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## Pacific's Sisterhood: The History and Development of Women's Greek Life at University of the Pacific

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## **Pacific's Sisterhood**

The History and Development of Women's Greek Life at University of the Pacific

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### **Abstract**

Pacific's Sisterhood examines the history of the sororities at the University of the Pacific. Focusing primarily on the available documentation from the organizations, university, university publications along with secondary works on national sororities, the National Panhellenic Council and other published works. It presents the argument that sororities at the University of the Pacific developed differently and positively based on the small community of the university and involvement of university administration. Explaining the founding and history of these organizations and their development on campus, and how their formation has differed from other Greek systems. Looking into how the factors of community and administration have had an effect on the organizations. Finishing with how this Greek system stands out. This work will look at the sororities from their inception as literary societies in the late 1800s to their transformation to national organizations in the 1960s, and looking for other colleges and universities to do the same for their organizations.

## Introduction

The year is 1885; you are part of a new group who are able to attend college, women. You are beginning your freshman year at University of the Pacific which moved to San Jose, California in 1871 the same year the university began admitting women. While it is all very exciting, you can't help but be reminded how far you are from home, how lonely it is, how monotonous college homework is, so you realize the natural step to take is to seek out some friends. There are a handful of organizations on campus that bring students together, unfortunately many of them are male dominated, you are not really sure if they would even take a woman, besides it is unseemly for a woman to play masculine sports. However you hear around the residence hall there are two groups that will, in fact are only for women, Emendia and Sopholechtia Societies. These two groups were literary societies that brought women together under the ideals of mental, moral and literary advancement, and best of all the women in these groups are friends. Emendia and Sopholechtia would be the organizations from which Pacific's first sororities would take root. It was in these organizations that women would find intellectual discourse and lasting friendships.

These societies attracted women from all over the university. However like their male counterparts to join such an organization was a privilege and garnered some prestige. In order to gain entrance to one of these societies one had to go through the process known as "rush". In this process, those who express interest in joining the society are placed into a pool of candidates. From this collection, women are chosen and given bids<sup>1</sup> based on interactions with members and

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<sup>1</sup> An invitation offering membership given by sororities and other Greek organizations, what is given to those interested to signal acceptance of said person to pledge or join.



in some cases meeting requirements such as age or a decent scholastic record. Many organizations across the country around this time use this same process to select new members.

Having decided that one of these societies is right for you, you proceed to “rush” your organization of choice. Towards the end of the “rush” period, to your delight you receive a bid and are now on your way to becoming an official member. Today “rushing” still stands as the official process to join a Greek organization, with thousands going through each year. Amongst the thousands there are some familiar names such as, Elizabeth Dole<sup>2</sup>, Ruth Bader Ginsburg<sup>3</sup>, Condoleezza Rice<sup>4</sup>, Nancy Grace<sup>5</sup>, and Katie Couric<sup>6</sup>. The Greek system began over one hundred and fifty years ago, with rich traditions and history, with sororities being one of the sole women’s organizations on college campuses, thus it is significant to study their history.

### **Argument/Thesis**

The 160 year old University of the Pacific holds the distinction of being one of the first colleges in California to admit women. Higher education has had a significant impact on the lives and experiences of women since it started in the 1800’s. For the University of the Pacific this started in 1871. Much of the media and scholarly focus on women in higher education is placed on what they do after they graduate. Not their college experience or how they impacted the college they attended. The fact is women did establish something on college campuses which

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<sup>2</sup> Wife of politician Bob Dole, Dole served as the senator from North Carolina, as well as the secretary labor under George H.W. Bush and secretary of transportation during Regan’s second term. Member of Delta Delta Delta (women’s) fraternity. <http://www.onlinecollege.org/2010/07/20/25-famous-leaders-who-were-in-a-fraternity-or-sorority/>

<sup>3</sup> Supreme Court Justice and the second woman to ever serve on the bench. She is a member of Alpha Epsilon Phi. Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Served as the National Security Advisor during George W. Bush’s first term and was Secretary of State during his second term. She is a member of Alpha Chi Omega. Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> CNN Reporter and TV host, former prosecutor.

<sup>6</sup> Famous newscaster/reporter. Member of Delta Delta Delta.

are still standing today, sororities. My research argues that the administration at the University of the Pacific, the small community on campus and how the women established themselves at school allowed for a positive and distinctive female Greek system. This system standing as a exceptional example of true sisterhood, with little hazing, low rates of drinking or drug use, high grades, amazing philanthropy, and positive community. My research explores the how, and the why women started organizing on campus, the unique impact of administration and the community of Pacific students on the development of the sororities, and how the sororities had a positive impact on campus. I do this by focusing on their foundations in women's literary societies to the establishment of nationally chartered sororities on campus.

