

# Burned frat house part of Oxford history

May fire at Fiji House  
unsolved; reward for  
info \$5,000.

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OXFORD — With a \$5,000 reward now being offered for information about what has been determined to have been arson in a May 25 fire at the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity house, a lengthy investigation and legal proceedings are possible.

Fraternity officials face major decisions about demolition or repair of the building, which could also be long process.

The property at 130 E. High St. has a long history itself, dating back to the 1820s when the original brick house was built by Capt. John Smith, replacing a log cabin on the site, according to a timeline provided by the Smith Library of Regional History.

Known as the Smith-Munns House, the property became the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity in the 1950s with a major addition constructed in 1963. It is known to most Miami students and area residents as the Fiji House.

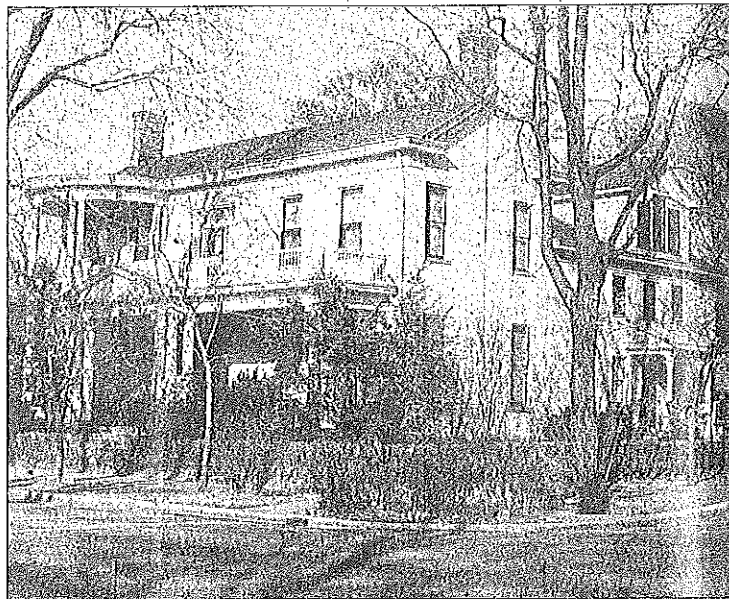
The property was sold in the early 1840s by a professor of mathematics, who sold it to Miami University in 1845. The university's third and fourth presidents, Erasmus McMaster and William Anderson, lived there, but by the late 1850s the property was purchased by Alexander Guy, a widowed Cincinnati physician.

Another physician, Horace Logee, purchased the property and sold it in the 1880s, along with his medical practice, to a third physician,

**Frat house** continued on B4



The Division of State Fire Marshal, working in conjunction with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and the Oxford Police Department, is seeking the public's assistance in solving a case of suspected arson. Early on May 25, there was a fire at the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity house at 130 E. High St. in Oxford. CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



The Phi Gamma Delta fraternity house at 130 E. High St. is shown in a 1957 photo from the Miami Recensio, a year after purchase by the fraternity. The photo is part of the local collection of the Smith Library of Regional History.

# House part of history

## Frat house

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Charles Munns, who lived there with his wife Cornelia, their children, her mother and a live-in cook. After his death in the 1950s, the house was sold to Phi Gamma Delta.

Exterior paint was removed and the addition added to the north of the house.

The tax duplicate of 1830 shows the value of the property as \$1,500, owned by John Smith.

A store was built on the property and in 1839, the value of the house was shown as the same as 1830, but the store was valued at \$500. Z.T. DeWitt was in the store in 1840 and John Armstrong, a professor of mathematics and civil engineering bought the property the following year. Miami's purchase came Oct. 9, 1845, for use by university presidents, but was used by only two, McMaster from 1845-49 and Anderson from 1849-54.

The university's board of trustees assigned the property to Alexander Guy on July 6, 1854, with additional adjacent property added for Guy by Zachariah T. and Nancy Jane DeWitt in February of 1857. Value of the brick and wood house was valued at \$1,100 in 1859 with the west brick and frame house and frame stable valued at \$1,000.

Guy sold the house on the east corner to Dr. H.M. Logee in 1875, who opened his medical practice there, while Guy moved across the west alley to live at 116 E. High St. Horace and Lettie Logee were listed as the residents at 130 E. High in the census of 1880.

C.O. Munns joined Logee in medical practice at the home in 1885 and began a solo practice there the following year. He lived in the house until his death in 1954.

Munns and his wife Cornelia, two daughters and his mother-in-law were listed as residents in the 1900 census.

Munns died in 1954 and Phi Gamma Delta purchased the house in 1956 with The Oxford Press of Nov. 22, 1956 reporting, "... at present residence of Mrs. Helen Munns Phalen, Dr. Munns daughter," and "...the residence may someday be sanded so that its exterior will match the Georgian style of ... buildings which stand on adjacent corners..."

The bricks were still painted in 1958 when Mrs. Marjorie Porter, house mother, moved into 130 E. High St. The fraternity's "Founders Step" moved to the house.

This was a step from Harrison Hall taken when it was torn down in late 1950s.

By 1959, the house was no longer painted and changes were made to the front porch. A large addition was added to the north side in 1963.

The house remained largely in that state until the May 25 fire, which burned the roof and much of the interior, now being declared arson.