

# ALEXANDER JAY WURTS

(1862 – 1932)

ALPHA CHAPTER · CHARTER BROTHER NO. 4  
FOUNDING BROTHER OF GAMMA DELTA PSI FRATERNITY

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## DAVE BARTLETT

GAMMA ALPHA CHAPTER NO. 10



Alexander Jay Wurts

There is no doubt that Brother Alexander Jay Wurts was the founder and architect of Gamma Delta Psi, as Brother Arthur Jackson of Alpha Chapter tells us in his letters to Brother Frank Buchanan, in 1941:

*“Dann, Jones and myself were old friends even before we went to High School, Wurts got the idea first and consulted one of his brothers, who was a Yale Fraternity man. He somehow picked us three as the ones he thought would help him.”*

Brother Alexander Jay Wurts was born in Carbondale, Pennsylvania on March 3, 1862. He was the son of Charles Pemberton and Laura (Jay) Wurts.

Born into an old and illustrious family, with roots connected to John Jay, a Founding Father of the United States and first Chief Justice of the United States.

Wurts attended Hillhouse High School (Class of 1880) and earned his Ph.B Degree at Sheffield Scientific School, Yale University in 1883.

In 1884, Wurts received his M.E. Degree at Stevens Institute of Technology.

During 1884 to 1885, Brother Wurts ventured to Germany to study electricity at Hanover Polytechnium. He then worked for Westinghouse Electric Company in their electrical research program.

One of Wurts' proudest achievements was the winning of a Gold Medal from the St. Louis World's Fair for his development of the Nernst Lamp.

In 1904, through his association with Mr. Westinghouse, he became acquainted with Andrew Carnegie and was appointed the first faculty member at Carnegie Technological Institute, as head of the Electrical Engineering Department.

In 1924, due to increasing deafness, he was compelled to give up teaching. Brother Wurts was likely the first Gamma Delta Psi Brother to set foot in Canada, a true pioneer.



*Early Rendering of Gamma Delta Psi Crescent (Pin)  
Original Design Concept attributed to A.J. Wurts*

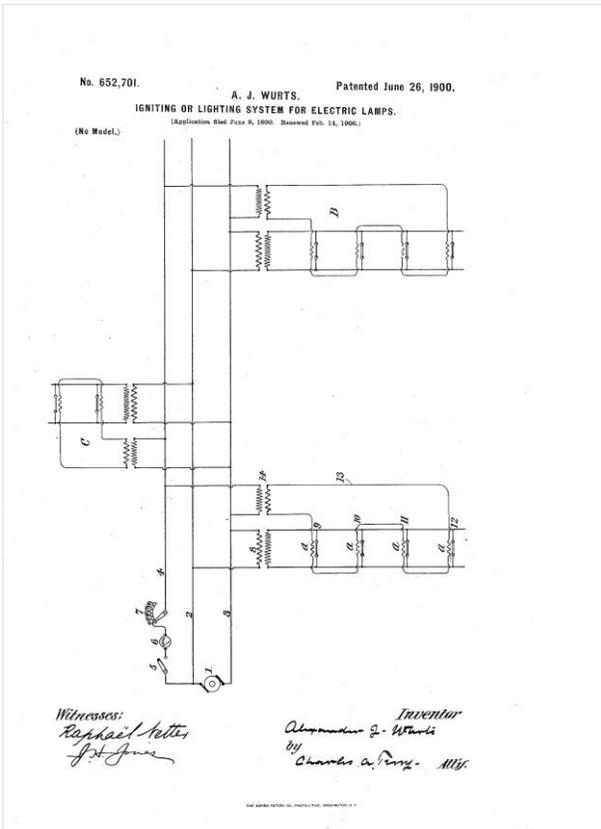
Brother Wurts was married to Jeannie Childs in 1890, after her death he married Elizabeth Reed in 1924. He had two children from his first marriage, Thomas Howe Childs Wurts and Laura Jay Wurts.

As a dedicated scientist and researcher, he held multiple patents, including U.S. Patent #652,701 for an "Igniting or Lighting System for Electric Lamps".

In 1924, Lee De Forest returned to Yale to speak about his new invention, "Talking movies."

De Forest recalled a lecture he had attended as a student that was given by Professor Alexander Wurts. Wurts's description of his invention of the lightning arrester (an early form of surge protector) had inspired De Forest to enter the field of experimental research.

Brother Alexander Jay Wurts (Alpha Chapter No. 4C), on January 21, 1932 after two weeks illness due to typhoid fever, died at his home in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He is buried there at Allegheny Cemetery.



Brother Wurts was well known for his discipline towards science, but he also had a great influence on many of the experimental research scientists in his day.



All Brothers of Gamma Delta Psi, on April 13, 2014 have an obligation to say,

"Thanks to Brother Alexander Jay Wurts", for without his foresight, imagination and determination Gamma Delta Psi would not exist.

**"The Mystical Bond of Brotherhood makes all Men of Gamma Delta Psi Brothers".**