

# Delta Sigma Pi's History

By: James Prescott, Loyola-Chicago

It was in the autumn of 1906 that the history of Delta Sigma Pi began. Life was much different then as there were only 46 states and the major method of transportation was by train. The airplane was flown for the first time only a few years earlier. The automobile was still a "toy" for the well to do; there were no talking movies; radio was very new and most homes were without a telephone. It was a time after what is termed the Industrial Revolution and before the times of world wars, the Great Depression and the Age of Consumerism.

In the academic world at that time, the formation of schools of business was relatively new. There were only a handful of such schools in the United States in 1906 and one such school, known as the School of Commerce, Accounts, and Finance existed at New York University. There were approximately 300 students in attendance at this school at that time, including 70 freshmen representing the Class of 1909. Four members of that Class of 1909, previously unknown to each other, soon were to start an association that would become what is known today as the International Fraternity of Delta Sigma Pi.

These four young men met in their classes and were drawn closer together as they shared the same subway route on their way home every evening. Occasionally, other classmates came along, but the four were regularly together and it was this time together that gave them the opportunity to get to know one another, to become friends, and to discuss topics of mutual interest.

One such topic was school affairs, and the domination of one organization on campus. In the opinion of these four men, the overwhelming majority of students at New York University were ignored by this organization and, as a result, restricted from membership. These four, Alexander F. Makay, Alfred Moysello, H. Albert Tienken, and Harold V. Jacobs, decided they should do something for the benefit of the student body at large. They decided to form a club that would be open to all business students.

During that first year in school these four young men were occasionally accompanied by a fifth student who, in the spring of 1907, dropped from the group to accept the pledge of the only fraternity in the School of Commerce, Accounts, and Finance. It was at this time, and perhaps because of this incident, that they felt there was a need for two fraternities in the school, and they approached their fellow students this time with the idea of joining a fraternity. The response to their idea was very positive and, somewhat to their dismay, they found students who wanted to be initiated immediately into the proposed fraternity which was not yet organized.

Makay and Jacobs had been members of high school fraternities so they were assigned the duty of drafting a Constitution, Bylaws, and a Ritual. The Constitution was finally drafted and adopted in the fall of 1907, yet the selection of a name for the Fraternity was not completed. Nevertheless, these four men proceeded with the next major order of business which was the election of officers. Makay was elected the first president, and Jacobs and Moysello were elected treasurer and secretary, respectively. They first approached their Class of 1909 classmates and, in short order, initiated several new members. They immediately began to recruit the Class of 1910 from which they initiated several more members.

The year of 1908 was notable for the establishment of many aspects of the Fraternity which are still in existence today. While the Constitution and Ritual had already been approved, there was still no badge or "pin" as it was called at that time. In addition, the Fraternity still lacked a name. The name of

the organization had a high priority and the four founders agreed upon the three words that best expressed the meaning of their Fraternity and had a friend of Moysello translate them into Greek with the resulting designation: Delta Sigma Pi. On April 2, 1908, the name Delta Sigma Pi was adopted by the membership and the bylaws were also approved at this meeting. The design of the badge was approved shortly thereafter.

On April 29, 1908, at the third official meeting of the Fraternity, the report of the committee appointed to suggest Fraternity colors was heard. Following the report, a motion to adopt the colors violet and gold was made; however, the motion died for lack of a second. A subsequent motion was made to adopt the colors purple and gold as the official colors of Delta Sigma Pi and at that third meeting of the Fraternity, the colors which we know today were adopted.

In 1909 the Founders graduated, but the Fraternity was being guided and nurtured by other dedicated officers and members. As the membership continued to expand, so did the activities. A Fraternity publication made its first appearance in 1911, but was mainly an internal newsletter. The name of that publication was simply DELTASIG. By 1912, the name had been changed to THE DELTASIG and was being published in a much more professional manner. Later the name of the official publication of the Fraternity was established as The DELTASIG.

Also established in 1912 was the Delta Sigma Pi Scholarship Key. This award was developed to recognize the outstanding male senior in the Business school and, eventually, was allowed to be presented in every business school where a chapter of Delta Sigma Pi was active. Many of the early keys presented nationwide were won by members of Delta Sigma Pi; however, the Delta Sigma Pi Scholarship Key was at that time and continues today to be awarded to the most outstanding male or female senior in the School of Business where a chapter of the Fraternity is active.

