

**Alpha Nu-USC**

**Fast Facts:**

* Installation date: February 11, 1922
* Location: Los Angeles, CA
* Region: 8
* Original name: Delta (III) 1887-1897

**History:**

The University of Southern California was founded following the efforts of Judge Robert M. Widney, who helped secure donations from several key figures in early Los Angeles history: a Protestant nurseryman, Ozro Childs; an Irish Catholic former-Governor, John Gately Downey; and a German Jewish banker, Isaias W. Hellman. The three donated 308 lots of land to establish the campus and provided the necessary seed money for the construction of the first buildings. Originally operated in affiliation with the Methodist Church, the school mandated from the start that "no student would be denied admission because of race." The university is no longer affiliated with any church, having severed formal ties in 1952. When USC opened in 1880, tuition was $15.00 per term and students were not allowed to leave town without the knowledge and consent of the university president. The school had an enrollment of 53 students and a faculty of 10. The city lacked paved streets, electric lights, telephones, and a reliable fire alarm system. Its first graduating class in 1884 was a class of three—two males and female valedictorian Minnie C. Miltimore.

Alpha Nu's history dates back to 1887 when Ella Tarr, Sigma-Northwestern, went to a promising new institution in the West, the University of Southern California, to be its Dean of Women. She immediately organized a chapter of her own fraternity on the growing campus. The letter Delta was given to this chapter. The founding of Delta meant it was the first chapter in California; and it always maintained a high standard. When Alta Gwinn Saunders, *ANCHORA* Editor in 1945, was gathering information on this original chapter, she found the early years were very prosperous for the chapter and university but when the great depression hit, those years became very lean. Delta chapter was only to survive until December 1896. USC had been founded during the Los Angeles real estate boom. The boom subsided and the young University was left without material means of existence. We had one Greek rival whose chapter had been reduced to one member. The university's future was quite dubious and so the vote was taken to withdraw Delta chapter.

A local sorority, Beta Phi was organized in October of 1902. Correspondence began in 1918 between Beta Phi and Delta Gamma. Members had learned about the Fraternity from Delta Gamma friends and were acquainted with members of the Los Angeles alumnae chapter. A June 2, 1919 letter from the Beta Phi secretary states: "We realize that to obtain a charter of Delta Gamma probably requires a great deal of hard work, but that the goal, which we so much desire, when attained will be worth it all and we hope to prove ourselves worthy of such an honor."

On January 5, 1921, Rose T. Smith, Upsilon-Stanford, Fraternity President, wrote to the Fraternity expansion chairman on behalf of the Beta Phi members. She had met them while taking courses at the university. She said "I like the girls immensely and consider them fine material for a charter chapter.... I should like to hurry it up for them if possible so that they might apply for something else if there was no hope of. They do say however that they will not do this - It is DG or nothing." To her surprise she was appointed the "official investigator" of the University of Southern California. Rose immediately enlisted the help of another past Fraternity President, Blanche Garten (1903-05), who was staying in California for the winter.

While gathering material for their report, they found the university very different from what had been reported at the time Delta chapter was disbanded. "To realize that the University of Southern California lived through this time of stress and has become what it is today, a big university of 4,000 students and several affiliated colleges, shows that the foundations were strong and true." The two women enthusiastically recommended to the Grand Council that a charter be granted to Beta Phi.

Forty-three women were initiated as members of Alpha Nu chapter on February 11, 1922 at the chapter house, 920 West 28th Street. Members of Beta Phi who had been out of school three years or less were permitted to be initiated as Delta Gammas. The Los Angeles alumnae assisted Rose Smith, Blanche Garten, and Bertha Rose, Delta, with the planning of the ceremony and the dinner for the new chapter and alumnae following the installation.