

**Iota-Illinois**

**Fast Facts:**

* Installation date: May 12, 1906
* Location: Urbana-Champaign, IL
* Region: 5

**History:**

Between several cities, Urbana was selected in 1867 as the site for a new school. From the beginning, John Milton Gregory's desire to establish an institution firmly grounded in the liberal arts tradition was at odds with many state residents and lawmakers who wanted the university to offer classes based solely around "industrial education.” Illinois Industrial University opened for classes on March 2, 1868 and had two faculty members and 77 students. In 1885, the Illinois Industrial University officially changed its name to the University of Illinois, reflecting its agricultural, mechanical, and liberal arts curriculum. This remained the official name for nearly 100 years, until it was changed to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1982 (using the reverse of the commonly used designation for the local area, "Champaign-Urbana"), ostensibly to establish a separate identity for the campus within the University of Illinois system.

In the fall of 1904, a local sorority Zeta Nu was organized as a possible future chapter of what was then a local chapter known as Sigma Kappa at another school to the near east. However, one of the members attended a formal hosted by Sigma-Northwestern, and she returned to her chapter full of enthusiasm for Delta Gamma Fraternity. The women decided to “work like beavers for something worthwhile,” such as Delta Gamma.

The Fraternity granted a charter to Zeta Nu women exactly one year from their first petition dated April 20, 1905.

Iota chapter was officially installed May 12th, 1906, and 16 women of Zeta Nu became charter members.

In 1909, the chapter was honored with a visit from two of the Delta Gamma founders, Eva Webb Dodd and Mary Comfort Leonard, following Convention hosted in Ann Arbor, Michigan. In a thank you letter Mary Comfort Leonard wrote, “the day with the dear girls in Champaign appeals to us as nothing else has done. You took us right into your hearts and home and were as lovely to us as only Delta Gamma school girls can be.”

In the fall of 1916, the local alumnae opened a tea room called the Green Tea Pot. The funds received from this endeavor over ten years went towards making payments for the mortgage on the Iota chapter house. The house is located directly next to the campus and was built in 1910. A circular staircase from the basement to the third floor is a focal point for chapter traditions. Frances Lewis Stevenson, Zeta-Albion, the Fraternity Historian at the time of the chapter’s 75th anniversary, detailed how the doors to each room displayed pictures of the women who had lived in each room over the years. Members of Iota have a very special reverence for their house.

Beginning in 1911, to encourage scholarship, the name of the girl with the highest average was engraved on a scholarship cup. In 1912 Faculty nights were held on Wednesdays when two faculty members would be invited to dinner. Later the freshman ring was established which was passed from the most outstanding freshman to her successor the following year.

Iota celebrated its 75th anniversary on April 25, 1981. Women from as far back as the class of 1918 were in attendance. Twenty-four 50-year members were honored with the presentation of cream-colored roses.

Since its installation, Iota has been awarded the Patricia Peterson Danielson Award 12 times.

Iota’s first chapter house was purchased in 1907. In 1916, the chapter moved into a brand-new home on W Nevada Street, which was subsequently rebuilt in 1936. Iota still occupies this house today.

In 1981, a new anchor on loan from the United States Navy was unveiled as a gift for the 75th anniversary from the Champaign-Urbana alumnae group. The chapter pays the Navy one cent every year to rent the iconic white anchor that rests on the front lawn of the chapter house.