

**FOUNDERS' DAY PROGRAM 1999**

*This program starts with the organization, continues with biographies of each sister, a summary of the rest of the world in 1869, and final thoughts and challenges for today's P.E.O.s*

- MAS There were seven of us attending Iowa Wesleyan University at Mt. Pleasant, Iowa who formed a bond of friendship. College was a unique and joyous experience to us. We had been taught to think and all had become recognized leaders in campus and community activities. Each of us was well aware of how fortunate it was to be receiving an education. With the passing of each year, our friendship deepened and we wanted it to be a lasting thing. Our friendship stood the test when a small chapter of I.C. Sorosis was organized in Mt. Pleasant on December 12, 1868. Not all of us were asked to join and those who were would not join without the others. As a result of this action, it was Hattie who said, "Let's have a society of our own. "
- ES Active plans for organization began to emerge on the morning of January 21, 1869 as Hattie Briggs and Franc Roads sat together on the stile at the southeast corner of the campus. They were gravely discussing the fraternity system in general, and more specifically, their own responsibility for organizational life on the campus. They found the rest of us and we made hasty plans to organize our society that very day. Alice Bird composed our oath of allegiance and pledge of secrecy. It was only thirty-five words.
- ABB The organization of P.E.O. took place in the music room on the second floor of Main Hall. Preparation was not difficult. We recognized the need for some kind of ceremony. A Bible was placed on the table and we all stood around it. Ella read the oath first to me and then I read it in turn to each of the other six. This was our initiation.
- HBB Following our initiation we chose P.E.O. as the name of our society. Alice Coffin suggested we choose the star as our emblem. Ella Stewart chose our colors of white and yellow. Alice Bird was designated to prepare a constitution and bring it to the next meeting which was set for the following Saturday evening, January 23, 1869, at the home of Mary Allen.
- AC The first pins were made by the Crane Jewelry Store at Mt. Pleasant. They were flat pins and larger than those made a few years later. The pins were marked with our name, date and chapter.
- ES We wanted a dramatic and dignified way to announce P.E.O. to the rest of the campus and call attention to our new star pins. We chose to make aprons and fasten the pins to them. Franc's mother designed the aprons and helped each of us to make ours.

- SPP Can you imagine the excitement when the seven of us marched into the chapel wearing our new aprons, the bib of which was pinned on the left shoulder with the beautiful new stars? All eyes were on us.
- FRE Alice Bird served as our first president. We had no gavel; we used a large wooden crochet hook to bring meetings to order. Voting was done by slips of paper, pro or con. We had much business to conduct, but we still had time for literary programs. Roll call was answered with quotations for a long time.
- AC To go to a P.E.O. meeting was not a simple process. The fact that a meeting was in session was a deep dark secret and we would go by roundabout ways to throw curious observers off the track.
- MAS Let us introduce ourselves to these sisters. I am Mary Allen. I was born in Mt. Pleasant on December 30, 1848, the daughter of Reuben and Evelyn Caulk Allen. I entered Iowa Wesleyan in the fall of 1865 and four years later received my A.B. degree.
- ABB I am Mary Alice Bird. Please call me Alice. I was born in Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, on May 8, 1850, the daughter of Dr. Wellington and Sarah Thornton Bird. My father was the first physician in Henry County, Iowa. I entered Iowa Wesleyan in 1865 at the age of 15 and graduated in 1869 with an A.B. degree.
- HBB I am Harriet Briggs but everyone calls me Hattie. I was born in Troy, Iowa on October 10, 1848, to Rev. and Mary Elias L. Briggs. I entered the university in 1865 and received my B.S. degree in June 1869.
- AC I am Alice Coffin. I was born in Louisville, Kentucky on March 29, 1848 to Matthew and Martha Coffin. My mother died when I was nine years old. We lived in Kentucky, Indiana, and then Iowa. I entered Iowa Wesleyan in 1865 and graduated with a B.S. degree in 1869.
- SPP I am Marie Suela Pearson. I was born in Cleveland, Ohio on August 24, 1851 to Dr. Clement and Marie Rose McKinley Pearson. I go by my second name, Suela, and please pronounce it with the "e" as a long "e". I was named for the heroine in a Spanish novel my father was reading shortly before my birth. Our family moved to Mt. Pleasant in 1860. I entered Iowa Wesleyan just after my 15<sup>th</sup> birthday and graduated with my A.B. degree in 1871.
- FRE I am Frances Elizabeth Roads. Everyone calls me Franc. I was born February 10, 1852 at Marshall, Iowa, a town near Mt. Pleasant, to Addison and Nancy Roads. I entered Iowa Wesleyan in 1866 at the age of 14 and graduated three years later with my B.S. degree.
- ES I am Ella Lovina Stewart. I was born at Pittsburg, Iowa on May 8, 1848, the daughter of Rev. Isaac and Mary Stewart. My father was a Methodist minister and we moved to Mt. Pleasant shortly after I was born. We lived for some time in

