

The District Evolution: Growing the Omega Map Part II 1940-2021

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In 1922, the Fraternity took its first steps in building a regional governing system that would work in conjunction with the National leadership to further manage the business of the Fraternity. The original five districts were placed under the supervision of a District Representative who was responsible for coordinating administrative matters and facilitating communication between the national headquarters and local chapters. Over the course of the next few decades the number and size of Districts expanded as the number of chapters grew and its correlating administrative needs increased as well. Along with such growth there were redesignations of states from one district to another to align the administrative responsibilities of the District Representatives to better promote national programs and policies. Heading into the 1940s, expansion would continue to be a focus for the fraternity as it pushed to establish undergraduate chapters at various college campuses and graduate chapters in regions where a substantial number of Omega Men lived. District evolution slowed considerably in the 1950s as the fraternity developed a mature organization structure to administer its respective chapters thus leading to the current district alignment we see today.



17th Grand Basileus
Z. Alexander Looby
(1940-45)

Make it an even Dozen

As the world found itself in the beginning years of a second World War, the Fraternity did hold its annual Grand Conclave in 1939, 1940, and 1941. In 1940 at the 28th Grand Conclave in Nashville, Tennessee, the 17th Grand Basileus Z. Alexander Looby was granted authorization to form a committee to study re-districting. It was at the 29th Grand Conclave in 1941 held in Indianapolis, Indiana, that the conversation around redistricting was once again on the docket. The leading purpose put forth by the committee was the strengthening of each district through better alignment. The organizational changes recommended were adopted and effective immediately.¹

The big adjustment to the district layout occurred with the reassignment of a Twelfth District. California, the long-time stronghold of the west coast, was now the newly formed Twelfth District. With a new Twelfth District, there was also a change to the Eleventh District. Ohio and West Virginia were redesignated back to the Fourth District where the states previously resided and were now put in proximity to their sister states and numeric order of districts. In place of Ohio and West Virginia, the states of Colorado, Nebraska, and Iowa would become the new Eleventh District. The Eleventh District would remain intact for a little more than a decade after this decision. The following new alignment came out of the district reorganization:

- 1st District-Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Sigma Chapter in Montreal, Canada.

- 2nd District-New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania.
- 3rd District-Maryland, Delaware, Washington D.C., Virginia.
- 4th District-West Virginia, Ohio. (Both states previously made up the 11th District)
- 5th District-Tennessee, Kentucky.
- 6th District-North Carolina, South Carolina.
- 7th District-Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi (Officially listed in the 7th District)
- 8th District-Missouri, Kansas, Arkansas.
- 9th District-Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma.
- 10th District-Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Indiana.
- 11th District- Colorado, Nebraska, Iowa (Nebraska and Iowa were new states added to existing districts).
- 12th District-California.

Grand Basileus Z. Alexander Looby's administration also wanted to formalize the district reorganization effort which required the 29th Grand Conclave to approve an amendment to the fraternity by-laws. The Constitution and By-Laws Committee put forth an amendment to add a new section to the fraternity By-Laws to place formal structure around the districts to include (1) the requirement to conduct an Annual District Meeting under the supervision of the District Representative as the presiding officer; (2) that a District Meeting elect its own officers from the financial members who reside within that district; and (3) Any action except the election of Officers at a District Meeting shall be subject to the veto powers of the Grand Conclave when in session and of the Supreme Council when the conclave is not in session, but the decisions of the Supreme Council on matters pertaining to the District Meeting may be appealed to the Grand Conclave at its next session.^{xvi}

The recommendation was adopted by the Grand Conclave thus 1941 marked the first time the position of the District Representative would be elected by the financial brotherhood within those respective geographic districts. Prior to 1941, the position of District Representative was appointed by the Grand Basileus but with the close of the 29th Grand Conclave all districts were required to hold an annual meeting with one of its primary duties to elect its district officers. The following men were elected as District Representatives to help guide the territories for the Fraternity while the country was at war:

- 1st District-No representative*
- 2nd District-Flemming Norris of Paterson, NJ.
- 3rd District-future 19th Grand Basileus Harry Theodore Penn of Roanoke, VA.
- 4th District-Chester Gray of Columbus, OH.
- 5th District-A. A. Branch of Memphis, TN.
- 6th District-E. Kermit Hightower of Greensboro, NC.
- 7th District-John H. Calhoun, Jr. of Atlanta, GA.
- 8th District-Ulysses Simpson Donaldson of St. Louis, MO.
- 9th District-F. Rivers Barnwell of Fort Worth, TX.
- 10th District-Corneff Taylor of Chicago, IL.
- 11th District-Raymond Holman of Denver, CO.
- 12th District-Ralph Augustine Vaughn of Los Angeles, CA

*In the December 1941 Oracle Directory, all the states of the 1st and 2nd Districts were all listed under the 1st District. District Representative Flemming Norris of New Jersey is listed as 1st District Representative supporting a notion that the two districts for a short time were combined into one. In June of 1942, The Oracle Directory listed both a 1st and 2nd District. However, starting in 1942 there was no District Representative listed for the 1st District this continued over the course of a number of issues. Flemming Norris is listed as the 2nd District Representative in 1942.

