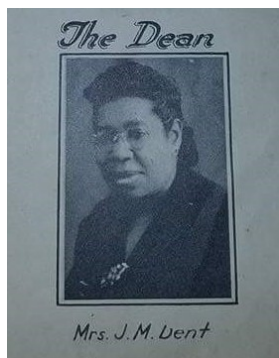


Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Incorporated Southwest Region Heritage Moment – Founders Day Edition

Happy Founders Day Sorors of the “Blazing” Southwest Region!!!! Established in 1932, the Southwest Region is comprised of 140 chapters and includes the states of Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, New Mexico and the country of Jamaica. It is home to Founders Zephyr Chisom Carter, Jessie McGuire Dent, Frederica Chase Dodd and Myra Lillian Davis Hemmings. It is especially on these shoulders that the Southwest Region stands as we continue to solidify our rich history of service and solid legacy of leadership as we continue to move the region to higher heights as we “Keep it REAL in the Blazing Southwest”. We are committed to “REAL Sisterhood, REAL Commitment, and REAL Service” along with “Joy in our Sisterhood, Power in our Voice and Service in our Heart”. As we celebrate 107 years of Sisterhood, Scholarship, and Service, we pay tribute to our Southwest Region Founders....



Founder **Zephyr Chisom (Carter)** (1891-1976) born in El Paso, Texas was in the first graduating class of Douglass School and among the first African-American women in El Paso to graduate from college. She was Alpha Chapter’s first reporter and had a close relationship with Founders Bertha Pitts Campbell (both were described as fun loving with a ribald sense of humor) and Naomi Sewell Richardson. Soror Carter was a lover of the arts, a member of Howard’s drama club and served as a critic for the campus Literary and Social Club. During her years at Howard University, she played a very active role in the collegiate chapter of the NAACP and an issue of the *Crisis Magazine* described her as a “leading spirit in the organization”. After graduation, Soror Carter move back to Texas where she briefly taught in San Antonio. She later moved to California where she married, and began singing with a chorus, performing background music for movies and television shows. She also attended business college at night and was hired as a security officer at the California State Department of Employment, which helped to support her love of singing.



Founder **Jessie McGuire (Dent)**, (March 24, 1891 - March 12, 1948) born in Galveston, Texas, was the first corresponding secretary of Alpha Chapter. She enrolled in the Teacher's College at Howard University and upon graduating in 1913 began teaching at her alma, Galveston’s Central High School, where she was paid \$50 per month. By 1943 she was receiving \$1,548 annually and had been teaching in Galveston 30 years. Dent discovered the Galveston Independent School District was paying black teachers and administrators 20 percent less than white teachers and administrators. Believing that it was unconstitutional that black teachers and administrators were being paid less than white teachers (all teachers had the same requirements for their jobs

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Incorporated Southwest Region Heritage Moment – Founders Day Edition

and should be paid the same rate based on years of service and level of education) Dent sued in federal civil court claiming a violation of the 14th Amendment rights of equal protection under the law. On June 15, 1943, the lawsuit was settled in favor of all black teachers and administrators. Soror Dent was also instrumental in integrating the Galveston Public School System. Upon her death in 1948, the city of Galveston recognized her contributions by placing her portrait on permanent display in the Texas Cultural Archives. In 2009, Galveston opened the McGuire-Dent Recreation Center, named in her honor.



Founder **Frederica Chase (Dodd)** (1893-1972) was born in Dallas, Texas. She was the first sergeant-at-arms of Alpha Chapter and after graduating from Howard University, began a brief career as a teacher and later became one of the first black social workers in the state of Texas. In 1924, Soror Dodd helped to charter and served as the first chapter president of the Eta Beta graduate chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority in Dallas, Texas. Eta Beta's name was changed to the Dallas Alumnae Chapter in 1960. Delta Sigma Theta's Eta Beta chapter was the first Greek letter organization in the city. Soror Dodd helped establish the Maria Morgan Branch YWCA for Black women in Dallas and was Director of Emergency Relief Station for Blacks in the city of Dallas. She attended graduate school at Atlanta University, now Clark Atlanta University.

Sorors Dodd and Dent formed a lasting friendship that lasted throughout their lives. Since neither had heirs, in their later years each made out a "survivor's" will which stipulated that whoever survived the other would receive her estate. Soror Dodd would survive Soror Dent by 24 years and is listed as the informant on Soror Dents death certificate.



Founder **Myra Davis (Hemmings)** (August 30, 1895 – December 8, 1968) was born in Gonzales, Texas and grew up in San Antonio, Texas where she graduated from Riverside High School. Soror Hemmings has the singular distinction of serving as president of both Alpha Kappa Alpha (AKA) Sorority, and Alpha Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated. In 1912, inspired by the call to respond to issues and concerns facing African Americans and women, Madree Penn (White) went to AKA president, Myra Davis to discuss a change of name, motto, colors and symbols of the sorority. The proposal included revamping the structure of AKA to devote it to matters larger than those with which the organization had previously been concerned. Soror Hemmings

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Incorporated Southwest Region Heritage Moment – Founders Day Edition

was receptive of the idea and members of AKA (including some who had graduated) were contacted to see if they would accept the change. All who were contacted agreed to the change and President Hemmings appointed Soror White to chair a committee to draft a constitution, by-laws, select the Greek-letter symbols and formulate an initiation ritual. On January 13, 1913 the 22 Founders held an official meeting to reorganize as Delta Sigma Theta and Soror Hemmings was elected as the first president of Alpha chapter. However, one graduate, the only alumna present at the re-organization meeting, objected to the change of the name from Alpha Kappa Alpha to Delta Sigma Theta. She quickly contacted graduate members who were scattered over the country and those whom she could reach in Washington, DC. They reorganized Alpha Kappa Alpha and declared their determination to hold on to their tradition and to their original name.

Soror Hemmings went on to earn a master's in speech and dramatic arts from Northwestern University and taught school in San Antonio. Her teaching career spanned fifty-one years and she received accolades for her oratorical abilities and stage productions of works from Shakespeare to modern writers. She was a charter member of the San Antonio (TX) Alumnae Chapter and served as co-chairman of the 19th National Convention in San Antonio. In 1963, she co-chaired Delta's Golden Anniversary Celebration, which was addressed by President John F. Kennedy.



Michelle Brown and Tierra Shepherd
Southwest Regional Director and Regional Representative
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

Regional & State Heritage and Archives Team

Stephanie Adams– Regional Co-Coordinator
Gloria Vaughn– Regional Co-Coordinator

Shirley Jackson – Texas/New Mexico Heritage & Archives Coordinator
Linda Morgan - Arkansas Heritage & Archives Coordinator
Josephine Wade– Louisiana Heritage & Archives Coordinator