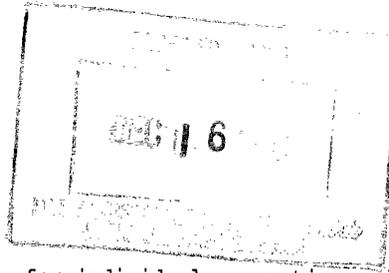


1508



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name: Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity House
other names/site number: ATO House

2. Location

street & number 205 University Terrace not for publication N/A
city or town Reno vicinity N/A
state Nevada code NV county Washoe code 031 zip code 89503

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility, meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally X statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Ronald M. [Signature] 12-15-03
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register Elson H. Beall 1/28/04
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain):

Elson H. Beall 1/28/04

[Signature]
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: SOCIAL Sub: Fraternity

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: SOCIAL Sub: Fraternity

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals/Georgian Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

roof Composition shingle

walls Brick

other _____

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.) See continuation sheets.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Social History

Period of Significance 1929
Significant Dates 1929
Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A
Cultural Affiliation N/A
Architect/Builder Lehman "Monk" Ferris

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.) See continuation sheets.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Alpha Tau Omega

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.54 acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>11</u>	<u>357760</u>	<u>4379750</u>	3	___	___
2	___	___	___	4	___	___
	___	See continuation sheet.				

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mella Rothwell Harmon, with the assistance of Erin Lankowsky
organization State Historic Preservation Office date October 1, 2003
street & number 701 Stewart Street telephone 775-684-3447
city or town Carson City state NV zip code 89701

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Nevada Delta Iota Building Associaton
street & number 205 University Terrace telephone _____
city or town Reno state NV zip code 89503

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 1

Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity House, Reno, Washoe County, Nevada

7. Description

Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity House was built in 1929 on a hill overlooking University Terrace Avenue in Reno's West University neighborhood where a number of other fraternities and sororities are located. It was the first fraternity-built house at the University of Nevada. The large red brick house is situated at the back of a parcel that originally consisted of five lots. The large front lawn slopes steeply to the street. Concrete steps lead up to the formal Georgian entrance, producing a dramatic visual effect. The building backs up at grade to Tenth Street. The house was designed by Reno architect Lehman "Monk" Ferris, who was a member of Alpha Tau Omega fraternity.

Architecturally, ATO House is a three-story (plus a basement), side-gabled Colonial Revival-style building modeled after a Georgian precedent. The style-defining features are symmetrical 5-ranked windows on the primary façade, a Georgian entrance with a centered door, an upside-down pedimented crown supported by decorative pilasters, sidelights, and a horizontal double row of small panes beneath the crown. Above the reversed pediment are the inscribed letters ATΩ.

The plan of the building comprises a rectangular primary section and a single-story wing projecting off the northeast side of the building. The roof is sheathed in composition shingles, and a brick chimney projects at the end gable on the west elevation. The eaves are boxed and return at the gable ends. There are three gabled dormers on the front elevation. The roofline in the rear was modified in ca. 1987. The shed extension to the roof expanded the third-story floor space and provided easier access to the existing rooftop sun porch above the single story wing.

The building's exterior surface is red brick in running bond with contrasting sand-colored stone quoins on the primary structure. Fenestration consists of multi-pane sashes of varying sizes and shapes. The single-story wing has few windows. There are two doors into the building, the main entrance and a door on the east side. A parking area, entered from Tenth Street, is located on the west side of the building.

Integrity

ATO House retains a high degree of all seven aspects of integrity, especially since it still retains its original use. The extension of the roof at the rear was sympathetically rendered and is not visible from the primary façade fronting University Terrace. Major renovations were made to the interior in the 1980s to comply with fire code, but none of these modifications diminish the historical or architectural significance of the building.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 2

Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity House, Reno, Washoe County, Nevada

8. Significance

The Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity House in Reno, Nevada is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its role in the social history of fraternity organizations associated with the University of Nevada, and as the first fraternity-built house in Nevada, and under Criterion C as an outstanding local example of Colonial Revival architecture, designed by prominent Reno architect, Lehman "Monk" Ferris. The ATO House is significant at the state level since during its period of significance it functioned at the only university campus in Nevada, and students from throughout the state resided there and carried the affiliation with them for the rest of their lives. The effect of this significance is reflected in the number of prominent men, throughout the state, who looked, and for many continue to look, to the ATO house as home.