In these early years, the Founders and their fellow Brothers realized significant progress and set the foundation for an organization that has touched the lives of over 175,000 students of business.

The choice of the Northwestern School of Commerce for the second chapter of Delta Sigma Pi marked the beginning of the nationalization of the Fraternity. Existing as a national fraternity was completely new to both Alpha and Beta Chapter members and difficulties in communication were compounded by the fact that the two chapters were hundreds of miles apart.

Prior to the chartering of Beta Chapter, a meeting was held by the New York members of Delta Sigma Pi in January of 1914 to form the national organization. This meeting was referred to as the Organizational Meeting and pertained to national administrative matters. In addition, the first national officers were elected, Walter N. Dean was elected president and Henry C. Cox was elected secretary-treasurer. This meeting was called the Congress of Chapters, an event which is known today as the Grand Chapter Congress. At this Congress of Chapters, two undergraduate chapters were represented; however, a group of alumni was also present. At this early date, Delta Sigma Pi had an alumni organization which was called a "graduate chapter," but by 1917 this name was changed to an alumni chapter, a term the Fraternity used until about 1920 when the alumni chapters were called "alumni clubs." The designation "alumni chapter" was reinstated in 1982.

On January 29, 1915, the Executive Committee of Delta Sigma Pi met in New York to hear a report on numerous expansion possibilities. It was decided at that meeting to pursue the installation of a chapter at Boston University and to establish initial contact with many other business schools across the country. Of even greater significance at this meeting was the approval of a Statement of Purpose for the Fraternity which was added to the Constitution as a Preamble. It was the desire of the individuals at this meeting to clearly state that Delta Sigma Pi was to be a professional fraternity for men.

The Preamble, adopted at that meeting in 1915, read as follows:

A fraternity organized to foster the study of business in universities; to encourage scholarship and the association of students for their mutual advancement by research and practice; to promote closer affiliation between the commercial world and students of commerce, and to further a higher standard of commercial ethics and culture and the civic and commercial welfare of the community.

It was not until the 1949 Grand Chapter Congress in Baltimore that the Preamble was changed to include the words "social activity."

The second Congress of Chapters was held at the Hotel LaSalle in Chicago in August of 1915. Representatives from the newly installed Gamma Chapter at Boston University participated in the third Congress of Chapters held in New York in August of 1916.

As was the general practice at previous Congresses, much of the agenda of the fourth Congress of Chapters held September 1917 in Boston was devoted to chapter reports, to expansion prospects, and to uniformity in chapter operation. It was at this meeting that H. G. "Gig" Wright made his first impact on the national Fraternity as the delegate from Beta Chapter. His influence on the national level began at this meeting and was to continue for many years into the future.

The war being waged in Europe eventually involved the United States and became known as World War I. As the United States went to war, many college campuses were drained of students and, as a result, most national and chapter activities came to a standstill. Further growth of the Fraternity both in the number of chapters and in the number of members became dormant.

The post-war convention was held on February 10, 1920, at New York City and the national officers were anxious to resume the many projects, especially expansion of the Fraternity, that had been deferred due to the war. At this fifth Congress of Chapters, which was referred to as the "Founders Meeting" because all four Founders of the Fraternity were present, the three undergraduate chapters were not fully active and the New York Alumni Chapter had been reactivated during the previous month.

At this time, Delta Sigma Pi was approaching its 13th year of existence. By the end of 1920 four chapters were added to the official roll including Delta Chapter at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Epsilon Chapter at the University of Iowa in Iowa City, Zeta Chapter at Northwestern University in Evanston, and Eta Chapter at the University of Kentucky in Lexington.

The year 1921 was indeed an outstanding one for the Fraternity. Although a Congress of Chapters was not held during this year, a special meeting of the Board of Directors was held in New York on May 14. It was at this meeting that the red rose was adopted as the official flower of the Fraternity and the official pledge button, later called the pledge pin (which was approved in principle at the 1917 Congress of Chapters), was finally designed and approved.