A Doorway to New Lands

Up to this point in its history, the Fraternity had initiated men who attended schools in the states but were originally from places abroad. In some cases, after graduating, they returned home or to other destinations to start their professional careers. In other circumstances, assignments in the military would find Omega men stationed around the world. Both scenarios helped provide an avenue to spread the word and efforts of the Fraternity.

In his report to the Grand Conclave in 1947, former 1st Vice Grand Basileus and sitting Second District Representative since 1945, Mifflin Tucker Gibbs of Mu Omega Chapter in Philadelphia, PA reported that steps had been taken to have the Virgin Island as part of the district. He mentioned that the work of fraternity member and Governor of the Virgin Islands William Henry Hastie was a welcomed benefit to creating a graduate chapter in the Virgin Islands.ⁱⁱ The Virgin Island while not having an actual chapter, was considered a functioning territory of the Fraternity, and as such, in 1949 and 1950 was listed on Second District Conference literature along with the states of New York, New Jersey and, Pennsylvania.

It helped that this tool of expansion was already discussed in an earlier Supreme Council meeting in 1947 and that it was agreed that other locations outside of the Continental United States such as Puerto Rico, British West Indies, and Cuba should also be given consideration as territories and be situated within districts within the Fraternity based of proximity. Puerto Rico and the British West Indies would be included in the Second District, the Virgin Islands would be part of the Third District, and Cuba be placed in the Seventh District. While such recommendations did not come to full fruition at that time, the continuing appeal of international expansion would surely continue to exist, and these opportunities did not go unnoticed and would eventually usher in growth in places other than the United States.ⁱⁱⁱ

A Continuation of Consistent Districts

Heading into the 1950s, the changes to the districts slowed down considerably. A few notable changes occurred in the Second District, where Delaware and Maryland were the last states to settle into place. In 1952, both Delaware and Maryland were still part of the Third District. Delaware and a part of Maryland would soon join the Second District in 1953.^{iv} At the start of 1955, the state of Maryland still had chapters split between two districts. Pi Epsilon, the undergraduate chapter at Maryland State College (now the University of Maryland at Eastern Shore), and Pi Alpha a graduate chapter in Princess Anne, Maryland continued to be listed as part of the Second District, while Pi Chapter at Morgan State College (now Morgan State University) and Pi Omega Chapter, a graduate chapter in Baltimore Maryland were listed as part of the Third District. It wasn't until after the end of 1955 that Pi Chapter and Pi Omega were

listed as members of the Second District.^v Another change that occurred was the state of Arkansas, which presided in the Eighth District would move over to the Ninth District where it has resided since.^{vi}

Heading to the middle years of the decade another big shift would happen. At the 1955 Grand Conclave held in Los Angeles, California, a motion was put forth to combine the Eleventh and Eighth Districts. At the time, the existing Eleventh District had three chapters and the Eighth District had a total of eight chapters. The decision was made that the district with the least number of chapters would be absorbed into the bigger district. This result was the Eleventh District being vacated and the states of Colorado, Iowa, Nebraska moved into the Eighth District which consisted of Kansas and Missouri.^{vii} In the years since that decision, there have been no new states or chapters designated for the Eleventh District.

While there were no realignments to the districts after that Grand Conclave decision in 1955, the Fraternity did continue to grow in the decades after as some new states like Utah, Oregon, New Mexico, and Alaska would be eventually added to existing districts and chapter charters awarded to locations in those territories. The following were the new districts and the states that made up their alignment in 1956.

- 1st District-Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut.
- 2nd District-New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland.
- 3rd District-Washington D.C., Virginia.
- 4th District-West Virginia, Ohio.
- 5th District-Tennessee, Kentucky.
- 6th District-North Carolina, South Carolina.
- 7th District-Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi.
- 8th District-Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, Iowa.
- 9th District-Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma. Arkansas.
- 10th District-Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Indiana.
- 12th District-California, Arizona, Washington

Chartered on December 1, 1955, Tau Chi Chapter in Liberia, Africa became the Fraternity's new International Chapter. After the realignment the men serving in office in 1956 as District Representatives were:

- 1st District-Chester N. Gibbs of Springfield, MA.
- 2nd District-Ermon K. Jones based in Neptune, NJ.
- 3rd District-Hilary H. Jones of Norfolk, VA.
- 4th District-Leonard L. Holland of Columbus, OH.
- 5th District-L.W. Beasley of Nashville, TN.
- 6th District-Former 9th Grand Basileus Jasper Alston Atkins of Winston-Salem, NC.
- 7th District-William C. Gaines of Atlanta, GA.
- 8th District-H. Monroe Purnell of Denver, CO.
- 9th District-F. Rivers Barnwell of Fort Worth, TX.
- 10th District-Abraham Ulmer Jr. of Detroit, MI.

