

The Acacia Society

I'm sure you have all heard of Greek letter fraternities. Phi Beta Kappa is probably the best known, The founding of the Phi Beta Kappa Society came significantly at the heels of the American Revolution and not surprisingly within the very township that helped to foster the Declaration of Independence. Phi Beta Kappa began its maiden voyage on December 5, 1776 at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg,

Following the footsteps of the Greek-letter Societies, a lesser-known group of university undergraduates formed an organization of Hebrew-letter Societies. The Acacia fraternity was founded at the University of Michigan, being incorporated on May 12, 1904, as an outgrowth of a Masonic club at the University which had existed since 1894. It now has thirty-three Chapters and Colonies, well distributed over the country.



The Acacia Fraternity was begun as a society of college men who were already Master Masons. It is not a Masonic body in the ordinary sense of the word, and it is not a side degree. It claims no antiquity. It seeks no recognition to which its inherent worth does not entitle it.

It is exactly like any one of the thirty odd Greek letter fraternities which flourish in American colleges, except for the fundamental requirement for membership that one who is considered must be a member in good standing in some regularly authorized lodge of Master Masons. Membership comes from within by invitation. Candidates do not petition. Those students who have the good fortune to be offered membership pride themselves on the triple selection thus indicated, the selection from the great mass of high school students for the privilege of college education, the selection from the citizenship of their home communities for the rights and benefits of Masonry, and the selection for the social and intellectual joys of Acacia fraternity life.

The Masonic Club piqued a great deal of interest in Freemasonry amongst young students enrolled at the University of Michigan. The first meetings of the Acacia Society were held in a boarding house on South Thayer Street, in Ann Arbor, Michigan. During these meetings, the membership agreed to establish different chapters of the Acacia Society at various colleges and universities using Hebrew-letters to differentiate the Acacia Chapters from the more common Greek-letter Chapters.

The first Acacia Chapter was incorporated on May 12, 1904 at the University of Michigan and was named Aleph Chapter. Other Chapters soon followed with Beth Chapter being formed at Stanford University, Gimel Chapter at the University of Kansas, Zayin Chapter at Dartmouth College, Teth Chapter at Harvard University, Samehk Chapter at Purdue University, Tsadhe Chapter at Colombia University, Aleph-Daleth Chapter at Syracuse University and Aleph-Beth Chapter at Northwestern University, to name just a few.

The official badge or emblem of the Acacia Society is a right-angled triangle of gold with jeweled borders, within which are three smaller triangles marked respectively by the three Hebrew-letters Shin, Teth and He.



They are necessarily in the larger institutions where the number of Master Masons in attendance furnishes sufficient material for energetic existence. Most of these Chapters maintain Chapter houses in which the members make their home, several of these houses being owned by the local organization, but the majority being rented. The fraternity has an excellent standing among similar college societies. It is a recognized member of the national Inter-Fraternity Conference. It shares generally the privileges of local conferences of representatives of like organizations. During its first decade of life it garnered much approval from college authorities because of its high average ranking in scholarship. As a member must be at least twenty-one years of age, and as, in many places, those who wear its badge are advanced students, there is a realization of the value of scholarship and right conduct which the younger members of other societies sometimes lack. The result has been that Acacia is highly regarded by the college administration wherever it has a Chapter.

From the beginning much stress has been laid upon the social life in the Chapter home. Much has been done to cement college friendships, stronger than the ordinary, perhaps, because of the Masonic tie. The Chapter houses breathe the atmosphere of sentimental affection. Group pictures of the members are found on the walls. Pennants tell of the other institutions where the fraternity has its branches. Individual portraits proclaim some one of exceptional interest or influence. Through Acacia, then, many a college Mason has had his years of study made happier because of close fraternal ties.

There have been developed some splendid degree teams. The Acacia members comprising these have sought always to be letter perfect in the rendition of the ritual. In a good many lodges their aid in degree work has been received with enthusiastic praise. They have encouraged mass visitation of neighboring lodges and so the college boys have been brought into closer relationship with local craftsmen and have had their circle of acquaintanceship much enlarged. Naturally they have been careful watchers of the ritualistic work and have profited by the errors made by less eager officers. If Acacia has done nothing more, it has greatly stimulated the Masonic interest of its own membership.

In this new millennium, members are no longer required to belong to the Masonic Fraternity in order to pledge to the fraternity. However, since Acacia was founded by Master Masons, it still enjoys an informal spiritual tie to Masonry. Some Acacians pursue membership in the Masonic Orders, and Masonic lodges and individual masons have been of invaluable service to Acacia chapters over the years. This relationship, however, is voluntary.

The mission of today's ACACIA Fraternity is:

Academic achievement and betterment of ourselves through participation in student activities.

Community service to better the lives of everyone who comes in contact with the ACACIA Fraternity.

Acquire leadership skills to become more involved with and have a greater influence in society.

Character building experiences which bring about maturity, integrity, and a sense of responsibility.

Individual development that instills personal confidence in every social arena.

Ability to attract and retain people who represent and believe in these Acacia values.

The evolution and development of Acacia over the years has resulted in a fraternity considerably different from what its founders originally envisioned. But, each major change has been an adaptation to the needs of new conditions, and each has permitted the fraternity to grow in reputation, influence, and strength.

Sources: phoenixmasonry.org
acaciafraternity.org



...Another nugget from the quarry: