AN ALPHA OMICRON PI HOUSE FOR THE
UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA
at
MISSOULA, MONTANA

Part 1
Undergraduate Thesis in Architectural Design

by
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INTRODUCTION

In fulfilling the requirements for a Bachelor of Architecture degree at Montana State University, I submit this thesis, a proposal for a new Alpha Omicron Pi Sorority house at the University of Montana in Missoula, Montana.

This paper constitutes a complete program for the Alpha Omicron Pi Sorority house, similar to what would be compiled by an architect if he were to design the house.

The solution of problems and the design of the building will be done during the design portion of the thesis.
Need for new facilities
CONDITIONS CREATING A NEED

On January 2, 1897, four young women at Barnard College of Columbia University in New York founded the Alpha Omicron Pi Sorority. Since that time, Alpha Omicron Pi has shown a very healthy growth; and today in the United States and Canada there are eighty chapters. Active membership exceeds 40,000, and there are 172 alumni chapters and clubs.

Alpha Omicron Pi started a colony at the University of Montana at the start of rush, September 22, 1964. Shortly before this time, the local alumnae pledged seven upper class girls who were to help with the upcoming rush week. The membership after rush week was only twenty girls, but this was a start. On April 11, 1965, the colony at the University of Montana was installed as the 77th National Chapter. At present there is a membership of 52 girls.

The present home of the Alpha Omicron Pi chapter is one wing on the top floor of Knowles Hall, a new women's residence on the University of Montana campus. There are two girls per room with a total of fourteen rooms and a lounge. The eating facilities are at the Lodge dining room across the street from the dormitory.

Although Knowles Hall is only two years old, it does not, nor can it ever, offer the facilities and environment which are needed in a sorority house. Alpha Omicron Pi is a social sorority, and some of the goals and objectives of a social sorority lose their meaning if the girls do not actually
feel that they are part of a special, individual group. A great deal of the prestige, inspiration, ego, spirit, dedication, etc., are dependent on the actual physical facilities. These facilities should be unique.

The social life of a sorority girl depends a great deal on her actual environment. Teas and exchange dinners are impossible in the present facilities. Serenades become quite cumbersome when there are 200 extra girls who are merely bystanders. The pledge duties cannot be carried out without a "house". Other house rules, such as those in the dining room, can't be enforced in a public dining room.

The environment of a sorority house must offer the girl more than a dormitory can. She is attracted to a sorority for this reason above all others. The traditional recreation room and chapter room are not included in the dorm facilities. The living room should have warmth; it should make one want to be there. The food is generally much better in a sorority because it is prepared for a small number of people.

Perhaps most important is the fact that the members of the Alpha Omicron Pi Sorority cannot identify themselves with a chapter house. Without having an actual chapter house, the sorority does not have as much feeling or meaning. A sorority is a unique organization; and because of this, it must have a unique physical plant.

The environment of a sorority will either help or hinder the rush program. In order to establish an effective rush program, a sorority must have something to offer the rushee. Since the Alpha Omicron Pi sorority is new and has
not been on the University campus long enough to establish a reputation of any consequence, there is very little to attract a freshman girl to the sorority. Starting a new sorority on a campus where there are already long established sororities, and expecting this sorority to be a good one, is expecting a great deal. Doing this with the present facilities may be an extremely difficult handicap; and if it continues for an extended period of time, the sorority may be in an unfavorable social position. Once a reputation is established in a social organization, it is very hard to alter or extirpate it. Offering the rushee a new and very appealing facility will do much to overcome the handicap the sorority faces.

Since the present facilities are inadequate to fulfill the physical and psychological requirements of a sorority, it is quite evident that a new facility is needed as soon as possible.
Local conditions
LOCAL CONDITIONS

Climatic

Missoula is located between two mountain ranges: the Continental Divide, 60 to 80 miles to the east, and the Bitterroot Range, 20 miles to the southwest. The climate of Missoula is effected greatly by these two ranges.

During the spring and summer months, the prevailing flow of air aloft is from the west and southwest, and from the west and northwest during the winter months. The passage of air over the Bitterroot Range causes it to lose much of its moisture on the western slope of these mountains. This is one reason Missoula gets only 12-15 inches of precipitation annually, giving it a semi-arid climate.

