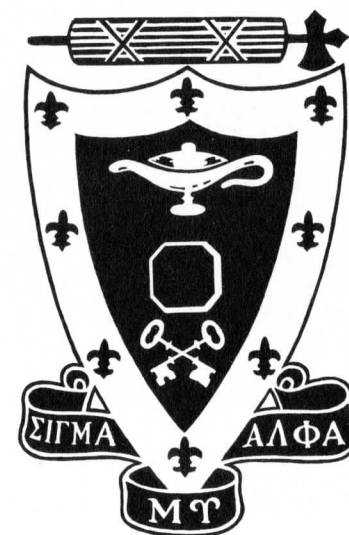
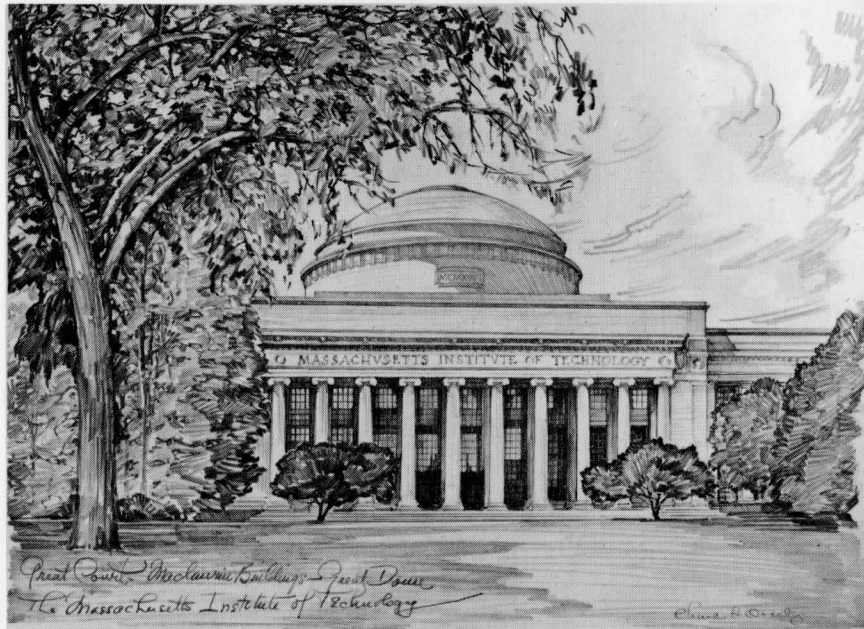


THE
HISTORY
OF
XI CHAPTER



1917-1967



The MIT of fifty years ago must have been very different from the MIT which the brothers of Xi see today. Even a casual glance at some of our scrapbooks will reveal the great extent to which our chapter has undergone change. Throughout the years, change has not always meant progress. In fifty years, our chapter has seen times of strength and stability and times of weakness. Nevertheless, the spirit of brotherhood as expressed in the creed has been a powerful bond. Now, during our fiftieth anniversary, we become more conscious of our history. We have therefore tried to present the highlights of our chapter's progress. Although no history can capsule the meaning of the house for its brotherhood, we hope the following pages will stimulate many personal memories.



Xi, 1923-1924



"Ben, Bud, Len, and Jerry"
About 1925



Initiation, 1930



Our Egmont St.
home



Early in 1916 Xi Chapter of Sigma Alpha Mu was organized by five close friends. These young men were Irving Fineman, '17, Samuel Mann, '19, David Rubin, '18, Bernard Cohen, '18, and George Kahn, '19. Shortly thereafter, William Barron, '20, pledged and Murray Horwood, a faculty member, became affiliated with the chapter. The formal installation was held on February 11, 1917 at Matthews Hall, Harvard University, with Lambda Chapter present.

