

## **The District Evolution: Growing the Omega Map Part I 1922-1939**

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### **An Organization to Grow**

The Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. has enjoyed an existence of over 110 years and has shown amazing growth over the course of its history. The Fraternity has established over 990 chapters around the world during its existence. Over the course of its growth, the Fraternity went through a number of territorial changes before arriving at its current global alignment. The moves at times were geographical in nature with small adjustments of a state or two switching from one jurisdiction to another. Some of these changes took place in short time spans, sometimes yearly, especially throughout the thirties.

Researching and referencing the most available information is a healthy task and one that future historians should look to expand upon. Recognizing the frequency of these realignments, this written examination of those movements presented an opportunity to focus on some of the biggest changes and how they led to a more final settling of territories.

The Fraternity now embarks on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of utilizing a regional governing practice as districts. Looking at the trajectory of those early years, it is understandable that there would be a need to adhere to better organizational practices. This was a direct result of the explosion of chapters beginning in 1919 as the Fraternity entered its eighth year of existence. Prior to 1919, The Fraternity had established three undergraduate chapters. Alpha Chapter was located at Howard University in Washington, D.C., Beta Chapter at Lincoln University in Oxford, Pennsylvania and Gamma, represented by several colleges in the Boston, Massachusetts area.

Starting in 1919, under the guidance and groundwork of the 7<sup>th</sup> Grand Basileus Raymond George Robinson, the Fraternity did flourish with new charters being offered to schools in Nashville, TN (Delta), New York, NY (Epsilon), Richmond, VA (Zeta), and Atlanta, GA (Eta). Also, under Grand Basileus Robinson administration, the creation of the graduate chapter increased the opportunities for post-graduate participation for members. These graduate chapters opened the doors for college graduates who were not fortunate enough to have a chapter on their campus to join the Fraternity.

### **A Need for Governing**

Recognizing the growth potential past the reach of individual college campuses, Omega had to consider the way governing her chapters would take form. As the Fraternity grew out of Washington D.C. to Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and places as far as California, the need to have a uniform system in place for all chapters to adhere to grew stronger. In the book Baird's Manual of American College Fraternities, author William Raimond Baird puts forward language for an organized government that suggests each fraternity should select a parent chapter to be called a Grand Chapter. From this centralized chapter, all chapters would communicate a set form and flow of information. He further explains that this Grand Chapter would be guided by the voices of delegates from its individual chapters. Such direction and occurring policies would

be the results coming forth from the conventions of such delegates. In the case of Omega, the Grand Chapter was set up from the very beginning. This chapter consisted of the Grand Basileus, the Grand Keeper of Records, and the Grand Keeper of Seals (the three governing officers of the organization) and representatives (delegates) of each Chapter that convened annually for a meeting called the Grand Conclave.

Another opportunity for growth was solving the retention of Fraternity men once they were no longer undergraduates. The practice of creating alumni chapters in major cities allowed members to continue their interest in serving their organizations. It held forth the means to conduct Fraternity business, hold chapter meetings, and have a voice in governing matters by sending delegates to conventions. With times of such rapid growth, Omega adopted additional methods utilized by fraternities whereas territories would be divided into Districts.<sup>i</sup>

Through the administrations of the 8<sup>th</sup> Grand Basileus Harold Hillyer Thomas and 9<sup>th</sup> Grand Basileus Jasper Alston Atkins, the Fraternity's efforts to expand continued. In a period of four years starting from the beginning of 1919 to the close of 1923, the Fraternity grew from three chapters to forty-seven chapters across the United States. While brief, the placement of Theta Chapter at the University of California, gave the Fraternity temporary representation on both coasts. With the arrival of Lambda Chapter at the University of Southern California in 1923, Omega now claimed chapters on both sides of the country from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans, and in doing so was recognized as the first Black Greek Letter organization to span the country.<sup>ii</sup> With the relocation of Sigma Chapter from the University of Chicago and Northwestern University in Chicago to McGill University in Canada in December of 1923, the Fraternity now had its first international chapter past the northern border of the United States.<sup>iii</sup>

