

The first meeting of T.O., which was its founding meeting, was held on the night of April 29th, 1895, at 8:00 P.M. in the Germania Dramatic Club meeting room in the parochial school of Trinity Church, which was adjacent to Old Hughes. The meeting took 2 hours and adjourned at 10:00 P.M. (The Germania Dramatic Club headquarters were at Trinity Church, but the club was not officially connected with the Church. Bill Henley was a member of the club, and he was able to secure the room for this first meeting because of this.)

At this meeting, the 5 founder discussed the great need at Hughes High School for a democratic organization which would solicit the membership of boys based upon their personal good character and reputation, and not upon the social or financial standing of their families.

Shortly after the meeting, the 5 founders voted upon the additional boys who would be taken in, and who would become Charter Members of T.O. These are the boys who were taken in during the remainder of the School Year 1895-96, and who became the Charter Members:

- \*Clifford David
- Oliver Schlemmer
- Charles W. Dupuis
- \*Harlowe K. Farrell
- Millard Goldsmith
- \*Jolly J. Heintz
- \*Spencer H. Huntington
- \*Isaac Isaacs
- Pizer W. Jacobs
- Charles Liddell.
- Parker Liddell
- Harry W. Lushey
- Clarence Ohmer
- Edward G. Roberts
- \*Ernest Sattler
- \*John A. Achroth
- \*Norris Stayton
- \*Frank O. Taylor
- \*Edwin H. Thielie
- \*William Smith Golderburg

(\*Deceased)

This group, plus the 5 founders, comprised the first Active Chapter of the Fraternity.

In late 1895 or early 1896, the first officers of the fraternity were nominated and elected. The first Rex Regum was Whittington Underhill. The first Bibliothecae Praefectus (Secretary) was Edward G. Roberts, and the first Dux Sacrorum was Bill Henley, Founder.

It is interesting to note that one of the Charter Members, Clifford David, was originally a member of D.B., but left that society and became a member of T.O. because of his great friendship and love for Founder Whittington Underhill. Whit Underhill was one of the great active forces in getting T.O. off to a healthy start, and was Henley's right hand man in all matters pertaining to the good and growth of T.O. Underhill's father was a well-known physician living in the west end of Cincinnati, and it was this same Dr. Underhill who brought Bill Henley into the world some 16 years prior to the founding of T.O. Whit Underhill himself was considered in 1895 the smartest student to ever enter Hughes High School, and was paid that compliment personally by Principal Coy, a member of D.B. After Whit's father died he went to live with his uncle, a Dr. Dunham, in Mt. Auburn, another well-known Cincinnati physician.

Professor William Ocker, then the gym instructor at Hughes, and Miss Celia Doerner, of the faculty, were made honorary members of T.O., the only faculty members belonging to our society, and they helped the fraternity through many of its early difficulties.

The early meeting of T.O. were masterpieces of ceremony and formality. The Rex Regum wore a robe of purple, and the Bibliothecae Praefectus one of black.

The fraternity's first constitution was written by Fratres Underhill, Henley, David, Bender and Huntington. It was adopted and accepted in 1896. The colors of Red and Gold were decided as being the official colors of the fraternity.

After the first meeting held by the 5 founders, the decision was made to select the Charter Members, mentioned previously, and adopt a Latin name "Triginta Optimi", meaning "30 of the Best". The democratic principles of the early Roman Republic were indoctrinated into the fraternity's Constitution and concepts, chiefly because of the democratic spirit and laws which prevailed in the first Roman Republic. This was especially appropriate for Triginta Optimi because it was a Cincinnati fraternity, and since Cincinnati itself was founded on 7 hills, like Rome, and named after the great Roman patriot, Cincinnatus. The original name of the organization was "Triginta Optimi Society", which later became "Triginta Optimi Fraternity".

Following the first and founding meeting in the Germania Dramatic club rooms, several more meetings were held there by the 5 Founders, and after the Charter Members were taken in the meetings were thereafter held in a classroom at Hughes at nighttime.

