



# PHI GAMMA DELTA

## HISTORY OF PIG DINNER

In the nineteenth century, “Class Day” was a public student exhibition featuring orations by chosen seniors, among other entertainment. At the class day exercises of the University of California in 1893, the dispensator was brother **Ralph L. Hathorn (California 1893)**. He took occasion to rap the Delta Kappa Epsilon and Beta Theta Pi fraternities for monopolizing campus activities, particularly the “glee club.” Glee clubs provided musical entertainment and school spirit - part chorus, part cheerleading section. In the days before phonographs or radio, they were an important and popular campus activity.

Hathorn’s stunt consisted in bringing on the platform a barrel labeled “U. of C. Glee Club,” tied with a cord symbolic of the strangle-hold established by these two rival societies. Out of this barrel tumbled a squealing pig - a commentary on the Dekes’ and Betas’ singing ability.

Some say the pig escaped and was pursued by Fijis with murderous intent. At any rate, that night the suckling pig was incarcerated at the chapter house on Dana Street in Berkeley. **Frank Norris (1894)** wrote an elaborate mock ceremony. On May 18 at 6 P.M., twenty Fijis made the Delta realm resound with “All Hail 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 the 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 graduate chapter pig dinner and rally.

These Fiji dinners occurred annually the night before Thanksgiving and the Stanford vs. California football games. They were always held at the Old Poodle Dog restaurant on the southeastern corner of Bush and Grant streets, San Francisco. **Wallace Everett (California 1897)** wrote, “This habit continued up to the time of the great fire in 1906... 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.”

“An Exile’s Toast” was read at the November 28, 1900 dinner. Frank Norris sent his poem from far away New Jersey in response to the graduate chapter’s invitation, which was signed “The Committee.” Thirty-two brothers attended, including Section Chief **Edward Selfridge (California 1894)** and Frank’s brother **Charles (California 1896)**. Hathorn was toastmaster for the event, and almost everyone in attendance knew Frank Norris personally.

Interestingly, some business occurred amidst the fellowship. **C. B. Lamont (Cornell 1900)** wrote to The Phi Gamma Delta, “During the course of the toasts the subject of a chapter at Stanford was brought up and very actively discussed... A committee was chosen at the banquet to look into the subject ...”. Lambda Deuteron Chapter was finally re-chartered two years later.

Frank Norris died in 1902. He was a nationally known author, having published several highly regarded novels and short stories. Fittingly, the annual Pig Dinner festivity was dedicated to him and began to spread across the Fraternity. In early 1903, pig dinners were held at Denison, Wabash, and Indiana; the latter wrote in the magazine, “our dinner... surpassed all previous gatherings. It was simply great... Resolve to give a pig dinner before the close of the year. We guarantee that you will repeat it next year.” Within a few years, almost every chapter had adopted the event.

From this small dinner of those days when Delta Xi had less than fifty members on its roster, has come the Norris Dinner for all Fijiland. This is significant to symbolize the spiritual ideal of good fellowship in the Fraternity, so perfectly exemplified in brother Frank B. Norris.

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 Volume 52 No. 6, April 1930, pp.560-566.