

Historically Speaking

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Were the prints often offered for sale on the Internet ever used officially in the past or ideas submitted by chapters when the Fraternity Coat-of-Arms was being created? The pieces you see are engravings made from original steel dyes created by some of the early chapters. Authentic engravings made from these dyes can be recognized because they have a raised feeling on the paper and they are known as a “cut.” Webster defines a “cut” as “a block or plate engraved for printing, or the impression from this.”

In the minutes of the 1884 Convention held at Canton, New York, with Beta Chapter (later called Beta Beta), *St. Lawrence*, the Committee on Cut reported, “We have presented to us one cut in the possession of the chapters. It is owned by Beta (Beta) and can be rented for \$30 a thousand by any of the chapters.”

This was the design which Beta (Beta) Chapter, *St. Lawrence*, used in the 1882 *Gridiron*, its university annual. It shows Minerva at the top, a shield showing five owls, two badges and two wreaths of buttercups, within which are the letters of the Fraternity name. The buttercup was the flower of the Browning Society, which received the charter of Kappa Kappa Gamma in September 1881 and became Beta Chapter. The new chapter left the original flower there for decoration when the design was revised for use in the 1882 annual. The fleur-de-lis was not adopted as our Fraternity flower until six years following the 1884 Convention.

At least one other chapter used this cut before the 1884 Convention. In the spring of 1884, a copy was found in the Minnesota library in a copy of the annual printed by the class of 1885.

After hearing the report of this committee, the 1884 Convention voted that the matter of the cut be put into the hands of Psi Chapter, *Cornell*, to report at the next Convention. This was done, and at the 1886 Convention held in Akron, the matter of a cut was left in the hands of the new Grand Council. In June 1887 *The Key* showed the cut that the Grand Council approved and that was the only official cut of the Fraternity ever adopted for annuals. It was the first illustration ever printed in *the Key*, an insert used as a frontispiece. The cut was a steel engraving by Lowell and Company of Boston.

The *Standing Rules* from 1892 to 1896 state that this cut by Lowell and Company was the “authorized cut for college annuals.” After that date there is no mention of an authorized cut. During this time, according to the Grand Presidents Reports and Minutes of Conventions, there were standing committees working on the suggestion of a new cut. But nothing more satisfactory evolved and chapters were permitted to use the one created by Lowell or others that were designed by various Eastern engravers. Dreka who was the official Fraternity stationer from 1888 to 1900, also made at least two similar plates, prints from which were available to chapters for use in their college annuals as inserts to stand opposite the list of members’ names. These will be remembered as including the key similar to the one shown in the official cut and such other symbols as the conventional fleur-de-lis, 1870 and clouds. Dreka’s design was used on the menu covers of the 1892 Convention.

Lambda Chapter, *Akron*, had a cut which was designed by Emma L. Goodwin, an 1885 initiate. This was mentioned in the March 15, 1886, minutes and used in the annual, *The Buchtel* of 1887. The December 5, 1886 minutes state that (Beta) Tau Chapter, *Syracuse*, requested a copy, which *Akron* sent to them. Other chapters may have used it since all delegates to the 1886 Convention in Akron undoubtedly saw the original drawing. It included Minerva standing beside a shield upon which is a key and the three Greek letters of the Fraternity.

The History of Kappa Kappa Gamma Fraternity 1870-1930, pages 835-837, shows pictures of six cuts used by chapters in college annuals. When the Coat-of-Arms was adopted by the Fraternity in 1912 many of the chapters began using this Fraternity symbol in their annuals rather than a cut.