### **Background: A Brief History of Women's College Organizations**

When most people think of a sorority or fraternity, Animal House and Legally Blonde come to mind, but there are actually a few different types of Greek organizations that fall under the same terminology. There are four main types of organizations, professional, social, service and honor societies. Honor societies are composed of students with high academic achievement, some in the same subject such as Phi Alpha Theta which is an honor society for history majors. Professional fraternities and sororities are organizations whose membership is based on similar professional and vocational fields. The service fraternities and sororities whose membership, purpose and interests lie in performing community service these include organizations such as The Rotary Club. Finally there are social sororities and fraternities which are the focus of this paper. Some would wonder if the true focus of this work is sororities, why the term fraternity keeps coming up. The word sorority didn't actually exist until 1874 when Professor Frank Smalley began using it in reference to Gamma Phi Beta which was being established at Syracuse



University at the time.<sup>7</sup> So organizations established before 1874 and even some after are referred to as women's fraternities<sup>8</sup>, such as Delta Delta Delta and Kappa Alpha Theta. The use of the name fraternity stems from a number of factors such as time of establishment, how the organization is modeled, simply wanting that terminology, not wanting to separate or differentiate themselves from the men organizations, all dependent upon what the organization chooses.

In order to understand why women's Greek organizations started at Pacific, it is best to look at how these organizations started in America. The earliest Greek organizations often started as honor or literary societies, which offered selective membership usually based on academic and intellectual background. This transformation is the model women had to work from started across America and at Pacific. The first women's society was founded at the Wesleyan Female College<sup>9</sup> in Macon, Georgia on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 1851. It was the Adelphean Society, formed by 6 women for the purpose of mental, moral, social and domestic betterment. The second society for women would also form on this campus in January of 1852 known as The Philomathean Society. It was from these societies that the modern female Greek system would take its roots. The first society for women modeled after a men's fraternity was I.C. Sorosis, founded April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1867 at Monmouth College, in Monmouth, Illinois.<sup>10</sup> The twelve women who founded it wished to enjoy the benefits of a secret society just as men had. Women's

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<sup>7</sup> Ida Shaw Martin, *The Sorority Handbook*, [Boston], 1909. Print.

<sup>8</sup> Women's organizations modeled after fraternities. Ibid

<sup>9</sup> Wesleyan Female College was the first college for women in the world that was chartered to grant degrees to women. Life at Wesleyan was highly regulated, everything including eating, sleeping and taking air. The Adelphean Society was a revolutionary establishment on the campus as free-thinking and socialization was not on the schedule. "Alpha Delta Pi." *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011. <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alpha\\_Delta\\_Pi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alpha_Delta_Pi)>.

<sup>10</sup> Ida Shaw Martin, *The Sorority Handbook*, [Boston], 1909. Print.

literary societies flourished as more and more women were allowed into colleges and universities.

Most people have never heard of the Adelphean or Philomathean Societies or I.C. Sorosis. This is not because they no longer exist, but because of the adoption of Greek letter names. This trend begins with where almost all Greeks started, in the Latin literary societies. When early male organizations got their start the study of Greek literature was in fashion<sup>11</sup>, so many of the organizations adopted Greek or Latin mottos.<sup>12</sup> Each letter means something different to an organization, as well as a meaning when in combination<sup>13</sup>, and also may reference a motto. This can be seen with Phi Beta Kappa Society, the first Greek organization, whose Greek initials for the society's motto, "Love of learning is the guide of life" create their name.<sup>14</sup> The Adelphean and Philomathean Societies and I.C. Sorosis still exist today as Alpha Delta Pi<sup>15</sup>, Phi Mu<sup>16</sup>, and Pi Beta Phi<sup>17</sup>. As other organizations before them the sororities at University of the Pacific began as women's literary societies and became Greek letter organizations, each with their own unique history.

## Sources

The sources used for this paper are taken from a wide and interesting array of documents. The primary sources the paper draws on reside in two locations on campus at University of the

<sup>11</sup> Jeremy D Cuevas, *Brotherhood: The History and Evolution of Fraternities at the University of the Pacific*. Fall 2008. Capstone. University of the Pacific, Stockton, CA

<sup>12</sup> Ida Shaw Martin, *The Sorority Handbook*, [Boston], 1909. Print.

<sup>13</sup> Jeremy D Cuevas, *Brotherhood: The History and Evolution of Fraternities at the University of the Pacific*. Fall 2008. Capstone. University of the Pacific, Stockton, CA

<sup>14</sup> [www.pbk.org](http://www.pbk.org)

<sup>15</sup> [www.alphadeltapi.org](http://www.alphadeltapi.org)

<sup>16</sup> Ida Shaw Martin, *The Sorority Handbook*, [Boston], 1909. Print.

<sup>17</sup> "Pi Beta Phi." *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011. <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pi\\_Beta\\_Phi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pi_Beta_Phi)>.



Pacific. The first and main source of documents is the Holt-Atherton special collections in the basement of the University library. The second location is the library at the Phi Rho chapter house of Delta Delta Delta.

The Holt-Atherton collection houses Pacific's archival collection of the women's literary societies and sororities on campus. These documents include everything from founding histories, constitutions, by-laws, minutes, programs, invites, pictures, news clippings, mothers clubs, member lists, financials, administrative paperwork, president's reports, newsletters, scrapbooks and more from the original literary societies Emendia, Athenaea, Sopholechia, and Zetaganthean Club to their modern counterparts Delta Gamma, Tri Delta, Kappa Alpha Theta, and Alpha Chi Omega<sup>18</sup>. These documents are interesting because they provide insight into the sorority's history and development in relation to Pacific.

The second location of primary source documents, in the form of scrapbooks is the library of the Phi Rho chapter of Delta Delta Delta fraternity.<sup>19</sup> The house is set on the end of the Sorority Circle. I have been allowed access to documents and scrapbooks because I am a member of the Delta Delta Delta fraternity.