In addition, there was some question concerning the date of the actual founding of the Fraternity, and Founder Alexander Makay, who was present at this meeting, informed the group that "Bert Tienken, Al Moysello, Harold Jacobs and I founded the Fraternity at New York University in 1907, the exact date being November 7 of that year."

In these early years the Fraternity was growing and the chapters were divided into provinces and districts for easier administration. Also in the early 1920s, discussion concerning the establishment of a National Administrative Headquarters and staff for the Fraternity commenced.

It was also during the early years of the 1920s that the Fraternity began an unprecedented level of expansion. Seven chapters were installed during 1921 and eight in 1922. By the mid 1920s, over 3,000 students of business had been initiated by Delta Sigma Pi and the roll of chapters was approaching 40.

With the election at the 1924 Congress of Chapters, Gig Wright left the office of National President after serving two terms. He was immediately appointed Secretary-Treasurer of the Fraternity and during that year established the Central Office of Delta Sigma Pi as the administrative headquarters of the Fraternity. The original Central Office was established at 222 West Adams Street in Chicago. With a greatly expanded chapter roll, the Eighth Congress of Chapters in 1926 again set a record of having the largest attendance of any congress held up to that time. The official registration totaled 167.

It was during the year of 1926 that the first Biennial Survey of Universities Offering an Organized Curriculum in Commerce and Business Administration was published. This survey, prepared by the International Fraternity of Delta Sigma Pi, was widely used by various departments of the United States Government, major corporations across the United States, high school guidance counselors, and individual students. The Biennial Survey was produced until the mid 1990s when more comprehensive reference sources had become available commercially. It was also during this year that the "Rose of Deltasig," which was named for Rose Jacobs, the wife of founder Harold V. Jacobs, was adopted as the official song of the Fraternity.

In 1928, the Professional Interfraternity Conference was organized with Delta Sigma Pi as one of the charter members. The organization flourishes today as the Professional Fraternity Association, of which Delta Sigma Pi is a charter member.

In 1931, the Great Depression was being felt nationwide. For the next few years, the individual chapters and the international organization as a whole were struggling to survive. Eight new chapters were installed during the depression years.

1932 was known as the Silver Anniversary of the Fraternity in recognition of the 25th anniversary of its founding. Founded during a depression, Delta Sigma Pi would celebrate its Silver Anniversary during another depression year.

Despite the state of the economy, the spirit of the celebration was not dampened as 37 banquets celebrating the 25th anniversary were held across the country, attended by some 25 percent of the total membership initiated since 1907. By that time, the Fraternity had grown to some 55 chapters, 10 alumni chapters, and a total membership of over 8,700.

By 1937, 60 chapters had been installed. Although the depression was to end soon, this did not signal an end to the difficult times that had been confronting the Fraternity for most of the 1930s. World War II began in 1939. It was not long before the United States was involved in this worldwide conflict and the Fraternity, like most organizations, came to a virtual standstill. Every project within the country was geared toward the war effort and during the period between 1937 and 1946, only four chapters were installed by Delta Sigma Pi.

During the war years, chapters were active in many cases in name only as many chapter members found themselves in the Armed Forces. The DELTASIG magazine became little more than a roster of Deltasigs who were serving the war effort both at home and overseas. Deltasigs were scattered throughout the world and the memories of Delta Sigma Pi and the receipt of The DELTASIG, wherever possible, provided comfort to these Brothers as they proudly served their country.

It was during this time in its history that Delta Sigma Pi experienced perhaps the greatest challenges. The combination of the Great Depression followed by World War II had drained many chapters of members and financial stability. Having experienced a history of challenges which were turned into opportunities, the leaders of the Fraternity were now faced with the biggest challenges in nearly 40 years.

This period in the history of Delta Sigma Pi could indeed be viewed as the time of the second founding of the Fraternity. A renewed spirit of Brotherhood and fraternalism was evident, but it was not until the 17th Grand Chapter Congress that all chapter activities had been fully resumed. The Fraternity had endured almost 10 years of depression followed by five years of war and much time had been lost.

Now with nearly 80 chapters and over 22,000 members, it was felt that if the Fraternity was to continue expanding and providing the administrative services necessary to serve the organization, a permanent national headquarters would have to be established in the not too distant future. It was at the 1949 Grand Chapter Congress that a fund was approved for the acquisition of a permanent national headquarters and members were solicited for contributions.

