

**Alpha Tau-Butler**

**Fast Facts:**

* Installation date: October 3, 1925
* Location: Indianapolis, IN
* Region: 4

**History:**

On January 15, 1850, the Indiana State legislature adopted Ovid Butler's proposed charter for a new Christian university in Indianapolis. After five years in development, Butler University opened on November 1, 1855, as North Western Christian University at 13th Street and College Avenue on Indianapolis' near north side at the eastern edge of the present Old Northside Historic District.

Butler University was founded by members of the Christian church (Disciples of Christ), though it was never controlled by the church. The university charter called for "a non-sectarian institution free from the taint of slavery, offering instruction in every branch of liberal and professional education." The university was the first in Indiana and the third in the United States to admit both men and women. Butler was the first university in the United States to endow a chair designated specifically for a woman, the Demia Butler Chair (endowed in 1869). Catharine Merrill, the first person to hold the chair, became the second woman to be named a professor in an American university. It was among the first institutions of college standing to offer the same advantages to women as to men, and was among the first to permit students to select subjects best suited to their needs.

The oldest of the fraternities on campus is Phi Delta Theta, established at Butler in 1859.

Alpha Tau was one of two Delta Gamma chapters installed in 1925. The other was Alpha Sigma-UCLA, as the Delta Gamma expansion policy was very conservative. At the 1924 Convention, when Butler was presented as a field for expansion, 24 other interested campuses were not accepted for consideration. Butler was one of many schools experiencing increased enrollment and a need an expanded fraternity and sorority system.

Indianapolis alumnae chapter played a major part in the establishment of Alpha Tau. One chapter member, Alice Young, reminisced that she and Sarah Sisson were selected by an alumnae board to choose a founding group which would work only for acceptance by Delta Gamma. These two women, with four others, established a group in December of 1922 called Sigma Delta. Their purpose was to perfect an organization which would be recognized for its high ideals of scholarship, democracy, and womanhood, and petition Delta Gamma for a charter.

Sigma Delta was welcomed into the campus Panhellenic in April of 1923. Sigma Delta held her own with the established chapters on campus. The women ranked first scholastically for men's and women's fraternities in 1923-24, and were actively involved with an endowment fund drive for the university, raising enough money to reserve a lot on sorority row. Honors and activities included: Chimes, Scarlet Quill (Mortar Board), Phi Kappa Phi scholastic fraternity, varsity debate team, college paper staff, campus dramatic productions, vice-president and secretary of Y.W.C.A. and vice president of senior class.

The members of Sigma Delta were excited to finally receive the acceptance of their petition to Delta Gamma on November 18, 1924. The charter members were Mary Crew, Helen Doeppers, Louise Haggard, Eleanor Muller, Sarah Sisson and Alice Young, who served as president.

Headquarters for the Installation, banquet and reception was the Hotel Lincoln in Indianapolis. It seemed like a miniature Convention with all of the members from Theta chapter in attendance, many Theta alumnae, representatives from the chapters at Northwestern, Ohio Wesleyan, West Virginia, Ohio State, Illinois and Miami University, and alumnae from Minnesota, Michigan and Nebraska. More than 50 came from a distance of 50 to 800 miles. Initiation was Saturday morning October 3, 1925, in the beautiful Travertine Room, and 29 women were initiated. Former Delta Gamma Fraternity President Blanche Garten, Kappa-Nebraska was the Installation officer and the toastmistress was Mary Frisinger Peterson, Theta-Indiana, and mother of Patricia Peterson Danielson. The 40th chapter of Delta Gamma was official.

That same year, the chapter rented a house on Downey Street that sat “… in the center of an immense lawn with huge trees over-shadowing it.” In honor of this new house, the alumnae presented the chapter with a baby grand piano. In 1926, Delta Gamma won the honor of having the best decorated sorority house in the Homecoming contest. In 1927, after visiting Theta chapter at IU for Founders Day and seeing Theta’s chapter house, Alpha Tau members were inspired and the Building Fund effort for the new chapter house took on a life of its own.

The chapter would soon select the site of the future house on the new Fairview campus. The chapter was thrilled to learn of the lot it received, stating “Ours is a wonderful one on the front side, even though we came next to the last for choice in the order of founding on campus.” In 1928, the chapter moved to a new house on Buckingham Drive when the campus moved from Irvington to Fairview. Members could have been spotted that year at the inaugural basketball game in the Butler Field House (now Hinkle Field House) where the Bulldogs beat top-ranked Notre Dame in overtime and went on to win the national championship.

