

**Alpha Chi-Penn State**

**Fast Facts:**

* Installation date: May 17, 1930
* Location: Centre County, Pennsylvania
* Region: 1

**History:**

The Pennsylvania State University, commonly referred to as Penn State, was founded in 1855 as an agricultural college. After President Lincoln signed the Morrill Land Grant Act offering each state free public land for higher education in 1863, the state legislature designated Penn State as the land grant college of the Commonwealth for both men and women. However, it wasn’t until 1871 that women attended the university and President Calder made the statement that, “Thus far six ladies have entered, and have proven as diligent, orderly, and successful as the young men in the same classes.”

By 1892 things had begun to change and Penn State received state appropriations of $12,000 for a program in Home Economics and $13,000 to build a Women’s Dormitory in 1907. By 1909, 35 “girl students” were admitted and 16 of them lived in the Women’s Cottage. As enrollment increased, they built more cottages, and local “social clubs” sprang up. In 1922 a group called “La Camaraderie” was formed as 1 of 4 social women’s clubs. The women chose the name “La Camaraderie” to represent their unity and sisterhood. Eight years later this group would become Alpha Chi chapter of Delta Gamma Fraternity, joining Chi Omega, Alpha Omicron Pi, Theta Phi Alpha and Phi Mu National Panhellenic Conference groups on campus.

In June 1926 the Senate Committee on Student Welfare gave the clubs permission to petition women’s national fraternities. After serious consideration, La Camaraderie decided to petition Delta Gamma. A further step was taken by the university when the administration permitted the five oldest clubs to take cottages on campus for their houses, creating greater centralization. In March 1928 Donna Hinds Amsden, Upsilon-Stanford, First Vice-President of Delta Gamma Fraternity, and Janet Brown, Province 1 Secretary, made an official visit to inspect the college. On the way to a Council meeting, Marguerite Dawson Winant, Omicron-Adelphi, Fraternity Second Vice-President, spent a day in State College on an unofficial visit. Both visits left the women enthusiastic and felt the college equaled the kind of institution Delta Gamma would be interested in. By December 1929 the club petitioned Delta Gamma to allow them to be a collegiate chapter and although it took a while to get the results, the vote was affirmative and planning for installation began.

On May 17, 1930, Alpha Chi chapter of Delta Gamma Fraternity was installed on the Pennsylvania State University campus in State College, PA. Many fraternities offered their homes for various events. Pledging was held Friday evening at the Phi Delta Theta house. On Saturday afternoon Delta Sigma Phi hosted the installation service. An installation banquet was held at the University Club and many present and former officers and the *ANCHORA* editor were present. It was impressive how many alumnae attended from Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington, D.C. Chapter Roll Call and countless telegrams were read. Janet Burns was toastmistress and many made toasts to the new chapter. Alpha Beta-Swarthmore contributed an original song for the new chapter and serenaded all with many beautiful Delta Gamma songs. The charter presentation was made by Fraternity President Mary MacHarg Halstead, Sigma-Northwestern and received by Sarah Wentzel. First Vice-President Florence Cornell Bingham, Chi-Cornell presented the member certificates.

The chapter house was the women’s cottage used by La Camaraderie, which was occupied until 1940 when all sororities were required to move into university dormitories. The sorority house was a three-story, wooden frame house with a porch that wrapped around its front and sides. At the time, Alpha Omicron Pis lived across the street and one alumna fondly remembers bouncing from house to house in search of bridge games.

In the 1940s, the dormitory area designated for sororities was Center Hall, and the Delta Gammas were assigned a suite on the ground floor of Simmons Hall. The six floors of ivy-covered red brick were enough to house 700 women. The Pi Beta Phis were located in McElwain Hall, the neighboring dormitory.

Anne Seltzer pledged in 1957, and had the following to say about why she chose DG: “Because everyone in it wasn’t a stereotype of everyone else. We had Marion Beatty with her constant 4.0, more than our share of “hatwomen” and campus big shots, beauty queens (two Miss Pennsylvanias in my pledge class!), cheerleaders, jocks, party girls, tall and short, gorgeous and not-so-gorgeous, slim and not-so-slim. And there was definitely that DG spirit that held us all together.”

1970 was the year for the first Delta Gamma Anchor Splash® at Penn State. The enormous amounts of organization required to carry out a philanthropy of this type at a school so large created the need for greater organization in all DG offices.

The 1980s brought new involvement to the Alpha Chi’s. The sorority suite was moved to Pollock Hall and redecorated. The chapter also helped with the installation of a Delta Gamma chapter at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

At some point in the late 1980s, early 1990s, the chapter relocated to a suite in Shulze Hall. The suite was redecorated in 1992.