During the winter, the Continental Divide shields the Missoula area from much of the severely cold air which sweeps down from the arctic regions to the north. Sometimes the cold air sweeps over the Continental Divide, causing blizzards in the Missoula area. Cold air often becomes trapped in the western valleys and results in prolonged cold spells.

Sunshine in the winter months is limited to about 30% of the possible amount. Throughout the year, 53% of possible sunshine occurs. July has 80%, while December has only 26%. There are an average of 75 clear days, 83 partly cloudy days, and 207 cloudy days. Heavy fog occurs in the Missoula area an average of 28 days per year.
The spring months are generally cool and wet. Almost daily showers occur in May and June when the average rainfall is two inches each month. During the summer and fall, the days are usually clear and warm, but are occasionally interrupted by afternoon showers.

The growing season is about 137 days, with the last spring freeze in mid-May. Summer is usually dry with temperatures seldom reaching 100 degrees. Minimum temperatures are around 50 degrees during July and August. Temperatures above 90 degrees occur about 18 days a year, and temperatures less than zero occur 13 days during a normal year. January is the coldest month with an average temperature of 21.6 degrees.

Average relative humidity ranges from 83% at 5:00 A.M. to 54% at 5:00 P.M.

Geographical

Missoula is located in the heart of the Montana Rocky Mountains, latitude 46° 52' North, longitude 114° 5' West, at an altitude of 3218 feet. It is called the hub of five great mountain valleys: Bitterroot, Blackfoot, Frenchtown, Clark Fork, and Lower Flathead.

The metropolitan population is 50,200, and the population in the primary trade area is 90,500.

Travel routes in Western Montana converge on Missoula. U. S. Highways 10, 12, 20 and 93 pass through Missoula. Three bus lines serve the area: Greyhound, Intermountain Lines, and Northern Pacific Transport.
Northwest Airline, and Northern Pacific and Milwaukee Road railroads serve the city. The Blackfoot, Bitterroot, and Clark Fork rivers all converge near Missoula.

The Missoula area offers a wide variety of recreation. The geography of this area provides opportunity for hiking, horseback riding, camping, waterskiing, fishing, boating, golf, skiing, hunting, and others. There are two ski runs, three golf courses, two playgrounds, eighteen parks and picnic areas, seven tennis courts, fifteen ball fields, and a swimming pool.

The main campus of the University of Montana is one a site of 116 acres on the east side of Missoula. It is bordered by the Black Fork River on the north, Mount Sentinel to the east, and a Missoula residential district to the west and south. Several blocks south of the main campus is a 154 acre site containing married student housing and a nine hole golf course.

Economic

Large stands of timber surround Missoula and provide a large share of the economic base for the city. Missoula is one of the largest lumbering and forest products centers in the Northwest. Tourism, agriculture, feed mills, livestock, mining, and manufacturing are major industries.

Federal land grants, made available during Montana's territorial years, were allocated to the University when it was founded. Today the main support comes from biennial legislative appropriations and from student fees. Student fees amount to $360 per year for a state resident and $996.50 for an out of state resident.
In 1806, Captain Lewis of the Lewis and Clark Expedition camped across the river from the present University. The expedition opened the way for trappers and traders. Indian wars and vigilante action were prevalent in this area during its early growth. In 1860, the first village was started and it was called Hell's Gate. Thereafter, Missoula's growth continued; and in 1869, the first newspaper was established and the first school was opened. In 1895 the "City of Missoula" was incorporated.

The University of Montana was chartered February 17, 1893, by the Third Legislative Assembly of Montana. In 1895, there was a student enrollment of fifty and a faculty of seven. In 1899, the main campus was established at the mouth of the Hellgate Canyon. Today the campus community includes more than 6,000 students and a faculty of 300 full-time instructors.

In 1909, Kappa Alpha Theta and Kappa Gamma became the first two sororities on the University of Montana campus. Delta Gamma was founded in 1911, Alpha Phi in 1918, Sigma Kappa in 1924, and Delta Delta Delta in 1926. Alpha Omicron Pi was founded in 1964.