When I decided to research sororities and sought out the archival material neither the path nor the argument for this paper was at all clear. I stood in the hallway staring at the board A Tradition in Classiness, in the Phi Rho chapter house of Tri Delta and tried to connect myself with the women in the photos. Knowing the foundational history of my own sorority I began

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<sup>18</sup> Alpha Chi Omega no longer has a chapter on Pacific's campus, and Alpha Phi has taken the place of the 4<sup>th</sup> sorority. Organization reportedly "disbanded" as they could not obtain and retain the number of members needed. At the time they were the only sorority not located on campus or in the circle and the organization felt doomed by their location, both at the March-Coburn house on Pacific and to the second off campus location they moved to. Judy Avila, "Why Alpha Chi Omega Disbanded" Interview by Ken Avila. 6 Dec. 2011.

<sup>19</sup> Located on Presidents Drive, on the Stockton, California campus of University of the Pacific

with the archival material for Tri Delta in Holt-Atherton special collections. While what I had in mind was a complete history of the sororities here at Pacific, it took a significant chunk of time to sift through just one organizations material. In interest of being thorough I began to narrow down my time frame to the start of the women's literary societies in the late 1800s to just after the establishment of the nationally chartered organizations in the late 1950s and early 1960s as I deem it to be the more historically significant period of these groups. Unfortunately this time period does not allow for Alpha Phi to be included as they were not on campus until the 1990's. As I started to branch out from my own organization I was delighted to find a plethora of information on all of the chapters here on campus.

In Holt-Atherton Special Collections there is about a combined 5 linear feet of material including Constitutions, By-laws, meeting minutes, membership lists, scrapbooks, finance paperwork, histories, programs and memorabilia, correspondence, reports, mother auxiliary, insurance paperwork, scholarship awards, activities, employee paperwork, newsletters, photos, the list goes on. It was from these documents that I got a lot of my research on each individual chapter.

What I began to find in looking at all this material was lots of correspondence in each chapter with the Dean of Women Catherine P Davis, and other administrative persons. Despite each chapter appearing to develop in their own way, there was a sense of heavy involvement by the schools administration, as well as a low incidence of problems between the school and Greek organizations. Any issues that arose within the sorority system were well documented within the Greek system and the administration involved such as the Dean of Women, housing, student affairs, etc and was handled by the school with expedience and efficiency.



The collection within my own sorority includes scrapbooks and some documents dating back to Phi Rho chapters beginnings as Tau Kappa Kappa back in 1924. These contain highlights and progression of the chapter at Pacific.

The Holt-Atherton Special Collections also holds an equally impressive amount of material on the fraternities here at Pacific as well as multicultural Greek organizations. It would be quite interesting to see what could be found by combining all the information found in these documents. With the material covered in this paper, anyone with interest could use this as a reference point for sorority research.

While the available material is nothing short of wonderful there are certain limitations that come with researching Greek life. Due to the secret nature of Greek organizations there is a good deal of material and documentation is not available to people outside of the chapter or organizations. Greek members and organizations are notoriously tight-lipped about their organization and their "inner workings". A great deal of the silence and secrecy by members is often imposed by their organization, which forbid and require oaths and promises from its members to not reveal information. A member can face discipline and significant backlash for sharing information with those outside the chapter. The declassification of fraternities pushed by the Anti-Masonic movement caused a great deal of information to be revealed there are still significant gray areas with individual organizations. In addition to secrecy, material is limited by what an organization chooses to share or makes available to the public. It is much easier to find out the values of which an organization bases itself on rather than hazing issues within their organization. It is quite simple to find out that a sorority does not discriminate based on race, religion, etc, but not how that policy evolved. An organization is always going to show its best side, the positive and do its best to suppress the negative. The negative is often what media and

other outlets jump on and gets presented to the public in articles, books and popular culture, which casts a bad light on the Greek community.

### **Historiography**

As a member of a Pacific sorority I started my research with a love of the Greek life on campus. While desiring a greater understanding of my own chapter, I found interest in wanting to know more about Pacific's sororities in general not just my own. Being a member of a particular chapter is only part of a school's Greek life experience. In coming to understand more about my own Greek system, I wanted to know how it compared to other systems nationally. The historiography available is basically the histories of national sororities and women's fraternities that are published by the organizations themselves, and of course Wikipedia. The wealth of sources that are widely available on the subject are focused on the sociological aspects of Greek life on college students. Popular topics are drinking, hazing, academics, self-esteem, sexual assault/stds and body image, which cast Greek life in a very negative light. Though there are rare occasions of philanthropic endeavors and academic achievement can be found in articles and popular writings. Some of the earlier work about the 1950's and 1960's on sororities is actually rather positive as sororities were considered to be a place for young women of ideals, to be a member of a sorority was a distinction of honor<sup>20</sup>. However this is not the same work that is available today. This past decade has seen a massive rise in eating disorders and other body image issues, a relaxing of sexual attitudes, and an increase of alcohol abuse in college women. Unfortunately sororities have become a target with these issues, with new studies coming out at a steady clip. However it is wrong to allow these to define the modern Greek system, it is

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<sup>20</sup> Part of this honor being that one was attending college, having a scholastic record that allowed you to be in a sorority and in being chosen for an organization.



unfortunate that a few bad chapters can brand an entire organization or the system as a whole. The focus of this essay however is not the negative accounts of Greek life but rather getting back to what these groups actually stand for and that many chapters strive to live up to. How these organizations started, the how and the why. To expose the rich history and traditions of sororities that will help others to understand what Greek life is really about.