### **Managing the Territories**



9th Grand Basileus  
J. Alston Atkins  
(1921-24)

The initial responsibilities of managing the new chapters fell on the Grand Basileus and, subsequently, the Vice Grand Basileus when that position was created. At the Eleventh Grand Conclave during the week of December 26-30, 1922, in Philadelphia, newly elected 9<sup>th</sup> Grand Basileus Jasper Alston Atkins was granted the authority to identify and appoint men to assist in supervising our chapters and the five districts he divided the Fraternity into.<sup>iv</sup> Grand Basileus Atkins appointed the following men to become the first District Representatives of Omega.

- Charles William White, Eta Chapter in Cambridge, Massachusetts, was assigned to the New England States which also included Sigma Chapter in Toronto, Canada.
- Carter Lee Marshall, Alpha Omega Chapter in Washington D.C., was responsible for the Middle Atlantic States.
- Leander Raymond Hill, formerly of Delta Chapter, living in St Paul, Minnesota, was responsible for the Central States.
- William John Faulkner, Eta Omega Chapter in Atlanta, Georgia, handled the Southern States.
- Future 11<sup>th</sup> Grand Basileus George Louis Vaughn, Upsilon Omega Chapter in St Louis, Missouri, was tasked with governing the Western States.<sup>v</sup>

These appointments were made to cover areas in the United States within the proximity of members and chapters. At the time, some states like Michigan, Minnesota, and Tennessee had only one established chapter, whereas in states like Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Georgia there were multiple chapters.

With each District Representative now in charge, their mandates were clear. In accordance with the Fraternity's plans for expansion, they were to visit every chapter under their jurisdiction once a year, identify new locations for chapters, and inspire chapters to maintain health and financial wellness. One of the biggest opportunities the growing districts presented was the flowing of fellowship among neighboring chapters, states, and active members of the Fraternity as well as the rekindling of the fraternal spirit in detached members. Results showed that such interaction inspired bonding, sharing of ideas, and most importantly members working together on programs.

In a short time span, the Fraternity went from five districts in 1922 to eighteen districts in 1924. These new territories covered forty-eight chapters and the following men served as District Representatives in 1924.

- 1<sup>st</sup> District-Rudolph Ulysses Lanclos, Gamma Chapter in Boston, MA.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> District-Frederick Douglas Johnson, Epsilon Chapter in New York City, NY.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> District-Julius Scotland McClain, Mu Omega Chapter in Philadelphia, PA.
- 4<sup>th</sup> District-Joshua Lightfoot Heartwell, Delta Omega in Petersburg, VA.
- 5<sup>th</sup> District-Francis Marion Kennedy, Tau Omega Chapter in Winston Salem, NC.
- 6<sup>th</sup> District-William John Faulkner, Eta Omega in Atlanta, GA.
- 7<sup>th</sup> District-Daniel Bernetter Taylor, Iota Omega at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama.
- 8<sup>th</sup> District-Julian William Kelso, Theta Chapter in Marshall, TX.
- 9<sup>th</sup> District-James Arthur Redd, Theta Omega in Louisville, KY.
- 10<sup>th</sup> District-Nathaniel Braxton Bowen, Zeta Omega in Cleveland, OH.
- 11<sup>th</sup> District-Benjamin Wilbon Clayton, Sigma Omega in Chicago, IL.
- 12<sup>th</sup> District-George Louis Vaughn, Upsilon Omega in St. Louis, MO.
- 13<sup>th</sup> District-Charles Augustus Chandler, Xi Omega of Tulsa, OK.
- 14<sup>th</sup> District-Dr. Leander Raymond Hill, Formerly of Delta Chapter. Dr. Hill was based out of St Paul, MN.
- 17<sup>th</sup> District-William McKinley Peterz, Lambda Chapter in Los Angeles, CA.
- 18<sup>th</sup> District-Walter Herbert Mazyck, Alpha Omega Chapter in Washington, DC.