- 12th District-Thomas G. Neusom of Los Angeles, CA.^{viii}

In the years following the 1955 redistricting, Omega celebrated its Golden Anniversary at the 47th Grand Conclave held in August of 1961 in Washington, D.C. At the closing of the Fraternity's 50th year, there were over 25,000 members.^{ix} Also, at the close of 1961, nearly 300 charters had been issued and Tau Chi was the Fraternity's international chapter in Liberia, Africa.^x A little over a year after the Golden Conclave, Theta Rho Chapter would be chartered in Frankfurt, Germany on August 15, 1962, therefore joining Tau Chi as international chapters for the Fraternity.

In as much with such growth over the course of its sixty-plus years of existence, the Fraternity was now on the verge of exhausting its use of double letter Greek letters to designate chapters. As a result of this achievement, on March 3, 1978, under the administration of 30th Grand Basileus Dr. Edward Braynon, Jr. the Supreme Council approved its first charter for a triple letter chapter. On March 10, 1978, the Alpha Alpha Alpha Chapter was chartered in Shepherdstown, West Virginia as a member of the Fourth District.^{xi}

Later that year, the new triple letter chapter Beta Alpha Alpha Chapter was chartered on September 18, 1978, in White Plains, New York as part of the Second District. Gamma Alpha Alpha Chapter was chartered on September 15, 1978, in Anchorage, Alaska as part of the Twelfth District. Also, on September 15, 1978, Delta Alpha Alpha Chapter in Tucson, Arizona in the Twelfth District and Epsilon Alpha Alpha Chapter of Jonesboro, Arkansas in the Ninth District were granted chapter charters.^{xii} Since the addition of the triple letter into the Fraternity's chapter lettering system, there have been a host of new chapters that have joined that group, including a good number of which were designated to chapters outside of the United States.

A Global Explosion

In comparison with the continuous domestic growth, Omega's global expansion was successful as well. What began with the Fraternity's establishment of Sigma Chapter in Canada and the first chapter outside of the United States in 1923 has since extended well beyond the land of North America. In the late 1940s, the Virgin Island open the gateway for territorial recognition as part of the Fraternity and was considered part of the Second District. As mentioned previously, in December of 1955, Tau Chi Chapter was established in Liberia, Africa, and, in 1962, Theta Rho Chapter was chartered in Frankfurt, Germany.

Over the next fifteen years, new chapters would be added to the Fraternity's International District. In the mid-1970s, the Fraternity set up a charter for Zeta Xi located in St. Thomas, the Virgin Islands on August 15th, 1976. Nearly six months later, on February 22, 1977, the Lambda Xi chapter was chartered in Seoul, Korea. Later that year on August 17th of 1977 the Pi Xi chapter was established in Nassau, Bahamas.

In the early part of the 1980s, on June 25th, 1982, Lambda Beta Beta chapter was chartered in Honolulu on the island of O'ahu in Hawaii the 50th state. A few years later Nu Gamma Gamma Chapter was established in Panama City, Panama in December of 1985. Towards the latter years of the eighties and the beginning of the 1990s, only a couple of international chapters were

chartered. On February 28th, 1987 the Sigma Gamma Gamma Chapter was set up in Okinawa, Japan. Phi Gamma Gamma Chapter was chartered in Wuerzburg, Germany in July of 1988.^{xiii} At the beginning of the nineties, Eta Iota Iota Chapter was chartered in St. Croix, The Virgin Islands on December 8th, 1990

The 1990s saw the official naming transition of the International District to the Thirteenth District. The mention of the new title shows up at two different points in time. In a report presented to the 66th Grand Conclave in Detroit Michigan, the International Chapters are referenced as the 13th District on the Section 3 cover of the Report to the Grand Conclave.^{xiv} It is noted in the History of the 13th District, that it was during a Supreme Council meeting in Cleveland, Ohio in December of 1993, that 34th Grand Basileus Curtis Tyrone Gilmore, Sr. presented the motion that the International District be known as the Thirteenth District. The motion was accepted and passed by the Supreme Council.^{xv}

As the world welcomed in the 2000s, Omega established additional chapters around the world. The first few years into the new millennium saw new charters given to Zeta Lambda Lambda Chapter in Hamilton, Bermuda on October 1st, 2001, Kappa Lambda Lambda Chapter located in Freeport, the Bahamas on August 9th, 2002, Upsilon Lambda Lambda Chapter across the Pacific in Tokyo, Japan in July of 2004, and Alpha Delta Xi Chapter up north in Ottawa, Canada on June of 2008.