Another form of research material available is what the organizations themselves publish or make available to the general public. These usually come in the form of histories available on an organizations website or Wikipedia pages. Histories typically contain the background information on an organization such as who founded them, when they were founded, and where they were founded. Aside from the very basic background information what is actually in the histories is totally up to the organization and what they are willing to share, such as why they were founded, on what principles they were founded, issues they faced upon establishment or otherwise, what their philanthropic cause is and perhaps why they partnered or chose that cause, when they went national or joined the Panhellenic Council, and many other facts. Some organizations are very elaborate with their histories and give tons of information while others condense their history into a single paragraph. While these histories can be very helpful, particularly with dates, they are a general history and information source about a whole organization rather than a particular chapter.

I went to the university library in hopes of finding more material on sororities. What I found was *Pledged: the Secret Life of Sororities* by Alexandra Robbins. This book is fairly stereotypical of what is available about sororities, which means for the most part it casts sororities in a fairly negative light. As I read through this book all I could think was how wrong this author was about Greek life when it came to my school. However this book was different

from other material available because it went much farther in depth. It was easier to pick out specific aspect of Pacific's Greek system and how it matched up with the author experienced as well as what people have been lead to believe is the experience overall. This led me to further analysis of my documents in truly looking at the how and why my schools sorority system is different from the general stereotype.

As for further secondary research I began I general search for information on sororities. From there I found general founding histories for most national sororities. While these were informative I wanted to know more specifically about the sororities here at Pacific. Pacific is home to some wonderful national organizations but they didn't start that way, I became interested in how our local sororities were formed. This is where in my research I began to focus specifically about how Pacific was similar to other Greek systems and how it was unique. However there are little to no secondary research on local groups, other than what a group puts out on its own. Again almost all pieces written on Greek life pertain to hazing and alcohol abuse rather than histories.

Honestly I would like to see more research done on Greek systems in general, their formations and histories, rather than the focus on the negative. Every schools Greek system has a different story to tell. Because of the sociological focus towards Greek life it is something historians rarely look at. Though there is quite a bit of work done on black and multicultural organizations and their history. For future sorority girls there are also guides to rushing, though in looking into them I found them to be very outdated and horribly stereotypical, referenced as such in *Pledged*. However none of them are really focused on any historical aspects of Greek life.



## Body

To understand the beginnings of Pacific's Greek system one needs an understanding of the Greek system in general. By the time women were allowed into colleges men had already begun to establish literary societies and fraternities. The Phi Beta Kappa Society was the first fraternity/honor society in America established back in 1776<sup>21</sup>. When the daring men started the society they had no idea it would become the basis of North America's college Greek system. The organization was started as an educational endeavor, but meeting outside of the classroom made it a social one. The society was founded at the College of William and Mary which at the time was rather conservative, leading the men to conduct their meetings in secret<sup>22</sup>. It had all the makings of what would become a fraternity, a Greek letter name, Greek and Latin mottos, and an oath of secrecy, badges and an elaborate initiation ritual.<sup>23</sup> When the anti-Masonic<sup>24</sup> movement swept the nation in the 1830's Phi Beta Kappa was put in an uncomfortable situation. In response the society gave up secrecy and revealed themselves to the public. When "secret organizations" began to go public an influx of fraternities and literary societies to spring up, and this was a place that women were not allowed. The establishment of women in what would be Greek life is very similar to that of what men went through. The Adelphean Society was started by six women as a secret society on the highly conservative and very strict campus of Wesleyan Female College<sup>25</sup>. Starting with similar principles to men societies such as leadership, academia, service to others, and fellowship. This would be the first college society for women, not a new concept but

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<sup>21</sup> [www.pbk.org](http://www.pbk.org)

<sup>22</sup> [www.pbk.org](http://www.pbk.org)

<sup>23</sup> [www.pbk.org](http://www.pbk.org)

<sup>24</sup> The Anti-Masonic Movement was a popular movement based on distaste of and suspicion of the secret fraternal orders the Masons/Freemasons. It began with the disappearance of a Freemason member who supposedly was writing a book disclosing the secrets of the organization thereby breaking his vow, he was never found. The Anti-Masonic Party and movement condemned Masonry for secrecy, exclusivity and undemocratic character.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/27626/Anti-Masonic-Movement>

<sup>25</sup> Now known as Wesleyan College

revolutionary none the less. It was from here that other women's societies would take their lead, each with their own path. When Pacific officially opened its doors to women in 1871, women's societies found their own way here.

