

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For NPS use only
received **APR 27 1982**
date entered

1. Name

historic Beta Theta Pi Fraternity House, The University of Oklahoma

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 800 S. Chautauqua Avenue N/A not for publication

city, town Norman N/A vicinity of ~~Congressional District~~ 4

state Oklahoma code 40 county Cleveland code 027

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>N/A</u> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Beta Theta Pi Corporation of Oklahoma c/o Quentin W. Remy, Architect

street & number 2500 McGee Drive

city, town Norman _____ vicinity of _____ state Oklahoma 73069

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of the County Clerk

street & number Cleveland County Courthouse

city, town Norman _____ vicinity of _____ state Oklahoma 73069

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Oklahoma Comprehensive Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date Spring 1981 federal state county local

depository for survey records State Historic Preservation Office

city, town Oklahoma City _____ vicinity of _____ state Oklahoma

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Beta Theta Pi fraternity house is a three-story limestone building located within two blocks of the University of Oklahoma campus, the state's primary institution of higher education. The building is sited on the SW corner of Chautauqua Avenue and Brooks Street, a corner prominent for outstanding architecture in Norman. On the NW corner of that intersection is the Ledbetter (Taylor) House designed by Bruce Goff in the early 1950's.

The Beta House faces East, on Chautauqua Avenue, on a site 220 feet by 192.5 feet, The site extends to the alley on the West and a service drive access is provided to the rear of the building. The fraternity house is located in one of the older, well-maintained residential neighborhoods in Norman. The building is set back from the sidewalk 77 feet and the generous front lawn enhances the feeling of monumentality.

Stylistically the Beta House is Italian Renaissance Revival with limestone exterior, steel casement windows and tile roofing. The most prominent architectural element is the semi-circular portico which extends the entire height of the front facade. The building structure consists of poured-in-place concrete floors and columns and steel truss roof.

The Beta House was designed by Harold Gimeno, an architect who began his practice in Oklahoma in the 1920's, and constructed from 1927 to 1929. The building is 100 feet long and 45 feet wide, excluding a kitchen addition. The first floor includes a large living room, music parlor, dining room, kitchen and housemother's room. The second and third floors of the building contain student dormitory rooms. There is also a full basement with several recreation rooms, study areas and laundry.

Changes to the original building include installation of a central air-conditioning system and a kitchen addition in the 1950's. The exterior surface of the kitchen addition is sheathed in matching limestone. The original structure is essentially unaltered and in good condition with the exception of needed repair work on the windows and overall cleaning of the limestone facade.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1929-present **Builder/Architect** Harold Gimeno, Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Beta Theta Pi Fraternity House is significant in terms of its architecture. Like most major universities in America there are many fraternities and sororities at The University of Oklahoma. Many of these organizations constructed elegant houses in the 1920's during a period of economic growth and university expansion. And the Beta's at OU outdid all the others. They hired a young architect named Harold Gimeno who was just beginning his career. Gimeno had grown up in Norman and was the son of Professor Patricio Gimeno, a long-term OU faculty member in the School of Art. Young Harold acquired a BA in Mathematics from OU in 1918 and then attended the Harvard Graduate School of Architecture on a scholarship. He returned to Oklahoma to practice architecture and the commission for the Beta House was one of his first projects. Gimeno later moved to California and practiced there until his death two years ago. Throughout his long career he worked in a number of styles- Spanish Revival, Art Deco, and Modern. Yet during his career he never returned to the architectural style associated with one of his earliest and most successful efforts - the Italian Renaissance Revival style of the Beta House. Although he designed a number of very good buildings, both in Oklahoma and California, the Beta House is one of his finest. And this building has even greater meaning since it is the only example of this style in Norman, Oklahoma.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Womack, John, Norman - An Early History, Norman, Oklahoma, 1976
Gimeno, Harold, Building Projects Brochure, n.d.
Oral interview with Quentin Remy, May 1981

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property c. 1 acre

Quadrangle name Norman, OK

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

1	4	6	4	1	0	8	0	3	8	9	6	9	2	0
Zone				Easting				Northing						

B

Zone				Easting				Northing						

C

Zone				Easting				Northing						

D

Zone				Easting				Northing						

E

Zone				Easting				Northing						

F

Zone				Easting				Northing						

G

Zone				Easting				Northing						

H

Zone				Easting				Northing						

Verbal boundary description and justification

Lot 31 Block 7 Parsons Addition Norman, Oklahoma

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
N/A			

state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Arn Henderson, AIA Professor of Architecture

organization School of Architecture

date June 1981

street & number University of Oklahoma

telephone 405/325-2444

city or town Norman

state Oklahoma 73019

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

C. Metcalf

4/15/82

title

date 4/15/82

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

[Signature]
Keeper of the National Register

date

6/8/82

Attest:
Chief of Registration

date

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Continuation sheet

Item number 8

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Harold Gimeno was an architect who lived and worked in both Oklahoma and California during the first half of the 20th century. Several of his designs are very good buildings. His best work was done early in his career in Norman, Oklahoma, and his buildings in this local community are prominent. There are several houses in Norman he designed in the 1930's in a Spanish Mission style that are highly regarded. Moreover, another of his buildings - the Sooner Theater in downtown Norman - has been listed on the National Register for several years. The Beta House, like the Sooner Theater, is his best work.

The Beta House is significant architecturally in this local community. It is the only example of this style in Norman, Oklahoma. There is no other building in this style in Norman, Oklahoma. There is no other building in this community that conveys such a powerful sense of grandeur, dignity and monumentality as does the Beta House. It is a monochromatic building that is sheathed entirely in cut limestone. The sense of visual continuity is derived in large measure by the use of this one material. The simplicity of the rectangular form played against the monumental semi-circular portico is another important element of the composition. It is clearly a powerful design.

Although there are many fraternity houses at O.U. there are none that match this one architecturally. The others, for the most part, are simply "large houses" that are over-scaled, stylistically eclectic, and not at all distinctive.