Social

The University of Montana is a liberal arts school. The College of Arts and Science is the main instructional unit at the University. There are twenty-one departments in this unit with curricula in the life sciences,
physical sciences, social sciences, humanities, and applied arts and sciences. Also, at the University are seven professional schools: Business Administration, Education, Forestry, Law, Journalism, Pharmacy, and the Fine Arts. The school also has an extensive graduate program.

The University has developed a fine arts program in music, drama, and art. The music department schedules weekly recitals, frequent concerts, and ensembles, choir, and orchestra programs. The drama department produces contemporary plays, experimental drama, and children's theatre programs. The art department displays student and faculty work. Also, guest lecturers and performers visit the campus and attract large audiences.

Recreation and sports play an important role at the University of Montana. The school is an active member of the Big Sky Conference. Intramural programs in many sports are popular for both sexes.

The Greek system at the University is a strong social influence. There are seven sororities, ten fraternities, and one fraternity colony; the school has applications to start one more sorority and one more fraternity. At present, sorority membership numbers 476, which is 25% of the total university women. Of the 476 girls, 260 live in sorority houses. Fraternity membership is 607; however, this is only 13% of the total male enrollment.

Even though the sorority has a very important role socially, it also stresses high Scholarship. Nightly study tables are common in many of
the sororities on the Missoula campus. As an example of comparative scholastic achievement, during winter quarter of 1967 the overall grade point average of all University women was 2.67, while the all sorority grade point average was 2.82 (data from the school registrar).  

A very short, but maudlin, summary of sorority life at the University of Montana is contained in the 1967 *Panhellenic Handbook*, "A Glimpse of Sorority Life."

"A sorority is a group of college women with common interests who live together during a major part of the university life in a closely knit organization. Its purpose is to provide an opportunity to build lasting friendship, to develop effective study habits, to encourage leadership and responsibility, and acquire proper etiquette and social skills. Endless work done by alumnae, officers, members, and pledges perpetuate its existence.

"The pledging period enables you to learn about the sorority. A pledge is usually required to put in a certain amount of study table hours, to attend weekly pledge meetings and to do certain house duties on Saturdays. As a pledge you choose a big sister in the sorority who is a shoulder to cry on during moments of disappointment and homesickness, as well as a friend who takes the place of an older sister during your "family" life in a sorority.

"Joining a sorority gives you a sense of belonging. The members of the group help you to adjust to college life more quickly by always being ready to understand and realize your problems. You learn to live with
others in harmony and to assume responsibility. Lifelong bonds of friendship are formed through sorority sisterhood. This closeness is shown in many ways -- working together on programs and projects, playing and laughing together, experiencing tears and disappointments together. Above all, a sorority encourages attainment of the highest scholarship."

Other indirect benefits are included in sorority life. The close relation with campus fraternities is one benefit. Many times the sorority will entertain a fraternity at a tea or coffee hour. Another function is the exchange dinner which occurs when half a sorority eats at a fraternity house and half the fraternity eats at the sorority house. A fireside is a date function which may be a dance or a costume party, etc., and can only be held in a large recreation room.
Site Conditions
SITE CONDITIONS

Orientation

The site for the Alpha Omicron Pi Sorority is located in the heart of the Greek district, four blocks from the edge of the University campus. Sorority and fraternity houses surround the site, which is 21,200 square feet, on all but one side. The site faces south on Daly Avenue in the block bordered on the east by Ronald and on the west by Gerald. The lot is 150 feet wide and 140 feet deep. (See area plan).

Adjacent Environment

To the west of the site is the Kappa Alpha Theta Sorority (photo #1), to the northwest is the Sigma Nu Fraternity (photo #8), and to the east is a private residence (photo #5). Across Daly Avenue is the Sigma Chi Fraternity (photo #3). Having no alley at the north of the site will create some problems of circulation. Service and parking will have to have access on Daly Avenue.

Vegetation

There is a boulevard at the front of the site which is twelve feet wide with six mature deciduous trees on twenty-four foot centers (photos 11 & 12). At the northwest corner of the site is a number of small deciduous trees (photo #6) and almost all of the north boundary is thickly lined with shrubs and trees as high as twenty feet (photo #7). The rest of the site is free from vegetation.
Building Codes

The city of Missoula follows the Uniform Building Code. This places the sorority house in an "A" Residential category. Being located in fire zone #2 requires a one hour fire rating throughout. The setback requirements are thirty feet at the front, twenty feet at the rear and seven and one-half feet at the sides. If the height of the building exceeds twenty two feet, the setback on the sides must be at least 1/3 of the building height. Building height must not exceed 40 feet. One off street parking space for every two occupants will require a great deal of space and will greatly effect the design and utilization of the site.

