

Historically Speaking.....

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Which chapter built and owned the Fraternity's first chapter house? It was the chapter at Stanford, which was founded in 1892. Initiations had taken place in the music room of Roble Hall and the chapter met in members' room. Later a second-floor apartment was rented and then a house on campus. By the spring of 1899, business arrangements had been made for building on the west side of the street, at 554 Lasuen Street, where the only other structure was the Phi Delta Theta house. Kappas made daily trips to watch the progress of construction and the move was made in January 1900.

The earthquake of 1906 brought normal college life to a halt. There was great damage on the Stanford campus. When the chapter returned to school in September, members found the house had remained untouched since labor and materials were so scarce. Early in September 1918, the house was badly damaged by fire; and again during summer quarter of 1927 there was a fire and chapter members returned to find the roof gone. By January 1928 the chapter was able to move back into the house. By 1934, the house association constructed a much needed wing to provide additional bedrooms, a chapter room and a lounge.

At the close of the 1944 spring quarter the chapter and all other women's fraternities on the campus were gone from the campus. The administration and the dean of women, a fraternity woman herself, had shown a consistent disapproval of the fraternity system and for 20 years sororities and their alumnae fought a losing battle against the final outcome. By the fall of 1944 the chapter house had become a university residence.

In 1978, a second Stanford chapter was installed on the campus as Beta Eta Deuteron. Since the house remains under the university's ownership, the chapter members do not live together in a chapter house.

During the early 1920s, the Fraternity Council, especially Executive Secretary Clara O. Pierce, *Ohio State*, felt that good and adequate housing was vital to the success of an active chapter. The need to assist with the planning and financing of chapter houses was realized at that time. This concern led to the formation of a "Chapter House Building and Financing Committee" in 1930. The Cornell chapter was the first chapter to be assisted with its plans for a new house.

In 1939 Catherine Kelder Walz, *Michigan*, was appointed chairman of the committee and served in this capacity until 1970. Frances Sutton Schmitz, *Michigan*, became a consultant on the committee in 1946 and also served until 1970. These two women gave loving and devoted service to chapter housing through those years.

During the decades between 1939 and 1970, some 53 houses were constructed or remodeled and of that number 26 were designed by Frances and Herbert Schmitz. Among the most unusual on which they collaborated with a local architect and Kappa Alpha Theta's counterpart is a double house at the University of Pittsburgh. Kappas continue to own and live in their house, but Theta no longer has a chapter on the campus.

Testimony to the Housing Committee's diligence and effectiveness was seen in the survival of chapter houses during the troubled years of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Many other groups were forced to sell their houses because they could not make the payments when their membership declined.

Today the Fraternity Housing Committee continues to assist and guide House Boards with house management and chapter relations. The major challenges also include budgets, remodeling current facilities, upgrading infrastructure of the facilities, employment issues and adding sprinkler systems to the houses for the safety of the members.

Although not all chapters live together in a chapter house, each House Board carries out its responsibility with dedication. All living facilities reflect dignity, livability and gracious charm provided by loyal and talented Kappas who helped to make it so.