## **Pacific**

The University of the Pacific got its start as the California Wesleyan College in Santa Clara under the Methodist church in 1851 and of course did not allow women to attend. Within a month the name was changed to University of the Pacific, and would also later be known as the College of the Pacific before finally returning to the name University of the Pacific. Located within the university was the Santa Clara Female Institute which was a school of sorts for women<sup>26</sup>. While not a formal college it offered some higher education to women. It was here that the Emendia Society would be established in 1858 for the purpose of mental and moral improvement. While the first women's society the Adelphean was started in secret, there is no mention of this being the case for Emendia. The school considered membership to Emendia to be an honor. When the university moved to their San Jose location the society was given their own meeting room in one of the halls.<sup>27</sup> By this time, the society had chosen colors, designed a badge, and created a form of constitution, produced their own newsletter, in addition to having anniversary celebrations and having articles and columns writing about this innovative society. When the university officially opened its doors to women, allowing them to complete degrees through the university itself, Emendia was considered the oldest women's society on the west coast<sup>28</sup> and a legitimate organization that the university praised and supported. This was not the

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<sup>26</sup> The Santa Clara Female Institute would for the most part stay as a sub-section of the college when it made its move to San Jose.

<sup>27</sup> Emendia/Delta Gamma Collection 1858-1958, University of the Pacific

<sup>28</sup> Unknown newspaper clipping, Emendia Scrapbook, University of the Pacific



stereotypical response to women's societies, organizations like the Adelphean and Philomathean Societies and I.C. Sorosis were not welcomed by administration with open arms and enthusiasm. In its early years the society experienced healthy membership and prestige according to histories of the society.<sup>29</sup>

It was in 1881 that a few members of the Emendia society branched off to form a new society. This new society would be Sopholechtia, meeting at Alpha Phi Sigma hall these women wanted society that offered a social aspect as well as literary advancement, but had no designs to rival Emendia rather to work with them. The first minutes were signed by Dr. J.N. Martin who was the head of the Classical Department. By 1882 they had chosen a motto, colors, some symbols etc, and in the fall they saw the President of the college in hopes of gaining a charter for their society. According to the Sopholechtia history this was not well met, as the president was not in favor of another society for women feeling that Emendia was enough<sup>30</sup>. In truth no president or administration at University of the Pacific had ever been asked or sought out to charter a women's organization at this time. Emendia was not technically established at University of the Pacific but at a women's institution and was in a sense absorbed into the university upon becoming co-educational. A lack of support or favor was the more typical historical experience of these societies. While women's education was on the rise women still faced many restrictions, including what they could study. Organizing on campus and seeking further legitimacy on the college campus would be no exception. However the women of Sopholechtia soldiered on, when membership began to lag, they recruited harder, when attendance was low they pushed harder. While the society didn't have the support of the president, they did have the support of the faculty. Through perseverance the society gained a

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<sup>29</sup> Emendia/Delta Gamma Collection 1858-1958, University of the Pacific

<sup>30</sup> Sopholechtia/Kappa Alpha Theta Collection, University of the Pacific

charter from the school the following year 1883. At Pacific it was not uncommon for students to be members of both societies. But after Sopholechia received its charter, it became too demanding to be a member of both societies and was recommended by administration that young women only select one society to be in<sup>31</sup>. With each society growing it was clear to administration that involvement would require more time and participation, being in two societies would conflict with school work and distract students. It was by this urging of the administration the female students at Pacific began to associate with only one society on campus, thus creating completely separated organizations. Both Emendia and Sopholechia began expanding socially, holding events with each other as well as the men's organizations on campus. Sopholechia went as far as having honorary male members in 1884. The women's societies had begun to gain equal ground with the men on campus. Those in either society were considered to be the "cream of crop" of women students on campus<sup>32</sup>. Interestingly enough the women's societies never developed the kind of rivalry with each other that the men's societies did. In the case of men's organizations not all formed and existed on campuses in a friendly manner, it wasn't out of place for one men's organization to consider another their "rival". In the case of University of the Pacific this formed between the two literary societies Archania and Rhizomia<sup>33</sup>. Archania was the first society formed and was a strong and respected organization, but the great debates held over the civil war left some attendees<sup>34</sup> disappointed, definitely those who sympathized with "the other side".<sup>35</sup> These disappointed gentlemen decided to create their own society Rhizomia by improving Archania's model and suit it to their mindset, which to them

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<sup>31</sup> Sopholechia/Kappa Alpha Theta Collection, University of the Pacific

<sup>32</sup> Sopholechia/Kappa Alpha Theta Collection, University of the Pacific

<sup>33</sup> Jeremy D Cuevas, *Brotherhood: The History and Evolution of Fraternities at the University of the Pacific*. Fall 2008. Capstone. University of the Pacific, Stockton, CA

<sup>34</sup> Most likely non-members. Ibid

<sup>35</sup> Ibid



included morality clauses in their constitution that Archania was lacking<sup>36</sup>. Archania did not take this well and a dislike formed between the two societies, this dislike going so far as to incite fist fights over World War 2 debates 50 years later.<sup>37</sup> But in the cases of the women's societies it would in fact appear the prerogative of both societies to better relations with all other organizations on campus. As attitudes relaxed women became a more prominent group on campus. Many members of the women's literary societies were also members of the campus honorary societies<sup>38</sup>. These societies continued to exist in peace and with relative success.