Criterion A

University of Nevada

The University of Nevada was established in 1874 in Elko under the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862, which granted 90,000 acres of public land for an agricultural and mechanical college. Nevada was allowed to include mining as a college function, and the search for a site for the new university was begun in 1873. The legislature required that any town wishing to be considered for the university must provide \$10,000 for a building, 20 acres for the campus, and be able to serve 100 students. Despite the fact that most of the Board of Regents lived in western Nevada, and Carson City was the state capital, Elko, in eastern Nevada, was the only town to meet the requirements (Greenhaw and Primeaux 1998).

The University of Nevada lasted in Elko only 11 years, as enrollment never exceeded 30 students. In 1885, the Nevada legislature decided to close the university and move it to Reno, which by then had grown to a bustling metropolis of 4,000 and Nevada's second largest town. The Board of Regents selected a sagebrush-covered site on "the hill" north of town and authorized the construction of Morrill Hall.¹ After the turn of the twentieth century, a series of major gifts from Clarence and Mary Louise Mackay, heirs of Comstock "king" John Mackay, expanded the campus with the Mackay School of Mines² Colonial Revival/Georgian-style building in 1906, the Mackay Science Hall in 1930 and several others³ (Hulse n.d). Clarence Mackay made his mark on the university, by hiring a landscape architect to design a quadrangle modeled after the University of Virginia, and funding the construction of numerous educational buildings and facilities. During the years of Mackay influence (1906-1938), the campus and

¹ Morrill Hall was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on May 1, 1974.

² The Mackay School of Mines Building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on April 1, 1982.

³ Thirteen buildings, including Mackay Science Hall, and two landscape features are contributing elements to the University of Nevada, Reno Historic District listed in the National Register of Historic Places on February 25, 1987.

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Section 8 Page 3

Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity House, Reno, Washoe County, Nevada

8. Significance, continued

student enrollment grew (Hamby and Sikes 1986). Today, the University of Nevada has grown to a student population of 15,534 (Office of the President of the University of Nevada, Reno, personal communication, September 30, 2003).

The Fraternity Movement at the University of Nevada, Reno

There were a number of fraternities and sororities at the University of Nevada beginning around 1895. The earliest fraternity seems to have been T.H.P.O., which was established "in the early 90's" (Doten 1924:213). The Hall Protective Organization began as a group of residents of Lincoln Hall, but they later admitted non-residents and moved off campus, becoming the Nevada Alpha Chapter of Sigma Alpha Epsilon in 1917 (Hulse 1974:208). Sigma Alpha was founded either in 1895, 1896, or 1899, but it became the Eta Deuteron Chapter of Phi Sigma Kappa, also in 1917. The third fraternity to be founded in Reno was Phi Delta Tau in 1912, which became the Delta Iota Chapter of Alpha Tau Omega in 1921. Sigma Nu was chartered by the National organization in 1914. By 1923, there were ten fraternities and seven sororities associated with the University of Nevada. Of these only two fraternities and one sorority owned its own house, with Alpha Tau Omega being the first, having purchased a house at 745 University Avenue in 1921 (Doten 1924:212-213).

The University of Nevada embraced the fraternities and sororities, because they provided democratic leadership for students and much-needed student housing. They were generally seen as positive forces in student academic and social life and contributed much to the educational experience. By 1914, the fraternity and sorority movement had impacted the University of Nevada, and the administration, faculty, and alumni supported the Greek-letter organizations. Fraternities and sororities proliferated through the 1920s, and only organizations that established their national connections at that time have endured (Hulse 1974:208).

