Madree Penn White was born November 21, 1892 in Atchison, Kansas. She grew up with her parents, John and Mattie Penn and siblings, Elijah, Marshall, Noel, Jenny and William in Omaha, Nebraska.

Madree Penn graduated in 1909 with honors from Central High School in Omaha, Nebraska. She turned down scholarships to the University of Iowa and the University of Nebraska to attend Howard University in Washington, DC. She was the first female editor of the Howard Journal, the campus newspaper. She was a member of the Classical Club, president of the campus chapter of the YWCA, vice-president of the student branch of the NAACP, vice-president of the Social Science Club, and class journalist, vice-president, and treasurer of her class during her years at Howard. Madree Penn graduated Cum Laude in 1914. Of her graduating class, she was voted “Most Popular” and came in third for “Who Has Done the Most for Howard.”

Madree Penn was the one who first conceived the idea of Delta Sigma Theta in 1912. She was appointed Chair of the committee to draft the new Constitution and Bylaws and to devise the Initiation ritual. Penn, a linguist, selected the Greek symbols for the sorority. She succeeded Myra Davis Hennings as President. She also held an individual initiation ceremony for Ruby Martin to establish Beta Chapter at Wilberforce during her presidency.

Madree Penn served as the National Journalist under Ethel LaMay Calmes and helped to charter a Delta chapter in St. Louis. She was a member of Omega Chapter (now Greater Cleveland Alumni Chapter).

Madree Penn married Dr. James Earbel White and had two children, James E. White and Grace White Ware, who is a Delta. She served as executive secretary of the YWCA in Charlotte, North Carolina and then had a career in journalism. She served as associate editor and business manager of the Omaha Monitor and also formed her own publishing and printing company, the Triangle Press Company in St. Louis, Missouri. Additionally, Madree Penn White served as Associate Editor of the Howard University Alumni Journal. In 1966 she was honored by the League of Women Voters of Cleveland in 1966.

She worked as a substitute Latin teacher in Cleveland, taught at the National Training School for Girls in Washington, DC, Tucker Business College and Douglas University in St. Louis. Madree Penn White also worked for the Phyllis Wheatley Association in Richmond and Charlotte. Madree Penn White died on January 31, 1967 in Cleveland, Ohio.
Founder Madree Penn White’s Papers at National Headquarters

During the Open House portion of the National Founders Day Dedication Weekend, Soror Grace White-Ware, daughter of Delta Founder Madree Penn White, presented over 20 items that belonged to her mother to Soror National President Yvonne Kennedy for inclusion in the Sorority’s national archives. Among the donated items were personal papers belonging to the late Founder White, correspondence, Delta publications (copies of the DST Bulletin and the Torch), minutes from the 8th Annual Delta Convention and the 1926 Regional Conferences.

Other items included were an invitation from Beta Sigma (now Washington, D.C. Alumni) to a formal dance held Dec. 29, 1927 during the Ninth Annual Convention; a 1924 issue of the Howardite, the alumni magazine of Howard University where Founder White was a contributing edi-

SORORS MADREE PENN WHITE AND GRACE WHITE WARE