

CHRISTOPHER CHAMPLIN WAITE

by Alex Ricardo

Description of the fraternity's intention

Theta Xi Fraternity is in need to locate a living member of Christopher Champlin Waite to be able to get permission to place a memorial marker at the grave of Christopher Champlin Waite. Theta Xi Fraternity cannot do this without the family consent or a court order. The Fraternity has vowed not to pursue a court order out of respect for the family. Therefore, if you know of any living relative to Christopher Champlin Waite, please contact [Theta Xi Fraternity](#).

Outline and description of the grave marker

The plaque would be placed right on top of a marble column. The column would extend out of the ground by at least 6 inches (or more should cemetery policy dictate). There are certain clarifications needed for the plaque and they are listed below:

- a) The Coat of Arms (Top Center) is the coat of arms of our fraternity.
- b) The star with the contents of "A3" is the role number of Christopher Champlin Waite. The A3 indicates this member was of Alpha Chapter (Greek Letter A) and was the third initiate at that chapter. For example, I am Gamma 1086. I am the 1086th member at Gamma (or 3rd) chapter of Theta Xi, which is at Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken, New Jersey.
- c) "Chapter Eternal" - Is the term our fraternity uses to indicate the "initiation" into our "Chapter Eternal" after death.
- d) Symbol (bottom center) - This is our Fraternity Badge. It contains the two Greek letters of our fraternity in its official stance. The Greek letter Theta is on top of the Greek letter Xi.
- e) The Arabic numerals, 62 and 94 - These two numbers carry special significance to our fraternity and must be placed side by side to our badge or coat of arms.

Short Narrative on Christopher's life

I have two narratives on Christopher Champlin Waite. The first was written by his son, Harry S. Waite addressed to Christopher's alma mater Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, New York.

"My father was born in Maumee, Ohio, a small town near Toledo, on September 24, 1843. His father was Morrison R. Waite, an attorney in Toledo at that time and afterward, Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court. His mother was Amelia Champlin. His early school training was at a school at Gross Isle; an island in the Detroit River, conducted by a Mr. Hunter. He graduated from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in 1865? And was one of the charter members of the Theta Xi Fraternity. He was married in 1868 to Lillian Gutherie in Zanesville, Ohio where he was then superintendent of the Cincinnati and Muskingum Valley Railroad (now a part of the Pennsylvania.) He lived in Zanesville from about 1870 until 1881 where

CHRISTOPHER CHAMPLIN WAITE

both of his sons were born, the writer and my brother, Ellison G. Waite, the writer in 1874 and Ellison in 1880.

In 1881 he moved to Cincinnati as superintendent of the Little Miami Railroad (now a part of the Pennsylvania System). We lived there about a year, when father was made Assistant to the President of the Erie Railroad with headquarters in New York City, which position he held until about 1884 when he was made Vice President of the Cincinnati, Hamilton and Dayton Railroad and we moved back to Cincinnati. The C.H. and D.R.R. is now a part of the Baltimore and Ohio.

In 1889 he was made President of the Hocking Valley Railroad with headquarters in Columbus, Ohio which position he held until his death, February 21, 1896. The Hocking Valley Railroad is now a part of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad. His wife died on November 1, 1905 and my brother on December 3, 1905."

The second is a reprint from Transactions, a publication of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), Vol. XLIX, page 363.

"Christopher Champlin Waite was born at Maumee City, Lucas County, Ohio on September 24, 1843. He was a son of Morrison Remick Waite, late Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, and Amelia (Champlin) Waite. He inherited a sturdy strength of character which served him well in a long period of private and public usefulness.

He entered the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in 1860, and was graduated in 1864. His first engineering employment was on the Coxsackie Railroad, in 1865 and 1866. During the next two years he was engaged on the Croton Aqueduct for New York City. In 1868 he became Chief Engineer of the Columbus and Toledo Railroad, and Chief Engineer and Superintendent of the Cincinnati and Muskingum Valley Railroad. In 1889 he became President of the Columbus, Hocking Valley and Toledo Railroad, and, under his administration, in spite of strikes and financial embarrassments from other sources, a property which had met with many reverses was converted into a paying investment. He was thoroughly conversant with all the details of the operation of the road, and, while he exacted obedience to a rigid discipline, there was a bond of fellowship between the president and the subordinate.