The 1900's saw an increasing number of female students on Pacific's campus. It was recommended by the college president Dr. John L. Seaton that a third women's literary society be organized to accommodate the growing number of female students<sup>39</sup>. On October 8<sup>th</sup>, 1917 the Athenaea Literary Society was formed with 14 actives and 3 honorary members.<sup>40</sup> While at this time women's organizations were not uncommon, it was not often they were recommended by faculty members much less the president of the college. Beyond the fact that the president got the ball rolling for this organization, they received a chapter room and continued support in their development, which allowed them to quickly come up to speed with the other two societies already on campus. A similar instance occurred with the men's groups when President Tully C. Knoles instigated the formation of the Omega Phi Alpha fraternity in 1921.<sup>41</sup> These rare cases of faculty inspired Greek life makes Pacific's Greek system even more unique and intriguing. When looking at founding histories of national organizations rarely are school administration ever mentioned, and if they are it is usually in opposition to what was seen as a secret society.

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid

<sup>37</sup> Ibid

<sup>38</sup> Sorority Collections, University of the Pacific

<sup>39</sup> Athenaea/Delta Delta Delta Collection, University of the Pacific

<sup>40</sup> Athenaea/Delta Delta Delta Collection, University of the Pacific

<sup>41</sup> Jeremy D Cuevas, *Brotherhood: The History and Evolution of Fraternities at the University of the Pacific*. Fall 2008. Capstone. University of the Pacific, Stockton, CA

It was around this time that women's societies became more active organizations. Adding community service to their roster, these societies jumped into war relief efforts. It was also around this time that women's societies began to adopt an elaborate initiation ritual like that of men's societies and fraternities. With this the women's societies on Pacific's campus began to look at themselves more like Greeks and less like societies. This began the formation of Pacific's already unusual sorority system. In the 1920's University of the Pacific would make its final move to Stockton, California. As the school began to settle and establish itself on the new campus, an important shift happened with the women's literary societies. With all the makings already in place, they wanted to be sororities. Keeping their original structure the societies began to adopt Greek letter names. Emendia became Epsilon Lambda Sigma, Sopholechia became Alpha Theta Tau in 1923, and Athenaea became Tau Kappa Kappa, a name based on their Greek motto "hold fast to the good"<sup>42</sup> in 1924. It was also at this time that the literary societies turned sororities began hosting more events, definitely with a more social focus. Teas, dinners, dances and formals, various parties, holiday celebrations, open houses, and charity events are just a few of the events sororities began to host on campus. In 1925 a new series of Greek life fixtures would be opened on the new Stockton campus, the sorority's chapter houses<sup>43</sup>. Standing tall these houses helped round out the still developing campus. The establishment of sorority houses on campus gave the sororities even more legitimacy as organizations. No longer did these organizations have to meet in crowded rooms granted to them by the university. While it is not uncommon for sororities to have their own chapter houses the majority are not located on

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<sup>42</sup> Athenaea/Delta Delta Delta Collection, University of the Pacific

<sup>43</sup> Tau Kappa Kappa did not have a house on campus in 1925. In early 1927 Tau Kappa Kappa obtained the home of Mrs. Adelaide Colburn an honorary member who had passed away the year before. In 1946 Tau Kappa Kappa sold the house to the school and moved into a house on sorority circle. Located across the street from the school, the English Colonial style home is still standing today and serves as the Phi Kappa Alpha fraternity house. Prior to the Phi Kappa Alphas the house was home to the Zeta Phi sorority. Athenaea/Delta Delta Delta Collection, University of the Pacific.



campus. The locations of the chapter houses are another unique aspect of Pacific's Greek life. Rather than just being a chapter of an organization located at a particular school, these organizations are part of Pacific's campus. In fact some of the chapter houses on campus are formally owned and maintained by the school, which allows for unique interaction between the Greek community and the administration. Having university owned chapter facilities is actually a major advantage for Pacific's Greek system. Not only does the on site location serve as a major bonus, but it provides great security for members of the Greek community and the school. Members and chapters have a significantly lower risk of losing their facilities<sup>44</sup>, worry about zoning and other matters of facility parking, able run facility access through a card system<sup>45</sup>, provided maintenance services, can formally file complaints with the school, are provided with a RD<sup>46</sup> and benefit from university security such as alarm and card systems as well as campus police. The university also benefits from this arrangement in that students continue to have housing contracts with the school, are able to keep more students on campus, are able to maintain the facilities and keep them up to code, and can enforce rules and police organizations if need be. Both the university and the Greek organizations benefit by having a whole new level of communication that is often non-existent at other schools.

In 1935, four women spearheaded the campaign at University of the Pacific for a new organization to be developed to encourage women who lived off campus to become better

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<sup>44</sup> One of the only ways to lose your chapter house at Pacific is to lose your charter which results in your organization being removed from campus all together. Though chapter facilities can be "in danger" with their housing in situations involving payment or severe code violations.

<sup>45</sup> In some cases this allows more members to have access to the facility without violating any rules, such as house A is only allowed X number of keys.