That year the fledgling chapter faced two major problems. First, the chapter, knowing of the faculty's dislike for sectarian fraternities, was hesitant to apply for formal recognition. However, to quote George Kahn:

We decided that recognition was worthwhile trying for whether we should get it or not. Accordingly, a committee consisting of fratres Cohen and Mann interviewed Dean Buston, and here's where the best part of it comes in. After giving the committee a hearing, the dean looked up the standing of Sigma Alpha Mu Fraternity and it seems that that settled the matter immediately for he at once informed the committee that the faculty would have no objections against recognizing our chapter.
(Octagonian, May 1917)

The second problem was stability. By the end of that first year, Irving Fineman had graduated and William Barron and Harry Stiller, a later pledge, were initiated. Though Edgar Goldstine and Lester Wolf joined during the following year and Fra Herzstein from Alpha stayed at Xi for a year, the house approached a major crisis in January of 1918. Because of the accelerated turnover of college students during the war, only William Barron, of all the fratres, would remain by the middle of the next school year. New and younger members were desperately sought. Louis Wolf, '19, and Theodore Shedlovsky, '19, pledged. Soon after, Mark Hamburger, a freshman transfer from the University of Cincinnati, also pledged. This gave the chapter two younger members, Barron and Hamburger. Continued efforts for stability were rewarded with the pledging of S. Albert Kaufman and Harold Levin.

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Wolf, Shedlovsky, Hamburger, Kaufman, and Levin were initiated in April of 1918; Arthur Silver, another new pledge, was initiated in June. The problem was overcome.

Though her roots were firmly planted, Xi was hampered by size. In an attempt to overcome this weakness, small but numerous pledge classes were initiated, bringing membership to 17 by the school year 1920-1921. With this increase, the chapter was able to rent its first house, at 179 Bay State Road. The brothers moved into the house in traditional style with a housewarming party in December of 1921. Before this time, the fratres had met at the Harvard Chapter House on Plympton Street. The Harvard friendship had continued since installation.

During her early years, the chapter emphasized scholarship. In the three years following 1921, Xi was first in campus scholarship twice, and second for the overall period. But scholarship did not mean the sacrifice of athletic or theatric endeavor. Bill Barron reached the New England tennis finals only to be defeated by his own doubles partner. While Mark Hamburger was establishing himself as a track star, Walter Hamburger started a fraternity tradition with his outstanding performance in Tech Show. In 1925 Saul Brodsky set an M.I.T. record in the shot-put. Henry Gitterman displayed great courage as well as athletic prowess when he saved a crew member after a racing accident on the Charles.

The brothers of this period later proved to be outstanding in their professional careers. Noteworthy examples are Dr. Nathaniel Frank, an outstanding physicist at M.I.T. for the past 40 years, Al Pearlman, now president of the New York Central Railroad, and founder Irving Fineman, a noted author who was awarded the Sigma Alpha Mu Man of the Year Award in 1937. The men who solidified our chapter were dynamic and creative individuals.

The roaring twenties and depression brought change and complications to Xi from outside. This was a period during which the chapter moved from house to house: to 194 Bay State Road in 1923, to

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188 Bay State Road in 1924, and finally to 338 Bay State Road in 1928. Though there is little evidence that the brothers joined in the swing of the roaring twenties, it should be noted that liquor was often brewed in the house bathtub! The early effects of the depression were minor, but the continuing economic hardships were to slowly undermine the chapter's finances to such an extent that she could not afford heat during the winter of 1936.

The greatest effect of this era was the change of administration at M.I.T. When Karl Taylor Compton became president of M.I.T. in 1930, he initiated a trend to liberalize the then "parochial engineering school." About the same time, the chapter underwent a similar change. The brotherhood increased to about 25 in number. Many became active and powerful in school affairs. Fra Pforzheimer was editor of the Tech; Fra Geisman was active in Voodoo, Tech Show, and Senior Weekend Committee; Tech Show was dominated by Xi with Fra Peskin as music manager, Fra Fleisher as general manager, and Fra Mayer as rehearsal manager; Fra Freeman was on Inscomm; Fra Levinson was a star swimmer; Bob Ripin a star wrestler; Fra Poze was editor of Voodoo; Fra Folk was president of the Glee Club. Many other fratres worked for these activities and contributed to student government. This trend was exemplified by Xi's admission to the IFC in 1929.

Social-mindedness was not recklessness as the mothers of many Xi pledges were relieved to learn--it was a common pledge mission to go to a hospital and to be tested for pregnancy.

The surge of activity lasted through the thirties. During these years the chapter rented a beautiful house on 83 Egmont Street in Brookline. Just two years after the move, on the morning of April 12, 1934, a fire causing more than \$5000 in damage raged through the house. The fratres sleeping in the house were aroused and led to safety. The Boston newspapers, with their usual pin-point accuracy, claimed that the brothers had jumped out of the second floor windows, while, in fact, the only things that went out the windows were Fra Pressler's clothes, without Fra Pressler in them!