Mr. Waite was married to Lillie C. Guthrie, daughter of Julius C. Guthrie, of Zanesville, Ohio, on October 22d, 1868, and is survived by his widow and two children, Harry and Ellison.

Mr. Waite was interested in the public affairs of the communities of which he lived, and was at one time Vice-President of the Cincinnati Chapter of Commerce. He was a prominent in Charitable work, served as a Trustee of the Children's Hospital, and as President of the Board of Trustees of the Ohio State

CHRISTOPHER CHAMPLIN WAITE

Epileptic Hospital, at Gallipolis, in the organization and management of which he was deeply interested.

He was a lover of art, and had at his home, in Cincinnati, a fine collection of statuary and paintings. Mr. Waite was elected a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers on March 3d, 1880."

Christopher's Role in the History of Theta Xi Fraternity

Theta Xi was founded at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) in Troy, New York, on April 29, 1864, by Peter Henry Fox, Ralph Gooding Packard, **Christopher Champlin Waite**, George Bradford Brainerd, Samuel Buel Jr., Henry Harrison Farnum, Thomas Cole Raymond, and Nathaniel Henry Starbuck. Minutes of the original meeting, Constitution and Ritual have been preserved by the Fraternity to this day. Our tradition is truly continuous.

Christopher "Kit" Waite, whose father was destined to become Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, was from Toledo, Ohio. Peter Fox from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and Thomas Raymond, a "downeastener" from Westborough, Massachusetts, together with **Waite**, were the only Founders from out of state. Nathaniel Starbuck was a local from the campus town of Troy whose father, a leading citizen of the town, was often called upon to address public meetings to arouse popular support for the Lincoln administration. The remaining Founders were all New Yorkers: George Brainerd from Brooklyn; Samuel Buel, Jr. from Poughkeepsie; Ralph Packard from Niagara Falls and Henry Farnum from Port Jarvis.

In 1864, Rensselaer was attempting to rebuild. The Civil War had threatened the future existence of the institution, just as it had threatened the future existence of our Union. In 1861, the collar factories, for which Troy was famous, nearly all closed down, and several other large manufacturing plants went idle. In 1862, sparks from a passing locomotive ignited the roof of a covered bridge spanning the Hudson at Troy, and before it could be halted, the fire swept across the 75-acre tract, completely destroying eight hundred structures in the heart of Troy's business section, including the downtown campus and the original building of RPI, the Old Bank Building.

All of the Founders were members of Sigma Delta, a local fraternity established in 1859 to rival Theta Delta Chi, the only secret society then at Rensselaer. Crude in its beginnings, Sigma Delta gradually increased and prospered so that, by the fall of 1863, it had become a secret center of attraction for all freshmen.

Debates formed a regular part of Sigma Delta meetings (as in other fraternities at that time), and these were judged by the presiding officer. Spirited debates were held on such topics as: "Genius is more necessary in the pursuits of science than in the pursuit of art," "The use of tobacco is injurious," and "The rum barrel is more potent than the gun barrel."

CHRISTOPHER CHAMPLIN WAITE

Dissension within Sigma Delta became apparent on October 30, 1863, when George Brainerd tendered his resignation to the society. The resignation was unanimously declined, but it contributed to a rift that would not heal. On that same day, due to a seeming desire of some of the members to bust up Sigma Delta and try to become part of another organization, Samuel Buel suggested that Sigma Delta try to obtain a charter from some large and flourishing society such as Sigma Phi, which had been founded in 1827 at Union College and had six chapters at the time. He had previously had an interview with a minister who belonged to Sigma Phi, who assured him that he favored such a move. He promised to do all in his power to help them obtain a charter. Sigma Phi sent representatives to Troy who were entertained and had their hotel bills paid.

A petition was prepared and submitted to Sigma Phi, but at its convention at Union College on March 4, 1864, a motion was adopted to the effect that no more charters be granted. Since no action was taken on Sigma Delta's petition, this was accepted as a refusal.

