



Iota Chapter
of
Delta Kappa
Epsilon

1854 - 1954

A HISTORY
by
Arthur P. Bodner, Jr.



Acknowledgements . . .

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1854 - 1954



Two groups — Active Members during Chapter's one hundredth year.



Fraternity House today . . . "The Little Red Barn."

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Before Delta Kappa Epsilon was ten years old, the seeds of Iota chapter had been planted. In the fall of 1853, two students, W. S. Mitchell and R. H. Isbell, of the Kentucky Military Institute at Frankfort, Kentucky, began planning for a D.K.E. chapter. These two men, along with M. A. Brooks, W. E. Burnett, C. Cartwright, and E. R. Gale, banded together and presented their petition to the mother chapter Phi, at Yale University. After an investigation by a committee of Phi alumni, this K.M.I. group was granted a Deke charter. Thus, in the winter of 1853-54, Iota chapter began her career.

Kentucky Military Institute at this time was a young school. Yet it was rapidly increasing in popularity, especially throughout the South. In this area the impending conflict between the northern and southern states had cast a deep shadow, and many sons of leading families were choosing this school for the military education that they knew would soon be so necessary. Many K.M.I. graduates were entering the army, easily obtaining commissions upon recommendation by the faculty of this distinguished school.

When Iota was first activated, it was known as a social club, just as it is today. During her first years, however, the literary program of the regular Saturday night meeting became a prominent feature. These literary programs proved to be of great benefit to the members, who won many scholastic and oratorical honors, despite the fact that scholarship was not a basic consideration in the selection of new members. To a modern reader of the ancient minutes of the fraternity, this emphasis on literary discussion seems to add to the quaintness of these earlier fraternal meetings. We must remember, however, that in those halcyon days before the tempo of social life became so fast, literary programs were popular at nearly every level in all communities throughout America. Therefore, it should not be inconceivable that in the nineteenth century, even college boys occasionally took some interest in literary and forensic pursuits.

When the Civil War began, in April, 1861, K.M.I.'s commencement exercises were held hurriedly so that the entire school, students and faculty, could rush to the front. In war, as in peace, Iota

led the way, with some of her members joining the Union Army and some the Confederate. It was impossible, of course, for the chapter to remain active during the war years. With the following message from the chapter scribe to her sister chapters, Iota closed the first phase of her history:

May, 1861. I am the last of thirteen a week ago, and have just been to see three of our band enlist. I am only writing to finish our chapter correspondence to return and enlist myself.

Your Brother in D.K.E.

Although this message brought to a close Iota's official existence, the fraternal spirit lived on. According to a legend that still survives, a secret meeting was held shortly before the end of the war in a hay loft on a farm near the Ohio river. Five men were present at this meeting, three in Confederate uniforms and two in Union. Neither the specific purpose nor the business conducted is known; but legend has it that the reactivation of the chapter after the war was the main topic of discussion.

After the Civil War, K.M.I. reopened, but under entirely new management. For a number of years the school was unable to regain its former prestige. During the 1880's, efforts were made to reopen some of the fraternity chapters that the war had closed. For Iota chapter, Central University at Richmond, Kentucky, seemed the most favorable location. Central had been founded in 1872 by a group of southern alumni of Centre College who believed that a university should be broader in its curriculum than Centre had been. Having grown rapidly, Central University gave all indications of becoming the most excellent institution in the South.



Old Centre, Iota's home on numerous occasions . . .

Upon learning of the efforts being made to revive old chapters, a group of Central students banded together, calling themselves I.B. (Iota Beta?). Although they did not know the true D.K.E. standards, these men set high goals and earnestly tried to make themselves worthy of becoming Dekes. In spite of the competition of previously established fraternities and social clubs, this group was soon acknowledged to be the strongest organization in the university. In the spring of 1885, the old Iota charter was granted to them, and on June 9, initiation was held. The following men were the charter members of the revived Iota chapter: Philip F. Barbeuse, William J. Chinn, Jr., James C. Flourney, Saunders A. Fowler, John L. Harris, Alex Henry, James Henry, Robert T. Irvine, Frank L. Lapsley, Robert H. McCreary, Charles H. R. McElroy, J. M. N. B. Nix, Jr., James N. Saunders, Jr., David M. Sweets, and Robert O. Wallace. So it was that Iota, while she was located on the Central campus, maintained the high Deke standards and won for the fraternity a large share of honors and leadership recognition.