There were no territories or District Representatives listed for the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Districts.<sup>vi</sup>



14th Grand Basileus  
Julius S. McClain  
(1926-29)

The number of districts remained large over the course of the next few years and in his report at the 16<sup>th</sup> Grand Conclave of 1927, 12<sup>th</sup> Grand Basileus Julius Scotland McClain makes mention questions from the membership as to why so many small areas were considered districts. His response was that at that time the number of dedicated brothers appointed to each district would provide key attention to such territories and in the long run would be best for addressing the attention needed in keeping chapters functional, working on special projects, and reclaiming detached members - all of which was vital in

strengthening the Fraternity.<sup>vii</sup> While the District Representatives were much needed, additional help managing the expanding fraternity was to come in the form of the Traveling Representative.

In 1927 under the 12<sup>th</sup> Grand Basileus McClain, the Traveling Representative role was created, and Fred B. Payton of Chicago, Illinois was the first member to be appointed to serve in this position. The Traveling Representative held responsibilities like those of the original District Representatives, such as reaching out to detached members, inactive or delinquent chapters, and looking into housing for undergraduates. This national role also gave deliverance of fraternal news from the Grand Chapter directly to individual chapters.<sup>viii</sup>

At the conclusion of 1927, Omega had chapters across 26 States and one in Canada. Under Grand Basileus McClain's administration, the Fraternity transitioned from the eighteen districts that were covered in 1924, to seventeen in 1928 to a reduction to almost half with nine in 1929. The Fraternity had 81 chapters heading into the thirties. The following men led their districts at the close of the decade.

- 1<sup>st</sup> District-Richard Edmond Carey, Xi Phi Chapter in New York, NY. and Malvin Proctor, Gamma Chapter in Roxbury, MA. shared responsibilities for the district.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> District-Mosley Bradley McAden, Phi Omega Chapter in Buffalo, NY.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> District-George Dennis Brantley, St Louis, MO.
- 4<sup>th</sup> District-Orlando J. Smith, St Paul MN.
- 5<sup>th</sup> District-Dr. Clarence Fitzhugh Holmes, Jr. (past 6<sup>th</sup> Grand Basileus), Chi Phi Chapter in Pueblo, CO.
- 6<sup>th</sup> District-Hayward P. Carter, Alpha Phi Chapter in Houston, TXs.
- 7<sup>th</sup> District-Harold Hillyer Thomas (past 8<sup>th</sup> Grand Basileus), Eta Omega Chapter in Atlanta, GA.
- 8<sup>th</sup> District-Stanley Herbert Adams, Pi Phi Chapter in Charlotte NC.
- 9<sup>th</sup> District-Dallas F. Nicholas, Mu Omega in Philadelphia, PA.<sup>ix</sup>



14th Grand Basileus  
Lawrence A. Oxley  
(1932-35)

The beginning of the thirties marked some additional changes to the district alignments. While in 1931 a Tenth district was added back into the line-up a bigger shift was proposed in early 1933. A letter drafted to the Fraternity's Grand Keeper of Records and Seal (GKRS) Walter Herbert Mazyck on February 18, 1933, by 14<sup>th</sup> Grand Basileus Lawrence Augustus Oxley put forth the following new district alignment.

- 1<sup>st</sup> District-Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Sigma Chapter in Toronto, Canada.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> District-New York, New Jersey.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> District-Pennsylvania, Delaware.
- 4<sup>th</sup> District-Washington, DC, Virginia, Maryland.
- 5<sup>th</sup> District-Kentucky, Indiana, West Virginia, Ohio\*.
- 6<sup>th</sup> District-North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee.
- 7<sup>th</sup> District-Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi\*

- 8<sup>th</sup> District-Missouri, Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas.
- 9<sup>th</sup> District-Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, California.
- 10<sup>th</sup> District-Illinois, Minnesota, Michigan, Wisconsin.

\*Grand Basileus Oxley put forth in his letter that Ohio be part of the Fifth District and Mississippi be part of the Seventh District. However, The Fraternity directories in the April and November 1934 Oracles still listed Ohio as part of the Third District and Mississippi as part of the Fifth District. The state of Ohio remains in the Third District until 1937 when it became part of the newly added Eleventh District. The state of Mississippi would eventually show up in the Omega directory as part of the Seventh District in 1942 after reorganization in 1941.