Needless to say, Fra Pressler's room was untouched while his clothes landed safely in a mud puddle. Despite extensive damage, only one room was unlivable.

During the later thirties, the chapter showed continued spirit, unity, and achievement. Again scholarship was exceptionally high as Xi was first on campus by .13 cumulative points. The effects of the depression were more pronounced during this period. There was the heatless winter of 1936. Sigma Alpha Mu was the only M.I.T. fraternity to vote for Roosevelt in the campus poll.

In 1937 Xi celebrated its 20th anniversary, and in 1942 its 25th. Neither of these were major celebrations, but rather efforts to improve alumni relations. An alumni club was the goal. Soon afterward, a chapter newsletter was started. Since then, there have been many newsletters printed, the Xi Bulletin, Xi News, and Xi Times. The early success of these efforts was short lived.

The brothers, in 1940, felt it would be advantageous to move rather than to continue with the inadequate space on Egmont Street. The new house, at 222 Babcock Street, in Brookline, had a capacity for 19 people. The move marked a new period in Xi history--the war years. The rapid turnover of fratres caused year-round activity and change. Summer initiations were held for the first time. There was a resurgence of social activity such as Tech Cabin Weekend, a chapter "function" held in the midst of the woods, and the chamber music concerts held in the house. The fraters never lost their ability to laugh. When Mr. Dubois phoned for Howard Dubois, the answer the brothers gave was "Oh, de boys are fine!"

During the forties many outstanding brothers passed through the doors of Xi Chapter. Bob Given, an all-New England Lacrosse player, starred on the first Tech football team in 37 years. Sid Atlas, a jack-of-all-trades, was exceptionally active in TCA and the Intercollegiate Committee on Social Service. Stan Roboff, recipient of the 1942 exchequer's key, Bob Lichten, and Ted Natanson also contributed much to the prestige and unity of the house. The later forties saw the continuation of a chapter tradition, as Sammies such as Fras Schiff,



The Babcock Fortress



Fratres Kellner
and Wolf



"Iola, Leeds, Kaplan,
and Isaacson helping
out guzzling Fred
Goldman"



Field Day
About 1948



Initiation, 1950



Field Day, 1951

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Cohen, Mains, Cotton, Lock, and Maslon dominated the publications.

The start of the fifties was marked by the great excitement of the M.I.T. Mid-century Convocation in the Boston Garden. Though Winston Churchill attended as planned, President Harry Truman made a last minute cancellation. Xi fratres ushered at these ceremonies.

The enthusiasm of the forties carried deep into the fifties. The Xi activity list, headed by Fras Kaplan, Schwartzman, and Janis, was impressive, with the brotherhood active on The Tech, Voodoo, and Tech Show. For one day in 1954, Sigma Alpha Mu nearly took control of the entire M.I.T. campus. Fra Frank Leeds was performing a Voodoo stunt, making H-bombs in the Great Court. The explosions broke 15 windows and resulted in his mention on the six O'clock news.

Scholastic efforts were rewarded in 1952 by the winning of the I.F.C. Scholarship Trophy. Marvin Harris led the chapter with an overall cumulative rating of 5.0. Fra Harris was also prior in 1953-54 and won the Hi Jacobson Scholarship Award from Sigma Alpha Mu National.

Mike Brenner, '57, led a revival of chapter activity, concentrating on athletics and student government. Fra Brenner was prior, member of the wrestling team, and chairman of the I.F.C. Many fratres followed Brenner's footsteps. Robert Muh, prior for two terms, became permanent secretary-treasurer of the Class of 1959. John Castle, co-captain of M.I.T.'s national lacrosse champions, was very active in numerous political offices. Ed Linde, pledgemaster, rush chairman, exchequer, and prior, was also a star lacrosse player. Cooperation between fratres was also excellent, as Xi went on to win the softball championship and the Spring Carnival Award in 1959.

An unsolved mystery in chapter tradition is the origin of Epsilon Pi (Eternal Pledge). Traced back to 1956, there are only nine known Eternal Pledges. Epsilon Pi, an award handed down from year

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to year, is given to the pledge who best typifies the spirit and enjoyment of pledging.