The Charter Members were all initiated informally in the large auditorium room at Hughes. The first initiated was Clarence Ohmer. (In those early days, only the one initiation was held, the Barbarian Degree.) Successive initiations up to around 1900 were held in the auditorium room at Hughes during which the pledges were held in an adjoining anteroom and brought into the auditorium for actual initiation. The ceremony lasted about 3 hours.

Two of the Charter Members, Jolly Heintz and Carl Ney, both excellent trackmen, were badly wanted as members by D.B. However, because of their great friendship for Bill Henley, they chose to join the new and yet unknown society, Triginta Optimi. During their days at Hughes these two men brought many honors to T.O. by their victories on the track and in other activities. Even after Heintz became Rex Regum of T.O., Delta Beta sought, by many means, to have him leave T.O. and join D.B., but Frater Heintz remained loyal and steadfast to Triginta.

Millard Goldsmith, another Charter Member, ranks among the best organizers and parliamentarians in the fraternity's history. He helped to re-draft in formal form the first Constitution, and it was through his hard work and good efforts that the Constitution and it was through his hard work and good efforts that the Constitution, and By-Laws, of T.O. became of such depth and strength to lead the order through many difficult years, and live over a half century. Goldsmith served several terms as Bibliothecae Praefectus and term as Rex Regum, and it was during his term as Rex Regum that he saved the fraternity from passing out of existence by taking it from a low membership of 6 men to a full membership of 30 men. He was highly respected by all, including the faculty, because of his high ranking as a scholar. His great contributions to T.O. can never be over-estimated, and he ranks as one of our most honored members.

Another man who helped T.O. in its early days was Gus, a non-T.O. who was janitor at the school. His friendship for the T.O. boys made possible the use of the classrooms for meetings.

The 5 Founders, the Charter members, and those initiated after that, became fast and loyal friends, and banded together in a common good and common effort to establish T.O. as a proper and respected fraternity at Hughes, regardless of the well-established

competition of Delta Beta. T.O. soon became a permanent fixture at Hughes, and an important factor in the school's life and activities. Its membership included boys who excelled in athletics, scholarship, and in the arts, and presented an excellent balance of typical American high school boys of good character and good habits.

T.O. was the first fraternity at Hughes to organize the "Interscholastic Field Day", in which Hughes, Woodward, Franklin, Technical, and later on, Walnut Hills High School, took part in athletic competition against one another. The first event was held at the East End Park in 1895, and it was a great success. A large brass band was featured in addition to the field events themselves. Scores of prizes were offered, and thereafter the Interscholastic Field Day became a regular yearly event, under the auspices of T.O.

After its founding, T.O. also took an active part in the Hughes Bicycle Club, which was organized by Professor Ocker (T.O.). Ocker was Captain and Bill Henley Lieutenant of the club.

On Friday evening, December 20, 1895, a musical and literary entertainment was held for the benefit of Hughes by the "Triginta Optimi Society". This was the first such event held by T.O., and it was given for the purpose of raising money with which to buy pictures for the classrooms at Hughes. For years thereafter, these pictures were testimony to this early act by T.O. to help beautify the school's classrooms. The affair was a great success. The program sheet for the affair, a copy of which is in our Archives, reads as follows:

"At a meeting of the Hughes faculty some time ago, it was decided to raise a sum of money for the purchase of pictures, etc., for the walls of the school, both to decorate the walls and to illustrate the various studies. The matter was placed in the hands of Professor Ocker. He being a member of the TRIGINTA OPTIMI fraternity, unfolded his plans to the members of that organization, who immediately decided to take charge of the affair and give a Grand Entertainment for the benefit of "Old Hughes". The results of their labors are submitted to you tonight. No such entertainment has ever been given at Hughes before, and although Triginta Optimi is a new society it is the first to undertake such a task for the benefit of "Old Hughes" in whose interests it was founded. As T.O. has been but recently founded, we take this opportunity of explaining to our friends the character and object of Hughes' new fraternity. Heretofore, there was but one fraternity in the school, and that a Greek fraternity. Seeing the need of a Latin Fraternity of some kind, a number of teachers and pupils met April 29, 1895, and organized