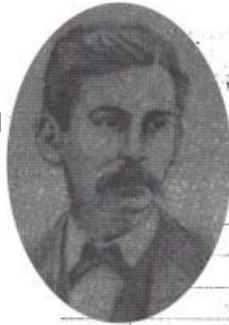
Dissension in Sigma Delta continued to grow such that two factions sprang up within the society. The eight members who ultimately founded Theta Xi considered such divisiveness incompatible with their ideals of unity and fellowship. They determined to build anew with the intention of forming a society national in scope - a tall order for the Civil War era!

The ill feeling became more acute after the failure to obtain a charter, and at a regular meeting held on March 11, 1864, attention was called to the sad condition of the society. A suggestion was made that each one present express his views concerning the management of the affairs and offer some plan of removing this feeling which has existed, and does now exist, among us. This suggestion was accepted and each member in turn was called upon for his opinion. One suggested plan, which met with instant favor and was finally agreed upon, specified that bottles, suitably covered and labeled, be provided and placed in the adjoining club room.

On March 12, 1864, two large cups of white and black beans were provided for the purpose of voting. A bottle was placed upon the table and each member went into the clubroom to cast his ballot on the member whose name appeared on the bottle. After everyone had voted the bottle was sealed, and the next vote taken. When the process was completed, the members assembled in the club room to count the votes. Before any bottle was opened, each man deposited on the table the keys and all other property in his possession which belonged to the society. The bottles were emptied alphabetically and, as one received a majority of black beans, he took up his hat and left. The first person who received a majority of black beans remarked, "I guess I am not wanted here." Four of our eight founders had opened their bottles before the five who received a majority of black beans left them in possession of the room. A new lock was immediately put on the door.

CHRISTOPHER CHAMPLIN WAITE

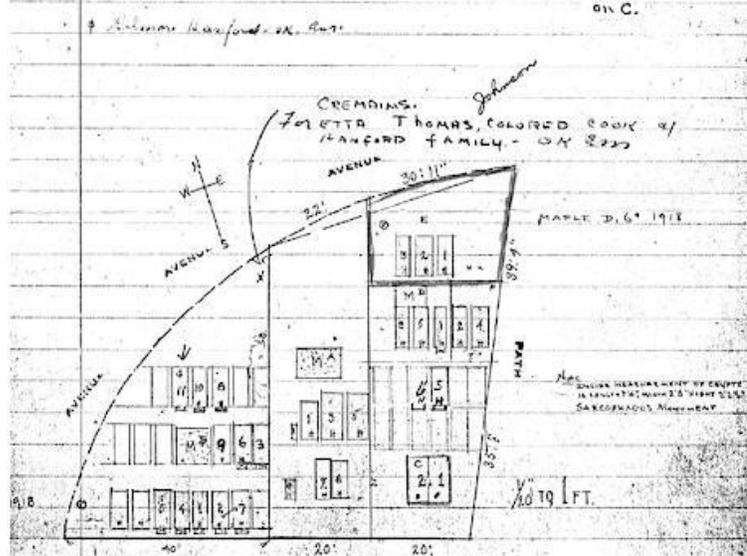
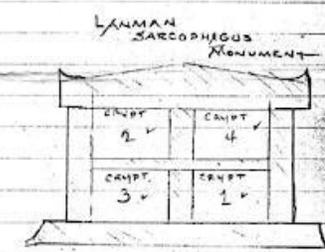
At a meeting held on April 1, 1864, a committee consisting of **Waite**, Buel, Brainerd, and Packard was appointed to prepare a constitution. At this meeting the secretary was instructed to recall their petition to Sigma Phi and inform them of their intention to form a new society. On April 6, Buel presented two monograms, Theta Xi and Theta Psi, as possible names for the new society. Theta Xi was chosen because of the reported existence of a local society called Theta Psi at Yale at that time. On April 29, 1864 - that most sacred night in the history of our brotherhood - eight former members of Sigma Delta met in their secret rooms for the purpose of founding Theta Xi. Ralph G. Packard was chosen chairman because he had been president of Sigma Delta at the time of its dissolution. Brother Farnum was requested to act a secretary. A committee made up of Brothers Buel and Brainerd was designated to develop an initiation service, while another committee comprised of Brothers Raymond, Starbuck, and Brainerd was made responsible for developing a grip, various symbols, and names of the officers, as well as for completing all vacancies in the constitution. The Constitution, By-Laws, and Rules of Order which had been drawn up by the committee were read and adopted without a dissenting vote. The oath of initiation was taken by all the Founders as a group, then they signed the Constitution alphabetically and by classes. The new society decided that the chapter be called the Alpha Chapter of Theta Xi, and that each succeeding chapter should be named by the following letter of the Greek alphabet. On the same night Edward H. Morrison was unanimously