Additionally, as part of that letter, Grand Basileus Oxley asked that the GKRS Mazyck create a record of these new districts. He asked that this report list the total number of chapters in each territory and the names of each member in such locations. He asked that all chapters and members of the Fraternity active and detached be contacted by the District Representatives with assistance from the Supreme Council.<sup>x</sup> Following the 1933 Grand Conclave, Grand Basileus Oxley appointed the following men as District Representatives.

- 1<sup>st</sup> District-Everett C. Yates, Eta Phi Chapter, Boston MA.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> District-Ellis Brown Weatherless, Xi Phi Chapter, New York, NY.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> District-George Billingslia, Ardmore, PA.
- 4<sup>th</sup> District-James Arthur Weisiger, Alpha Omega Chapter, Washington, D.C.
- 5<sup>th</sup> District-Julius Albert Thomas of Theta Omega Chapter, Louisville, KY.
- 6<sup>th</sup> District-Stanley Herbert Adams, Pi Phi Chapter, Charlotte, NC.
- 7<sup>th</sup> District-Harold Hillyer Thomas of Eta Omega Chapter, Atlanta, GA.
- 8<sup>th</sup> District-Herman S. Dreer of Upsilon Omega Chapter, St. Louis, MO.
- 9<sup>th</sup> District-Hayward P. Carter of Alpha Phi Chapter, Houston, TX.
- 10<sup>th</sup> District-Francis Morse Dent of Nu Omega Chapter, Detroit, MI.<sup>xi</sup>

Prior to and after the 1934 Grand Conclave, there was a slight difference listed for district alignments. It appears that for a short time an eleventh District was added to the organization after the 1934 Grand Conclave. These slight changes were common in the 1930s. While the following states were listed for 1935, the notes in parenthesis indicate the changes that were listed from the Chapter Directory in the April 1934 issue of The Oracle:

- 1<sup>st</sup> District-Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Sigma Chapter in Toronto, Canada.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> District-New York, New Jersey, Connecticut (previously listed in the 1<sup>st</sup> District)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> District-Pennsylvania, Ohio.
- 4<sup>th</sup> District-Washington DC, Maryland, Delaware (previously listed in the 3<sup>rd</sup> District).
- 5<sup>th</sup> District-Tennessee, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana.
- 6<sup>th</sup> District-North Carolina, South Carolina.
- 7<sup>th</sup> District-Georgia, Florida, Alabama.
- 8<sup>th</sup> District-Missouri, Kansas, Colorado, Minnesota, Illinois (previously listed as part of the 10<sup>th</sup> District).
- 9<sup>th</sup> District-Texas, Oklahoma, California.
- 10<sup>th</sup> District-Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Wisconsin.

- 11<sup>th</sup> District-Virginia, West Virginia (previously listed in the 4<sup>th</sup> Districts).<sup>xii</sup>

### **The Silver Marker**

As Omega celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> year of existence in late 1936 there were ten organized Districts. In looking at the years prior and the number of changes to the territories, most of the recent district alignments were still consistent in geography based on the direction given by Grand Basileus Oxley in 1933. However, the biggest change happened in the Fifth District with a total switching of states. It previously consisted of Kentucky, Indiana, West Virginia, and Ohio. Both Kentucky and Indiana were moved to the Tenth District, and Ohio and West Virginia were moved to the Third and Fourth Districts respectively. The new district alignment was as follows:

- 1<sup>st</sup> District-Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Sigma Chapter in Toronto, Canada.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> District-New York, New Jersey, Connecticut.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> District-Pennsylvania, Delaware, Ohio.
- 4<sup>th</sup> District-Maryland, Washington DC, Virginia, West Virginia.
- 5<sup>th</sup> District-Tennessee, Mississippi, Arkansas.
- 6<sup>th</sup> District-North Carolina, South Carolina.
- 7<sup>th</sup> District-Georgia, Florida, Alabama.
- 8<sup>th</sup> District-Missouri, Illinois, Kansas, Colorado, Minnesota.
- 9<sup>th</sup> District-Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, California.
- 10<sup>th</sup> District-Michigan, Indiana, Kentucky, Wisconsin.<sup>xiii</sup>

