

**Alpha Psi-Mississippi**

**Fast Facts:**

* Installation date: May 21, 1927
* Location: Oxford, MS
* Region: 3

**History:**

The University of Mississippi was established in 1840 by vote of the State Legislature and located in Oxford. It opened its doors to students on November 6, 1848. There was a student body of 50 men. During the years of the Civil War, when the young men of the state were in the Army of the Confederacy, the University was used as a Confederate hospital. More than 900 died here and are buried in a cemetery on university land. In 1856 the University reopened and continued to increase in number of students. The University became co-educational in 1882.

At the meeting of the State Legislature in February 1926, the anti-fraternity law was repealed. In March 1926, with the assistance of Psi chapter alumnae, a local group of 15 girls organized a petition for Delta Gamma. During the summer, Eva Webb Dodd, Mary Comfort Leonard, and Minnie Wohlleben Carter, all Psi I-Lewis School, attended the Fraternity’s 23rd Convention at Mackinaw Island, Michigan, and asked that they might “bring Delta Gamma home” and establish a chapter once again in Oxford.

The charter was granted in July 1926 by the fraternity. On May 20, 1927, in the former Wohlleben home and the location of Delta Gamma’s first Convention, Mrs. Carter gave the Pledge Service to the petitioning group. On May 21, 1927, Alpha Psi chapter of Delta Gamma was installed by Fraternity President Nancy Brown Woollet, Phi-Colorado, and Donna Amsden, First Vice-President, plus six girls from Alpha Epsilon-Washington University. A reception was held that evening in Mrs. Carter’s home for faculty, alumnae and representatives of the men and women fraternities on campus. The Initiation Banquet was held later that same evening at the Tea Hound. Telegrams of good wishes were read and Mrs. Woollett presented the Charter to chapter President Bessie Bourland. Alpha Epsilon members sang songs and delighted everyone with their repertoire.

Mrs. Woollett wrote in a letter printed in the November 1927 *ANCHORA*, “We feel we indeed returned to the land of our birth and hope to gain strength by the addition of Alpha Psi chapter and to be greatly enriched by the deeper and closer interest and devotion of the members of the mother chapter, Psi of Mississippi, who now become the alumnae sponsors for our newest chapter.” Eva Webb Dodd and Mary Comfort Leonard wrote, “We wish to repeat how happy we are that you have given back to us that which we gave to you so many years ago.”

In 1928, Evelyn Campbell (Watts), Anna Boyd Ellington’s niece, was initiated.

In 1931, the Association of American Universities removed the University of Mississippi from its list of Grade A institutions due to “political vicissitudes.” Once again Delta Gamma was placed in an equivocal situation. Upon receiving a petition from Alpha Psi and the Oxford alumnae, Council agreed to allow the charter to be held in abeyance until such time as Mississippi regained her scholastic prestige in the educational world. To that end the chapter did not suffer and was kept alive. Margaret Hammond was the last president of the original Alpha Psi chapter.

In 1937, “Ole Miss,” as the university was now nicknamed, regained its former prestige and was now considered one of the best of the southern universities. It was time for Delta Gamma to return “home” again. The first Delta Gamma colonization was held at Alpha Psi upon its return to University of Mississippi. In order to be sure, the chapter, located at the place of our birth, would be a strong chapter, Council decided to reinstate Alpha Psi as a colony first. Dorothy Oldham, an Oxford alumna, formed a local committee to assist with reorganizing at the University of Mississippi. Three girls from Alpha Rho- Ohio Wesleyan were sent to assist the chapter – Phyllis Chryst, Jean Malling and Ruth Fox. The plan was to enroll these girls in the University of Mississippi, establish a foothold, make Delta Gamma known and pledge eight or ten fine girls that first year. These three “little Yankee colonizers” pledged ten girls the first semester and several more the second semester. An offer to “pioneer” was printed and sent to northern chapters for members to transfer and help the colony flourish. Council members Florence Bingham, Dorothy Wildasin and Florence Gee helped the “colonizers” entertain the “prospects.”