Local and national fraternities needed university approval and/or support prior to establishment, and in turn national fraternities needed to approve the academic institution before new chapters were chartered. The University of Nevada's position on fraternities was stated in the 1928 bond offering for ATO's new house:

Due to the democratic ideals constantly practiced by fraternities at the University of Nevada, the University administration is entirely in accord with the plan of building fraternity houses and maintaining college organizations. In as much as the principal portion of the students attending the university are non-resident to Reno, proper housing facilities must be provided. The fraternity houses help handle this problem. The state

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Section 8 Page 4

Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity House, Reno, Washoe County, Nevada

8. Significance, continued

legislature has recognized this value of the fraternity to the University by exempting fraternity owned property from taxes.

By the second decade of the twentieth century, the University of Nevada had grown both in student body and academic stature that between 1914 and 1917 three national fraternities and two national sororities were recognized at Nevada. World War I hindered fraternal activities at the University of Nevada. Phi Delta Tau had begun its application for a chapter of Alpha Tau Omega in 1916, but because of the war the application was stalled until 1919.

Alpha Tau Omega

Otis Allan Glazebrook of Richmond, Virginia founded Alpha Tau Omega at the Virginia Military Institute in 1865. Mr. Glazebrook was a young civil war veteran, deeply religious, and desiring to foster peace and reconciliation in a country wracked by a devastating war between the states. Further, the South had lost all 142 of its fraternity chapters during the war, leaving a void to be filled by service-minded people like Mr. Glazebrook. With two of his VMI classmates, Alfred Marshall and Erskine Mayo Ross, the Mother Chapter of Alpha Tau Omega was formed. The Beta chapter was founded shortly thereafter at Washington College, next door to VMI, which had just become Washington and Lee University following the appointment of General Robert E. Lee as college president. The founding principle of Alpha Tau Omega was Christian love; the fraternity was Greek in name only. In the words of the founder, "Alpha Tau Omega holds before the young men of the country an ideal and something greater than a mere intellectual ideal. Alpha Tau Omega stands for heart as well as head. It has given men a true ideal of life" (Alpha Tau Omega On-line 2003).

By the late nineteenth century, fraternities were expanding nation-wide and by the time the Phi Delta Tau chapter at the University of Nevada received its charter as the Delta Iota Chapter of Alpha Tau Omega in 1921, Alpha Tau Omega had more than 67 chapters nationally.

Alpha Tau Omega at the University of Nevada

ATO's predecessor organization at the University of Nevada was Phi Delta Tau. In his oral history, given in 1970, architect Lehman Ferris claimed the organization was started in 1912 by a group of male students who had not been invited to join one or the other of the two established fraternities at the University of Nevada. Calling themselves Phi Delta Tau, they rented a house on the corner of Ninth and Sierra Street in 1914 and went about attracting new members. With rushing not going well, the founding members came up with the idea to collect the luggage of out-of-town students arriving for school, taking it to the Phi

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Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity House, Reno, Washoe County, Nevada

8. Significance, continued

Delta Tau house. When the new students found their luggage and upon seeing a good, active organization in place, the re-directed students decided to join. This method of acquiring members turned out to be successful and for a while the baseball team and much of the football team lived at Phi Delta Tau.

Over the course of their first few years, Phi Delta Tau had established itself as a full-fledged local fraternal organization, and set its sights on a national charter from Alpha Tau Omega. The formal charter application, submitted in 1921 stated Phi Delta Tau's objective:

Our membership is open only to men of ability and sincere purpose who seem to give promise of becoming a credit to their college and their fraternity.

As an organization we endeavor to develop in our members a strong spirit of fraternalism amounting to a deep mutual interest, a high standard of scholarship, and the maintenance of an active and honorable interest in all college organizations (Phi Delta Tau c. 1921).

