

THE HISTORY OF THE FOURTH DISTRICT

The history of the Fourth District represents the evolution of two organizational concepts now embodied in the present-day functions of the District Representative and District Meeting.

The first District Representatives were appointed by the Grand Basileus who was authorized by a constitutional amendment in 1922. The District Representatives were delegated the function of assisting the Grand Chapter in the supervision of chapters within a geographical area known as a District.

Districts were seemingly organized on basis of states contiguous to each other with consideration given to some of the amenities resulting from compatible regional and social relationships. The present district organization of eleven units reflects this logical development.

Besides supervising established chapters, the District Representative was expected to develop and expand the jurisdiction of Omegadom to all college campuses within the area. During the early days in Ohio and West Virginia the principal individual contacts between the Grand Chapter and local chapters or between chapters within the District were made by the District Representatives. With little, if any, funds from either the Grand Chapter or the loosely controlled District units, visitations depended largely upon both the dedication and affluence of the District Representatives.

The first step to strengthen the position of the District Representatives occurred during the administration of the 16th Grand Basileus, Albert W. Dent (1937-1939). District Representatives then became constitutional officers and were to be elected by the Districts at the annual meetings. Moreover, all initiations were placed under the supervision of the District Representatives.

The first District Meeting under this constitutional mandate was held in Columbus, Ohio in 1941 on the campus of Ohio State University.

Nine chapters were eligible to participate in this first District Meeting. But what about their origins and establishment? This development represents an inspiring story in Omega history.

This history of the Fourth District in Ohio actually began in 1919 - the year the Grand Chapter took steps to establish a chapter in Cleveland. During his administration, 1918-1920, the seventh Grand Basileus, Raymond G. Robinson, spent some time in the Forest City hopelessly seeking men possessing the desired Omega potentials. The story of this unsuccessful venture, however, offered a challenge to a young newcomer to Cleveland - Nathaniel B. Bowen, then a brother and student at Morehouse College. Between school semesters Bowen renewed the search and in collaboration with Ted Hendricks, a brother and several other migrant brothers, a qualified group was ready for a charter in 1923, the first in Ohio. The new chapter was designated Zeta Omega.

Charter members were: P. H. White, Estes Gunn, John McMorriess, Fred Roseboro, Julius Thomas, J. E. Edwards, Nathaniel Bowen, Elmer Whiting, William T. White, A. J. Thomas, and Henry Moon.

In recognition of this accomplishment, Grand Basileus J. Atkins in 1923, appointed Brother Bowen as Tenth District Representative for the states of Ohio, West Virginia, and Western Pennsylvania.

On the wave of this enthusiasm and success, Zeta Omega members ambitiously cast their eyes on the rest of the state. Their first target - Wilberforce University - resulted in establishing Upsilon, the first undergraduate chapter in Ohio. This became in retrospect, a notable and momentous event in Omega history.

Upsilon's initiation ceremonies were conducted in the tunnel-like basement of the late Colonel Charles Young's home at Wilberforce. This was the dwelling, a sort of improvised way station, where innumerable runaway slaves on the underground railway hid out en route to Canada and freedom. Through these same tunnels in 1923 Omega pledges began the march across the sands to Omegadom in search of enlightenment comparable to the slave's desire for freedom. Many successive waves of sons of Omega have repeated this initial ceremony.

With the spark now ignited, chapters were established in Dayton (Delta Alpha - 1924), at Ohio State University (Iota Psi - 1926), and at Cincinnati (Beta Iota - 1940).

Meanwhile, a new lease on life developed in the sister state of West Virginia. The oldest chapter in the District established as Kappa on the campus at West Virginia; chapters established prior to 1940 were Xi Alpha, Charleston, 1936; Zeta Sigma, 1936 and Chi Alpha, 1939 both at Bluefield. This brought the District total to eight during the 1930s.

Prior to 1941, Ohio and West Virginia had been in several districts. In the 1920s both were in the Tenth with Western Pennsylvania. In 1934, Ohio was still in the Tenth along with the present states comprising this district with Brother George G. Isabell as DR, but West Virginia became attached to the Fourth then consisting of the District of Columbia, Virginia, and Maryland with Brother G. Hamilton Francis as DR. In 1935, Ohio and Pennsylvania made up the Third with Brother Robert D. Baskervi as DR, while West Virginia and Virginia were in the Eleventh with Brother Joseph Bright and Ellis F. Corbett as DRs.

With the beginning of the Annual Meetings and the election of District Representatives in 1940, another transition took place in District organization. Both Ohio and West Virginia were now alone in the Eleventh which was dropped and the two states became assigned to the Fourth.

The early difficulty in developing chapters of two states into an effective organization for annual meetings is colorfully described by Brother James H. Rowland Sr., now a practicing Attorney in Harrisburg, Pa. As the District Representative of the Eleventh, it was his responsibility to plan for the first District Meeting. Here's how he reminisces about that first meeting.

“I have been DR of both the Eleventh District from May 1940 to May 1941 when my Assist. DR. Chester Gray (Zeta Omega) was elected DR. During my term, I sent out several newsletters to all known Omega men in the two states urging them to attend the 1941 District Meeting in Columbus. The result was the first

sizeable number of Omega men assembled (about 40) at an Eleventh District Meeting. Before that the conference had been held at West Virginia State College when the DR made no real prior arrangements for the meeting. Only eight to twelve brothers attended - one or two from Wilberforce, two or three from Bluefield and Charleston each, one or two from Columbus and Cleveland, and several from West Virginia State College. No chapter in Ohio had ever entertained a District Meeting. There was never any planned social program until this 1941 meeting. After the Columbus meeting at Ohio State, the District became alive as a unit.”