Topography

The topography of the site for all practical purposes can be considered flat. There are no natural features, outcroppings, etc. of any sort. The soil is typical of the Columbia Basin area, which consists of glacial and alluvial deposits. Topsoil and subsoil reach a depth of five feet, and below that is rock.

Availability of Utilities

Electricity, gas, and sewer lines run along the north edge of the site where a 15 foot easement is located. Water service is located along Daly Avenue.
Traffic Patterns

Daly Avenue is located one block north of University Avenue, which is a through street. One of the main arterials of the city, Higgins Avenue, is 1 1/2 blocks west of the site. Daly is not a through street; however, there is more traffic in this area than a comparable residential area because the concentration of people is larger. The traffic flow is far from excessive and is not a problem.
Function of the Building
FUNCTIONS OF THE BUILDING

A sorority house must provide all the functions of a normal house but on a grand scale. The Alpha Omicron Pi Sorority in Missoula will be designed to house fifty-four girls, their housemother, and a cook. Within the house they will eat, sleep, study, relax, clean, wash, and entertain.

The dining room is to be located on the main floor adjacent to the kitchen. It will have an average capacity of fifty-five persons, but there should be provision to expand enough to handle ninety people during special occasions such as "Rush." Storage is to be provided nearby for extra tables and chairs, linen, and silver service. Between the kitchen and dining room, will be two swinging doors or perhaps closable service windows. The floor material should be suitable for dancing.

The living room will be located adjacent to the main entrance. A fireplace and carpeted floor should be considered in the design of the living room. The possibility of locating the living room adjacent to the dining room should be investigated. This area will be used by guests and also by members of the sorority for entertainment, waiting and lounging.

There are several systems of arranging the sleeping facilities in a sorority house. The combination of the study room and the sleeping room is one way. When studying and sleeping are going on at the same time, problems are created. The light is bothersome to the person trying to sleep, and the bed is very tempting to the person trying to study. The system which
offers separate facilities for sleeping and studying is the one I have chosen. With this system there are study rooms for two or three girls and a separate sleeping space for as many as twenty-seven girls. The idea of having smaller dorms for six, eight, or ten girls will also be investigated. Several items should be considered: adequate ventilation to meet health codes, the use of obscure glass for privacy, electrical outlets must be provided for each bed (for electric blankets), and linen storage nearby.

The study rooms will house two and sometimes three girls. In the study rooms will be a desk four feet long and a closet dresser unit, preferably six feet long for each girl. One of the drawers in each desk will have a lock. There should be an easy chair or sofa in each room. Lighting for studying should be seventy footcandles and for applying makeup it should be fifty footcandles. Six feet of book shelves should be provided for each girl.

The bathrooms will be arranged so there can be movement from the study rooms and the dormitory to them without visual passage through the public areas. One tub for eighteen girls, one shower for six girls, one toilet for six girls, and one lavatory for four girls will be provided. Also included will be a bidet in each bathroom. Included in each bathroom will be a small cabinet space for each girl's personal items such as shampoo, toothbrush, etc. A towel storage and drying rack will also be included. Adequate lighting and mirrors are important here. Fifty footcandles is a minimum illumination level. A full length mirror should be located same-
where in the bath-study area. There will be two or more bathrooms in the
house depending on the room arrangement. There will be a bathroom for the
housemother, and a lavatory for the kitchen. It is possible that the guest
bathroom can be combined with the lavatory near the entrance.

The kitchen is a group of work centers that should be arranged for
proper adjacency depending on the direction and path of traffic. These
work centers are:

- Cook's area for heavy duty quantity cooking.
- Vegetable area for washing, peeling, and cutting of vegetables.
- Salad and dessert preparation.
- Bake shop for making pies, cakes, cookies and rolls.
- Dishwashing department, including glasses and silver.
- Pot and pan washing.
- Storerooms, dry and refrigerated.
- Garbage and trash rooms.