For sixteen years Iota remained at Central. In 1901, however, Central University and Centre College at Danville consolidated to form Central University of Kentucky. Both churchmen and laymen had come to realize the need for the greater moral influence that a unified Christian college could exert in the state. Although, for a while, the school maintained both campuses, the Iota chapter was moved from Richmond to Danville. By this time, understandably, Iota was known to the other Deke chapters as "Wandering Sister." Credit for this successful move belongs to V. L. Peterson, S. N. Saunders, and M. V. Ward. In spite of many obstacles, including opposition from other fraternities already on the campus, these loyal



Chapter House during year of 1918-19'



First permanent home 1923-1930.

Iota Dekes established a strong chapter in Danville. So it was that Dekism was destined to become an integral part of the university.

At Centre, Iota soon became the leader in all phases of campus life. Their social functions were always successful and long remembered. The fact that they continually received gifts of pictures, table linens, and other useful items from young ladies, mothers, and friends shows the extent of their popularity. This popularity was not confined to the Centre campus, for in 1906, despite intense rivalry for the honor, the national convention voted to hold its next convention at Louisville, Kentucky, with Iota and Gamma chapters as co-hosts. This convention was a great success, and the attending members returned to their respective chapters with many happy memories of their experiences in Kentucky.

The year 1906 was an important one for another reason. It was at this time that Iota first moved into a chapter house. When the group had come to Centre in 1901, some rooms in the Old Centre building had been rented and used as a place for meetings and social functions. In 1904 and again in 1905, the idea of obtaining a chapter house had been heatedly discussed. The idea, though opposed by some, was looked upon favorably by the college president. However, because of a lack of funds to support a house, it was not until 1906 that the chapter could actually acquire a residence. The first house, on Maple Avenue, was the old Goodwin school, which had been closed and made into a private dwelling. Iota was the first fraternity on the Centre campus to have a chapter house.

Between the years 1906 and 1930, Iota did not settle in any one house for very long. Within the city limits of Danville she was still a

"Wandering Sister." In 1913, meetings and social functions were again held in Old Centre. During 1914-15 the Dukes lived once more in the Goodwin house. In 1917, when World War I reduced the number of students, the ranks of all fraternities on the campus were decimated. For Iota, this meant another return to Old Centre. The following year, however, found the Dukes occupying an old dwelling on the corner of Maple and Lexington Avenues. In 1919, the chapter returned to Old Centre for four years. Nevertheless, the desire to have a fraternity house remained strong, so that in 1923 the chapter moved to an attractive brick house at 216 Maple, across from what is now Maple Avenue Grade School. Here they remained until 1930. For more than a year the chapter was engaged in an attempt to buy their house. However, owing to an unfortunate misunderstanding with a local business man, this purchase was not completed.

During this twenty-five-year period (1906-1930), the Iota members considered themselves the best on the campus in scholarship, in debating, and especially in giving lively parties. These parties were frequently distinguished by the lusty singing that they inspired. One alumnus recalls that the revelers usually sang many different songs simultaneously, each man following the tune that he knew best. Apparently vigor and enthusiasm were more important than harmony. In 1919, the words and music of "Iota, the Name that We Swear By" were first recorded. For many years this piece was extremely popular as a waltz at the annual dances. Doubtless many an alumnus of the chapter still gets a lump in his throat when he recalls the lyrics of that opening verse:



"The Duke Ranch" occupied frequently during early 1930's.

Iota, the name that we swear by,
Speaks of life jolly, happy, and free,
Of four merry years spent in college,
Linked together in gay D.K.E.

Many other memories crowd in upon the minds of those who were Dekes at Centre during this era. Perhaps the most memorable event was the notorious Deke-Sigma Chi war. This conflict reached its climax in 1929. At that time the Dekes were living at 216 Maple Avenue and the Sigs in the house next door. One Deke veteran of this campaign recalls that

shotgun fire knocked out all the windows on the sides of both houses facing each other. One afternoon, while some Sigs were playing cards in their living room, a Deke shot down the chandelier, but there were no casualties. Dr. Turk (the president of the college) then took over as mediator, and peace was restored. In the next issue of the Cento, three-inch headlines proclaimed: "ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT."

