

Rho Chapter

University of Illinois
505 East Chalmers Street
Champaign, Illinois

By A. T. Fagerburg, Jr., 1929
(*Supplemented*)

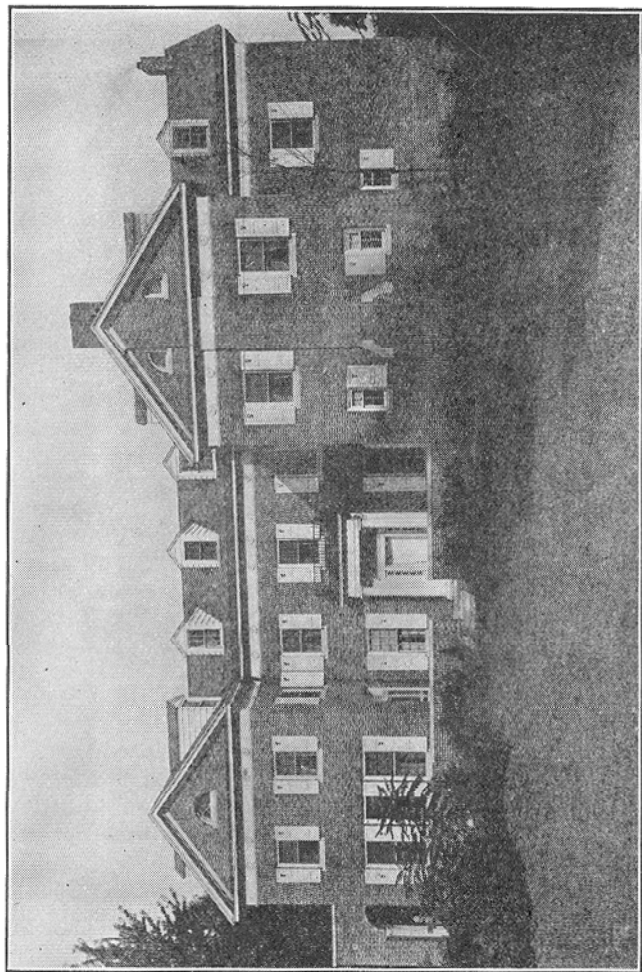
Rho Chapter is the outgrowth of a local fraternity, Pi Omicron, which was founded in 1912. In turn Pi Omicron was the outgrowth of another local organization known as "Trigon" and founded in the Spring of 1910.

In the second semester of the year of 1910 a local chapter of the brotherhood of Saint Andrews, organized as an Episcopal club, was established, at Illinois, and called "Trigon." It was intended that this club would provide means of economical and beneficial intercourse to the students of the Episcopal faith. Through the efforts of Professors Dufour and Stoek, Dean Green, Mr. P. H. Dunn, and the Rev. Poland, the club was started successfully, a constitution was adopted and a house rented on Springfield Avenue, in Urbana.

When the semester began in the Fall of 1911, such difficulty was encountered in filling the house that it became necessary to take men who were not members of the Episcopal Church. The influence of these men materially changed the ideals and purposes of the organization.

The status of the club, among the other organizations in the University, was at this time a very peculiar one indeed. In the eyes of the local Episcopalians, it was a church club; to the student body, it was virtually a fraternity; while the members themselves considered it nothing more than an incidental organization, loosely held together.

The lack of close fellowship finally culminated in the withdrawal of six or eight of its members who wished to form a more "pretentious" social fraternity. These six or eight men formed a local fraternity by



RHO
University of Illinois

the name of Delta Omega, which in 1915 became the Illinois Chapter of Lambda Chi Alpha. Through poor management "Trigon" was heavily in debt and with the loss of nearly half of its members, total dissolution, for a time, threatened. Indeed, it was only through the persistent efforts of the remaining members that the organization was kept intact. After a careful and thorough reorganization the name was changed to Pi Omicron, and to Arthur T. Thompson, Fred Du Hadwar, G. Edward Quick, Frank D. Garland, John N. Featherstone, Merle F. Lummis, Kenneth B. Bush and Clyde C. Barr belong the credit for pi Omicron's continuance. By hard work they succeeded in securing a dozen or more new members, who joined in the Fall of 1912, and who willingly assumed the heavy responsibilities and obligations of the fraternity to such good purposes, that its indebtedness was soon liquidated and Pi Omicron was placed on a firm financial basis.

This financial relief made it possible in 1913 to leave the old location on Springfield Avenue and move into a more comfortable home at 916 West Green Street, Urbana, where the chapter remained until the Fall of 1919.

A more specific idea may be gained of the purposes and ideals of Pi Omicron by reciting a few abstracts from its ritual and constitution. New members were elected by unanimous ballot in a meeting of all active members, upon the basis of manhood, congeniality and scholastic ability. The result of such choosing manifests itself in the scholastic standing maintained by the group. Never during its existence did Pi Omicron place below sixth among the general fraternities at Illinois, the average being about third. Quoting further Pi was given as the first letter of the Greek word Polimathias, meaning scholarship, and Omicron the first letter of a Greek word Omilia, meaning fellowship. These two words, fellowship and scholarship, symbolized the ideals of those that were later to become the Rho Chapter of Theta Chi.