Members held fundraiser bridge parties, candy and rummage sales, sold Christmas cards, college stickers and even Christmas trees. For the next decade, the chapter worked hard to increase the building fund for the new chapter house. In 1932, a house corporation was established consisting of the Mother’s Club, the local alumnae and the chapter, and it pledged $1,000 toward the progress of the house.

Alpha Tau alumnae jumped into roles at the Fraternity level, with Ruth Pahud serving as the Convention Chairman of Recreation for the 1930 Convention in Asheville, North Carolina. The chapter was in charge of planning several feature events like archery, golf, horseback riding and swimming tournaments for Convention attendees. The Recreation Committee promised, “There will be not be a dull moment at Convention.”

For many years, Founders Day was celebrated at the Indiana State Luncheon, which included Theta chapter and all nearby alumnae. Social activities kept Alpha Tau busy, from entertaining faculty with teas and planning senior dinners, to attending campus events like Junior Prom and May Day festivities. During the summer, a favorite tradition was an annual week-long getaway at such spots like Lake Manitou and Tippecanoe Lake where dancing and bridge filled the hours.

The women in Alpha Tau were continuously elected to various honorary societies, and scholarship was a priority. They also had their sights set on service, especially during the tenuous Depression years, including purchasing clothes for a 10-year-old little girl. Members went to the Field House to hear the likes of Hoagy Carmichael or attend political rallies for Thomas Dewey and Herbert Hoover.

After much anticipation and careful planning, the new French provincial house at 737 West Hampton was completed in 1936, and 12 women moved in. World War II arrived and war-time service took priority on campus. Many chapter activities were eliminated, such as State Day, in order to put the money toward war bonds instead. The Field House served as a barracks for the Air Force and Navy. Enrollment at Butler was largely women during World War II, with 669 women, but only 259 young men.

In 1948, a new wing was added to the chapter house that included a house mother’s suite and a large town girls’ room. The house was not ready in time for rush that fall, so the brothers of Phi Delta Theta loaned their house during rush week. To keep in the theme of being displaced, the chapter had a “shipwrecked” theme for rush. With the addition of this new wing, 25 members could live in. A dormitory made up the entire third floor and the house was completely redecorated, the dining room enlarged and a sun deck was added at the back. A large Christmas formal dance was held at the newly remodeled house to celebrate, which soon became an annual favorite.

The chapter house had more additions added in 1963, 1982 and 2009, expanding each time to accommodate the growing student enrollment at Butler.

The 1950s saw Alpha Tau winning numerous Homecoming float awards and best Homecoming house decorations. The Drift yearbook staff was overflowing with five editors and four assistants from Delta Gamma.

By the time the groove of the 1960s hit, Alpha Taus excelled in scholarship and served as editors for both the yearbook and newspaper, the cheerleader captain and held many other campus honors. In 1968 alone, five members were tapped for Mortar Board.

In the 1970s, the chapter hosted exchange students from Sweden and France through the Delta Gamma Foundation’s International Education program, and Swedish student Anne Zachau became a favorite initiated member of the chapter. Chapter members brightened the basement laundry room, stairway and study room by painting the walls with a butterfly, sailboat, rainbows and sunsets, all in the spirit of the ‘70s.

Alpha Tau held its first Anchor Splash® in 1979.

The chapter continued to excel in all areas in the 1980s and helped sponsor the World Goal Ball Tournament at Hinkle Field House, which was for athletes who were blind to compete. In 1983, the chapter hosted Alpha Taus only living charter members and first president, Alice Young Holsclaw, at Founders Day, and flew her in from Arizona for the celebration. She was overwhelmed by how the campus and chapter how grown and thrilled with the accomplishments of the chapter. Alpha Tau was always on the Delta Gamma Rush Honor Roll, making quota every year. Rush was in the fall, and in 1989, Panhellenic policies changed on campus, and it was the first year new members did not move into the chapter house on Bid Day.

It was not unusual for Alpha Tau to hold first place in academic standing, which happened at least eight terms in a row in the early ‘90s. The chapter has received numerous Fraternity awards, including numerous scholarship-related awards like the prestigious Parnassus Award in 1990. Alpha Tau has received the Patricia Peterson Danielson Award nearly every year since 1985. The chapter received the Outstanding Chapter Award in 1996, and in 1988 and 2004, the chapter was runner-up for the Outstanding Chapter Award.

Members can always be seen participating in philanthropies for other groups on campus and serving in leadership roles in other campus organizations. Foundation activities include functions with The Indiana School for the Blind, and participation in Prevent Blindness Indiana's Sweetheart of the "See" campaign. The chapter holds Anchor Splash annually.

Alpha Tau chapter has an exemplary history, full of notable, exceptional women who continually demonstrate service for others and a respect for academic success.