During the '30's, Iota continued her nomadic life. From 1932 to 1935, the chapter house was far out on Maple Avenue across from the Danville Greenhouses. This dwelling was affectionately known as "The Deke Ranch." Though sometimes inconvenient because of its distance from campus and town, "the Ranch" had the compensating virtue of great privacy. In 1935, the chapter moved to a beautiful and imposing residence on West Main Street, the old Cecil home. It was a noble experiment, but well-nigh disastrous. With rent at \$120 a month and only eight men living in the house, the



Iota's adventure of 1935-36 year.



Chapter Home from 1938 to 1940.

chapter was hard pressed to remain solvent. Throughout that unforgettable year the bill of fare monotonously consisted of dry cereal, kidney beans, and canned spaghetti. Small wonder that the chapter joyfully returned to "the Ranch" in the fall of 1936. Two years later, the fraternity moved into Hillcrest, a college-owned residence adjacent to Old Centre. Finally, in 1940, Iota moved to her present home, a graceful old house near Young Hall, known as "the Red Barn." Apparently the long search for a dwelling was ended. The years in "The Red Barn" have been successful and happy ones.

It was during the '30's and early '40's that Iota won her proudest honor. She retired the Delta Kappa Epsilon Fraternity Founders' Scholarship Award, a plaque presented annually to the chapter having the highest scholastic standing. The award was started in 1934, and Iota was the first chapter to win it. In 1940, Iota shared the award with Omega Chi. In the following year she won the plaque for a third time, thereby retiring it. This highly valued trophy is now enshrined in the chapter room.

In the years 1939-41, Iota reached perhaps her lowest ebb in membership. Fortunately, however, a group of loyal alumni, including Brothers Elbert Sutcliffe, Robert S. Tyler, Lisle Baker, Peter Spalding, Jr., and M. L. McMakin, helped to rejuvenate the chapter.

Although all fraternities on the campus were virtually inactive during World War II, Iota came back strong in the fall of 1946. Quickly regaining her former prestige, she has held a position of leadership ever since. This prominence has been manifested in

various fields. In the last four years Iota has made a respectable academic record, carried off three-fourths of the trophies offered by the school for intramural athletics, won the annual "School Spirit Cup," provided two presidents of the student body, and contributed to Centre a football fight song (composed by Brother David Steere, '33). It may be truthfully said that as one hundred years of D. K. E. move to a close, the Iota chapter stands at the very top of life on the campus of Centre College.

Centennial Committees



Central

Art Bodner, Chairman; Robert Cocanougher, George Evans, Steele Harmon, Duard Sullivan, Joe Pollard.

Alumni Fund

Ebb Bell, Chairman; E. G. Sutcliffe, J. W. Frazer, C. T. Hazelrigg, Joe Frankel, Jr.

Reception

George Evans, Ray Evans, Co-Chairmen; Todd Richardson, Dave Sturgis, Herb McGuire, Joe Gormely

Housing

Steele Harmon, Duard Sullivan, Co-Chairmen; Tony Demarco, Don Donnelly

Banquet

Robert Wickman, Chairman; Jerry Daywitt, Clint Skaggs

Publicity

Peter Mazzaferro, Chairman; Ralph Martin

Finance

Robert Cocanougher, Chairman; Art Bodner, Alex MacMillan

Publications

Joe Pollard, Chairman; James Clarkson, Eddie Barrass, Aubert Koch, Malcolm Roessler

Decorations

Bill Decker, Chairman; Mickey Covington, Thad Cowan, Hubert Shearer, Frank Clendenen, Frank Yeager, Robert Moore, Byron Shelton, Herman Butler, Charles Dixon

Entertainment

Aki Fushimi, Chairman; John Ellison, Mrs. Neal Gordon, Mrs. Ebb Bell, Mrs. Charles Hazelrigg, Mrs. John Frazer, Mrs. Arthur Bodner, Sr.