

North San Diego County Alumnae Chapter

Heritage & Archives
Historical Moments

June 8, 2019

Patricia P Watson Ed.D.
Chair

June's historical Moment
pays tribute to

Founder Bertha Adine Pitts Campbell

The Founder that we knew...

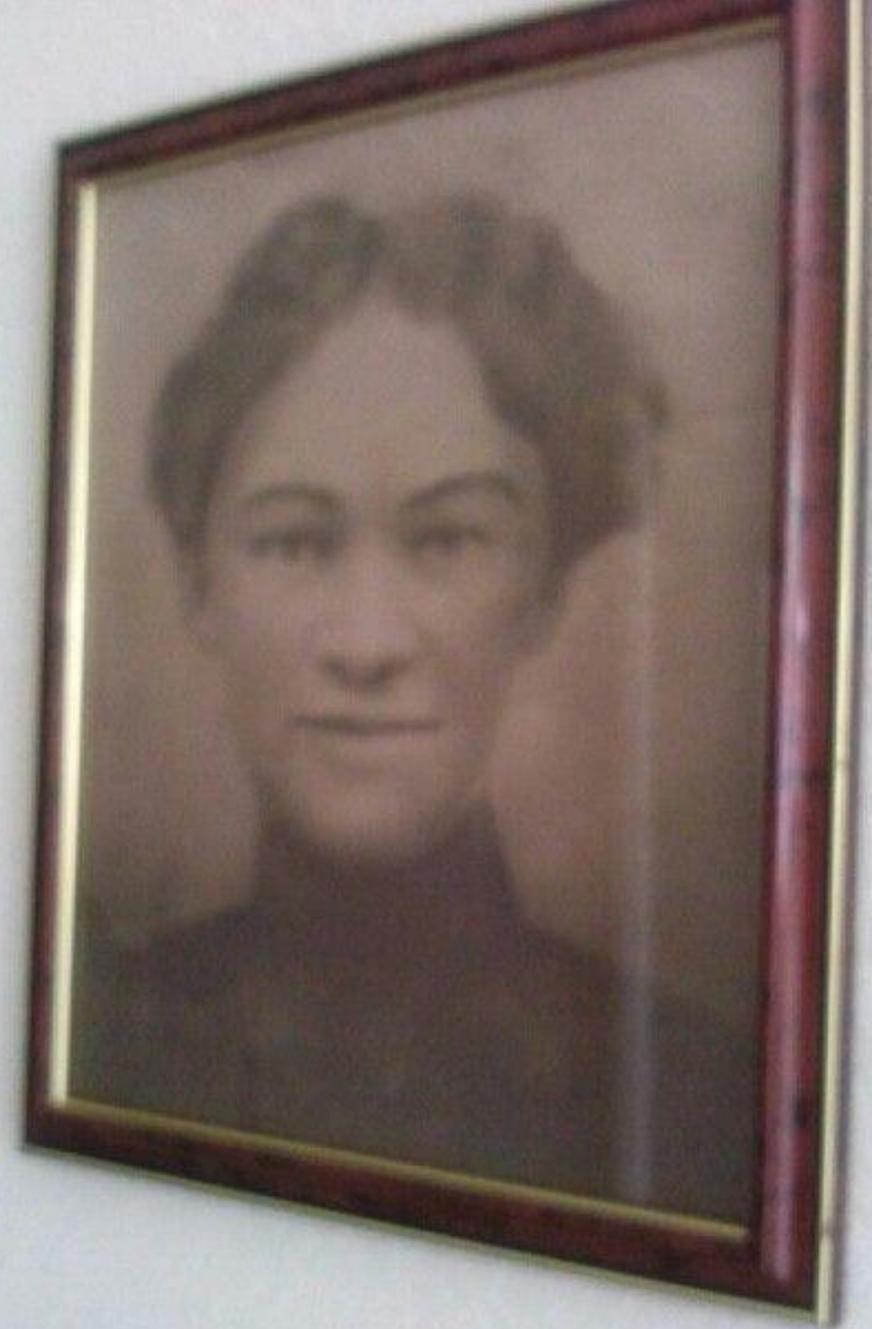
Early Life and Education

- In the late 1800's the economy in Winfield, Kansas was weakened by a nationally depressed economy. This may have factored in the reasoning of Ida and Hubbard Pitts to move from Kansas to Colorado with two other children, Charles and Minnie, shortly after Bertha Pitts was born in 1889. This move, led to a very close relationship between Bertha Pitts and her maternal grandmother, Eliza Butler.
- Eliza had a profound impact on young Bertha because she was among the first generation of Blacks who knew both slavery and freedom. She taught Bertha that 'education is the gateway to everything', and young Bertha took those words seriously!



Howard University

- As Colorado did not even register births until 1908, there was no mandatory requirement that children attend school at a certain age.
- However, realizing that her grand daughter was highly intelligent, Eliza Butler navigated her educational experiences. Eventually, all of Montrose would come to know of Pitts' intellect.
- She was the only Black student enrolled in Montrose High School (Montrose, Colorado) when she delivered the Valedictorian Address to the Class of 1908. Upon graduation she was offered a four-year scholarship to Colorado College. Campbell declined the scholarship and chose instead to enroll in Howard University in Washington, D.C. in 1908 after receiving financial support from the Montrose Congregational Church



Alpha Kappa Alpha

Bertha Pitts was a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority and part of a group of 22 bold, courageous, ideological, gutsy, risk taking women willing to defy the convention of the time and the restrictive roles prescribed to women.