Triginta. The object of T.O. is to advance the interests of Hughes in all fields, and its entertainment tonight is one of its first great efforts in that direction. The fraternity will continue to give such evidence of its true object and thus live up to its motto "Spectemur agendo", and will make the crimson and gold of Triginta the brightest color of the school". (December 20, 1895)

Appearing on the program that night were students of the school, both T.O. members and non-T.O. members. Some of the groups which performed were the "T.O. Mandolin Club", the "Girls Ring Drill", and athletic events of club swinging and parallel bars. The Entertainment Committee was comprised of the following: Prof. Ocker, Chairman; Wm. Henley, Ed Roberts, Clarence Ohmer and Harry Lushey.

Around 1896, T.O. gave a mammoth picnic at Woodsdale Island, above Hamilton, Ohio. The fraternity netted \$900 on the affair, and ran three special trainloads of guests from Cincinnati. A 25 piece orchestra was employed to entertain. Each of the 3 private trains cost \$105. All retail stores in Cincinnati advertised the event. The event was further advertised by T.O. in the Cincinnati Times-Star. All the trains were packed, the affair was a great success. The Cadets, under their Captain, Bill Henley, gave drills with their guns - virtually all the students at Hughes attended, as well as students from other schools - there were boat races, sack races, and so forth - and from that day on Triginta Optimi Fraternity was accepted as a part of the school's social life.

The first dance sponsored by T.O. was held at Coney Island in the spring of 1896. Other early dances were held at the Hotel Alms.

The early athletic events of T.O. were held at the Avondale Athletic Club, which grounds are now part of Xavier University.

The years of 1895 and 1896 were happy and prosperous ones of T.O., and the fraternity flourished. The latter part of 1896 some condition arose, which caused T.O. to go into a temporary decline, and this condition continued until the fall of 1897 when, at the commencement of school, T.O. had only 6 members. It was here that Frater Millard Goldsmith stepped in as Rex Regum, and through his great organizing ability and loyalty to T.O. within a few weeks the membership of the fraternity was raised to 30, and T.O. regained its honored position at Hughes.

An early account of the fraternity's founding and the years which immediately followed appear in the issue of the school magazine, "Old Hughes", dated May 1899. This article reads as follows:

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"The History of Triginta Optimi is the short but suggestive record of the strivings and achievements of the best men of Old Hughes during the last four years.

Our fraternity was founded April 29th, 1895. Our founders were few, our influence small, our opponents were many, and the odds against us great. But it did not take us long to organize, frame a constitution with by-laws and ritual and choose colors, pins, regalia and all the other requisites of a live high-school fraternity. And when the time came to assert ourselves and we were called upon to show our strength we did so in no uncertain way.

The first opportunity was at the '95 field-day, when we captured the field-championship and the majority of the contests. Since then T.O. has led in athletics. Last year our men again took the field-championship and eleven of fifteen events. On the football and baseball field we have always been well represented---this year by over two-thirds of the members of either team.

We believe T.O. has done well for the school in athletics. But it has served in other ways. Early in '96 it gave a splendid entertainment with the proceeds of which were bought the many beautiful pictures that now adorn the classrooms of the school.

Ninety-seven was a bad year for the frat. Without cause we were deprived of our place of meeting, and although the men of '97 and '98 kept the frat alive, our membership ceased to increase and at the beginning of '98 we had but six men in the school. Then Frater Millard Goldsmith took hold, and by his tact and diplomacy regained for us the privilege of meeting in the school-building.\* In six weeks our ranks were filled and we had reached the limit--Triginta. During this year we lost two of our members, Frater Sherman Turrill '98 and Frater Clifford David '95, both true and loyal members of our order, whose memory Triginta honors and reveres.