The petition for charter was accepted later in 1921 and Phi Delta Tau became the Delta Iota Chapter of Alpha Tau Omega. That same year, the fraternity established the Delta Iota Building Association and purchased a two-story house at 745 University Avenue, financing the \$8,000 purchase price with personal loans and a bank mortgage. By 1928, the Nevada ATOs had grown to 150 men, 45 of whom were in college at the time. (The others were alumni members.) The house on University Avenue could only accommodate 20 men, however, and the decision was made to build a house with all of the amenities and space required to serve the active membership and to be a source of pride for the alumni members. It would be the first fraternity-built house at the University of Nevada. The ATOs had an advantage in planning their new house. They had a track record of sound and determined financial management and an architect as an alumni member.

Alpha Tau Omega House

With the decision made to build a fraternity house, the ATOs set about to establish their financing mechanisms. In 1928, they made a public offering of \$10,000 of secured bonds at \$50.00 denominations carrying 6% interest, and maturing in five years. The bonds were secured by a deed of trust. In addition to these funds, and the house on University Avenue that they owned free-and-clear, the Building Association owned the three lots in Reno, totaling \$20,000 in equity. The Building Association had previously bought three lots for their house, but when five lots in the more desirable location on University Terrace became available the Building Association purchased them for \$2,750. Meanwhile, several members toured fraternity houses in Washington, Idaho, Montana, and California, gathering ideas for the house. Lehman Ferris drew the plans and served as supervising architect. An added bonus came

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 6

Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity House, Reno, Washoe County, Nevada

8. Significance, continued

in the form of a lumber price war, allowing construction to be accomplished at the target amount of \$32,000, including furnishings (*Sagehen* 1929).

The June 10, 1929 edition of the ATO's newsletter *Sagehen* described the plans for the house:

The first floor of the structure consists of a 16X19 reception hall, a 22X28 living room, a 22X22 dining room, a 12X21 glassed-in-porch on the west end and a bedroom with a bath, a lavatory and a serving pantry. The second floor consists of ten 9X12 rooms with built-in dressers and drawers, a large bathroom, and two 10X18 sleeping porches. The third floor consists of five 9X18 dormitories, bath and a storage room. A full basement is taken up with a large kitchen, cooks room and bath, furnace room, a 20X22 chapter room, and a 'rough house' room. Dumb waiters are installed between the kitchen and the serving pantry on the first floor. The first floor is constructed with hard wood floors, and is equipped with a fire place, double telephone booth, cloak room, and a screened in back porch.

The original design called for a classical portico, a glassed-in porch at the west end, and chimneys at each gable end. Neither the portico nor the glassed-in porch were constructed, and only one of the chimneys was built. It is not known what motivated the change in plans. The cornerstone was laid on April 30, 1929 and the building was dedicated to the memory of Judge Erskine M. Ross, one of the founders of Alpha Tau Omega. By June 1929, the building was nearly complete, and although mention of its completion has not been found, it no doubt was ready for the arrival of students that fall.

World War II had an impact on the University. By 1943, general enrollment was down as men and women students (and faculty) joined the war effort or were called home to assist their families. A.T.O. was called upon to help, as well. By the fall semester of that year, several university buildings were being used to house soldiers and military trainees. Housing for regular students was at a premium and the Board of Regents looked to the fraternities to help fill the gap. Three fraternity houses were identified to house displaced students (Board of Regents Minutes September 2-3, 1943:3-4).

A.T.O. and the Lambda Chi Alpha house were renovated to house women, and men who ordinarily would have lived at Lincoln Hall were moved to the Sigma Alpha Epsilon House. The University A.T.O. also served as the women's dining hall. The Dean of Women was appointed as the supervisor of the dining hall (Board of Regents Minutes October 2-3, 1943:2). Board was furnished at \$32.50 per month, and room rent was \$36 per semester. Any revenue deficiencies were covered by the rent the government paid to house military personnel at Artemesia Hall (Board of Regents Minutes September 2-3:4). It is not

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Section 8 Page 7

Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity House, Reno, Washoe County, Nevada

8. Significance, continued

known how soon after the war men returned to their fraternity houses, but it was a boon to the university to have the use of the space in their absence.

