



PHI GAMMA DELTA

BUILDING COURAGEOUS LEADERS

How the Norris Pig Dinner Began

In 1893, the first of the famous Pig Dinners, dedicated to **Frank Norris (California 1894)**, was celebrated at the University of California, as in the case of Charles Lamb's account of the discovery of roast pig, our most popular annual barbecue originated in incidents which at the time seemed quite accidental and the trivial. Years later when the custom was established in every chapter, innumerable conflicting legends seem to have sprung up concerning its origin. What happened on that memorable occasion in 1893 was related in detailed by participant, **Ralph L. Hathorn (California 1893)**, at the 67th Ekklesia banquet in 1915, and his version has been faithfully adhered to in this account:

At the Class Day exercise of the University of California in 1893, the dispensator, who was Ralph Hathorn, a loyal Fiji, took occasion to knock the Dekes and Betas who monopolized the glee club for the past year. The stunt consisted in bringing on the platform barred labeled "U. of C. Glee Club," tied with a cord symbolic of the strange-hold established by these two rival societies/ out of this barrel, to complete the figure, tumbled a squealing pig. Some say the pig escaped and was pursued at this point by underclassmen Fijis with murderous intent. At any rate, that night the pig was incarcerated in the lower regions of the Fiji stronghold on Dana Street, while Frank Norris staged an elaborate ceremony worthy of the burnt offering. The date set was May 18 at 6 p.m., at which time 20 Fiji brothers foregathered at the banquet board and made the Delta Realm resound with, "All haul the pig!" Hathorn, as master of ceremonies, then called upon every member present to renew his bond of allegiance, fidelity, and alliance, and to seal his vow on bended knee by the solemn ordeal of kissing the pig's snout.

After the banquet...at the break of dawn Frank Norris was inspired to propose that they perpetuate the memory of the occasion by a perennial alumni-chapter pig dinner and rally.

"These Fiji dinners occurred annually on the night before the big game and were always held at the Old Poodle Dog restaurant, then located on the southeastern corner of Sacramento and Dupont streets in San Francisco. This habit continued up to the time of the great fire in 1906. The dinners of the latter 1890's were limited to University of California Fijis of whom there were less than a hundred, not one of whom would have missed the dinner. While the heartiest of good fellowship reigned and cocktails and red wine were to be had at all times for the asking, there were no evidences of over-indulgence to be found at these dinners. We were there for a good time and we had it, but the morning found us ready for the big game rally and all the excitement attendant upon this annual event. That was the Fiji attitude of those days.

After the untimely death of Frank Norris in 1902, it was most fitting that this annual festivity should be dedicated to him and that the custom should be known thereafter in all Fijidom as the "Norris Pig Dinner."

*From **The History of Phi Gamma Delta, Tomos Beta**, with excerpts from "Frank Norris In His Chapter" by Wallace W. Everett (California 1897), **The Phi Gamma Delta**, Vol. 52, No. 6, April 1930, pp. 560-566.*