Along with these new changes, 15<sup>th</sup> Grand Basileus William Edward Baugh appointed the following men to manage the districts:

- 1<sup>st</sup> District-Everett C. Yates, Dorchester, MA.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> District-Ellis Brown Weatherless, Xi Phi Chapter, New York, NY.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> District-Robert D. Baskerville, Mu Omega in Philadelphia, PA.
- 4<sup>th</sup> District-Clifford Richard Alexander, Baltimore, MD.
- 5<sup>th</sup> District-Zephaniah Alexander Looby, Nashville, TN.
- 6<sup>th</sup> District-Stanley Herbert Adams, Pi Phi Chapter in Charlotte, NC.
- 7<sup>th</sup> District-Marcellus Meyer Austell of Atlanta, GA.
- 8<sup>th</sup> District-Ulysses Simpson Donaldson of St. Louis, MO.
- 9<sup>th</sup> District-Hayward P. Carter, Alpha Phi Chapter in Houston, TX.
- 10<sup>th</sup> District-George A. Isabell, Nu Omega Chapter in Detroit, MI.<sup>xiv</sup>

A few of these men had served previously as District Representatives for their territories, namely Everett C. Yates, Ellis B. Weatherless, Stanley Herbert Adams, and Hayward P. Carter.

While there would be some additional tweaks to the states between 1936 and 1937, the last of the new changes for the year 1937 yet again saw the addition of the Eleventh District with Ohio and West Virginia as the two states composing the district. Unlike the previous year, this alignment of the districts remained in place and there were no adjustments as Omega was heading into the forties.

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- <sup>i</sup> Baird, William Raimond, "Organization and Government" *Baird's Manual of American College Fraternities, A Descriptive Analysis of the Fraternity System in the Colleges of the United States, (1915 Volume 8) P.20.*
- <sup>ii</sup> Dreer, Herman S. "Chapter X The Grand Basilei in the Administration of Omega" *The History of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, A Brotherhood of Negro College Men 1911 to 1939 (1940) P.223.*
- <sup>iii</sup> "New Chapters" *The Oracle, (August 1921) P.28*
- <sup>iv</sup> Mazyck, Walter H. Mazyck, *Alpha Omega Chapter "Omega's Expansion Since The 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Conclave" The Oracle, (May 1924) P.15-16.*
- <sup>v</sup> Dreer, Herman S. "Chapter III National Aspirations" *The History of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, A Brotherhood of Negro College Men 1911 to 1939 (1940) P.38-39.*
- <sup>vi</sup> "District Representatives" *The Oracle, (May 1924) P.1.*
- <sup>vii</sup> "Report of the Grand Basileus, 16<sup>th</sup> Grand Conclave" *New York City (1927) P.5-6*
- <sup>viii</sup> Gill, Robert L. Ph. D. "Chapter II The Period of Expansion and Internal Development 1922-1932" *The Omega Psi Phi Fraternity and the Men who made its History, A Concise History (1961) P.17.*
- <sup>ix</sup> Nicholas, Dallas N. "Correspondence from the Office of 17<sup>th</sup> District Representative Dallas F. Nicholas of Philadelphia, Pa". (January 14, 1928).
- <sup>x</sup> Oxley, Lawrence A. "Grand Basileus letter to Grand Keeper of Records and Seal Walter Herbert Mazyck" (February 18, 1933).
- <sup>xi</sup> "Elections and Appointments" *The Oracle, (April 1933) P.3*
- <sup>xii</sup> "District Representatives, Chapter Directory" *The Oracle, (June 1935) Inside Front Cover.*
- <sup>xiii</sup> "District Representatives, Chapter Directory" *The Oracle, (December 1936) Inside Front Cover.*
- <sup>xiv</sup> "District Representatives, Chapter Directory" *The Oracle, (December 1937) Inside Front Cover.*