

For just a moment, step back in time and envision two young girls engaged in thoughtful conversation, walking slowly across the small campus of Monmouth College in central Illinois. What do you suppose they might have been talking about? As the story goes, they stepped onto a little bridge spanning across a small stream on campus and stopped to carry on their discussion. From this conversation, Kappa Kappa Gamma was born. Those two initial Founders, and four others who joined them, were leaders striving to set the standards of academic excellence and friendship for women on their campus. Every October, we take time to celebrate, honor and give thanks for these six women whose vision and pioneering spirit founded Kappa Kappa Gamma.

Our Founders surely had no idea how much influence they would have on the thousands of Kappas who would follow them in the ensuing 152 years. Throughout our history, thanks to the bold footsteps of our Founders, Kappa has been on the forefront of changing social, political, and economic times.

At the turn of the century, many Kappas were involved in the suffrage movement, helping to found the League of Women Voters, walking in protests and even participating in hunger strikes. During WWII, Kappa took an active part in the war effort by opening Kappa Service Women's Centers that were staffed by 1,200 Kappas throughout the states and assisting more than 225,000 women during this difficult time.

During the turbulent '60s and early '70s, the purpose and need for Greek-letter organizations were under attack on many fronts while at the same time women fought for equal rights and equal pay, Black Americans fought against racial disparity, and pacifists rebelled against the Vietnam War. Kappa's leadership held its membership together at a time when misunderstandings and emotions ran high by strengthening relationships with university administrations through honest communication, listening to its members and bolstering alumna support to chapters.

Kappa continues to navigate social unrest on college campuses today across North America through impactful programming that addresses mental health and well-being, sexual assault and substance abuse as well as incorporating more inclusive practices around membership selection and retention. Our Founders' bold dreams and willingness to pursue them still resonates in our Kappa sisters today. Our members continue to courageously blaze trails and break barriers and stereotypes just like our Founders did when they walked into chapel.

Today, Kappa Kappa Gamma is **152 years old** and proudly claims **141** active chapters, **229** alumnae associations, and more than 314,000 initiated members since our founding in 1870. The Kappa Kappa Gamma Foundation has preserved our archives and provided over \$1.2 million in scholarships and more than \$240,000 in confidential aid this year. Furthermore, the Foundation continues to support the ongoing education of all members.

In the words of former Fraternity President Jean Hess Wells, *Georgia*: "Whatever the future may

hold, the Fraternity of Tomorrow will reflect the University of Tomorrow. For, by our very nature, we are inseparably bound to institutions of higher learning. Kappa will remain sensitive to the changes in these parent institutions and responsive to the needs of its members. For Kappa — as a vital, living organization — is ever-changing and ever-growing. We shall continue to seek the finest caliber of members within the spirit of friendship, to uphold the highest standards in social, moral and intellectual conduct and to promote excellence in all that we endeavor.”

We each carry with us the pioneering spirit of our Founders and of those who have come before us. Our lives become more significant when we commit ourselves to something that will live beyond us. Let us commit to making our mark on the living history of Kappa Kappa Gamma and continue to lead with integrity, cherish our sisterhood, and seek to live up to all that is fine in life and thought and character. Happy Founders Day!

*Written by Denise Rugani, UC Davis, Ritual and History Director.*