N D 36 CONCLUDED 277

NAME		WAITE, CHRISTOPHER CHAMPLIN		NO. 23077
INTERMENT ON		Lillian G. Waite Lot,		
LOT NO.		36 N. pt of N. pt of		
		S. E. pt of		
BORN		Sep. 24, 1843	BIRTHPLACE	Maumee, Ohio.
DIED		Feb. 21, 1896	LATE RESIDENCE	Columbus, Ohio.
PARENTS' NAMES		Morrison R. & Amelia C. Waite.		
CAUSE OF DEATH		Pneumonia,	J.V.S.	
BURIAL		R. E. Jones,	V.G. 20 ⁰⁰	
PLACED IN CHIFF		Feb. 23, 1896,		
DATE OF INTERMENT				

- 23077 Christopher C. Waite #1
- 34727 Lillian B. Waite #2
- 34878 Ellison B. Waite #3



CHRISTOPHER CHAMPLIN WAITE

selected as the first new member of the Fraternity, and was initiated eight days later on May 7, 1864 as Alpha 9.

Cemetery plot maps

The first file shows the landscape map of the plot where Christopher is buried. He is buried at Green Lawn Cemetery, outside of Columbus, Ohio – Lot 36, Section D. His wife, Lillian and son, Ellison are buried there too.

The second file shows the cemetery's burial record card for Christopher Champlin Waite. There are additional notes on this file that show, in greater detail, the layout of the bodies within the plots. It also lists the cemetery's burial record number for Lillian and Ellison should you further wish to research their burial cards.

Christopher Champlin Waite's Obituary

Christopher Champlin Waite – Christopher Champlin Waite, President of the Columbus, Hocking Valley and Toledo Railroad, died yesterday in his private car, in the railroad yards in Columbus, Ohio. He went, with a

party of Columbus men, a week ago last night to Jackson to participate in a banquet celebrating the opening of a branch of the road to that city. While at Jackson he was sized with a chill, and when the train reached Columbus, pneumonia soon developed, and his physician advised against removing him to his home. The physicians had little hope of his recovery from the first, as he was always frail. Mr. Waite was the only living son of the late Chief Justice Morrison R. Waite of the Supreme Court of the United States. He was born in Maumee City, Ohio, September 24, 1843. He was married in 1869 to Miss Lillian Guthrie of Zanesville, Ohio, who, with two children, Harry, twenty-three years old, and Ellsworth, seventeen years old, survived him.

(ed: I have a copy of the original obituary from the newspaper. I also have a copy of the original issued death certificate confirming his death due to pneumonia. The death certificate also confirms place of death at 387 Monroe Avenue and last address prior to death was 383 East Broad Street)

Historical Information Theta Xi has on Christopher Champlin Waite

The following report summarizes the work I have done for the Committee on Ritual, Theta Xi Fraternity. Over the past eight years (since 1991), I have been in contact with many resources of information pertaining to the four topics being discussed. The

OBITUARY RECORD.

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CHRISTOPHER CHAMPLIN WAITE

resources used range from offices of vital statistics, city, county, and state clerk's offices, cemeteries, churches, libraries, historical societies, actual individuals of the towns, industrial companies, the Federal Record Center, and the National Archives and Records Administration which hold census, birth, marriage, and death records. Here are my findings on Christopher Champlin Waite:

This census listing is of Christopher Champlin Waite's Father:

Brother Waite married Lillie Pamela Guthrie on October 22, 1868. She died on November 1, 1905. They had two children, Harry S., born in 1874 and Ellison G., born in 1880. His father, the Honorable Morrison R. Waite, became Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court in 1874 under the Ohio Bar. I am also trying to gather some information on his father.

