

This Month in Wittenberg History: October 16-22, 1927

Few weeks in Wittenberg history can match this week, eight years ago, for significance. Nationally, the Teapot Dome trials began, related to one of the major scandals of the Harding administration. Locally, the “Ridgewood Model Home” on Walnut Terrace opened to the public, to promote the new Ridgewood subdivision in which many Wittenbergers still live today.

But Wittenberg College dominated much of the local news that week, so much so that it will take more than one installment to do justice to the stories.

Kappa Delta, Alpha Delta Pi, and Afternoon Tea at Ferncliff Hall

Theta Gamma Rho organized at Wittenberg as a sorority chapter of Aloquin Society in 1915, and then was re-organized as a Greek letter organization in 1918. In the mid-1920s the chapter undertook to join Kappa Delta, by then a prominent national sorority. Following a visit from the national organization late 1925, the Wittenberg ladies applied for formal admission, which they received in June 1927. Installed in July at Asilomer, California, the chapter then held its local installation services at Wittenberg over three days, October 20-22, at their house at 630 N. Fountain. After the final service, on Saturday, October 22, they headed downtown to a closing reception at the Hotel Shawnee. They were led that year by Miss Helen Harris (president), Miss Christine LeFevre (vice president), Miss Mary Ellen Westenberger (secretary), Miss Margaret Menges (treasurer), Miss Edna Kurzen (chaplain), and Jeannette Rambo (sergeant-at-arms).

The same week, the ladies of Alpha Delta Pi, formerly of 45 E. Ward, obtained a larger home for themselves at 1019 N. Fountain, a house with sixteen “spacious rooms” and “beautiful fireplaces.” Alpha Delta Pi was one of the nation’s oldest sororities, dating to antebellum days, and the Wittenberg chapter had been chartered in 1913. Their officers in 1927 were Miss Eva Ross (president), Mrs. Leon Kling (vice president), Miss Ruth Walker (secretary), and Miss Elizabeth Astors (treasurer). They and their fellow members took possession of the house on November 1.

A third event may seem at first obscure. On Thursday of that week, and women of Ferncliff Hall (the historic ladies’ dormitory) held an informal tea. This event might have escaped general notice, save for the guest of honor, Miss Margaret Washburn of Vassar College. Who was Margaret Washburn, and what was she doing at Wittenberg in 1927? You will have to read the next installment to find out. :)

Sources: *Springfield Daily News*, October 16-22, 1927