In December, 1915, after having been offered a charter, by then a small national fraternity, Pi Omicron decided to petition Theta Chi Fraternity. On the 8th day of April, 1916, Pi Omicron was authorized by the Grand Chapter to organize and transact business as Rho

Chapter of Theta Chi. However, it was not until May 20th of the same year that the official installation committee composed of Dr. Robert L. Irish, Alpha, '89; F. V. Hugo, Epsilon, '12; J. B. Wirt, Beta, '15; L. B. Scott, Theta, '15 and W. M. Stanton, Kappa, '13, arrived to install the new chapter. On that same day the Council of Administration, of the University, granted permission for the formation of the chapter and formally took recognition of it. At the same time Rho was admitted to the Pan Hellenic Council now known as the Interfraternity Council of the University of Illinois.

At the end of the school year of 1917 Rho began to feel the effects of the World War. The exodus of men to all branches of service began to show, as the University began to offer full credit to all students who took up some specific work of national defense. The full effect of the war was not felt, however, until the Spring of 1918. In September of that year an S. A. T. C. Camp was established at Illinois. The old peace and quiet of the campus was no more. Every tradition that Illinois loved was upset-changes almost revolutionary took their place. Changes of such nature naturally effected Rho Chapter. Its home was taken over by the government and given to a sorority, Kappa Kappa Gamma, in order that their home, in turn, might be used as a barracks. But even the new military spirit with its multitude of government regulations was not sufficient to kill the fraternity spirit in the fifteen or twenty men who made up the chapter. They rented and furnished a suite of rooms just off the campus and here all of the fraternity work was carried on. The numerous and complex problems seemed to instill in the members a new spirit of fight. All of them were determined that under no circumstances would Rho give up the "ship" even for a few months. With the dissolution of the S. A. T. C. on December 21, 1918, plans were made to again take up the work in their real home on West Green Street.

In the Fall of 1919 school opened with an old time pep and spirit, though an increase of over 2000 students in the University had made conditions very crowded. Rho had anticipated the return of many of the boys who had been discharged from the Army and Navy and that gave rise to securing a new and larger home. It was at this time Rho

moved to 404 East John Street, Champaign.

The Illinois, Victory Homecoming, in the Fall of 1919m was indeed a real affair. Many of the boys came back and talked over and lived again the good old days tat used to be. Of the boys who were fortunate enough to be present on that occasion none will soon forget the wonderful advances taken by Rho Chapter on that occasion. It was then that the Theta Chi Alumni Association of Rho Chapter was formed and incorporated. Fred A. Du Hadwar was elected President, John J. Pieper Secretary, and Frank D. Garland Treasurer. This organization took the first step toward the realization of a dream-a fraternity home of their own. Shortly thereafter a lot was purchased and in a short time paid for. It is on that exact spot that Rho's magnificent house now stands, a monument to the untiring efforts of those loyal members.

The history of Rho Chapter from 1920 until the present is the history of growth, a consistent rock bottom foundation type of growth. The chapter has always stood high in scholarship, high socially, and high in campus activities. It was in the year of 1923 that the chapter had so many presidents of campus organizations that it was nicknamed, by other fraternities, The White House. Rho consistently keeps representatives in both the junior and senior honor societies and in the more important positions on the Daily Illini, the largest college newspaper in America. Rho is particularly noted for its good singers having won, three times, in competition with all the better national fraternities at Illinois, the trophy given by the junior honor society, Sachem, to the fraternity scoring first place in a group song contest held under their auspices. The song contests began in 1924 and have been held annually since. In 1924 Rho took second place, Acacia first and Beta Theta Pi third. The winners of 1925 were exactly the same as the year before. In 1926 Rho took first place and in 1927 sung on exhibition but was not allowed to compete, because it was feared their consistent winning would destroy the spirit of the contest.

Rho maintains a chapter roll of between thirty-five and forty men all of whom live in the chapter house. A large portion of the members are taken from the vicinity of Chicago, the remainder being made up of

other sections of the State and out of State students. To date one hundred and ninety-six members, four of which are now deceased, have been initiated.

Rho's contribution to the national fraternity consists of F. m. Can Natter on the Grand Chapter from 1925-27, National Vice-President from 1926-27, and Robert H. Hoge, Traveling Secretary from 1926—

Statistics

Chapter publication and frequency: Rho Echoes, monthly.

Average size of chapter: Thirty-five.

All members room in chapter house.

All members take meals at chapter house.

Owens its home, value \$80,000.

University of Illinois

The University of Illinois, with the exception of the Colleges of Medicine and dentistry which are in Chicago, is located in the twin cities of Champaign and Urbana. It is an entirely State supported institution, and was founded in 1867. Illinois is one of the three largest American universities having had, during the school year of 1926-27 an enrollment in excess of 10,000 students of which number approximately three-fourths were men. Fifty-eight national social fraternities are represented on the campus of which number Theta Chi was the thirty-fourth to be established.

Champaign-Urbana, a community of 25,000 people, is located at almost equal distance from the cities of Chicago, St. Louis and Indianapolis, being 126, 125 and 116 miles respectively distant from them. The University is served by the Illinois Central, Big Four and Wabash Railroads.