

Alpha Tau Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi minute books

Alpha Tau Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi minute books (Bluefield State University, West Virginia)
1951-1964

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Descriptive Summary

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Unit ID

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Language

English

Creator

Kappa Alpha Psi. Alpha Tau chapter (Bluefield State College, West Virginia)

Extent

0.25 Cubic Feet 1 half legal document box two bound minute books

Repository

Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research.

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Biographical / Historical

Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. (KAPΨ) is a historically African American fraternity. Since the fraternity's founding on January 5, 1911, at Indiana University Bloomington, it has never restricted membership based on color, creed, or national origin though membership traditionally is dominated by black men. The fraternity has over 260,000 members with 721 undergraduate and alumni chapters in every state of the United States, and international chapters in ten countries.

Kappa Alpha Psi sponsors programs providing community service, social welfare, and academic scholarship through the Kappa Alpha Psi Foundation. It is a supporter of the United Negro College Fund and Habitat for Humanity. Kappa Alpha Psi is a member of the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) and the North American Interfraternity Conference (NIC). The fraternity is the oldest predominantly African American Greek-letter organization founded west of the Appalachian Mountains still in existence. It is known for its "cane stepping" in NPHC organized step shows.

Bluefield State University is a public historically black university (HBCU) in Bluefield, West Virginia. Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) are institutions of higher education in the United States that were established before the Civil Rights Act of 1964 with the intention of serving African Americans. The Bluefield Colored Institute was founded in 1895 as an institution of higher education for the children of Black coal miners. Most are in the Southern United States and were founded during the Reconstruction era (1865–1877) following the American Civil War. Their original purpose was to provide education for African-Americans in an era when most colleges and universities in the United States did not allow Black students to enroll.

By the midpoint of the 20th century, the school was a celebrated gem of African-American culture, earning its ongoing recognition as one of the nation's Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). Heavyweight champion Joe Louis held boxing exhibitions in the gymnasium. Langston Hughes read poetry on campus. Count Basie and Duke Ellington played at fraternity parties.

Sources: Kappa Alpha Psi Wikipedia. Accessed 6/5/25 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kappa_Alpha_Psi

Bluefield State University <https://bluefieldstate.edu/heritage/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bluefield_State_University

Content Description

This collection contains two minute books of the Alpha Tau Chapter of the Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity at Bluefield State College, an H.B.C.U. in Bluefield, West Virginia. Each grey cloth-bound book has "Records" printed on its cover, with "Kappa Alpha Psi" handwritten on one and "KAPΨ" handwritten on the other. The minute books document meetings of the fraternity held over a decade, between 1951 and 1964. The first book dates from 1951 to 1956, and the second book is dated from 1956 to 1964. The entries chronicle the fraternity's pledging process, parties, hazing, initiation, charity events, finances, and the maintenance of the Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity house. Entries discuss the "laxity" of Scroller Club (prospective members), or impose sanctions on pledges failing to meet expectations: "Bro. Chesly made a motion that in the event that the prospective neophytes do not finish the painting tonight they will be left on pro until after Christmas (Dec. 11, 1952). Mention of trouble with the alumni committee for their hazing practices: "The Polemarch informed us that the alumni chapter said that we would have to drop some of the pranks played on probates such as kissing the Kotex, fake penis and slap jar drinking because it leads to homosexuality" (May 7, 1953). Lists of pledges are present in the books, alongside actual vote tallies by their elders accepting or rejecting them for membership; so too are vote tallies for women seeking to become "Kappa Queen." From time to time, problem pledges come up for discussion, for instance those too poor to pay the membership fee: "Bro Cousin mention that little bro Witten would have a conflict when he goes on probation because he works in the mines at night ... little bro. Witten may not be able to pay his money by the deadline." (Nov. 13, 1952). Other entries discuss their charity work and involvement with the local community including giving out scholarships, putting on plays in local schools, purchasing Christmas Seals from the N.A.A.C.P. and a "Guide Right" mentorship program. The brothers selected a topic of "The Challenge of Integration" as a topic for the program (April 13, 1959).

Keywords

African American fraternal organizations

African American students

African American universities and colleges

Historically Black colleges and universities

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Student life

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Bluefield State College