In 1984, the fire marshal closed ATO house because it was determined to be a fire hazard. Fearing the loss of their beloved building, the ATO membership—especially the Alumni Association—undertook a major fundraising program to renovate the building. More than \$500,000 was raised in two years and the house was ready to be re-occupied by October 1988. The interior was refurbished and the roof was extended to create more third-story floor space and to provide easier access to the sun porch.

The ATO fraternity house has served the organization and the University for nearly 75 years. Many of Nevada's prominent men in politics and business are ATO alumni, including State Senator William Raggio, former Nevada governor Grant Sawyer, former Nevada governor and senator Richard Bryan, former Nevada Gaming Commission Chairman Paul Bible, former state representative Jim Santini, and numerous attorneys, doctors, educators, and businessmen. Tales of fraternity rannygazoo are legendary, but in the long run ATO's contributions to the university and the state of Nevada have been substantial.

Criterion C

Colonial Revival/Georgian Revival

Interest in America's colonial architectural heritage began with the Philadelphia Centennial of 1876. The style, in its various phases, experienced a run of popularity that lasted to the middle 1950s. In 1877, the fashionable architectural firm of McKim, Mead, White, and Bigelow toured original Georgian, Adam, and Dutch houses in New England in order to study them first hand. In the mid-1880s, the firm executed two houses influenced by the tour: The Appleton House in Lennox, Massachusetts (1883-84) and the Taylor House in Newport, Rhode Island (1885-1886) (McAlester and McAlester 1990:326).

These and other early Colonial Revival examples were rarely historically correct and it was not until after 1910 that more accurate copies were executed. Knowledge of colonial architecture was disseminated by photographs in books and periodicals. *The American Architect and Building News* ran a series in 1898 called "The Georgian Period: Being photographs and measured drawings of Colonial Work with text." In 1915, the *White Pine Series of Architectural Monographs* widely featured photographs of colonial buildings. Colonial Revival buildings built between 1915 and 1935 reflect the influence of this interest in early prototypes of Colonial architecture. The Great Depression, World War II, and the post-war period resulted in a simplification of the style, although it retained a certain level of popularity into the mid-1950s (McAlester and McAlester 1990:326).

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Section 8 Page 8

Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity House, Reno, Washoe County, Nevada

8. Significance, continued

The Colonial Revival style included several subtypes distinguished by roof shape and type of details. The side-gabled form followed Georgian and Adam precedents, while the Gambrel-roofed variety was inspired by Dutch Colonial buildings. Georgian details include such classical elements as closed and broken pediments, quoins, dentils, and decorative pilasters based on the classical orders. The Adam influences include the use of fanlights. The Alpha Tau Omega house reflects historically accurate Georgian details, characterized by symmetry of form, the pedimented entrance, dormers, and quoins.

The majority of Reno's relatively few Classical Revival buildings are located on the University of Nevada campus and in the exclusive Newlands neighborhood. The majority of the buildings constructed on the campus during the Mackay period of influence employ Classical elements, and were influenced by the layout and design of the University of Virginia. During this time, there was a resurgence of interest in Classicism and the University of Virginia was a popular model for campus design. This trend was often referred to as Jeffersonian Revival. Residential buildings in Reno in the Colonial Revival style often reflected other influences, such as the McCarran House at 401 Court Street (1913), which although it has many Classical features also displays Prairie and Italian Renaissance Revival elements. The Alpha Tau Omega house closely resembles the Hawkins House at 549 Court Street (1911),⁴ designed by architect Elmer Grey, and may have inspired the design of the fraternity house. The Hawkins House reflects Georgian massing and symmetry, and the portico is similar to the one shown in Lehman Ferris's original drawings. However, unlike the fraternity house, the rafter tails are exposed and some of the windows and the entrance have Adamesque fanlights.

