



PHI
North Dakota Agricultural College

Phi Chapter

North Dakota Agricultural College
1316-12th Ave. N.
Fargo, North Dakota

By Floyd R. Borderud, 1921
(*Supplemented*)

Man is by nature gregarious and craves the friendship and society of his fellows. Empty indeed is the life of a man who has no friends and the student is to be pitied who completes his course, tho' he may graduate with honors, if his temperament or environment has been such that there are none who will sincerely say of him--"there is a true fellow and a prince." College life is incomplete if it does not foster and encourage fraternal spirit of a king that is synonymous with true friendship, good fellowship. It was this feeling that actuated the founders of the Alpha Mu Fraternity when they met January 10, 1904, and effected its organization with the following charter members: Bert Corbett, Roger Brown, Fred Birch, Ross Fowler, Rufus Lee and Harry Porter.

The purpose of this fraternity was to do all within its power to extend and upbuild the influence of the Institution of learning, among whose students these men were proud to be numbered, and to unite the members of the fraternity in a brotherhood so strong and lasting that its influence would become a determining factor in the life of every member, not only while at college but in after years as well.

With this high ideal uppermost in their minds, the founders chose the name of Alpha Mu because the Greek letters are the initials of Greek words—meaning goodfellowship.

The emblem of the fraternity was the flint arrow-head of the type formerly used by the Dacotah Indians. Attached to one face of the arrow-head by gold bands encircling it, was a gold triangle on which was inscribed the initial letters of the fraternity, together with the

small Greek letter “Alpha.”

The symbolic significance of this emblem was as follows: a Dacotah Indian arrow-head is made use of as a token of the respect and admiration they had for their state and college. The arrow-head implied that the course of the fraternity and its members must at all times be straightforward and honest, but swift and undeviating as the flight of the arrow, in avenging an insult to itself or members. The equilateral triangle signified equality of members, integrity of purpose, and that the fraternal spirit of the organization should be as enduring and unchangeable as are the pyramids, in imitation of which the triangular design was adopted.

The motto of the fraternity was—“An Alpha Mu is a man who knows all about you and is still your friend.”

This motto was adopted because it was believed that there could be no genuine Brotherhood without mutual regard, good opinion and esteem, mutual charity, and mutual allowance for faults and failings. It is those only, who learn habitually to think better of each other, to look for the good in each other and expect, allow for, and overlook the evil, who can be brothers one to the other, in the true sense of the word.

Early in the history of the fraternity the problem of a permanent and suitable meeting place was discussed. The meetings had, since the beginning, been held at the homes of the various members until the “Cave” was inaugurated, which was a room in the basement of the home of Fred Birch, dedicated especially for fraternity purposes.

As the membership increased, the need for a larger and better meeting place was keenly felt. Consequently they placed themselves at the mercy of the faculty, and as a result they were given a room in the basement of the Carnegie Library.

The location and size of that room was not suitable, so the members compromised with the faculty and agreed to fix up an unused room on the third floor of the Mechanic Arts Building, if given permission. The permission was granted. On January 5, 1908, the first meeting was held in this room, which until September, 1926, continued to be the permanent meeting place of Alpha Mu and subsequently Phi

Chapter of Theta Chi. No time or expense was spared in decorating the room and as the organization grew and progressed tokens and gifts were presented to the fraternity by different ones, all of which added to the attractiveness of the room. As a result the Alpha Mu Blue Room, the name it later became known as, grew to be one of the beauty spots of the campus, which all visitors admired for its attractiveness, beauty, originality and artistic qualities.

In the life of every fraternity there comes a time when it desires the closer companionship of each individual member. So the subject of a fraternity house was broached, with a result that in the Winter of 1913, a house was rented on 908—11th Avenue North. A boarding department was at once inaugurated and furniture purchased. This house was occupied for a year when it was sold and the members were forced to move. Dean Ladd, later United States Senator from North Dakota, then offered Alpha Mu a house at 1317—11th Avenue North, which was readily accepted. The organization remained here for two years, until the quarters became entirely too small for the growing membership, and then moved to a large three story house at 1414—12th Avenue North, just a block from the campus. Here it remained until absorbed by Theta Chi Fraternity.

In college activities the Alpha Mu's were always in the lead. They had members in every branch of activity and during the thirteen years of their existence, they had nine football, eight basketball and nine baseball captains elected from their number. The weekly Spectrum, the college publication, was usually edited by Alpha Mu's as was the Aggasiz, the college annual. The members were the controlling factors in the student commission, in whose hands lie the school government. In the military department they were always well represented, as well as in the band and orchestra.

Alpha Mu always made every legitimate effort to be a factor in the student life and organization of the college and was rewarded by more than a generous share of the honors to be won.