an apartment on the second floor of the Institute Building on the campus of Mt. Pleasant Collegiate Institute which later became Pioneer Hall and Iowa Wesleyan University. Later father assumed pastorates in southeastern Iowa and died in 1864 leaving my mother with five children and another soon to be born. We all moved back to Mt. Pleasant where mother started a boarding house for students. I entered Iowa Wesleyan in 1865 but did not graduate because I was needed at home.

- MAS On July 4, 1871, I married Charles Lewis Stafford who graduated from Iowa Wesleyan and was ordained to the Methodist ministry. He was president of Iowa Wesleyan from 1891 to 1899. It is said that I possessed a delightful sense of humor. We were the parents of four children: Clarence Allen, a successful business man and rancher, Eva May who died at age four of scarlet fever, Charles Ralph, a lawyer, and William Reuben who died a year after graduating from the University of Wisconsin.
- ABB For four years I taught Latin, Greek and elocution at Iowa Wesleyan. I married Washington Irving Babb on October 9, 1873. He was a lawyer and later district judge of the second judicial district of Iowa. He also served as a trustee of Iowa Wesleyan. We had four children: Max Wellington, a lawyer and later president of the Allis Chalmers Co. in Milwaukee, Miles Thornton, manager of the Western Wheel Scraper Co. and later sales manager of Allis Chalmers Co., Clarabelle, who died of diphtheria at age seven, and Alice, a graduate of Northwestern University. Max and Miles both graduated from Iowa Wesleyan.
- HBB After graduating, I taught music and art in several towns in Iowa. On January 12, 1873, following my father's sermon and at the close of the service, Henri L. Bousquet (pronounced Bus-ket) and I were united in marriage to the complete surprise to most of the congregation. We lived for many years in Pella, Iowa where Henri was cashier at the Pella National Bank. In 1884, we moved to Knoxville, Iowa where he was in merchandising and later the clerk of the Supreme Court of Iowa. We had two sons: Cutts Duddock and two years later Henri Lyman who died shortly before his sixth birthday.
- AC I was engaged to Will Pearson, Suela's brother, but later broke the engagement. There were other offers of marriage but I did not accept them. I taught school for a few years in Des Moines and Chariton and then taught until the last year of my life at Newton, Iowa. I tried to be a devoted and imaginative teacher and conscious of the needs of my students. Each child was a challenge and I lent encouragement and some I helped financially.
- SPP Soon after graduation our family moved to Washington, D.C. where I had more educational and cultural advantages. In 1876, I married Frank Harold Penfield of Cleveland, Ohio. Frank was associated with the Standard Oil Co. and we resided on Euclid Avenue. We had two children, Marie Rose and Frank Pearson who died while a college student.