Each area may be more or less individualized depending on the load
it is designed to handle. In the case of the sorority house, the kitchen
could be broken down into storage, preparation, and the dishwashing areas.

The kitchen area will be located on the main floor near a service
entrance. A walk-in cooler of 40 square feet and a dry food storage of 100
square feet will be located near the entrance. On the kitchen areas will be
a large refrigerator-freezer, a wheeled table to move supplies, a meat cutting
area, a large range and hood, a steam cooker, a three compartment sink, flour and sugar bins, a glass filler, a storage space for silverware, dishes and glasses located near the dining area, and adequate kitchen supply storage.

Somewhere in the kitchen area will be a dishwashing area which will include dish tables of stainless steel, a scraping block, a disposal, a dishwasher, and a hand lavatory. This area will be adjacent to the dining room and near the dish storage. A breakfast-snack area, which is separate from the dining room, should be located in this area. A small lavatory for the cook and houseboy will also be in this area. Illumination levels in the kitchen should be fifty footcandles or more, preferably with warm white flourescents. Area will be approximately 960 square feet.

The chapter room should be located in the basement with a storage room alongside for storage of ritual paraphenalia, etc. This area of about 1000 square feet will be well ventilated. Perhaps this can double as a recreation room. The lights in this area should be connected to a rheostat so they may be dimmed. The public should not have clear access to this area.

The basement area will also contain a laundry with two washers, two dryers, a wash sink and several ironing boards; a trunk storage near the exit stairs; and possibly a TV room.

The sorority house will have a housemother living with the girls.
Her room should be located near the main entry and should have access to the study room-dormitory area without passing through a public area. In the housemother's quarters will be located a sitting room (living room), a bedroom, and a bath; which all may be small but convenient. The housemother's guests should have easy access to her room.

The cook's room should be in a reasonably quiet space preferably near the kitchen. Her room needs only a studio arrangement, a closet, and a bathroom.

A lounge or two should be provided near the study areas. This area will contain a small counter which would allow cooking popcorn, making coffee, etc. A space for coke, candy, and ice machines should also be provided.
Aesthetic Considerations
AESTHETIC CONSIDERATIONS

My philosophy of design is to combine the functional aspects with a concept of how I feel the building should appear. The degree of complexity of a building's functions will regulate the degree of complexity of the original concept. A building of a very simple functional nature may fit a precise concept exactly and also fulfill all of the functional needs. It would be very difficult to pre-conceive exactly a complex building and at the same time fulfill all of the functional requirements. If a concept and function were not worked out with consideration for each other, the final result would probably be a poor design.

The location of the site has a direct bearing on the aesthetics of the building. The site which we are working with will effect the proportions of height, width and depth of the building. We may be forced to go to two or three stories in height because of the size of the lot. The location of rooms in regard to egress will depend on the site, especially since there is no alley on the site. The surrounding environment must be considered in the design; however, the building's appearance is in no way determined by the existing structures. The building should compliment the area in which it is located.

The functions of a sorority house are not highly complex but they do exist. In general, each function of the sorority house requires a certain
volume. These volumes can be combined to form a rectangular mass or they can be made more interesting by breaking them into several masses.

The function of a sorority house as an entity should be weighed heavily when determining its aesthetics. The fact that it is a sorority house means it should have a residential character rather than an institutional character. The environment which is created should be more like a home or an apartment rather than like a residence hall. It should create a warm feeling through the use of materials, colors, and arrangement of space.

The selection of materials in the sorority house is a very important consideration. The use of wood because of its warm, rich character should be considered. The maintenance of wood may preclude extensive use except if weathering is desired, as in shakes. Stone is also a very warm and "earthy" material, but the cost of stone may be prohibitive if used in any great extent. Brick can be used readily because it requires no maintenance, and it is not extremely expensive. Through the proper selection of color, texture and bond, it offers many variations. Concrete may be used but because of its cold grey character, its use should be limited. Concrete, either plain or textured, can be very successful on a certain type of building, but I have chosen not to use it because I feel that is does not work well with my vague concept of how the building should feel. The use of concrete as a structural element is entirely practical. Copper could be used as a roofing material. Steel can be used as a structural material, and the use of sheet metal as a finish material should be investigated.
The selection of color is also an important decision. Warm stain colors - browns, greys, and tans - enrich the wood. The color of brick must be chosen to enhance the design and desired character of the building. Stone is inherently colored well; however, the type and color of stone must be chosen to complement the other materials. The total result of the building should be of a restful and serene nature rather than garish or flamboyant. The use of bright colors is not eliminated, but I feel they should be saved for the interior spaces and used with restraint. They should look like they belong. They should not distract from the spatial concept, but add to it.

