

Some history of Delta Upsilon chapter houses.

The current Delta Upsilon chapter house is on the site of the home of one of the Gentry brothers, one of the owners of a dog and pony show. The mother of Bill Bear, class of '52, was a native of Bloomington and her sister often stayed in the Gentry "mansion," the house that later served as the D U chapter house. Bill now lives in Madison, Indiana and sent a 1990 article from the Madison newspaper about the Gentry dog and pony show. According to the article, Henry Gentry went to work for a circus animal act when he was 16 and traveled with the circus for seven years until the circus owner tricked Gentry out of all his savings. Penniless, Gentry returned to Bloomington and started collecting and training stray dogs. The article reports that he said "he spent more time on his knees than a preacher, teaching the dogs to walk upright, push baby carriages, and drive wagons." In 1887, Gentry's dog show had its premiere performance in the Bloomington Opera House. He feared the audience did not like the show but word of mouth gave him a sold out house for the following evening's show and he was a success. He promptly took his show to Bedford and Bloomfield and in 1890, his show had 53 dogs and 9 ponies and later added an elephant. Henry's three brothers joined his enterprise and he soon had four circus troupes that simultaneously toured the country as the Gentry Brothers Circus. The circus was sold in 1916 but Henry remained involved with other circus organizations until the 1930s. He was inducted into the Circus Hall of Fame in Sarasota, Florida in 1940 following his death. The 1990 article Bill sent described a revival of the Gentry Circus in Bloomington that year as a benefit for the Stone Belt Arc, an organization serving people with developmental disabilities.

One of Henry Gentry's brothers built his "mansion" at 1204 East Third Street; this is the house where Bill Bear's aunt played as a child. The building was used as a fraternity house by Phi Gamma Delta. Between 1912 and 1920, Delta Tau Delta fraternity called the Gentry house home. The 1921 *Arbutus*¹ shows members of Delta Upsilon at a house on Kirkwood but the chapter must have moved to the Gentry place that year. The Delta Upsilon entry in the 1924 *Arbutus* shows the Gentry house as the chapter's home. That was the year the house burned. The new D U house is shown under construction in the 1925 *Arbutus* and the completed house is shown in 1926. Prior to locating on East Third, the D U chapter house was at the corner of Lincoln and Kirkwood. This was its location when the Wrangler colony affiliated with Delta Upsilon. The Monroe County Library is now on the Kirkwood site and a plaque at the site commemorates its historic significance to Delta Upsilon.

There was a lot of fraternity house construction at the time the new Delta Upsilon house was built. Architectural drawings of new houses are shown in the 1925 *Arbutus* for Alpha Tau Omega and Lambda Chi Alpha. In 1926, the completed houses for DU and the other two chapters are shown. The 1926 *Arbutus* also shows drawings for new houses for Sigma Alpha Epsilon and Kappa Sigma. The 1927 *Arbutus* shows the completed SAE house and the completed Kappa Sigma house is shown in 1928.

Virginia Tyte, a neighbor, friend, and descendent of the Gentry family, presents historic programs about the Gentry Circus. She knew the house at the corner of Ballentine and Third was not the home of Henry Gentry but was not sure which brother had the house built. She was quite sure the house occupied only the existing lot and did not include the land where the Lambda Chi house is located; there has been speculation over the years that D U sold some of its land to Lambda Chi which built its house at the same time the current D U house was built.

The father of James Wade, also in the class of '52 and my fraternity father, was a resident in the Gentry house at the time it burned. Jim recalled his dad's story about the fire. Jim's dad's room opened onto the front porch roof. One of his most valuable possessions was a typewriter that was on his desk just inside the window to the porch. Jim's dad climbed onto the porch roof in his attempt to rescue his typewriter. The fire was roaring in the back part of the house but his room was not yet aflame. He broke the window; the introduction of oxygen into the room made it immediately burst into flame. In that instant, Jim's dad grabbed his typewriter but found it was blazing hot and as he swiveled to get out of the flames, the typewriter was

¹ The *Arbutus* is the official annual publication of Indiana University that lists graduates and contains other information about the academic year. In some issues, pictures of the residence's occupied by Greek houses and clubs are shown.



Original fire truck.

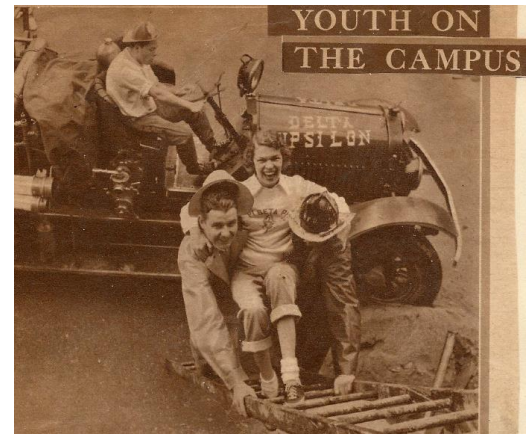
Life Magazine picture of Fireman's Fling party.



too hot to handle and it flew out of his hands, cleared the edge of the roof, and shattered into a million pieces on the yard below. Jim's dad survived to tell the story.

The existing house was built promptly after the fire on the site of the former Gentry Mansion. Several years later, Lindy Moss, class of '49, and other chapter members decided to buy a fire truck. A truck was to be auctioned and the brothers decided a bid of \$100 might be a winner. They fretted that someone else would have the same idea so decided to up their bid to \$101. They fretted some more and decided on \$101.01. A current neighbor and friend, Doris Brineman, was the clerk in the office that received the payment; it stuck in her head because it was so unique. DU was the only bidder.

The truck was a durable symbol used to ferry dates to parties at the house, to take brothers to serenades, to represent the chapter in par-ades, and other uses. It also fostered an annual "Fireman's Fling" party. The party was featured in Life Magazine as one of the best fraternity parties in the country. The party was also featured in an extensive article in the Chicago Tribune captioned "Youth on the Campus."



Chicago Tribune picture of Fireman's Fling party.

There were many trucks over the years and many times, the brothers had an official black and white dog to ride in the truck. By the 1990s, liability concerns had grown and insurance had become prohibitively expensive. Even though it was a beloved tradition, the truck had become a target of vandalism and the negatives outweighed history so the truck tradition was retired. Not long after the truck was retired, the chapter engaged a fireman as part time plant manager. Brent Stanton was so beloved he was made an honorary brother and was on the staff at the time of the chapter's centennial.

Derek Richey, author of *Bloomington Then and Now*, and speaker at a program I arranged at Meadowood, made me aware that a house at 301 E. Kirkwood was occupied by the Emanon Club from as early as 1903. This club became the Indiana University chapter of Alpha Tau Omega in 1915. The *Arbutus* revealed that the Wranglers occupied a house on Kirkwood at an address other than 301 E. Kirkwood starting in 1906 and apparently moved to the 301 E. Kirkwood house when it was vacated by the Emanon Club. Thus, the Wranglers moved to 301 E. Kirkwood very close to the time when it became the Indiana Chapter of Delta Upsilon. Henry Smith, the father of Cay Smith, a neighbor and friend, was a Wrangler who was part of the founding group of D U chapter members.

The three houses occupied by Delta Upsilon in its first 100 years