- FRE Most of my life I practiced art as a profession. I studied at the Rookwood Potteries in Cincinnati, in Europe, at Columbia, Leland Stanford, at the Chicago Art Institute, and the University of Chicago. I married Simon Charles Elliott, June 6, 1872 and we lived in Lincoln, Nebraska where Simon operated a china store. We had two children: Charles Addison, who became a distinguished doctor and professor of medicine at Northwestern University, and Stella May, who was educated at the University of Nebraska and was an assistant in the department of Physical Education there. She later became head of physical education for women at Ohio State University. She was married to James A. Canfield. In 1884, I represented Nebraska as assistant commissioner of art at the New Orleans Exposition. When we were faced with financial disaster, due to the panic of 1893, I worked in art supervision in the public schools to help finance our son's medical education. In 1911 we moved to Chicago and I continued to live there after my husband died. I created a model school room in Aurora, Illinois that attracted wide attention.
- ES For many years I gave piano lessons in Mt. Pleasant and adjacent towns. Later I taught eight years at the Iowa Industrial School in Eldora. I then returned to Mt. Pleasant due to ill health. My life was devoted to the service of others. My P.E.O. pin is the only one of the original seven in existence and is on display in Memorial Hall in Mt. Pleasant.
- MAS My son, Clarence, loved to tell this story: Max Babb, son of Alice Bird Babb, and I had an appointment to meet in the lobby of the Congress Hotel in Chicago one winter's morning. I was the first to arrive and as I waited for Max to come I noted a lady sitting close by. This lady wore a puzzled expression and she also wore a P.E.O. pin. Finally she very timidly asked a simple directional question. I gave her the correct answer, then told her that I noticed she was a P.E.O. and that my own mother had been one of the founders. Of course the lady was pleased to know all this and soon we were engaged in conversation about P.E.O. in general. Just then Max came by, and I introduced him as the son of another founder. A look of suspicion crossed the lady's face. Max of course explained the coincidence to the lady's entire satisfaction but then Dr. Charles Elliott, son of Franc Roads Elliott came through the door. Of course, he was also introduced as a son of a founder which was one too many for the little lady. She dashed out on Michigan Ave. with a flash of her eye and a toss of her head.
- MAS I belonged to four other P.E.O. chapters beside Chapter A. I often stressed the importance of proper procedure in conducting business meetings and the necessity for good order. At one time I said, "We are but undisciplined if we cannot endure the quiet restraint of listening."
- ABB I was able to participate in P.E.O. throughout my entire life and made a contribution to Grand Chapter in the preparation of resolutions, laws and ceremonies. I was also associate editor of the P.E.O. Record during the first years of its existence and wrote under the pen name of Avis. You have a wonderful historical resource at your fingertips in the library of the Ohio Historical

- Society, a complete file of P.E.O. Records from the first issue in 1869 through 1986 can be found.
- SPP I was not able to be active in P.E.O. but my daughter Rose was a charter member of Chapter AH Cleveland.
- FRE I worked for 18 years to secure for women the right to a seat and a vote in the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Changing social conditions and the advancement of women were lifelong challenges of mine. I had a crusading spirit and counted Susan B. Anthony, Lucy Stone, Frances Willard, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton as my friends.
- MAS I lived to age 78 and died July 10, 1927 in Muscatine, Iowa.
- ABB I lived to age 76 and died November 21, 1926 in Aurora, Illinois.
- HBB I wore the P.E.O. emblem only 7 years. I died June 22, 1877 at age 27 in Pella, Iowa and am buried in Oakwood Cemetery in Pella.
- AC I lived to age 40 and died July 28, 1888 in Newton, Iowa and am buried in Union Cemetery in Newton.
- SPP I lived to age 68 and died September 20, 1920 in Cleveland and am buried in Lake View Cemetery, Cleveland.
- FRE I lived to age 72 and died August 9, 1924 in Chicago. Mary Allen Stafford, Mary Alice Bird Babb and I are all buried in Forest Home Cemetery at Mt. Pleasant, Iowa.
- ES I lived to age 46 and died December 12, 1894 and am buried in the Old Cemetery at Mt. Pleasant.
- MAS We have told you so much about the happenings in Mt. Pleasant and in our lives. I think these sisters would be interested in what was happening in the rest of the world in 1869. The Union Pacific and Central Pacific railroads joined May 10 at Promontory Point near Ogden in the Utah Territory. Travel time between New York and San Francisco was reduced from 3 months or longer to 8 days.
- SPP The Hannibal Bridge opened in July in Kansas City, Missouri. It was the first permanent structure to span the Missouri River.
- HBB A cog railway was completed in New Hampshire, allowing persons to go to the top of Mt. Washington, a distance of 6,293 feet.
- ABB The Suez Canal was opened November 17 linking the Mediterranean with the Gulf of Suez. It was 103 miles long and it allowed Oriental ports to be 3,600 miles closer to America.