The twenty-two were dismayed at the lack of progress of Alpha Kappa Alpha to move beyond its function of orchestrating the affairs of campus society at Howard and wanted to reorganize the sorority to address higher purposes, like public service and women's advancement.



Delta Sigma Theta

- The new initiates wanted to establish a national organization, enlarge the scope of the sorority's activities, and change the sorority's name to reflect a true purpose. They felt Alpha Kappa Alpha was solely a female derivative of the Beta Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity with no individual meaning and were not "Greek distinctive" letters. They also wanted to change the symbols, change the sorority colors, and be more politically oriented. In 1912, these 22 undergraduates voted to change the organization's name to Delta Sigma Theta

Delta = CHANGE



Δ is used to show an incremental change in a variable

Σ indicates the summation of all the numbers indicated

Θ is used in trigonometry to show an unknown angle

CHANGE ALL ANGLES

- When 22 members of Alpha Kappa Alpha made the decision to form a new organization, their first attempt was to try to make changes within the sorority to which they already belonged. They wanted to expand the mission of AKA, incorporate, become a legal entity and expand beyond the walls of Howard University.
- As young, Black women earning a college education, they must have heard and took to heart W.E.B. DuBois's stance that the talented tenth (the one in ten Blacks earning a college degree) be more politically responsible to the needs of the African American community.

A New Direction

This new name was to reflect the group's desire to change the direction of the group and the philosophical underpinnings. The 22 undergraduate Alpha Chapter students sought to move towards social activism and greater public service, rather than continue to focus on social activities. According to Delta Sigma Theta's historian Paula Giddings, the twenty-two young women were concerned that since Alpha Kappa Alpha was not incorporated, there was no "legal entity". Since there was no charter, there was no authority to form other chapters, thus limiting their ability to enlarge the scope of activity."

A Different Kind of Organization

Had the 22 simply decided to just accept the ideological changes, the Sorority probably would have broadened its stance and become more politically active, but, they didn't stop there--- they wanted to change the colors, the motto, the flower and the NAME to reflect their passion and intent on presenting a different kind of organization.

They wanted to CHANGE ALL ANGLES.....

Bertha Pitts Campbell -
3rd row, 4th from the left



We had ***BROADER*** views. We wanted to ***REACH OUT*** in the community. We wanted to be ***MORE THAN*** just a social group.

Founder Bertha Pitts Campbell

Delta Sigma Theta

On January 13,
1913 Delta Sigma
was chartered on
the campus of
Howard University



Activism

- 1st Act of the newly formed Delta Sigma Theta was to participate on a march for women's suffrage in 1913.



Graduate

In June of 1913,
Bertha Pitts graduated
Cum Laude from
Howard University
with a Bachelor of Arts
Degree in Education.



Family Life

Upon finishing Howard in 1913 she went to Topeka, Kansas to teach for a year, then returned to Howard University to work in the dormitory with the Dean of Women. After working there for a year she returned to Colorado and married Earl Allen Campbell in 1917. They were in Colorado for about six or seven years, before moving to Seattle in 1923. Earl Sr. was a railroad man, but wanted to do something else, so they moved to Seattle looking for work. Earl Sr. did different types of jobs for about four years until he was able to get into government service at the Immigration Station.



Alpha Omicron Chapter- now Seattle Alumnae

- In 1923 Soror Campbell was instrumental in forming the Alpha Omicron (now Seattle Alumnae)Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority in Seattle, Washington.
- Soror Campbell also found time to volunteer in the community, helping to organize the Seattle Urban League in the early 1930s and served on its first board. She worked with the Phillis Wheatley branch of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) on 21st Street before the present East Cherry Branch was established.

Accomplishments

In 1936, Bertha Pitts Campbell became the first Black woman ever to exercise the right to vote on the local YWCA board and served four terms as chairperson of the newly established East Cherry Branch. In 1942, she and a group of women from the Council of Churches formed the Christian Friends for Racial Equality. This group worked to expand housing and other opportunities for Blacks until it disbanded in 1965



Great Sadness...

In 1951, their son Earl Jr. (age 33) was killed in a Seattle Shipyard accident. Three years later, Earl Sr. died of heart attack in 1954. When asked how she endured such losses Soror Campbell reflected” I’ve had great happiness and great sadness in Seattle; but I’ve enjoyed my life here and I keep hanging on to Delta work.”

She reportedly stated that “she would not have had nearly so contented and happy a life had she not been involved so extensively in volunteer work. It is the service we render that makes us happy”.