By 1955, plans were nearly complete for the building of a national headquarters building adjacent to the Miami University campus in Oxford, Ohio. It was also announced at the 20th Grand Chapter Congress held in Detroit in 1955 that Henry Gilbert "Gig" Wright, who had served the Fraternity as its chief administrator in the form of Grand Secretary-Treasurer (now Executive Director) for 31 years, was retiring.

Also during the early 1950s, the Fraternity was once again expanding and by the middle of that decade had reached a level of over 90 chapters, and total membership initiated since 1907 had surpassed the 30,000 mark. There were alumni chapters established in most of the major cities in the United States.

Upon the retirement of H. G. Wright in 1955, Assistant Grand Secretary-Treasurer James D. Thomson was promoted to the position of Grand Secretary-Treasurer. Jim Thomson, in conjunction with Past Grand Presidents Allen Fowler and Robert Busse and Grand President J. Harry Feltham, was heavily involved in the development of the plans for the establishment of the Central Office in Oxford. Construction began in late 1955, and by the fall of 1956, Grand Secretary Thomson had moved the Central Office operation from Chicago to the permanent headquarters building in Oxford. On May 18, 1957, with Grand President J. Harry Feltham presiding, the permanent Central Office of the International Fraternity of Delta Sigma Pi was formally dedicated (at 330 South Campus Avenue in Oxford, Ohio) to Gig Wright for his many decades of service to the Fraternity.

Delta Sigma Pi had been founded during a depression; it had celebrated its 25th anniversary during another depression; and now, in 1957, it would celebrate its 50th anniversary during a recession. Since 1957 was also the year of a Grand Chapter Congress, the Fraternity celebrated the anniversary in conjunction with the 21st Grand Chapter Congress in New York City. Grand President Homer T. Brewer presided over this event and the only living Founder at that time, Harold V. Jacobs, was present to join in the celebration of the Golden Anniversary of Delta Sigma Pi.

By 1964, Delta Sigma Pi had grown to a Fraternity with more than 130 chapters and the membership had grown beyond the 50,000 member level. By the mid-1960s, the indebtedness on the original Central Office building had been paid. The Fraternity was continuing its growth and the building was no longer large enough to house the staff needed to run ever expanding Delta Sigma Pi. Under the guidance of Executive Director Charles Farrar and Grand President M. John Marko, two wings were added (completed in 1970) which virtually doubled the size of the original building.

In 1965, the Grand Council, today known as the Board of Directors, approved a special certificate to be awarded to members of the Fraternity with 50 or more years of service to Delta Sigma Pi. It was called the Order of the Golden Helmet and Founder Harold V. Jacobs Received the first such award. In the late 1960s, and the first few years of the 1970s, growth continued for Delta Sigma Pi. By the end of 1970, membership had exceeded the 70,000 level and 172 chapters had been established. It

was during this time that the Undergraduate of the Year Program was established to recognize the outstanding undergraduate member of the Fraternity. Now called "Collegian of the Year" and awarded regionally, the national winner serves on the Fraternity's Board of Directors.

While most of the 1950s and 1960s were considered relatively calm years for the Fraternity, the 1970s were very different. There were three major issues that confronted Delta Sigma Pi in the decade. First was the Vietnam War. As the war intensified during the Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon years, college campuses were thrown into turmoil. Fraternities were often viewed as the "establishment" and this, combined with the social upheaval in campus life brought on by the war, caused a noticeable decline in undergraduate membership.

With social change came the implementation of Title IX of the Higher Education Act and with it a ruling that college professional fraternities, sororities, and organizations were discriminating by having singles ex membership requirements. Also facing the Fraternity as challenges during the 1970s were rampant inflation and the faltering economy.

Perhaps the most significant issue within Delta Sigma Pi during the early 1970s however, was the question of coeducational membership. At the 29th Grand Chapter Congress in 1973, a constitutional amendment to open the membership of the Fraternity to women was defeated. At the next Grand Chapter Congress in 1975, the Grand Chapter directed the Board of Directors to evoke emergency powers as provided in the Constitution and Bylaws to act on the coeducational question as required. The Board of Directors authorized the chapters to immediately initiate qualified female business students on November 7, 1975. It was not until 1977 in Toronto that the ratification of coeducational membership in the Fraternity was passed by the Grand Chapter Congress.