The late fifties brought another trend, increased competition among the predominantly Jewish fraternities. Before 1950 there were only two such houses, but by the late fifties there were five. As a result, the all important Rush Week became the intense and hectic period it is today.

One of Xi's better friends during this period was "Dr." Ben Baker. Always penniless, Ben was allowed to use the house phone. His excuse was that the pay of an intern was very small. However, the truth was that he was no doctor but an escapee from the psychiatric ward of a local hospital.

In Spring, 1961, the fratres gave a forced farewell to Belinda, the luscious beverage dispenser, and to 222 Babcock Street. The house was to be demolished and replaced by a modern apartment building. Prior Joseph Perkell sacrificed much time and effort to find Xi a house before Rush Week that September. Also Bill Silverman, a Lambda alumnus, gave legal advice and assistance with the same untiring enthusiasm that he has shown for many years. The finding and buying of 34 the Fenway resulted in major consequences. The chapter's financial position was improved and stabilized though large mortgages are still outstanding and the purchase led to the formation of the Xi Chapter Alumni Corporation, which legally owns the house and negotiates all legal transactions for the chapter.

Furthermore, the brothers found that they were able to devote more time to campus activities due to the closer proximity of the house to M.I.T. But perhaps of greatest significance was the fact that, for the first time in 45 years, Xi was the owner of a chapter house. This fact has contributed much to the unity and enthusiasm found in recent years.

The surge of activity in the late fifties continued into the sixties. The leaders in the house were outstandingly strong. Fras Bob Blumberg, '64, and Mike Crane, '67, were both priors for two terms and outstanding scholar-athletes. Bob was

voted one of the top ten chemical engineers in the nation. Mike recently won the Sigma Alpha Mu Senior of the Year Award. Fras Henry Lichstein and David Mundel, both priors for a term, were also active on campus. Henry, '65, chairman of the Parents Weekend and IFC Investigations Committees, went on to win the Karl Taylor Compton Award. David, '66, was chairman of the Intercollegiate Conference Committee. Fra Sam Cohen, '68, first honorable mention for Sigma Alpha Mu's Sophomore of the Year, founded and later became editor of Innisfree, M.I.T.'s newest publication. A secret group, AEOS, was organized by Fras Caloff, Kaplan, And Steinman to recognize actions, beyond the call of duty, in stupidity, pigheadedness, and other traits better left unrecognized.

The chapter set academic records in the sixties. In 1963, the pledge class of 1966 set a school record with a 4.2 cum, while six members achieved 4.7 or better. In 1964, the pledge class of 1967 captured the IFC Pledge Scholarship Trophy for the second straight year. The entire chapter compiled a 4.2 in 1964-1965 as we won the IFC Scholarship Trophy. In 1965-1966 we repeated that feat and won the trophy for the second straight year. In 1965 Mike Crane and Ted Kaplan won the Jacobson Scholarship Awards.

In 1963 and 1964 the national Sigma Alpha Mu recognized the overall excellence of the chapter and awarded her the Jimmy Hammerstein Plaque, while Fra Herb Cantor, '44, was presented with the Advisor of the Year Award. Also in 1964, Xi was awarded first honorable mention in the Founders Cup competition. In 1966, Xi was awarded Sigma Alpha Mu's highest award, the Founder's Cup. Then in 1967, the year of her fiftieth anniversary, Xi was again awarded the Founder's Cup.



Brothers and Belinda
1957



Pledge class of 1959



"Informal" meeting
Class of 1965



Brothers mingle about
new house, 1962



Spring Weekend float
1962



Xi, first in Scholarship

Schedule for Fiftieth Anniversary
Weekend, April 21-23

Friday, April 21 - Registration,
Chapter House and Somerset
Hotel

Friday Evening - Cocktails and
Buffet at the house

Saturday Morning - Brunch at
Somerset Hotel

Saturday Afternoon - M.I.T. Open
House

Saturday Evening - Cocktails,
Banquet, and Dance at
Somerset Hotel

Sunday Morning - Alumni Corporation
Meeting

* * *

Fiftieth Anniversary Committee

Michael Crane, Chairman

Samuel Cohen
Howard Greenbaum
Robert Petkun

Michael Rabinowitz
Donald Rosenfield
David Schlissel