May 21, 1927 in still used as Alpha Psi’s installation date since the charter was held in abeyance until their return in 1938.

Alpha Psi is the only chapter to be installed at a former Convention site and was the first chapter to be successfully reinstated after a period of absence.

By fall of 1937 Alpha Psi pledged seven more girls. Betty Leonard (Long), granddaughter of Mary Comfort Leonard, and Kitty Hicks, grandniece of Corrine Miller, who designed the anchor badge, were among the new members. Two other Delta Gammas transferred to Ole Miss from Beta Delta- Colorado College and Theta- Indiana chapters.

1938 marked the year Alpha Psi got a “House in Oxford Town” (*ANCHORA* March 1938). It was beautiful, with personality, something more than pure architectural perfection. This was the first home the Fraternity built and furnished for a chapter, and it was called the Memorial House. Lillie Hudson, the first girl initiated into Delta Gamma, dug the first shovelful for the groundbreaking of the Alpha Psi house. Delta Gamma was the first sorority on campus to be allowed to live in its own housing; in 1937, all the sororities had non-live-in lodges. During the weekend of February 13-15, 1938, the opening of this new home was a four-fold occasion. The week involved: memorial services at the graves and the marking of the graves of two Founders; the official opening of Alpha Psi’s new chapter house; the initiation of Alpha Psi’s pledge class; and the reinstatement of Alpha Psi chapter.

It was the first time that a chapter event brought all of Delta Gamma Fraternity’s Council members together. It marked the first time that daughters of a Founder had been initiated – Anna Boyd’s daughters Lena Boyd Ellington and Lillian Ellington Duncan; the first time that a granddaughter of a Founder had been initiated – Mary Comfort Leonard’s granddaughter Mary Elizabeth; and the first time a Delta Gamma anchor had been pinned on an initiate (*ANCHORA* May 1938). It was considered the Fraternity’s first “Pilgrimage to Oxford.” What made it even more special was Mary Comfort Leonard pinned her badge on her granddaughter, Mary, and Kitty Hicks was initiated with the first Delta Gamma badge owned by Corrine Miller. Rebecca Eason became the first president of the new Alpha Psi chapter.

Anna Boyd’s daughter Caroline Ellington Green was initiated in 1944.

The first addition to the Alpha Psi house was added in 1950. Rose Marie Leonard Paris, Mary Comfort Leonard’s granddaughter, was initiated 1951. The second addition to Alpha Psi house was added in 1960. In 1963 Betty Boyd Leonard (Nelson), Mary Comfort Leonard’s great-granddaughter, was initiated. The third addition to Alpha Psi house was added in 1964. In 1967, Mary Mack Leonard, Mary Comfort Leonard’s great-granddaughter, was initiated.

On June 24, 1973, the governor of Mississippi proclaimed “Delta Gamma Day” in honor of the Fraternity’s founding in Oxford, its flourishing success internationally and pilgrimage back to Oxford. Unfortunately, on March 30, 1976, the original Memorial House destroyed by fire. A rededication of the newly remodeled Memorial House at Alpha Psi was held on September 25, 1977.

In 2001, Rachel Marie Paris, great-great granddaughter of Mary Comfort Leonard, was initiated. In 2013, Vivian Redditt Paris, great-great granddaughter of Mary Comfort Leonard, was initiated. In 2015, Elizabeth “Ellie” West Waugh, great great great granddaughter of Eva Webb Dodd, was initiated. In 2017, Grace Elizabeth Waugh, great great great granddaughter of Eva Webb Dodd, was initiated.

“Alpha Psi has excelled on the Ole Miss campus for many years…Each member is proud to say that they are a Delta Gamma and hopes they will always live up to Delta Gamma ideals formed by our founders.” (From history written by Diana Stone 1984)