

**Beta Zeta-Denison**

**Fast Facts:**

* Installation date: May 13, 1938
* Location: Granville, OH
* Region: 4

**History:**

Denison University is a private, coeducational college founded in 1831, originally called Granville Literary & Theological Institution. In 1853, William S. Denison, a Muskingum County farmer, pledged $10,000 toward the college's endowment. Honoring an earlier commitment, the trustees accordingly changed the name of the institution to Denison University. They also voted to move the college to land then available for purchase in the village of Granville. In 1916, the college sought the expertise of the Frederick Law Olmsted & Sons architectural firm, the founder of which had designed Central Park in New York City. The resulting "Olmstead Plan" laid a foundation for expansion that has remained the guiding aesthetic for subsequent growth, establishing and maintaining a pedestrian-friendly campus, while also preserving scenic views of the surrounding hills and valleys.

The roots of coeducation at Denison University began in December 1832 with the establishment of the Granville Female Seminary. Ultimately called Shepardson College for Women, the college was incorporated as part of Denison University in 1900. In May 1928, permission was granted by the trustees of Denison for the local sororities to petition national sororities to establish their groups on campus. Delta Gamma was petitioned by some of these local groups, but our expansion policy was extremely conservative at the time with groups on other campuses waiting several years for Delta Gamma; only one chapter was installed in 1928, Alpha Phi-British Columbia, and there were no chapters installed in 1929.

A Western Union telegram dated October 9, 1937, to the Delta Gamma Fraternity President read: "University Pan Hellenic concerned over good unaffiliated material one hundred ninety-eight girls in freshman class and one hundred twenty pledged (stop) interested in having a chapter of Delta Gamma or Pi Phi on campus (stop) could you use your influence - Betty Shoemaker, Kappa Alpha Theta President of Panhellenic."

Delta Gamma responded immediately by sending Dorothy Wildasin, Province Secretary, to visit Denison. She found that "Kappa dropped many splendid girls because they thought the girls were holding out for Theta and Theta dropped these same girls because they thought they were holding out for Kappa and consequently when rush was over the cream of the crop had not been pledged and the campus was in an uproar." With the help of two Delta Gamma faculty members, Dorothy Wildasin organized a group of 24 to form the nucleus of a Delta Gamma colony. "...even the Dean of Women said that the group that I organized was beyond her wildest dreams as I really took the best girls." This was the first colonization ever held at Denison, and the first colonization for Delta Gamma that did not have active members brought in to help the group organize. Mrs. Wildasin wrote, "Believe me, if this doesn't go through [Fraternity approval] I am going to Alaska and be a Province Secretary to the Eskimos because I couldn't be so close to this group of girls and realize how disappointed they would be."

Epsilon- Ohio State chapter members with the assistance of Alpha Rho-Ohio Wesleyan members conducted the pledging ceremony at the Granville Inn on February 5, 1938. Miss Helen Badenoch, one of the Delta Gamma faculty members at Denison, became the colony adviser.

It was a rainy installation weekend, "but the thrill of it all was not to be quenched." Friday, May 13 was Initiation for the colony which took place at the Chi Omega lodge in the afternoon with Fraternity President Marguerite Winant presiding and Alpha Rho conducting the service. One-hundred fifty newly initiated members and guests attended the formal banquet, held in the evening at the Phi Gamma Delta house. The tables and rooms were decorated in sorority colors with many of the lovely flowers furnished from the campus itself by order of the President of the university. The theme of the banquet was the Ship's Program.

Saturday was filled with business meetings, tours of the campus, and a model chapter meeting. In the evening the new Beta Zeta chapter entertained the faculty and trustees of the university, representatives of other social groups, alumnae and actives of Delta Gamma, and the campus leaders, at a formal reception in the Granville Inn.

The chapter house for Beta Zeta came to life in the spring of 1939. The chapter used the house before its dedication for the first time when they gave their pledge formal in the house even though they were not pledges any more. They had postponed the formal until they could give it in the house.

A week later the house was formally opened and Beta Zeta hosted a reception for the student body and faculty, alumnae and guests. The chapter house was decorated by Fraternity President Marguerite Winant. She planned color schemes and selected and ordered all the furniture. Everyone was happy and grateful for the quality of the house and praised the work of their Granville patronesses, Miss Badnenoch, Miss Barr, Mrs. DeWeerd and Mrs. Titus who kept the whole project focused and on track.