The selection of materials and colors is a decision which will affect the entire success or failure of the building design. The arrangement and location of these materials are also important. A great deal of thought should precede any final decision on materials and color selection.

When considering the design of any type of a building, we automatically try to see what has been done in the past. What has seemed to work well? What has not worked well? We will benefit from the past. Considering the past design of sorority and fraternity houses, there has not been much ingenuity in the design and planning of these buildings. I think the colonial character of the older sororities is more successful than some of the contemporary styles because they look more like a home. I cannot allow myself to design a colonial style sorority house because I believe that a
contemporary style can be just as successful. There is good to be seen from the past, but we must be careful not to let this hamper creative thinking or ingenuity.
Economic Considerations
ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS

The Alpha Omicron Pi Sorority has already purchased the 140 x 150 foot lot. This was possible by a $35,000 loan from the National Alpha Omicron Pi headquarters, who will also handle the building loan.

The Marshall Evaluating Service classifies a sorority house as Class "A" construction. For Class "A" living or residential, the calculator estimating method puts cost at $20.80 per square foot. Using a rough square footage of 14,000 will mean a budget of $295,000. The building committee wants this figure to include site improvements and the architect's fee.

The Alpha Omicron Pi Sorority will be self-supporting and self-amortizing. Board and room will be about $288 per quarter. Out of this amount the loan and interest will be paid. There is a $100 initiation fee for members which goes to the building fund. Girls who live in Missoula will have to pay a "Parlor Fee" of $15 to $20 a quarter which will go toward the building fund.

The fact that the National Alpha Omicron Pi Chapter is so willing to loan the local chapter this money means that the sorority can build an adequate facility as soon as plans are drawn up.


3. Missoula Chamber of Commerce; Missoula, Montana.


5. Office of Information, University of Montana.


7. Missoula City Hall, Building Inspector.

8. Montana Power Company; Missoula, Montana.
At the completion of my thesis, I feel that I have come to the end of a very important part of my life. With this feeling is another feeling which makes me feel less sure of myself now, but much closer to the real discovery of architecture.

The design of a sorority house was a very interesting problem. I have never seen what I consider to be a satisfactory solution to this problem. My basic thought in my design process was to create a house which gave each girl a feeling of individuality and yet at the same time being a part of an organization. To me the concept of having X rooms which are exactly the same except for color is the basic fault of the majority of sorority houses which I have seen. Each quarter the occupants of the sorority change rooms and roommates. Moving into a room the same as the one just moved from has a negative feeling.

The choice of structure was based on a simple idea that the structure would be the finished building. After the reinforced masonry is laid, nothing is added. After the structural concrete floors are poured there is nothing further to do except lay the carpet or tile the bathrooms. Non-structural partitions will be studs with sheetrock, which will add a subtle contrast to the masonry structural elements.

In my thesis I have stated, "study rooms for two or three girls." I have study rooms for four girls but have tried to locate the study desks in such a way as to separate them from more than one other person. The feeling was that when someone wants to study and another wants to talk there are problems. I have also offered the girls two lounges in which
to study, read, type, talk, play cards or anything else they desire. Four
carrells along the planter-rail provide another study area.

The design of this thesis was perhaps the most rewarding design that I
have done but it does not satisfy me. Each step toward the final solution
left me with a very humble attitude toward architecture. My design process
is fundamentally the same as it has been for several years, however, those
things which I can now accept are much more limited than they have ever
been. Only in the last year have I begun to find out what architecture
really is, and I am sorry that it did not come sooner. I do realize that
the feeling I now have toward architecture is something that many architects
do not have and will never have. This feeling gives me great hunger for
good architecture and is what you might call my driving spirit. I know
that I am on the edge of a great personal discovery. For me this is just
the beginning of my architectural life.