- AC Kyoto, Japan opened its first public elementary school in May.
- ES Purdue University, Lafayette, Indiana, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale and the University of Nebraska, Lincoln were all founded this year.
- MAS Thirteen territories had not yet become states in 1869. U.S. geologist, John Wesley Powell began explorations of the Green and Colorado Rivers in the Utah and Colorado Territories.
- FRE Susan B. Anthony founded the American Women's Suffrage Association. These women realized the need for a constitutional amendment that gave all U.S. women the right to vote.
- HBB Campbell Soup Co. was begun. H.J. Heinz Co. began to pack processed horseradish in bottles. Welch's Grape Juice was invented by a dentist. He was looking for a substitute for the incredibly strong alcoholic punch that his church used for communion. He started by making juice in his own kitchen, bottling it and selling it to nearby churches.
- AC Ulysses S. Grant became our 18<sup>th</sup> president in 1869. Julia Grant, with a little help from her husband, browbeat Congress into voting for a thorough remodeling of the White House. One of her innovations caused Congress to rumble and growl about the First Lady wasting money on her newfangled idea of closets.
- FRE J.S. Fry and Sons was the largest manufacturer of chocolate in the world. This was due in part to the fact that they were the largest suppliers of chocolate to the British Royal Navy.
- SPP Each of us has some final thoughts to share with you. "Looking over the yesterdays I can find no hour in which my heart has not turned to all in loyal devotion and a proud thrill of enthusiasm at the onward advancement of God's starry dwellers. To each and all my good wishes. May your sojourn here be long and ever crowned with bright hopes fulfilled."
- ES "It seems so strange when I think of our birthday and how we seven so unknowingly lighted so great a light. May we but feel that God's hand was surely in it and He has helped us to keep the star shining...where can we find a better chance to use our influence for good than P.E.O. association?."
- MAS "I am not extravagant enough to claim for the founders the credit for what P.E.O. has become. It is an honor and credit enough that we were so wisely and fortunately guided that we were able to lay a foundation broad and strong enough that others, following after us, could build such a structure as P.E.O. has become. Our one absorbing, and dominating purpose was to perpetuate a most beautiful and unselfish schoolgirl friendship that would continue after schooldays were over....Our love and friendship bound us together in ties so strong that I am confident that any one of the seven would have sacrificed, and if need be,

suffered, for any one of the seven in case of need. I am possibly giving you in this the key to what has made our Sisterhood what it is today.”

ABB “I have feared sometime, from our wonderful growth, that the Sisterhood might become a club, and that I would greatly deplore....Continue to read over and over our objects and aims, learn to be small and modest, rather than haughty and great, and above all—be kind to all.”

AC “May we always unconsciously attempt to raise the standards of those with whom we associate; may we strengthen the weak in purpose, lift the burden from a troubled heart, and may we always be stars among women in whatever circumstances we find ourselves.”

FRE “And will you allow me to say a word about precedents, about what has been? Do not try to preserve them because of sentiment, for new times demand new needs. Evolution and growth mean life to organizations as well as individuals. Please remember that true loyalty to us, your founders, lies in improving the unfinished structure we bequeathed to you, for P.E.O. is only yet in its beginning.”

HBB In 1869, when I said “Why not have a society of our own, then we can stay together” little did we know that P.E.O. would grow from seven to 251,985 active members in 5783 local chapters in the United States and Canada in 130 years. Happy Birthday!

Written by Ann Davidson, Chapter EW  
Presented January 18, 1999 – Chapter EW  
Presented April 15, 2000 – Akron Reciprocity

- 1) The P.E.O. Record, January 1965, January 1966, March 1968, October 1968, September 1969
- 2) Peoples Chronology, 1994
- 3) Out of the Heart, Stella Clapp
- 4) True History of Chocolate, Sophie D. Coe
- 5) First Ladies, Margaret Truman