



Housing

Pi Phi facilities aren't just places to live. They're places where friendships deepen, traditions take root and lifelong memories are made. Whether it's a chapter facility, residence hall or shared meeting space, Pi Phi housing has long created opportunities for members to connect, grow and find belonging.

On April 28, 1867, ten of the 12 founders gathered in the house of "Major" Jacob Holt, later known as Holt House, in a room rented by **ADA BRUEN** and **LIBBIE BROOK**. In this room, I.C. Sorosis was founded—our earliest testament to the power of shared housing.

In the early days of fraternities and sororities, many colleges and universities did not provide student housing. Organizations often created those opportunities themselves, and Pi Phi chapters

were no exception. Members sought spaces where they could gather, build community and create a home away from home.



Because funding was limited, many Pi Phi chapters rented houses rather than purchasing them outright—a practice still common today. If a chapter could acquire housing, they usually leaned on alumnae, friends and family for support.

Support for fraternity and sorority housing was not always universal. At the University of Wisconsin, the university president opposed both men's and women's fraternities and attempted to prohibit them.

Still, students continued to advocate for the value of these communities and the sense of belonging they provided. Ultimately, both the men's and women's organizations stood together and continued to thrive. The university president eventually relented after his daughter joined the Wisconsin Alpha Chapter of Pi Beta Phi.

Syracuse University was the starting point for many first houses in the fraternity and sorority community, including Alpha Phi, who was the first women's group to have designed and built their own house.



Pi Beta Phi was not far behind the building process! The New York Alpha Chapter of Pi Beta Phi was installed on February 11, 1896, at the home of **FRANCES BEATTIE**. During its first two years, the chapter met in the Hall of Languages and later moved into rented houses. When the chapter was faced with the challenge of having no housing, alumnae started a house committee—now known as a Chapter House Corporation (CHC)—and named New York Alpha **ESTELLE FOOTE HARVIZ** as the chairman. The house committee established a pledge-based fund, supported by alumnae over a set number of years, with the goal of purchasing or building a chapter house. Working together, the house committee and chapter selected and purchased a desirable lot using these funds. They then hired architect Ward Wellington Ward to design and construct the home.

The resulting Colonial-style house featured 12 sleeping rooms,



12 closets and two bathrooms, and was described as simple and home-like, with high ceilings, a piano room and French doors throughout. Alumnae donated much of the furnishings, and a particularly beloved gift was a set of brass door knockers engraved with Greek letters, given by **ESTELLE FOOTE HARVIE**.

The New York Alpha chapter was among the first to fundraise in this way, using chapter-driven profits to purchase land and ultimately build a house upon it. Although the chapter moved a little over 20 years later, the house still stands on campus today.



As chapter housing expanded across the Fraternity, alumnae volunteers played an important role in supporting and caring for these spaces. In 1966, Grand Council formally established Chapter House Corporations (CHCs), empowering alumnae volunteers to help oversee chapter facilities on behalf of the Fraternity. Arkansas Alpha **FREDA STAFFORD SCHUYLER** was the first to occupy a role as Director of CHCs in 1967.

The 1960s and 1970s were challenging for fraternities and sororities, with a downturn in the number of students joining the organizations. Freda noted

the biggest problem was filling the facilities and suggested future houses be smaller.

To further strengthen the member housing experience, Pi Beta Phi established the Fraternity Housing Corporation (FHC) in 2008. Today, FHC supports chapter facilities through property management, operational guidance and long-term planning while partnering with local CHCs to help create safe, welcoming and well-maintained homes for members across North America. ✨

