

**Epsilon-Ohio State**

**Fast Facts:**

* Installation date: March 17, 1911
* Location: Columbus, OH
* Region: 4

**History:**

The proposal of a manufacturing and agriculture university in central Ohio was initially met in the 1870s with hostility from the state's agricultural interests and competition for resources from Ohio University, which was chartered by the Northwest Ordinance, and Miami University. Championed by the Republican stalwart Governor Rutherford B. Hayes, the Ohio State University was founded in 1870 as a land-grant university under the Morrill Act of 1862 as the Ohio Agricultural and Mechanical College. The school was originally within a farming community on the northern edge of Columbus. While some interests in the state had hoped that the new university would focus on matriculating students of various agricultural and mechanical disciplines, Hayes manipulated both the university's location and its initial board of trustees towards a more comprehensive end. The university opened its doors to 24 students on September 17, 1873. In light of its expanded focus, the Ohio state legislature changed the name to the now familiar The Ohio State University, officially adding “The” to the university’s name.

The first woman graduated in 1879.

The Fraternity’s interest in The Ohio State University began in fall 1909. Four women’s fraternities were already established on campus, but the chapters were small, usually fewer than 20 members, and they paid little attention to out-of-town students. Thus, the time seemed perfect for the addition of a new organization.

Frances Frost of Dayton, who knew of Delta Gamma through a family friend, persuaded a couple of Oxley Hall friends to form an organized group, inviting several congenial upperclassmen and Columbus women to join them. They paid dues and held regular meetings but kept their group a secret because they had heard that another association was forming publicly to seek a charter from Alpha Phi.

Grace Ferree, a transfer from Phi-Colorado, helped and encouraged the little group. Delta Gamma’s Fraternity President and Editor visited the Ohio State hopefuls in February 1910. The inspection was rigorous as the Fraternity representatives inquired into the scholastic and financial strength of the university, the institution’s commitment to higher education for women, and the scholarship and seriousness of purpose of the young candidates. Ultimately, advised the student group to submit a petition for a charter the following fall.

In the meantime, the tiny organization pledged four new members, met visiting Delta Gammas, and tried to prove their worthiness by earning good grades and taking part as individuals in campus activities.

The approval of the petition was by no means certain. Having suffered the painful loss of several early chapters because of discrimination against women students or the financial collapse of small colleges, Delta Gamma had become very conservative in granting new charters. Though the girls were not aware, the Fraternity had, several years previously, denied the application of another Ohio State group that later became a chapter of a different Panhellenic organization. This time, however, the 19 existing Delta Gamma chapters voted to grant the charter.

In February 1911, an official telegram was sent to the petitioning group on campus that read, “The Charter has been granted. Letter will follow. Love and best wishes. (Signed) Grand Council.” Marguerite Williams passed the yellow envelope to Joy and Elvira Smith as they sat in Broad Street Presbyterian Church. Exchanging twinkling, silent nods, they struggled to contain their delight until the service ended.

Epsilon chapter of Delta Gamma Fraternity was formally installed on March 17, 1911. Thirteen members of Eta-Akron and five alumnae came to Columbus to conduct the Installation. The Installation was held at the Smith home, which still stands on the corner of Denison and Buttles Avenues. The new initiates entertained the Installation delegation with a banquet at the Chittenden Hotel, a tour of the campus and a luncheon.

The Ohio State women were Delta Gammas at last, but they had no pins, no manuals, no written instructions and practically no guidance. It was up to them to create a living chapter. Not knowing that there existed an official Fraternity jeweler, and to the dismay of Council, they commissioned a local jeweler to make pins from a design drawn from memory.

Marguerite Williams, the first president of Epsilon, graduated a few months after the Installation. She was succeeded in office by Frances Frost, who was the chapter’s official delegate to the 1911 Convention. Frances, Marguerite, Louise Bethel and Elizabeth Atcheson attended the 1911 Delta Gamma Convention in Waupaca, Wisconsin. Marguerite returned to campus as a graduate student in the fall of 1911 to continue her support of the new chapter.

In April 1961, the chapter celebrated its 50th anniversary with a banquet at the Fort Hayes Hotel.

In 1976, Epsilon brought Anchor Splash® to campus. Members cheered and coached fraternity men to take part in the contest which sparked enthusiasm in the fraternity and sorority community and brought in significant donations to support Foundation projects.

In April 1986, Epsilon’s 75th anniversary celebration began with an informal party on Friday night at the chapter house. The highlight of the evening was the unveiling of the President’s Room which was dedicated to past, present and future Epsilon presidents. On Saturday, the chapter celebrated Founders Day with more than 400 collegians and alumnae, which included a standing ovation to charter member and first chapter president of Epsilon, Marguerite Williams. That evening the celebration continued at the Fawcett Center for Tomorrow on campus.

Epsilon also hosts Anchor Slam, a basketball tournament. Every woman in the house is responsible for either getting together a team of 5-7 players or finding a sponsor (local restaurants, businesses) to donate money for the Foundation. In 2010, Anchor Games became a football tournament to also raise money for Foundation.

On September 23, 2011, Epsilon chapter of Delta Gamma celebrated their 100th anniversary on campus.

As early as 1911, the young chapter discussed renting a house, but they dropped the idea on the advice of the Grand Officers who said that they should not isolate themselves form prospective new members in Oxley Hall. Instead, like the other women’s fraternities, Epsilon rented rooms on the second floor of the North High Street building that housed the former Long’s Book Store. These rooms, furnished with the random donations from members’ families, served as meeting places for the members.

In 1922 the chapter moved into its first rented house on 14th Avenue, furnishing it with articles from home and gifts from alumnae. New member classes grew to twenty or more, but the chapter remained relatively small because many girls did not remain in college to complete their degrees.

In 1924, 10 women and their chaperone lived in the house, and local women made it their own special haven while on campus. The next year they rented a house on 12th Avenue but moved again in 1926 to Fourteenth and Indianola Avenues. Looking forward to ownership, the chapter held a bridge party and several rummage sales to augment the previously-established House Fund.

In 1938, ground was broken for a new Delta Gamma house at 131 East 15th Avenue. It was the first house built at The Ohio State University specifically to accommodate a women’s fraternity. Designed by Benham and Richards and built by Ralph Fallon, the new house set a tone for 15th Avenue. The Building Committee chose a Colonial design over the objections of a vocal minority of the undergraduates who thought they would like a modernistic glass-block structure.

Through the efforts of Mary Myer Tobin, Epsilon-Ohio State, financing was arranged, and the house was completed at a cost of $50,000. The mid ‘50s saw the construction of the large lounge, first called the New Room and later named the Edward Room, to add informal living space to the house.

The Epsilon anchor was gifted to the chapter by the family of Marquita Topovski. Marquita was president of her 1974 new member class and had been thinking about what her member class could contribute to the house. One day when she was home singing “Anchors Away,” her mom mentioned that she had seen a discarded anchor from an old ship near their summer home in Sandusky. Her dad followed through with his promise to bring it to Columbus and installed it in the cement where it remains “anchored” today.

Beginning in 1980, the house was restored to a Georgian style of decoration consistent with the building’s architecture. The chapter room was renovated just in time to be shown with pride at the 1984 Delta Gamma Convention in Columbus.

The Epsilon chapter house underwent a massive renovation that was completed in the summer 2018.