

Wear Our Badge With Pride

—by Lyn Harris, Psi Gamma/Mercer University

The Chi Omega badge represents the pride and honor that members feel as representatives of our Fraternity. The story of our badge is interesting and centers on some of the most important parts of Chi Omega's history.

Our first badge

Chi Omega founder Dr. Charles Richardson crafted our Fraternity's first badge from scraps of dental gold. Its simple design does not include precious stones or etchings. It is housed in the museum at the Chi Omega Executive Headquarters. Because it is pure gold, it is very soft and fragile and is kept in a special case.

The first member pins were manufactured by Wright, Kay & Co. Initially, any type of precious stone could be used and the Chi, or "X," was flat. Later manufacturers gave the badge visual depth by raising the Chi so that stones could be inset. In 1913, Chi Omega chose an official jeweler, D.L. Auld & Co. Years later, D.L. Auld merged to become Burr Patterson & Auld. In 2004, Herff Jones, a manufacturer of class rings and recognition jewelry, purchased Burr Patterson and continues to use the brand name for fraternal jewelry. As the official jeweler, Burr Patt makes badges, new-member pins, guards, dangles, lavalieres,



and 25- and 50-year pins. They also have an extensive line of fashion jewelry that features Chi Omega's letters and crest.

Chi Omega's badges are not mass produced. Master craftsmen at the Herff Jones facility in Providence, Rhode Island, make each one by hand, setting every pearl individually.



Chi Omega's new-member pin was adopted in 1904.

Chi Omega's new-member pin indicates that a young woman has pledged Chi Omega but is not yet initiated. It is a black enamel oval with the Greek letters Chi and Omega in the center. Designed by Julie Winchell, Xi Chapter/Northwestern University, it was adopted at our Convention in 1904. A new member receives this pin during the Formal Pledging Ceremony. It belongs to the chapter and is exchanged for the member badge during initiation. No initiated member should keep her new-member pin.

Why does the badge have only pearls and diamonds?

At our 1906 Convention, the size of the badge was standardized and the type of stones limited to pearls or diamonds. Delegates at the 1904 Convention restricted the wearing of the badge to initiated members. Because the jeweler would not issue pins without proof of membership, delegates were advised to write the Greek letters ΠΒΥΗΣ below their signature to indicate they were entitled to a badge.

What do some of the rare badges look like?

A vast collection of beautiful and unusual

badges resides in the Archives at Executive Headquarters, including a very small miniature badge about half the size of today's badge. Other unique examples include badges set with turquoise and opals, and a badge with a black enameled Omega (instead of gold).

Ida Pace Purdue, the first editor of *The Eleusis*, had a badge set with rubies. About 30 years ago, this badge was stolen from our Headquarters office in Cincinnati and has not been seen since. We still have Ida's Psi Chapter guard and hope that her ruby badge will someday be recovered.

How do we wear the badge?

Both the new-member pin and the badge are worn over the heart, above all other pins. Members are encouraged to wear their pins often, and with pride. Pins should be worn only with badge attire—dressy clothes that honor the symbolism of the badge. New-member pins and badges are never worn with jeans, shorts, T-shirts, or other casual clothing.

In the 1980s, the Governing Council determined that an alumna may wear the badge on a ring or pendant, or on the collar of a suit or dress. Collegians must wear it only over their heart.

What is a chapter guard?

A guard is a small pin attached to the badge with a fine chain. When worn, it is pinned to the left, and slightly below, the badge. A guard usually depicts the Greek letters of the member's initiating chapter, although a generic guard of the Chi Omega crest also is available. Some early guards were stickpins.



Pearls are individually set by hand into each Chi Omega badge.

A guard is more than just for looks. It helps keep your badge attached to your clothing. Members are encouraged to purchase a guard to keep their badge safe. If you've ever attended a Convention or Firesides, you'll recall hearing, "We have a lost badge! We are looking for a badge, gold, with these initials . . ."

Alumnae are encouraged to wear their chapter guard. It keeps the badge safe. If your badge is on a ring or pendant, the guard is removed.

What are dangles?

Dangles are small charms that hang on the chain that connects the badge to the chapter guard. They recognize the leadership and accomplishments of members. There are dangles for each collegiate chapter-officer position (e.g., the G.H. dangle is a gavel, the G.K.A. is a quill) and for many alumnae leadership positions, too. Dangles are an inexpensive way to recognize a Sister:

- A retiring chapter officer could purchase a dangle for her successor and present it to her during officer installation.
- The G.T.B. could recognize Sisters with a 4.0 semester GPA by giving them a small pearl scholarship dangle.
- Chapter officers could present a retiring advisor with a dangle to thank her for her service.

The Burr Patt catalog and website have a list of dangles created especially for Chi Omega.

What if I lost my badge?

Please replace it! Any Chi Omega may order a replacement badge, or order a badge in another style, by contacting Executive Headquarters. Many alumnae choose to purchase a new badge in silver or white gold to match their other jewelry, or have a badge set with diamonds—something few of us could afford when we were in college.

Some alumnae opt to leave their original badge intact but purchase a new one to be set into a pendant or ring.

What happens when a member joins the Omega Chapter?

Chi Omega badges are the property of the Fraternity. Members are given permission to wear the badge during initiation. When a member dies, she joins the Omega Chapter and her badge should be returned to the Executive Headquarters. There, the badge is catalogued and placed in the vault for safekeeping. Because relatives often do not know how to dispose of the badge, we encourage local alumnae and Sisters of the deceased to assist the family in returning the badge to the Executive Headquarters.

Help ensure that your precious badge, an official emblem of the Fraternity, does not fall into the possession of a nonmember who may not realize its significance. On this page is a small card that you can duplicate and place in your jewelry box with your badge, as instructions to your family. We also encourage you to include disposition instructions for your Chi Omega badge in your will or estate-planning documents.


For each badge received, a small donation is made to the Chi Omega Foundation and the wearer's name will appear in the annual donor listing.

Why are Chi Omega badges offered for sale on eBay?

This is a common question. We believe these badges were lost or stolen, or are being sold by members or family members of Chi Omegas who do not know that appropriate disposition of the badges is to return them to the Executive Headquarters.

No Chi Omega wants to see our badge sold this way but it's impossible for us to control

what is bought and sold online. What we can do is continue educating members about the most respectful way to treat our badge.

There are a number of dedicated Chi Omegas who monitor online auction sites, looking for Chi Omega badges and other memorabilia. They purchase these items and send them to Executive Headquarters. Each returned badge is checked against our member database. If we believe a member is alive and her badge may have been lost or stolen, we try to contact her. 



This beautiful engraving of the Chi Omega badge was made in 1907 by Wright, Kay & Co. of Detroit. It was purchased on eBay and donated to the Executive Headquarters by a generous alumna.

Chi Omegas: Please duplicate this form, fill it out, and place it in your jewelry box next to your badge.



To my family / friends:
This is my Chi Omega badge. I have worn it with pride since my initiation. When I can no longer wear it, please return it to the Fraternity for cataloging and safekeeping. This information should accompany the badge:



This Chi Omega badge belonged to

(FIRST, MAIDEN, LAST NAMES)

who joined Omega Chapter on

(DATE)

She was a member of the Chi Omega Chapter at

(NAME OF COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY)

MAIL TO: Omega Chapter Badges
Chi Omega Executive Headquarters
3395 Players Club Parkway
Memphis TN 38125