

# Historically Speaking.....

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*Would you tell me the story of how the pledge pin came into being?* The first pledge insignia was merely a knot of grosgrain ribbon. In 1875, chapters were pinning their colors on future members. So little time elapsed between pledging and Initiation that there was no need for a more permanent emblem. Gradually the custom grew to use duplicates of the stickpins worn as guards as the pledge pin. Chosen first were a chapter's Greek letters. Then after 1890, the three-letter monogram and the fleur-de-lis stickpins came into equal favor.

An act of the 1894 Convention unknowingly introduced the Kappa pledge pin, though it was not so designated for 20 years. Carla Sargeant Fisk, *Northwestern*, deputy\* to Grand President Katharine Sharp, *Northwestern*, designed and submitted the sigma-within-the-delta as a symbol of the Fraternity, phrasing its meaning in beautiful flowing Greek. After its adoption, Katharine Sharp ordered the design made in gold and gave it, as a stickpin, to her deputy. She also suggested it for a pledge pin. Between 1894 and 1896, she had a similar pin made in gold and blue as a gift for another friend.

During the 1890s, the monogram reappeared and became popular. The second sigma-within-the-delta pin, a gold pin with light blue enamel on the sigma, was also made with pierced spaces like our present one. Miss Sharp took it to the 1900 Convention, and the question of an official pledge pin was discussed but no decision was reached. The Grand Council at its 1901 session adopted the first official pledge pin of the Fraternity and announced, "The monogram shall be the official pledge pin." This was approved by vote of the delegates at the 1902 Convention. At the 1904 Convention, a decision was reached after much discussion, permitting the sigma-within-the-delta "to be used as a pledge pin" again. This wording continued in our rules for ten years during which time either the monogram or sigma-within-the-delta could be used as the pledge pin.

The historic decision finally came in 1914: the sigma-within-the-delta should be the only pledge pin. It would measure three-eighths of an inch with the delta in dark blue enamel and sigma in light blue. Today, more than 95 years later, the design of the pin remains unchanged except that silver became the specified metal in 1926. The pin is called the new member pin now, and it currently measures one-half inch.

At Initiation, the cherished sigma-within-the-delta pin is returned to the chapter President, usually in a ceremony held during the Inspiration Period. To begin the new member's passage to initiated member, she returns the pin she'd been given upon her formal pledging. The new member pin was loaned to her as a symbol of the promise she made during the pledging ceremony.

Chapters have their own traditional ceremonies for returning the new member pins. Some use favorite readings, friendship poems and special thoughts reflecting the importance of the events of the Inspiration Period. The new member might fasten her pin on a pillow as it is passed among the group. The pillow may be special – one designed by the chapter and sewn and needlepointed in the shape of a sigma within the delta of the Fraternity coat-of-arms.

Some chapters celebrate this special time with a Blue and Blue Banquet, where new members wear light blue and initiated members wear dark blue. It is followed by a ceremony held in a living room where new members are seated in the form of a sigma surrounded by the initiated members in a delta. Thoughts appropriate to the symbolism of the occasion are expressed by chosen members of the chapter, and a pillow is passed for receiving the pins.

No matter what ceremony is used for returning the new member pins, the manner in which the pins are returned is important to the symbolism of the event. A golden key will soon replace the new member pin.

\*Until 1940, the Fraternity *Bylaws* stated that "each member of the Grand Council was authorized to appoint annually a deputy, whose duty was to assist the council member with the work of the office."