<sup>46</sup> An RD is a Residence Director, often a graduate student provided by the school who lives in the chapter house but is unaffiliated with the organization to which the chapter belongs. The position is similar to that of a residence hall RA, and they work to enforce rules and indirectly manage the house. Privately owned houses are often required to hire a housemother, which usually an woman older than those in the organization who serve as house director, enforce rules, and supervisor.

acquainted with those on campus and to become more involved. This organization would be called the Zetathean Club and with the goals of social development and friendship<sup>47</sup>. According to their bylaws any woman enrolled at College of the Pacific<sup>48</sup> or Stockton College could ask for admission and no one could be denied membership<sup>49</sup>. However at the time with no charter, no central meeting place and three established sororities on campus the Zetathean Club experienced difficulties with membership. In order to secure better numbers the Zetathean Club opened membership to the women of Stockton aged 16 and older<sup>50</sup>. In this case it was not that the university did not support the club in fact they did, but rather they couldn't actually offer them a charter. As time went on the overall structure of the organization began to change, in turn becoming more like a traditional sorority. In keeping with the other organizations on campus the Zetathean Club adopted the Greek letter name Zeta Phi, and as a sorority formally requested a charter from the university. Again Pacific met this request with support rather than oppose another women's organization on campus. In addition to support from administration, Zeta Phi met no opposition to becoming a sorority from the already established organizations on campus. While in other cases the chartering of a new organization is met with resistance and rivalry<sup>51</sup>, Pacific's sororities were rather welcoming to this new group, and as Zeta Phi became further established began collaborating with them on events<sup>52</sup>. In 1946-1947 Tau Kappa Kappa acquired a larger living facility on campus, and through the university Zeta Phi

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<sup>47</sup> Misc/Zeta Phi Sorority Collection, University of the Pacific.

<sup>48</sup> University of the Pacific

<sup>49</sup> Zeta Phi History, Constitution Handbook 1945, University of the Pacific

<sup>50</sup> Misc/Zeta Phi Sorority Collection, University of the Pacific

<sup>51</sup> Instances even at University of the Pacific with the men's societies, the rivalry between Archania and Rhizomia. Jeremy D Cuevas, *Brotherhood: The History and Evolution of Fraternities at the University of the Pacific*. Fall 2008. Capstone. University of the Pacific, Stockton, CA

<sup>52</sup> Event Flyers. Sopholechia/Kappa Alpha Theta Collection, University of the Pacific



was able to obtain the now available home<sup>53</sup>. Pacific was now home to four chartered and establish sororities, just as the popularity of sororities began to take off.

A 1949 edition of *Seventeen Magazine* asks "What is a Sorority?" and their answer is that it cannot be accurately defined<sup>54</sup>. As sororities and fraternities began becoming increasingly national so did their concept and the desire to join. At this time countless colleges and universities including Pacific were home to what are known as local sororities<sup>55</sup>. Older women's Greek organizations, mostly those who had started on the east coast in the late 1800s had held national charters<sup>56</sup> for years and by this time had scores of chapters across the nation. The 1900s brought about the Nation Pan-Hellenic Council, a large congregation of sororities who meet in conference to establish official and national guidelines and rules for women's organizations, who serve as court and advisor, not as legislators but as comrades to women's Greek life<sup>57</sup>. By the late 1940's to early 1950's twenty-six national organizations were members of the NPC. National Greek fever had swept the nation, as more and more Greek organizations sought to become larger, part of something bigger, more established, to add legitimacy to their organizations. Pacific was no exception. In response to the national charter mania the university put out pamphlets and guidelines for seeking a national charter. Pacific was not at all opposed to national organizations but they set down their own ground rules, the university had strict guidelines on discrimination policies, hazing, rules and regulations, etc, if an organization wanted a national charter they needed to do their homework. Scores of correspondence can be found between the national offices, on campus organizations and the administration of the

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<sup>53</sup> Misc/Zeta Phi Collection, University of the Pacific

<sup>54</sup> B.B. "Next on the Agenda: Do You Want to Form a Sorority?" *Seventeen* Feb. 1949: 186-87. Print

<sup>55</sup> Usually singular organization with no national charter only a charter from school.

<sup>56</sup> Charter that delineates a group as an official national organization, and these organization often have or build numerous chapters nationwide and on many different campuses.

<sup>57</sup> [www.npcwomen.org](http://www.npcwomen.org)

university about national charters. Letters between the Dean of Women Catherine Davis and national offices are very clear on Pacific's policy that organizations that discriminate are strictly not allowed, and if chartered an organization can or will be called on to prove that they don't discriminate<sup>58</sup>. It is stated in some of Davis's correspondence "that as a university founded on the rigorous moral background of the Methodist church, though no longer affiliated, are very concise and firm on discrimination policy"<sup>59</sup>. The policy from various correspondence focuses on racial discrimination directly pointing out "Orientals"<sup>60</sup> and "Negros"<sup>61</sup>. The timing of these letters definitely rest on the cusp of the Civil Rights movement, which may or may not have had an effect on this policy. However Dean Davis states it is due to the universities moral background. Discussions found in correspondence go so far as scholastic requirements of each organization. Rather than letting local sororities fumble in the dark with national charters the school was massively instrument in helping each individual organization gain national charters, to the point of carefully screening each interested party. The year 1959 marks the official year all four women's organizations gained national charters at University of the Pacific. Epsilon Lambda Sigma became Delta Gamma, Alpha Theta Tau became Kappa Alpha Theta, Tau Kappa Kappa became Delta Delta Delta, and Zeta Phi became Alpha Chi Omega. There is some interesting clashing information about Kappa Alpha Theta. According to some correspondence and the Necrology chapter of *The Sorority Handbook*, Kappa Alpha Theta actually established a chapter with the University of the Pacific in 1890. This is almost nowhere to be found in the material available except for the one letter from the 1950s. According to the Phi Chapter history on their website and the necrology Theta was only on campus from 1890-1891. When Pacific began to

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<sup>58</sup> Letter from Dean Davis to a national executive of Kappa Alpha Theta Fraternity on discrimination policy. Sopholechia/Kappa Alpha Theta Collection, University of the Pacific.

