in the 1942 international quartet contest, four years before the district was organized.

The Four Naturals from New Haven, CT were the first quartet to be northeastern champions, and they were later to become international finalists in 1947.

Another early quartet was the *Neptuners*, who have been in continuous existence for 24 years. This quartet was instrumental in the formation of seven chapters and they are still very active in furthering the Society locally and internationally.

The first district quartet to attain medalist status in international competition was the *Four Rascals* of the Marblehead Chapter, and the *Four Statesmen* quartet became our first international champions in 1967.



Many men have had a key part in the formation and success of the Northeastern District. In addition to Hal Staab, **Art Merrill** from Schenectady was the first district secretary and later, international president. **Charlie Ricketts** initiated growth of the eastern portion of the district. **Al Maino** attended the first organization meeting of the district and was a member of the first district board. He has served the district and the Society in almost every capacity, and has sung bass in the *Neptuners* quartet for all of its 24 years. **Carroll Adams**, a past Executive Director and also an international president, resides in the Northeastern District.

The year 1971 marks the 25th Anniversary of the Northeastern District; its 3,000 members represent 10% of the Society's membership. The district is third largest of the Society's 15 districts; its great heritage portends a promising future.

Chapter Anniversaries & Reunions 101

This organization is more than “*some guys singing*” each week

by Grady Kerr – Society Historian

The anniversary of a barbershop chapter is an important milestone and it should be celebrated in GRAND style.

This event gives the chapter many unique opportunities and convenient excuses to promote the chapter internally as well as externally. There are several valuable payoffs to be gained.

Imagine how many man hours have been worked and how many songs have been rehearsed and how many people have been entertained throughout these years. The results are remarkable and the journey has been unique.

It's sometimes important to stop and realize all you have accomplished. It's also vitally important to pay tribute to those who made it possible for you to be singing in this chapter today. Some chapters have not survived, yours has – why? Because of the dedication of those who stood on those risers in years past.

From the Riser Guys to the Coffee Maker to the Music Librarian to the Board Member and the Director; all have served this chapter through the years and it wouldn't be what it is today without them ALL?

Here's your chance to say thanks and tell them their time wasn't wasted as you are carrying on their mission.

It's also a chance to let the current membership know this organization is more than “*a bunch of guys singing*” each week. It's much bigger and more important than that.

So, here's a list of some ideas and tasks that should be considered in making this a successful **once-in-a-lifetime** event.

Things to Do

Organize

- Name a chairman, select a committee, set a date and establish a budget.
- Involve membership with committee – define tasks to accomplish the items below – set deadlines - follow up.
- Promote to active membership via the bulletin, announcements and your website.

Research

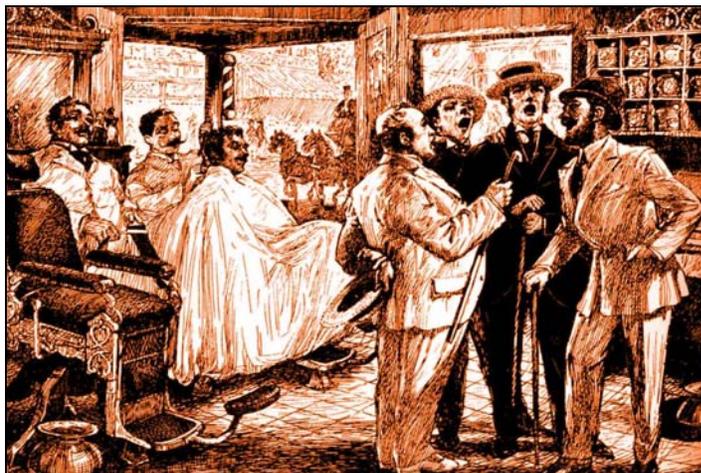
- Gather historical material - Bulletins – Photos – Recordings – Rosters – Oral Histories - Awards. Organize and determine best way to use this material.

Gather

- Locate and invite all former and inactive chapter members by **PHONE** – follow up by email. Print and mail invitations.

