

LOUISIANA STATE CHAPTER ACACIA FRATERNITY  
by  
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In 1904, fourteen Master Mason-Students at the University of Michigan banded together to form a social fraternity based upon the principles of Freemasonry.

Membership was restricted to Master Masons in good standing.

In lieu of the traditional Greek letter names, these Brethren chose to name their fraternity ACACIA, a very hardy Eastern evergreen symbolising immortality. We, of course, are familiar with the significance of the SPRIG OF ACACIA. The ACACIA fraternity is the only social fraternity that does not bear the Greek letter names.

The ACACIA CREED, recited at all formal chapter meetings is:  
To strengthen the ties of friendship one with another; to prepare ourselves as educated men to take a more active part and have greater influence in the affairs of the community in which we may reside; above all to seek the Truth, and knowing it, to give Light to those with whom we may be associated as we travel along life's pathway.

Its initiation consists of three degrees. The HIRAM ABIF of the ACACIA FRATERNITY is PYTHAGORAS, the ancient Greek philosopher, who developed some basic principles of mathematics and the harmony of spheres and a significant theorem in geometry. It is in the role of PYTHAGORAS that the candidate for membership in ACACIA assumes the obligation in the third degree of its ritual.

As mentioned above, initial membership was limited to Master Masons. In those days the average age of college students was much older than it is today. With the return of younger WWI veterans and also in later years, it has been necessary for the fraternity to amend its membership requirements. The following changes were made:

1. To include sons of Master Masons.
2. To include brothers of Master Masons.
3. To include brothers and sons of Acacia Alumni.
4. To include any student recommended by two Master Masons.

An earlier prohibition contained in the National Bylaws was the "adherence clause" which denied membership to anyone who professed a faith that "prohibited membership in the Masonic Order."

As a result of Federal Law and University policies, none of the restrictions remain today.

The initial effort to bring ACACIA to Louisiana State University was in 1949, with the organization of a Colony. With the demands of the Korean Conflict, the Colony was not successful.

In 1955, a group of young members of the Istrouma Chapter of DeMolay sought to continue their Masonic ties and approached Dr. John A. Hunter, 33°, Dean of the Junior Division, and later to become President of the LSU campus. Dr. Hunter contacted Roy Clark, Executive Secretary of Acacia National, and the young DeMolays were recognized as an official ACACIA COLONY.

On February 11, 1956, the LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY CHAPTER OF ACACIA became the 52nd chapter of ACACIA, with the initiation of twenty students and three charter alumni members.

Dr. Hunter, a member of the Baton Rouge Valley of the Scottish Rite sought the assistance of Ill.: J.Y. Sanders, Jr., 33°, and Deputy to the Supreme Counsel. As a result, Ill.: Walter R. McElroy, Venerable Master of the Lodge of Perfection, Baton Rouge Valley, appointed a committee to assist the new chapter.

The most urgent need was funds for a chapter house on the LSU campus.

At the 1956 Communication of the Grand Lodge of Louisiana, Dr. Hunter, Thomas D. Cox, Chapter President, and your writer, addressed the Grand Lodge, stressing the aims and purposes of the ACACIA FRATERNITY, and the need for a chapter house. Accordingly, the Grand Lodge authorized the solicitation of funds from the constituent lodges. Ill.: D. Allen Long, 33° incoming Grand Master adopted the drive for such funds as his project for the year. The drive resulted in the raising of \$75,000.00. A new house for thirty residents at a cost of \$125,000.00 was constructed. M:W: Elmer I. Gipson laid the cornerstone. This house was sold to another fraternity in 1967 and a new fifty-man house, at a cost of \$225,000.00, was constructed on the lake and occupied in 1969. M: W: T. Scott Strickland laid its cornerstone.

To receive the contributed funds and to hold and manage the real estate for the fraternity, the ACACIA FOUNDATION OF LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY, INC., was incorporated as a Louisiana non-profit corporation. The original members appointed by the Venerable Master together with several prominent Master Masons of the LSU faculty and staff were also included on its original Board of Directors. These latter members included the Vice-President for Financial Affairs, the Dean of the College of Social Work, the Dean of the Department of Agronomy, the Director of Food Services, and the Director of Extension Services of the College of Agriculture. Because of his position on the campus and the possible appearance of favoritism, Dr. Hunter elected not to become an official member of the Board, although he continued to render valuable assistance and a keen interest in Acacia throughout his remaining tenure at LSU.

To insure that the funds contributed by the Master Masons of Louisiana would be supervised and spent for the purposes they were donated, the By-laws of the FOUNDATION required that its members be Master Masons in good standing. This requirement remained in effect for over twenty-five years.

**It** is interesting to note that from the very beginning, there were only two ACACIA alumni in the Baton Rouge area, one from the Washington Chapter and the other from the Michigan Chapter.

Four of the charter members of the Foundation were alumni of other social fraternities and could not be initiated into ACACIA. Nonetheless they continued to serve on the Foundation Board (commonly referred to as the "House Board.")

After twenty-five years, these non-Acacia Masonic members of the House Board resigned so their places on the Board could be filled by LSU Chapter alumni. It was deemed that these Masonic Brethren had served the purposes for which they were originally appointed and it was time for the younger generation to assume their place in the scheme of ACACIA.

This fall (1999) the LSU Chapter of ACACIA will initiate its thirteen hundredth (1,300) member. Historically the chapter has been one of the largest fraternities on the LSU campus. Its academic standing among fraternities has generally ranged in the top one-third. Its members have consistently held responsible elected positions among the University Colleges and campus organizations. The present Foundation's President and the Chapter Advisor are members of the Craft.

I would be remiss not to mention that the LSU Chapter, as had most of other fraternities on the LSU campus, had over the past had its ups and downs.

One has only to follow local and national media to observe the actions of a number of fraternities that have brought discredit to their respective fraternity in particular and to the fraternity system as a whole through their hazing and alcoholic abuses. Fortunately, the LSU Chapter has not been one of them.

It appears to the writer that the LSU Chapter is showing great promise for the future. With the incoming pledge class, the active Chapter roster should again approach one hundred.