<sup>59</sup> Sopholechia/Kappa Alpha Theta Collection, University of the Pacific

<sup>60</sup> Sorority Collections, University of the Pacific

<sup>61</sup> Sopholechia/Kappa Alpha Theta Collection, University of the Pacific



lose students to Stanford the national organization authorized the move of the chapter from Pacific to Stanford<sup>62</sup>. According to Phi's history on their website the women remaining carried on under the name Alpha Theta Tau. While the existence of a one year establishment of Kappa Alpha Theta seems plausible, without any other proof the record shows that the 1890 chapter of Kappa Alpha Theta has no association or involvement with the history and progression to the 1959 chapter. This is "proven" by the fact that during this time Sopholechtia was still in existence, they were the organization that adopted the name Alpha Theta Tau and in turn chartered the sorority of that name with the university, of which there is documented evidence. The Alpha Theta Tau sorority did not exist until 1923 and Kappa Alpha Theta left in 1891, there is absolutely no evidence that Alpha Theta Tau existed before 1923 and Kappa Alpha Theta did not return until a formal charter was requested in the 1950s. Even if there was a chance of this being true the women of the 1890 Kappa Alpha Theta would have had to deactivate and formally withdraw from the organization and create an entire new organization, of which another society has documented evidence of creating and chartering only 30 years later. The research involved to discover where all this comes from would be an undertaking with the national organization and possibly need university documents no longer in existence, and unfortunately cannot be covered in the scope of this work.

The administration at University of the Pacific was instrumental in this system being established. Rather than resist the sorority movement they embraced it and supported it, without the involvement of the university and the community at Pacific this amazing system would not still stand today. Over their years of existence these organizations have helped to support other organizations on campus, raised countless funds for various organizations, hosted various events

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<sup>62</sup> [www.pacificthetas.com](http://www.pacificthetas.com)

such as speakers and clinics on campus, have held some of the highest GPAs and have made an all around positive impact on the school. Pacific has also helped each chapter to be outstanding, Emendia the founding organization and chapter through its progression to Delta Gamma holds the distinction of being the oldest sorority on the west coast<sup>63</sup>. Pacific's Phi Rho Chapter of Delta Delta is nationally ranked as a one-star chapter and raised over \$5000 at their 2011 fall philanthropy event for St. Jude Children's Cancer Research.

The history and origins of the sororities and women's fraternities at Pacific are vital to understanding numerous aspects of college life. The histories of these groups are a pivotal part to the development of the university itself and what it has accomplished. The chapter houses on campus truly serve as many college women's home away from home, their sisters as family in the absence of their own, the bonds made are strong and keep alumni returning time and time again supporting their organizations and Pacific. University of the Pacific is considered one of the oldest universities in the west, it strong, long-standing with many traditions and a vibrant history. Pacific's Greek life system is inseparable from that. To truly understand Pacific, one must understand what the proud homes on the end of campus are and why they stand so strong.

## Conclusion

What has been shown amongst this research is that the sororities at the University of the Pacific are tied to a long and vibrant history. That administration was absolutely vital in the development of sororities at Pacific. In addition it shows unique aspects of Pacific's Greek system and why that is significant. Showing where others met resistance, there was support,

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<sup>63</sup> Emendia/Delta Gamma Collection, University of the Pacific.



where other saw rivalry, there was acceptance, where there was national charter fever, and there was help.

The differences in the creation and development of these organizations are worth being investigated. Pacific's administration differed from other institutions, such as Wesleyan Female College and the College of William and Mary in that Pacific supported Greek life and the development of women's organizations. One way or another each group received their charter and organized and established themselves on campus. University of the Pacific administration and community did not allow Greek life to fail or stray too much from their original purpose. As the author I find the story of Pacific's sororities fascinating and very proud to be part of such an amazing system. It can definitely be said that the research done in this area of history is far from over. This paper only focuses on a small part of the history of Pacific's sororities and what can be draw from that. There are countless amounts of documents gathering dust in Holt-Atherton Special collections, that are dying to be examined, multicultural sororities and fraternities, fraternities themselves, housing and Greek life in general. This phenomenon is not specific to Pacific but applies to other colleges and universities as well. Other schools archives are bubbling with these kinds of records and documents, telling the story of their Greek system. Many Greeks on college campuses across the nation can only tell you the history of their own chapter if that, but know nothing of the system they are a part of. Unfortunately the private nature of these organizations makes it a difficult field of study. However not all documents are secret nor are large amounts of secret documents required to draw conclusions. With so many diverse people in Greek organizations it is likely there is at least one student out of one hundred that studies history, if they stepped up who knows what could be uncovered.

I plan to continue my research of the women's Greek organizations at University of the Pacific and dig down deeper. In addition I would like to create a more complete history as these organizations are still standing today, and also be able to include Alpha Phi. An amazing project for the Greeks of Pacific's campus would be to work together to create a complete history of Greek life at University of the Pacific, hopefully this one day will happen.



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