

**Gamma Zeta- Louisiana State**

**Fast Facts:**

* Installation date: March 20, 1948
* Location: Baton Rouge, LA
* Region: 3

**History:**

Louisiana State University Agricultural & Mechanical College had its origin in several land grants made by the United States government in 1806, 1811, and 1827 for use as a seminary of learning. It was founded as a military academy and is still today steeped in military tradition, giving rise to the school's nickname "The Ole War Skule." In 1853, the Louisiana General Assembly established the Seminary of Learning of the State of Louisiana near Pineville in Rapides Parish in Central Louisiana. Modeled initially after Virginia Military Institute, the institution opened with five professors and nineteen cadets on January 2, 1860, with Colonel William Tecumseh Sherman as superintendent. On January 26, 1861, after only a year at the helm, Sherman resigned his position because Louisiana became the sixth state to secede from the Union. The school closed on June 30, 1861, with the start of the American Civil War.

During the war, the university reopened briefly in April 1863, but was closed once again with the invasion of the Red River Valley by the Union Army. The losses sustained by the institution during the Union occupation were heavy, and after 1863 the seminary remained closed for the remainder of the Civil War. Following the surrender of the Confederates at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865, General Sherman donated two cannons to the institution. These cannons had been captured from Confederate forces after the close of the war and had been used during the initial firing upon Fort Sumter in April 1861. The cannons are still displayed in front of LSU's Military Science/Aerospace Studies Building.

The seminary officially reopened its doors on October 2, 1865, only to be burned October 15, 1869. On November 1, 1869, the institution resumed its exercises in Baton Rouge, where it has since remained. In 1870, the name of the institution was officially changed to Louisiana State University.

Louisiana State University Agricultural & Mechanical College was established by an act of the legislature, approved April 7, 1874, to carry out the United States Morrill Act of 1862, granting lands for this purpose. It temporarily opened in New Orleans, June 1, 1874, where it remained until it merged with Louisiana State University in 1877. This prompted the final name change for the university to the Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College.

In the early 1930s, Delta Gamma representatives began looking at Louisiana State as a possible expansion site. From 1934-1946, Delta Gamma continued to receive letters declining acceptance of the Fraternity on the campus due to too many sororities having already been established. Finally on April 1, 1947, the LSU Panhellenic invited Delta Gamma to colonize on campus.

Delta Gamma began the colonization process in September of 1947. Delta Gamma held its first alumnae meeting in the capital city of Baton Rouge. Only two women attended- Margaret Morgan Gregg, Gamma- UC Berkeley, and Vera Lescher, Alpha Omega- Arkansas. These women and Province XIV Secretary Polly Atkinson Jones, Alpha Iota- Oklahoma became close friends and worked together to host a tea in the campus French House for Fraternity Secretary Dorothy Knight Wildasin, Alpha Omicron-Miami. They sent invitations and familiarized themselves with the names of prospective Delta Gammas and the cities they came from. They put a notice in the paper announcing the tea for Mrs. Wildasin, and asked that any other Delta Gammas in Baton Rouge please contact them. Two new alumnae arrived to help, Marjorie Stucky Jordan, Theta- Indiana, and Miriam Echols Coots, Alpha Omega- Arkansas. With Mrs. Wildasin’s charm and efficiency, interviews were held, meetings with University and Panhellenic officials held, and a plan was put in place. Each of the local alumnae took over after Mrs. Wildasin’s departure and until the arrival of their Field Secretary. Lillian Newton Landrum, Alpha Psi- Mississippi, was the field secretary who assisted with colonization and installation of the chapter.

The Gamma Zeta colony held its first meeting in the playroom of the Evangeline Dormitory on November 11, 1947; Mrs. Landrum officiated the meeting.

Baton Rouge was a veritable garden of azalea bushes and spring flowers the weekend of March 19 as guests arrived in the city to install Gamma Zeta chapter on March 20, 1948. Ten collegians and five women were initiated. The charter members were: Frances Pryor Baldwin, Alma Gertrude Graves, Valerie Himbert, Lillian Joanne Lyles, Priscilla Jeanne May, Martha Gray Prentice, Marjorie Pulliam, Julia Quinn, Barbara Lee Terry, and Anita Wilson. Fraternity President Edith Taylor Smith, Alpha Beta-Swarthmore; First VP, Dorothy Glenn Holsinger, Iota- Illinois; and Treasurer Margaret Smallpage Banker, Sigma- Northwestern, arrived along with Province officers. Initiation was held in the chapter room of the Panhellenic House followed by an Installation Banquet at the Baton Rouge Country Club. The banquet program (“La Programme”) and menu were printed in both English and in French to honor the settling of Louisiana by the French. Frances Pryor Baldwin became the chapter’s first president. Upon installation, Gamma Zeta became the 75th chapter of Delta Gamma, and one among the 23 fraternities and 15 sororities on LSU’s campus.

The chapter’s first recruitment was held the next fall, in which Frances Lewis Stevenson, Zeta- Albion, assisted.

In December 1948, the collegiate members decided to give a record album to the School for the Blind instead of exchanging Christmas gifts to one another. Gamma Zeta established and sponsored a Brownie Girl Scout Troop at the Louisiana State School for the blind for several years.

Gamma Zeta moved into its first chapter house on January 31, 1966, and the house was dedicated in a ceremony on February 13, 1966. The chapter still resides there today at 4080 West Lakeshore Drive.

In 1978, Gamma Zeta held its first Anchor Splash®. In February 1984, Gamma Zeta helped with the pledging of a local sorority as Delta Gamma’s Epsilon Phi- Loyola chapter.