

The History of
The Northeast Club
of the
Pennsylvania State College

Until April 6, 1918 the organization, which, within a year, was to be installed as Omega Chapter of Theta Chi Fraternity, was known as the Northeast Club of the Pennsylvania State College. Membership in the club was restricted to those students enrolled at Penn State who attended the Northeast High School in Philadelphia.

The birth of Omega Chapter and of its parent, Phi Tau Alpha, were each attended by appropriate ceremonies and formal announcement. The Northeast club had more modest beginnings. Although the first minutes are dated May 13, 1915, its origin predates any organized meeting. It was born of an intangible something called "Northeast Spirit" – a loyalty to one's school – and a natural brotherhood of an alien group with common home interests. Without doubt, this school spirit was merely the outward manifestation of love and respect for the man who typified the school: Doctor Andrew J. Morrison, principal for many years whose "boys" always sensed his warm personal interest in their welfare. He was one of the old type educators who exerted a powerful influence for good on those who came in contact with him.

It had become a custom for a member of years for graduates of the Northeast High School attending Penn State to return during Christmas and master holidays for the purpose of visiting Doctor Morrison and others on the faculty and also to interest seniors in the Centre County institution. These pilgrimages, together with occasional informal gatherings on and near campus, such as smokers, cider feeds and annual football contests against a similar group from West Philadelphia High School, resulted in a desire to form a closer tie to fellowship.

In the spring of 1915 steps were taken for form a coherent organization and to rent a club-house. Signatures were obtained in May from thirteen men pledging support for the year 1915-1916. Of this number only five signified intention of taking room and meals at the club-house. One pledged to take a room only, two to take meals only and the others, merely non-residents membership. In spite of this apparent uncertainty, a three year lease was signed with Mrs. Elizabeth Thompson on May 31, 1915 for a house which would be erected at the northeast corner of Allen Street and Foster Avenue. This building was to be three stories in height with eight bedrooms of variable sizes in the two upper floors. This house remained the home of the Northeast Club, of Phi Tau Alpha and of Omega Chapter of Theta Chi until the close of College in June 1929.

When College opened in September 1915 the house lacked about two months of being completed. On September 15 a meeting was held at 200 South Atherton street at which constitution and finance committees were appointed. All of the twenty-two members present signed a pledge to support the Club for the college year. A meeting held October 16 in the engineering building served to acquaint those present with accomplishments of the proceeding month. Optimism for the successful operation of the infant organization

was reflected in an entry in the minutes for that date that instead of moving into the House, "It was suggested that those who are satisfied with their rooms volunteer to stay where they are this year." During the year 1915-16 sixteen men roomed in the clubhouse. One was a non-member, a senior who had roomed in former years with one of our men and who's presence was not welcome.

The first meeting to held in the new home was on November 9, 1915. This was followed by others at weekly intervals during those months College was in session. A perusal of the minutes for the college years that the Northeast Club existed reveals three prominent topics of discussion. A continued interest in activities and personnel at the parent high school is reflected by reference to frequent contacts with it through the correspondent. An economy of administration is evidenced by frequent motions and recorded suggestions in minimize expenditures – for a number of the group were working their way through college. The third outstanding item in the minutes is the passage of amendments to Constitution and By-Laws form time to time in an attempt to prefect an organization to meet new or unforeseen situations.

These revisions show a definite trend of thought and policy, the final result of which was inevitable under conditions to which the Club was subjected but which was contrary to the purpose originally intended by the founders. It was the intention, so recorded in the minutes of September 1915, that members of other fraternities might be eligible to membership in the Club. A pledge to support it for the current year was all that was asked. Realizing that such a plan would result in uncertainty and confusion at the opening of each college year, an amendment was passed February 22, 1916 requiring a pledge to support the Club for the full college course. The question raised some controversy and was opened for further discussion during March and April but the amendment stood. Those who were to be graduated in the following June were not asked to sign, but signatures of fourteen underclassmen were attached to the pledge in April. The following years, prior to initiation, nineteen other names were added.

It was not until October 22, 1917 that the minutes show mention was made o a probable desirability of changing to an unrestricted Greek letter fraternity. A week later a committee was appointed to investigate and report on reasons for changing. This report, presented to the group at its first November meeting of that year, predicted a more limited and less desirable enrollment from Northeast High School due to the fact that new high schools were being erected in the suburban residential districts of Philadelphia, which had been serviced formerly by Northeast. This fact and a loss of those members then entering the war service would so limit eligible candidates that a choice of selection on grounds of compatibility, morality, etc., would be precluded if the Club were to continue on a sound financial basis.

In a view of this rapidly approaching condition it was recommended that a change be made before action would be forced on a depleted membership, which would be less able to reorganize. The committee called attention to the advantages of the less provincial outlook accruing from wider geographical contacts and possibility of a larger future home if membership were not restricted to a small percentage of the student body. The report

was accepted and a motion to make preparations for changing to an unrestricted local Greek letter fraternity was passed. Succeeding meetings were devoted principally to the business of preparing for the installation of Phi Tau Alpha Fraternity, the name which was selected from four which were submitted. The last official meeting of the Northeast Club was held in the evening of April 2, 1918.