During the late 1970s and the early 1980s, inflation was being brought under control and growth of the Fraternity membership once again began to rival that of the postwar years. In 1979, a milestone of significance was reached with the initiation of the 100,000th member.

During late 1981, yet another milestone was reached as the 200th chapter of the Fraternity was installed at Missouri State University (then known as Southwest Missouri State University) in Springfield. The Diamond Anniversary year of the Fraternity was in 1982, culminating with recognitions and celebrations conducted at all of the Regional Conferences and a Fraternity-wide weekend celebration held in Cincinnati and Oxford with over 350 in attendance.

The 1980s were a period of steady growth in membership and the number of collegiate chapters. It was during this period that Delta Sigma Pi expanded into the state of Hawaii with the installation at the University of Hawaii at Hilo in 1989.

Also during the 1980s, the Fraternity experienced an unprecedented increase in the number of training and leadership conferences offered to members and in levels of participation. Additionally, the structure of the Grand Chapter Congress underwent significant changes to better serve the needs of the membership. Participation more than doubled. Record attendance occurred in New Orleans in 1987 with nearly 900 Brothers. The 1997 Congress, again in New Orleans, established a new record with nearly 1,100 attending.

As far back as 1945, Delta Sigma Pi began to give consideration to forming a charitable foundation to support its educational and scholastic endeavors. In response to increasing needs, the Fraternity formed the Delta Sigma Pi Educational Foundation. Today, the Delta Sigma Pi Leadership Foundation, having merged with the Educational Foundation in 1993, continues the strong tradition of supporting our Fraternity and its members. During the 1990s, the Delta Sigma Pi Leadership Foundation

became a key factor in the future of our Fraternity through its support of many new and important educational programs.

The three main areas of program support of the Leadership Foundation are: scholarships for academic achievement, leadership development and training, and personal and professional improvement.

Through these three program areas, the Leadership Foundation is able to provide direct financial assistance to Delta Sigma Pi and its members. The Foundation is recognized by the federal government as a charitable and educational corporation and contributions are deductible for estate and income tax purposes. All Brothers are encouraged to consider supporting the Leadership Foundation and its mission through regular contributions.

The 1990s also inspired further refinement of the educational programs of the Fraternity. The Officer Training School (or OTIS, as it was commonly known) was established to provide a more uniform and concentrated means of educating collegiate chapter Brothers. The Fraternity also introduced National Officer Workshops and the Summer Leadership Academy during the 1990s. The Chapter Efficiency Index, first developed in 1931, underwent an extensive modernization in 1997 and even more in 2002, resulting in a more vital 17th edition. Additionally, two new Fraternity wide awards, the Delta Sigma Pi Lifetime Achievement Award and the Delta Sigma Pi Career Achievement Award were established. They replaced the Deltasig of the Year award established in 1952. In 1999, the Leadership and Excellence Academies for Deltasigs (LEAD) program was the driving force of new educational endeavors for Deltasig collegiate and alumni members. LEAD events focus not only on fraternal development, but also professional, personal and leadership development skills. Comprehensive policies and educational programs in the areas of risk management and nondiscrimination were also developed and instituted Fraternity-wide.

At the 2001 Grand Chapter Congress in Niagara Falls, a new Governance Structure was put into effect. Some of the more notable changes to occur included the addition of a fifth province and the creation of Provincial Councils, national committees and the new Board positions of Vice President-Organizational Development and Vice President-Finance. History was also made in Niagara Falls, 25 years after women first became brothers in Delta Sigma Pi, when the Fraternity's first female Grand President was elected – Kathleen M. Jahnke.

Membership milestones were passed in late 1991 with the initiation of the 150,000th member, in 1997 with number 175,000 and in 2003 with number 200,000. In 2010, after Celebrating our Centennial in November 2007, there are now over 230,000 members, with 200 of 270 installed chapters active on college campuses, 29 regions and five provinces. Over 60 alumni chapters across the country function at some level of social and professional interaction. It is undeniable that Delta Sigma Pi and its members have enjoyed great success.