The second decade of the new millennium saw the establishment of Chi Mu Mu Chapter located in Birmingham, England in 2012. The Alpha Epsilon Beta an undergraduate chapter based at the University of Bahamas joined Pi Xi in the Nassau Bahamas on March 27, 2018. Phi Gamma Gamma Chapter was reactivated and placed back in Germany on March 31, 2018. Later that year the Chi Mu Nu Chapter was set up in the Far East in Shanghai, China on December 1st, 2018.

In recent years Beta Nu Nu Chapter was established across the border in Tijuana, Mexico in March of 2019. Later that year across the globe on December 9th, 2019 the Delta Nu Nu Chapter was chartered in United Arab, Emirates. After a pandemic stopped the world, the Fraternity set up its newest chapter Nu Nu Nu Chapter in Puerto Plata, The Dominican Republic on June 24th, 2021. Omega's Thirteenth District composed of the international chapters of the Fraternity has demonstrated a steady expansion of the organization around the world.^{xvi}

Omega, Today and Tomorrow:

What started as a unified effort amongst dear friends at Howard University during the fall semester in 1911 has developed into an international Fraternity. As an organization of both undergraduate students and graduate men, the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. continues to inspire men to seek and align themselves with its principles and efforts to contribute to the world.

Now, as we are in 2022, the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. will once again mark another great milestone. Nearly one hundred years ago in 1922 at the 11th Grand Conclave in Philadelphia, Pa, the foundation was put forth for managing the continuing expansion and health of the Fraternity's territories with the formation of the districts. With that decision came the creation of the District Representatives and eventually the Traveling Representative positions to help

manage the growth and expansion regionally. The Supreme Council, with the assistance of these men, helped inspire active members to continue their work, and detached members to realign themselves with the principles of the Fraternity and its service to the community at large. Ultimately those commitments over the course of all these years have led the way to the growing of the Fraternity, and the Omega map.

ⁱ "Loyalty to Majority Rule" *The Oracle*, (June 1942) P. 30-31

^{xvi} Dreer, Herman S. "Chapter II Omega Faces a Second World War" *The History of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, A Brotherhood of Negro College Men 1911 to 1939 (1940) Supplement to the History of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity* P.14.

ⁱⁱ Gibbs, Mifflin T. *Second District Representative "34th Grand Conclave Minutes, December 27-30 1947 Reports of District Representatives 2nd District"* P.51.

ⁱⁱⁱ "1947 Election of Chapter Officers, Supreme Council Minutes" (February 16th) P.8.

^{iv} "Chapter Directory" *The Oracle*, (March 1953) Inside Back Cover P.32.

^v "Chapter Directory" *The Oracle*, (December 1955) Inside Front Cover.

^{vi} "Chapter Directory" *The Oracle*, (September 1955) inside Back Cover.

^{vii} "Fourth Session Recommendation No. 2 Recommendation that Districts 8 and 11 be combined" *The 42nd Grand Conclave Minutes 1955, Proceedings, Grand Basileus John F. Potts presiding.* P. 320.

^{viii} "District Representatives, Chapter Directory" *The Oracle*, (September 1956) Inside Front Cover.

^{ix} Gill, Robert L. Ph. D. "Chapter VII Summary" *The Omega Psi Phi Fraternity and the Men who made its History, A Concise History (1963)* P.77.

^x Gill, Robert L. Ph. D. "Appendix IV. The Official Roster of Chapters of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. as of October, 1962" (1963) P.88-98. *The Omega Psi Phi Fraternity and the Men who made its History, A Concise History (1963)* P.88-98.

^{xi} "The First Triple Letter Chapter Named in 4th District" *The Oracle*, (Spring 1979) P.36.

^{xii} "IHQ, Website: oppl3th.clubexpress.com

^{xiii} "13th District History, The Official Website of the 13th International District" *IHQ, Website: oppl3th.clubexpress.com*

^{xiv} "66th Grand Conclave report Section 3 Report of the 13th District International Chapters" P.82

^{xv} "13th District History, The Official Website of the 13th International District" *IHQ, Website: oppl3th.clubexpress.com*

^{xvi} "13th District History, The Official Website of the 13th International District" *IHQ, Website: oppl3th.clubexpress.com*