Frater Jolly Heintz succeeded Frater Goldsmith as Rex Regum, and under his leadership the frat has continued strong and prosperous. The most important event of his term was the installation at our annual banquet at the Grand Hotel of the new Woodward Chapter, which bids fair to become as strong in time as the original Chapter at Hughes.

Altogether our past has been a happy one. We call ourselves Triginta Optimi, but a better name would be the Thirty Optimists. Our history leaves no room for pessimism, nothing to be wished

for. The highest hopes, the fondest aspirations of the founders of Triginta have been more than fully realized. Our enemies, who four years ago prophesied the early dissolution of the new society, now see that we have come to stay. The colors of Triginta are not the fading hues that linger round the setting sun: they are the crimson and the gold of the rising and ever brightening dawn.

#### One of the Fraternity

\*The Society has decided to meet hereafter outside the school, and for that purpose the Hughes and Woodward Chapters have engaged elegant quarters of their own."

In the early days of T.O., the Fraternity's motto was adopted, "Spectamur Agendo". Its official coat-of-arms, containing the Roman Eagle with wings spread, and posed above the words "SENATUS POPULEASQUE ROMANUS", (or in abbreviated for "SPQR") was not put into official use until around 1905. The official pin was adopted in 1896.

In these early five years of T.O. history, its members distinguished themselves in school life and school activities. Frater Wilson Ross Tenney wrote many articles for the Cincinnati Times-Star and the Cincinnati Post telling about the Society.

In 1898, the first deaths occurred in the fraternity. During this year Fraters Sherman Turrill and Clifford David both passed away.

Prater Isaac Isaacs, Charter member, was the first of eight brothers of the Isaacs family who became T.O. members, the last being Judah Isaacs, initiated November 24, 1920, some twenty-five years later.

Most of these Founder and Charter members and early members of T.O., after graduation became prominent business and professional men in all parts of the United States, and several of them were honored by being placed in "Who's Who".

The fame of this new fraternity began to spread among other Cincinnati high schools and petitions and requests were made by some of them to have a T.O. chapter at these schools.

A group of boys at Technical School, located in the north wing of Music Hall, at that time, asked for this opportunity, so a T.O. Chapter was formed there around 1893, and its first Rex Regum was Harry J. Price. Some of its members were a boy named Witte (a brother of T.O., C. Harvey Witte of the Hughes Chapter), and Frank Haas. The Chapter flourished for several years, and around 1903 the Technical School Chapter was discontinued, and its members absorbed by the mother chapter at Hughes.

Another group of boys at Woodward High School formed a T.O. Chapter in 1899, and this Chapter was officially chartered and installed at the Founders Day Banquet at the Grand Hotel on April 29, 1899. Records of this Woodward Chapter show Charles B. Terry was a member, and the Chapter also included in its membership Robert Peale, Simon Ross, (now Judge Simon Ross), and E. Julian Moore, who later became a prominent judge out West. The Woodward Chapter chose blue and gold as their official colors, and their pins were the same as the mother Chapter's except the color blue was used instead of the color red. The Woodward Chapter flourished until around 1905, and it too was then absorbed by the mother Chapter at Hughes.

With the turn of the century, in 1900 began the "golden years" of Triginta, and the coming into active membership of such early leaders as Eric Twachtman, Edward M. Hurley, Nathan T. Isaacs, Bill Mitchell, Bert Lyon, and Dennis Ryan. Under their guidance T.O. reached great stature at Old Hughes, scholastically, socially, and in athletics.

The Triginta Optimi Alumni Association was founded on December 11, 1902, and its first officers were:

- President - Jolly J. Heintz
- Vice Pres.- Charles LeCount
- Secretary - Bert Lyon
- Treasurer - Harry L. Wiemen

On January 5, 1909, the Triginta Optimi Alumni Association was officially chartered under the laws of the State of Ohio.

And so, the foregoing is a historical narration of Triginta Optimi Fraternity, from 1895 to 1900. The history of the years which followed from 1900 to 1953 is now in the process of being compiled and sometime in the next year or so it will be finished and at that time the complete story of the fraternity from 1895 to 1953 will be published in book form.