

**Theta-Indiana**

**Fast Facts:**

* Installation date: December 10, 1898
* Location: Bloomington, IN
* Region: 4

**History:**

Indiana's state government in Corydon established Indiana University on January 20, 1820, as the "State Seminary." Construction began in 1822 at what is now called Seminary Square Park near the intersection of Second Street and College Avenue. The school's name was changed to "Indiana College" in 1829, and to "Indiana University" in 1839. Growth of the college was slow. In 1851, IU had nearly a hundred students and seven professors. IU admitted its first woman student, Sarah Parke Morrison, in 1867, making IU the fourth public university to admit women on an equal basis with men. Morrison went on to become the first female professor at IU in 1873. By 1898, three women’s groups existed at IU. They were Kappa Kappa Gamma, Kappa Alpha Theta, and Pi Beta Phi.

With the help of a University of Michigan Pi Phi, and the wife of the president of the University and member of Kappa Alpha Theta, the three women laid the groundwork for Theta chapter. These women readied themselves to petition Delta Gamma for a charter but realized that another local sorority had already begun the process. Alice Kinnard, Eva Ensle, and Estoria Dunham, members of Alpha Zeta Beta, a local group, had already petitioned the Secretary of the Grand Council of Delta Gamma for a charter. Rather than be discouraged, the two groups joined together as one group to petition the Fraternity jointly. Fraternity representatives Caroline McCabe, Sigma-Northwestern and Helen Davis, Zeta-Albion visited the chapter to assess the women and the campus environment. Shortly before Thanksgiving, and only four weeks after the visitors came to the campus, President Swain was notified by telegram that the charter had been granted. Theta was installed at Indiana University on December 10, 1898. Theta’s founding members were: Effie Coleman, Lillian Bappert, and Nellie Perigo.

The chapter’s first meetings were held in the parlor of the private residence of Mrs. E.B. Cassell at 504 East Kirkwood. The Council of Delta Gamma Fraternity did not schedule a convention in 1898, the year Theta chapter was founded. Therefore, the date given on the charter was May 11, 1899, not the actual installation date of December 10, 1898. Those initiated were proud and would boast “this is the only Delta Gamma Chapter in the State.” Theta chapter marked the 14th Delta Gamma chapter in the United States.

The initiation ceremony of Theta was conducted by Caroline McCabe, Sigma-Northwestern, on December 10, 1898 at the Forest Place home of Mrs. John A Bergstrom, whose husband was a philosophy professor. The women chose Theta as their chapter letter “to show Mrs. Swain their appreciation for her advice and assistance in obtaining the desired charter,” recalled Effie Coleman. The charter bears the names of Coleman, Lillian Bappert, Alice Kinnard, Clara Snyder, Nellie Perigo, Eva Ensle, Maud Davis, Elizabeth Hedderich, Chrstine Hill, and Estoria Dunham, and the signatures of Council President, Nina Foster Howard, Sigma-Northwestern; Vice-President, Bessie Lee Hopkins, Xi-Michigan; Treasurer, Mary Stuart Foster, Omega-Wisconsin; Secretary, Ruth Nelson Wetzel, Chi-Cornell; and Fifth Member, Grace Tennant Adams, Lambda-Minnesota.

The Secretary’s book of 1898 stated rules of the early chapter. Early meetings were at 7 o’clock Saturday evenings in Effie Coleman’s room at the home of Mrs. David Mottier. At first the membership of the chapter was limited to 20 women. Dues were $1 a month, payable in advance for the entire term.

Theta celebrated its centennial on September 26, 1998. Over 400 alumnae from across the country attended.

For one semester in 1899, Theta rented three rooms in the home of Dr. and Mrs. Amzi Arwater for entertaining; it was located at the crossroads of Kirkwood and Grant. Nine Delta Gammas rented a chapter house at 720 East Third Street in the fall of 1900. The establishment of the Indiana University Panhellenic Association and Theta chapter’s purchase of its first house on East Third Street marked the year of 1916.

In 1924, Theta prepared to join eight other fraternity and sorority organizations in building Jordan Quadrangle. Two years later, in 1926, Theta moved into its new house at 105 North Jordan Avenue. A two-story brick addition was added to Theta’s chapter house in 1949.

After Theta Chapter's house expanded in 1959, the father of chapter member Rosemond Toner Graham, worked with the United States Navy to rent an anchor for the chapter’s front lawn. United States Naval Captain Raymond J. Toner, commanding officer of the U.S. Naval Station in San Juan, Puerto Rico, arranged for the chapter to acquire a decommissioned anchor in 1961 on indefinite loan. Each year, the chapter reports to the U.S. Navy on the condition and whereabouts of the anchor. The name of the ship that it served is not known – even by the Navy.

After it was delivered and installed, it became a "traveling trophy" on campus. Despite its weight of over 600 pounds, groups of sturdy college men regularly relocated it to their own chapter houses – the Sigma Alpha Epsilon house across the street being the most frequent destination. Soon, the anchor was embedded in concrete so it would remain in place. Once the anchor was immovable it took on a new life. It became a post to which men could be tied in celebration of their commitment to DG women – through a lavalier, pin, or engagement. It also became a favorite site for posing for photos. When the chapter house was enlarged in 1992, the anchor was relocated to its present position.

The final addition to the house was the Delta Gamma Centennial walkway and bridge over the Jordan River, added in 1998, as the chapter’s gift to the University on its 100th year anniversary of being on campus.

Theta’s chapter house is notable to the Fraternity for having the most beds. The house sleeps 120 women.