From this beginning, the District Meeting idea has evolved into its present format. The District Meeting is a miniature replica of the Grand Conclave. While comprising only two states and a comparatively small number of chapters in comparison with some of the giant districts, the Fourth has distinguished itself throughout its history on both the local and national scene.

Here is a list of notable developments and achievements:

- The establishment of the office of 2nd Vice Grand Basileus. This was a change to meet the demands of undergraduates for representation on the Supreme Council. Upsilon Chapter under the leadership of Brother Parris Sterrett dominated this campaign. After two unsuccessful attempts at the Conclaves in 1935 and 1935 Brother Sterrett was elected Vice Grand Basileus. Another undergraduate elected at the same time was Frederick Weaver as editor of the ORACLE. Later by constitutional change the office of 2nd Vice Grand Basileus was created especially for undergraduates.
- The District Council, comparable to the Supreme Council, came into being over a decade ago and under DR William I. Moore first became an effective tool in district administration between District Meetings.
- The District Newsletter, the “Q” Clearance Sheet, was originated by Brother Clark E. Beck, while director of publicity.
- The idea of the District Undergraduate workshop is a first for the Fourth. The first session was held in Cincinnati, Ohio, 1963, under DR Moore, who in 1962 was the first Fourth District DR to attend the newly established DRs Workshop in Washington D.C.
- The campaign for the inclusion of District Representatives on the Supreme Council saw the Fourth joining the Tenth and other districts in leading the fight which culminated with representation under the revised constitution adopted at the Constitutional Convention in Atlanta, GA, in 1969.

The Grand Conclave has met in Ohio four times as follows:

- Cleveland, 1937 with Brother George V. Johnson as Marshal

- Columbus, 1948, with Brother Leonard L. Holland as Marshal
- Cincinnati, 1953 with Brother Paul A. Jones as Marshal
- Akron's Xi Chi Chapter lost out to Detroit in its bid to host the 1965 Conclave

The first Talent Hunt Demonstration held at a Grand Conclave was presented at Cincinnati in 1953.

The Fourth District has had on a Traveling Representative Brother Robert Thomas, Dayton.

The Fourth has been represented on several national committees.

Brother James Rowland Sr. and Willard Brown on the Housing Authority; Clark E. Beck on the Undergraduate and the Study Committee which evaluated and updated every phase of fraternity's operations; Bertillo Barrow and Julian Bell on the Talent Hunt Demonstration; Dargan J. Burns and Samuel R. Shepard on the Public Relations Committee, the later serving as chairman two terms; Wo: oa, KI ppre pm Recommendations and Reclamations: Jesse I. Norment, Social Action; Carroll Boswell, Supreme Council Undergraduate Representative, Floydolph Anderson, Achievement Week; William Hunter, Supreme Council; Gregory Miller, Undergraduate Supreme Council Representatives, and R. Charles Byers, Supreme Council, Reclamation Committee.

The highest individual recognition for the Fourth came at the Pittsburgh Conclave in 1970 when J. Franklin Spruill was elected Grand Counselor. Unsuccessful candidates for Supreme Council officers were Leonard L. Holland at the 1961 Conclave for Keeper of Records and Seals and Samuel R. Shepard at the 1967 Conclave in the last election for the editor of the ORACLE.

A standout achievement for Omegadom came in 1963 with the election of Leonard L. Holland as president of the Alumni Inter-fraternity Council at Ohio State University representing all 44 fraternities on the campus. Holland as a seven-termer DR, a record number of years, established chapters at Central State, Youngstown College, and Graduate Chapters at Xenia and Canton.

District Representative, Dr. Floydolph Anderson of West Virginia State College sums up the present state of the Fourth as strong and vibrant. This is best exemplified by the tremendous expansion on campuses in Ohio and West Virginia. During this time more undergraduate chapters were established than during the previous 29 years.

This youthful membership necessitates a new look at district priorities — a look which every generation of Omega men has had to take. Guided by the four cardinal principles and the motto "Friendship is essential to the soul", true sons of Omega look forward beyond the 70s with hope and confidence.

The following chapters have been established since 1968: Psi Gamma, Kent State Univ. Kent Ohio April 25. 1969; Lambda Theta, Shepherd College, Shepherdstown, W.V. January 17. 1969; Xi Theta, Ashland College, Ashland, Ohio March 14, 1970; Psi Theta University of Cincinnati,

Cincinnati, Ohio August 14, 1970; Pi Theta Cleveland State, Cleveland, Ohio August 17, 1970; Omega Epsilon University of Toledo, Toledo, Ohio September 3, 1970; Delta Epsilon Bowling Green State, Bowling Green, Ohio September 8, 1970; Beta Beta University of Akron, Akron, Ohio January 8, 1971; Zeta Beta Dayton Area, Dayton, Ohio February 19, 1971.

The most recent chapters are: Mu Beta Marshall University, Huntington, W.V.; Nu Zeta West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV; Pi Zeta Baldwin Wallace College, Berea, Ohio.

The following Brothers have served as fourth District DR from 1923 to 1976. By Appointment 1923-1940 Brothers Nathaniel Bowen, J. L. Heartwell, J. Smith, F. C. Cade, J. Arthur Weiseger, G. Hamilton Franklin, A P. Hamblin, C. W. Seay, and Ellis F. Corbett. Brothers Chester Gray, J. Douglas Anderson, E. A. Bolling, Willard Brown, James W. Rowland, Leonard L. Holland, William J. Moore, Clark E. Beck, Robert Thomas, John Fuller, Floydolph Anderson, William Hunter and R. Charles Byers were elected to office from 1941-1975.