Scholastic standing had particular attention and the chapter maintained, as well, a high moral level.

The Alpha Mu Fraternity, being the first secret society organized at

North Dakota Agricultural College, has had in common with all pioneers, its hardships and struggles its trials and tribulations: but like the sturdy pioneers who immigrated to the prairie wilderness of the Decotah's and broke the virgin sod, whose fertility now feeds the world, troubles served only to strengthen and sustain. It was a good thing, it had a purpose and would not down. The Fraternity soon became recognized, not as a thing inimical to student life, but as a factor potent for good.

The "local" Alpha Mu Fraternity was granted a charter by the Theta Chi Fraternity at the latter's sixty-first annual convention, held in Worcester, Massachusetts, on April 7, 1917. The person most instrumental in bringing about affiliation with Theta Chi was Judge B. F. Spalding, Alpha, '77, former North Dakota Supreme Court Justice, and a resident of Fargo. The late Senator E. F. Ladd, then President of the College, also took a most active part in assisting Alpha Mu, in appreciation for which he was later made an honorary member of Theta Chi, by Phi Chapter.

The petitioning members were: Walter Bender, Harvey Copeland, Mortimer Keeley, Harold Kelly, Robert Lewis, Carl Loiland, Melvin Slingsby, Adrian Foley, Paul Peterson, Walter Elliot, Frank Henning, Harold Jacobson, William Nemzek, John Lange, Lloyd Engle, Culver Ladd, Jacob Fjelde and Arnold Heidner.

May 11th and 12th, 1917, marked the entrance of the first national social fraternity into the Greek letter life of the North Dakota Agricultural College, when Phi Chapter was installed by F. V. Hugo of Worcester, Massachusetts, and W. E. Steele of Waukeegon, Illinois. The active chapter had been officially created by the evening of Saturday, May 12th, 1917.

Following the arrival of Hugo and Steele, on Friday, May 11th, a smoker was held at the chapter house, at which time fifty members of Alpha Mu, including the honorary members, President Ladd, Dean Keene and Major Carrithers, enjoyed the evening and met the visitors.

The completion of the installation ceremonies took the major part of Saturday and in the evening the installation banquet was served at the Gardner Hotel. Following the banquet Robert R. Lewis, first president

Of Phi Chapter, President Ladd, Leo Nemzek, Dean Keene, Judge Spalding and F. V. Hugo made short talks. Hugo's talk dealt largely with his impressions of his trip to North Dakota and a brief history of Theta Chi Fraternity. Leo Nemzek, in closing his talk, presented Judge Spalding with a Theta Chi pin in the name of the newly installed Phi Chapter.

The charter members of the Phi Chapter were: Walter Bender, Mortimer Keeley, Harold Kelly, Robert Lewis, Carl Loiland, Melvin McGuigan, Floyd Slingsby, Adrian Foley, Paul Peterson, Walter Elliot, Frank Henning and Harold Jacobson.

The chapter at present is comfortably located in a three story modern house at 1316—12th Avenue North.

One of the most tragic set-backs experienced by Phi to date happened in the Fall of 1926 when the college was forced, by lack of room, to take the Blue Room, that long established chapter room, and re-convert it into a classroom. On the Editor's visit to the chapter shortly thereafter he was amazed at the chapter's profound sorrow to give it up. Only those who have experienced the loss of a tradition dearest to one's heart can really appreciate what giving up those quarters meant to the boys of Phi Chapter.

Phi's contribution to the Grand Chapter is Reginald Colley, '15, National Chaplain 1925-26.

Statistics

Number of initiated members to September, 1927: 191.

Average size of chapter: Thirty-five.

Name ad frequency of chapter publication: Qui Essus, three times a year.

Both members and pledges may room in the chapter house.

Meals are served in the chapter house.

Chapter owns its home, value \$6,500.

North Dakota Agricultural College

The North Dakota Agricultural College is located just within the northern limits of the city of Fargo. It began its existence August 20, 1890, founded in accord with the Morrill Act, which provides for a specified endowment from the United States government. It is co-educational and during 1926-27 had an enrollment of 1056 of which 730 were men and 326 were women. Theta Chi continues to be the only national social fraternity at North Dakota Agricultural College, but numerous strong local organizations, of varying ages, have been long established there. With the Institution having recently instituted class "A" requirements it is most unlikely that Theta Chi will retain its unique position much longer.

Fargo, a city of 30,000 people, is the largest city in North Dakota. It is located on the eastern edge of the state, just across the Red River from Minnesota. It may be conveniently reached from Minneapolis-St. Paul by either the Northern Pacific or Great Northern Railroads.