Lehman "Monk" Ferris

Lehman "Monk" Ferris designed the Alpha Tau Omega fraternity house at the University of Nevada. Mr. Ferris was a lifetime member of the fraternity, one of the founders of ATO's predecessor organization, Phi Delta Tau, and the son of prominent Nevada architect George A. Ferris. Lehman Ferris, who acquired the nickname Monk as a small child, came to Reno with his family in 1906. He entered the University of Nevada in 1911 to study electrical engineering. He left the University in 1915 without graduating to work in Elko as an electrical engineer. It was while working at the McGill Copper Smelting Plant in 1914 that Ferris first began designing structures. During World War I, Ferris worked on the development of underwater detection devices for the military, and after the war, he went to work for his father and architect Frederick DeLongchamps writing specifications (White 1991:A-30-A-31).

Lehman Ferris's career as an architect started in 1908 when his father became ill and asked his son to help out in his architectural office. In the mid-1920s, the partnership of George A Ferris and Son was

⁴ The Hawkins House was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on December 17, 1979.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 9

Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity House, Reno, Washoe County, Nevada

8. Significance, continued

established, and Lehman's design work expanded to include the Las Vegas High School in 1928,⁵ high schools in Austin⁶ and Eureka, several school buildings in Wells, and an office building in Reno. Lehman Ferris opened his own office during the depression after the partnership with his father was dissolved due to financial difficulties. In 1935, he became the City of Reno's first building inspector, while conducting his architectural practice in the evenings. Ferris held the city inspector job for ten years, during which time he was involved in the effort by the International Association of Building Inspectors to enact a uniform building code throughout the country. Lehman Ferris was also the first chairman of the Nevada State Board of Architecture that was created in 1949, and he held Nevada Architect license #1 (White 1991:A-30-A-31).

In 1945, Lehman Ferris quit his city inspector job to return full-time to architecture. In 1946, he took as his partner Graham Erskine a New York architect who had come to Reno for a divorce. Erskine sought a job to carry him through his six-week residency period and was hired by Ferris to do drafting. Upon his return to New York, Erskine discovered that the preliminary drawings he had prepared of the Reno High School had been accepted and he immediately returned to Nevada and a partnership with Lehman Ferris (White 1991:A30-A31).

With his experience in engineering, Ferris was qualified to be an architectural engineer and as such was involved with nearly all of the aspects of building design including plumbing, electrical, and structural. Some examples of Lehman Ferris's buildings include Reno High School (which Graham Erskine drafted for him), Proctor R. Hug High School, Wooster High School, and Harold's Club Casino Tower in Reno, the original Student Union Building and the original education building at the University of Nevada, the Civic Auditorium and Nevada State Legislature buildings in Carson City, First National Bank buildings statewide, and National Guard Armories in several cities (White 1991:A30-A31). Ferris retired at the age of 77 in 1970, and died in 1996 at the age of 103.

Summary

The Alpha Tau Omega fraternity house at the University of Nevada is significant at the state level for its association with the history of the fraternity movement at the University of Nevada Reno, as the first house built by a fraternity, as an excellent local example of Colonial Revival architecture, and as the work of Lehman "Monk" Ferris, who became a prominent and important architect in Nevada.

⁵ The Las Vegas High School was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on September 24, 1986.

⁶ The Lander County High School in Austin was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on July 20, 2000.

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Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity House, Reno, Washoe County, Nevada

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**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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9. Bibliography, continued

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10. Geographical Data

Boundary Description

The National Register boundaries of the Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity House includes the 0.54-acre parcel identified as Assessor's Parcel Number 007-171-24, Washoe County, Nevada, located in Section 2, T. 19N, R. 19E, MDB&M.

Boundary Justification

Resource boundaries include all land commonly associated with the lot identified as Washoe County, Nevada APN 007-171-24.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity House, Reno, Washoe County, Nevada

Photograph 1

Name of Property: Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity House

Location of Property: 205 University Terrace
Reno Washoe County, Nevada

Photographer: Mella Rothwell Harmon

Date of Photograph: October 11, 2003

Location of Negative: State Historic Preservation Office
100 North Stewart Street
Carson City, NV 89701

Direction of View: Facing north