The following is an excerpt from the *The New York Times* dated March 7, 1962 listing Christopher Champlin Waite's nephew's funeral:

Morrison R. Waite; Cincinnati Lawyer

Died on March 6 at the age of 95. Practiced law in Cincinnati for 69 years. Grandson of Morrison R. Waite, Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court from 1874-1888. A graduate of Yale University and University of Cincinnati College of Law.

It also mentioned that his nephew leaves behind two daughters; Mrs. Mary Thomas and Mrs. _____ Garvey, three grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. Also buried at the same cemetery as Christopher Champlin Waite are Ellison Guthrie Waite, his son, and Lillie Pamela Guthrie, his wife.

Waite 1850 Census Ohio

Morrison R. Waite	33	Husband	Attorney	\$1500
Amilia C	29	Wife		
Henry	9	Son		
Christopher	6			
Eumura or Eilmura	4	Son		

own "Quest" to find his picture.

That is what started my entire project for my fraternity. It led me to the National Archives, Census Records, Church and Cemetery Records et al....Before I knew it, I wasn't just looking for his picture anymore, I was now compiling information to who these eight gentlemen were. I began to gather who their relatives were, ancestors, descendents, where they lived, where they died, how they died, where they are buried. It became an obsession to me (and still is!) to put together the lives of these eight men. Just so you know, the task that I am trying to accomplish with Christopher Champlin Waite with regards to finding a living relative, I am also going through that

Fraternity Archivist's Thoughts

I remember when I was an associate member (what other fraternities call pledges) of my fraternity, in our fraternity manual (called "The Quest for Theta Xi"), we always wondered what the 8th founder looked like. So I set my

CHRISTOPHER CHAMPLIN WAITE

eight times over with the other founders!!! So, for me, I am experiencing such a unique and wonderful experience of seeing eight different families with an extensive, amazing and yet different histories come together due to this one common bond back on April 29, 1864. It is such a pondering thought to imagine how these eight families, however unique, in my eyes, have such a common bond through these men. I would definitely entertain (not now, but several years from now) to put together a book on how these families existed separately prior to Theta Xi, and to see how they met for a "moment in time" and then once again, continued their separate journeys.

There is a salutation which our fraternity uses amongst its Brotherhood. It is the phrase "I remain respectfully yours in the bonds" or in short "yours in the bonds". The bonds are obviously our fraternal secrets and ritual which of course, Christopher helped create. Although I am sworn to never reveal those secrets, you can be proud of Christopher and his seven fraternal brothers for putting together such a wonderful set of ceremonies, oaths, and common virtues shared by our fraternal brotherhood. There is also a song we sing as part of public and private ceremonies but this song is traditionally used for our Founders Day (April 29) to commemorate our Founding Brothers:

Our strong bonds can ne'er be broken,
Formed in Theta Xi,
Far surpassing wealth unspoken,
Seal'd by friendship's tie,

Amici usque adaras
Deep graven on each heart
Shall be found unwav'ring true,
When we from life shall part.

I, along with my fraternity, are VERY proud to have Christopher Champlin Waite as one of these eight great men and more importantly, able to call Christopher and the others, my brothers.

Acknowledgements

The following acknowledgments should be noted for some of the information contained in this document:

- Personal Correspondence from Harry S. Waite; brother of Christopher Champlin Waite.
- The Columbus Chamber of Commerce
- The Ohio State Health Department
- The Greenlawn Cemetery, Columbus, Ohio

CHRISTOPHER CHAMPLIN WAITE

- Office of Vital Statistics, Columbus, Ohio
- The Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio
- The Rensselaer Polytechnic Archives and Ms. Michelle Hendrickson
- The National Archives and the Federal Record Center – Division on Census Records- Bayonne, New Jersey
- The Regional Offices of the National Archives – Boston, Washington DC, Bayonne, New Jersey
- Dr. Schwab from National Committee on Ritual, Theta Xi Fraternity
- The Original Minutes from Alpha Chapter, Theta Xi Fraternity
- The Quest for Theta Xi, publication of Theta Xi Fraternity
- National Headquarters, Theta Xi Fraternity
- The New York Public Library – Newspaper Annex
- The Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute Alumni Office and Ms. Mary Abbott
- The Department of Health for New York State – Albany, New York