Promote

- Announce in chapter bulletin – website.
- Run articles in chapter bulletin prior to event and recap in following bulletin.
- Announce in District Bulletin.
- Announce via the Harmonet and SAI SING and other BBS Yahoo Groups.
- Publicize event to local press – invite local representatives (Mayor. etc.).
- Get Proclamation from Mayor's office.
- Get Proclamation from Governor's Office.
- Inform your District Board – invite BOD members - get a letter from the President
- Inform Society HQ – get letter from the Society CEO
- Inform Society Board – get letter from the Int'l President
- Invite local chapter presidents (including Sweet Ads)
- Invite members' wives and chapter widows



Celebrate

- Book special guest quartet
- Recognize chapter Presidents – BOTYs - Directors
- Produce special hard copy, souvenir bulletin for that night
- Create a booklet showing chapter history as a handout
- Set up historical display showing chapter history (photos and bulletins)
- Allow time to mix and mingle – include singing (talk to singing ratio: 60/40)
- Use this special as a guest night.

Reunite

- Reunite old chapter quartets

The Event

- Give up ONE full rehearsal for this special event (one every 50 years is all we ask).
- Create Name Badges with LARGE letters and returning member's claim to fame.
- Recognize special guests.
- Have SHORT speeches by current chapter leaders and other presenters.
- Play edited montage of past performances on big video screen.
- Show photos and FACES of past members on big screen.
- Pull out old songs once performed by chorus and sing again
- Have a Reunion Chorus – a few pre-event rehearsals may be needed – have former directors lead
- Have reunited quartets perform
- Have a special guest quartet perform to show guests how it's done and attract current members.
- This is a celebration. Include finger foods and refreshments.
- Invite women's auxiliary to decorate hall.

Post-Event

- Establish a Chapter Archive to hold the material collected
- Establish and name a chapter historian to manage archives, collect new material, observe and collect memorabilia and write articles to chapter bulletin.
- Set date for the NEXT reunion.
- Recognize key member(s) who organized and ran the reunion and present award(s) at chapter banquet.

Payoffs

- Membership better informed about history of their chapter.
- Guests for that night will understand this is something more than "just a bunch of guys singing"
- The locals will be educated as to the chapter's place in the community.
- Involves local community leaders.
- An excellent opportunity for press coverage and PR in the community
- Creates a diversion from normal rehearsals

- Expands your exposure in the community thus more paid performances
- Creates more esprit de corps among members and families past and present.
- Gives the active members a better sense of pride in their organization.
- Goes a long way toward showing appreciation and recognition of the members who came before.
- Shows current membership their work and efforts will not be forgotten.



The huge mural on display in the lobby of Nashville HQ

Job Description

Chapter / District Historian

- As a presidential appointment he will report to the President and Board of Directors
- He will submit a written report to the President and Board of Directors as needed
- He will be invited to attend all board meetings as an observer and consultant and be member of the administrative team
- The position should be a minimum of two-year term
- He should submit an annual budget in support of his work based on the goals set by the chapter/district leadership.
- He should be available serve on any long-range planning or Hall of Fame committees

His responsibility will include:

- **Observing** – He should be expected to attend all district / chapter events recording the event and evaluating its historical value and impact.
- **Recording** – He should taking notes of trends, turning points and milestones. Be an active biographer keeping up with who's who
- **Researching** - Researches and write articles of historical nature for the district/chapter publication and web page. Be available to the membership as a source of information as needed.
- **Reporting** – Generate articles and papers to document and increase awareness of our heritage among the Board, membership and the public
- **Collecting** - Both district and chapter historians should be alert to search out and discover historical items or artifacts. He should research and generate displays/exhibit for conventions / shows / special meetings as needed
- **Gathering** – He will maintain a historical archive of publications, photos, books, recordings and artifacts
- **Reuniting** – promote reunions of chapters & quartets
- **Promoting** – Be a proactive promoter of history as it pertains to the membership using all possible means of communication. He should be available to teach at district schools and/or make oral presentations at special chapter/district events



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