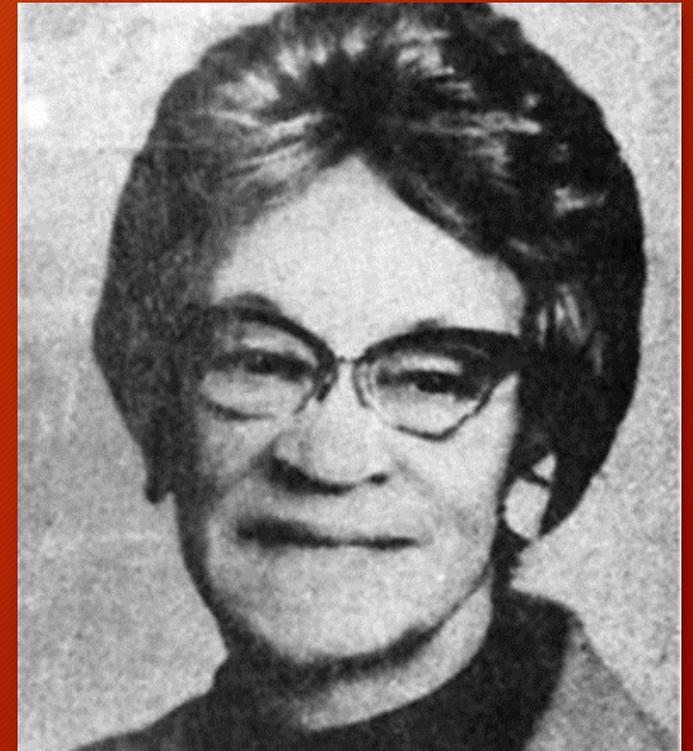
March on Washington Re-enactment

At age 92, Campbell led 10,000 members of Delta Sigma Theta sorority in a march down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C. to commemorate the participation of the organization in the suffrage march of 1913. The Washington State House of Representatives honored her for her life and work on May 11, 1987. The following month, Seattle proclaimed June 13, 1987, as Bertha Pitts Campbell Day.



Legacy!

Today, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. is the largest predominately African-American Greek lettered sorority, with more than 300,000 initiated, mostly college-educated women. The sorority currently has over 940 chapters located in the Bahamas, Bermuda, Canada, England, Germany, Jamaica, Japan, Liberia, South Korea, and the United States. Delta Sigma Theta has NGO status and is a member of multiple umbrella organizations, including the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) - an organization of nine international Greek-letter sororities and fraternities - as well as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW).



DELTA 50TH ANNIVERSARY FETE



Founders Oecola Adams and Elizabeth Young (r) listen, and Dr. Elizabeth Keenes sits with JFK at luncheon.



Founders Bertha P. Campbell (l) and Maria D. Hennings speak, while prey Noble, Vesp Lyndon Johnson and wife (r) cut anniversary cake.



Founders Winona Cargile Alexander and Bertha Pitts Campbell along with Past National President Mona Humphries Bailey in an issue of Jet Magazine from 1981



Soror Founders Winona Cargile Alexander, Bertha Pitts Campbell, Zephyr Chisom Carter and Osceola McCarthy Adams



Soror Founder Winona Cargile Alexander, 17th National President Soror Mona Humphries Bailey, 1st Executive Director of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Soror Patricia Roberts Harris, 12th National President Soror Jeanne Noble, Soror Founder Bertha Pitts Campbell, 10th National President Soror Dorothy Height and 15th National President Lillian P. Benbow

Rose Bowl Parade

- Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. is the oldest Black Greek letter organization to ever participate in the Rose Parade in its 124-year history. The parade's theme was "Oh the Places You'll Go!" named in honor of the Dr. Seuss book.

Delta's awe-inspiring float's theme, "Transforming Communities through Sisterhood & Service," was a highlight at the 124th Rose Parade on Tuesday, Jan. 1, 2013, in Pasadena, Calif. It's sculptured globe highlighted with a spectacular floral tribute emphasized Delta Sigma Theta's commitment to humanitarian efforts worldwide and a rotating hexagon, with six magnificently detailed florals took center stage and highlighted Delta's Five-Point Programmatic Thrust program: Economic Development, Educational Development, International Awareness and Involvement, Physical and Mental Health, and Political Awareness and Involvement.



The sorority reached a centennial year by being the first Black Greek-lettered organization to participate in the Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, California on January 1, 2013, with a float entitled "Transforming Communities through Sisterhood and Service."

Reflections....

- It was an unbelievable experience to go to a sorority meeting and there sat one of the 22 Founders of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority! It never dawned on me before I came out here how impactful that was going to be for me to go to a regular sorority meeting and see a Founder sitting there. It was unbelievable! I don't think that I stopped hugging her that afternoon and I never let go from that day forward.
- She was regarded as the one who had all the knowledge about our sorority and was revered as a Founder. She worked very hard on committees and fundraisers. Anything the sorority wanted her to do locally or anything that needed to be done she got involved. We would organize clothing and book drives, partner with other organizations like the NAACP or Urban League and we had Teen Lift which was a National initiative....

Mona Humphries Bailey, 17th National President

Soror Bertha Adine Pitts Campbell...Founder.

- C- courageous
- A- attentive
- M- magnificent
- P- powerful
- B- bold
- E- energetic
- L- loyal
- L- lady

We will always treasure you and the
role you played in changing the world
through Delta Sigma Theta!



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