

AUNT MARTHA

This program contains extensive historical information of the times followed by interesting facts about the founders themselves, tying each into a color of the rainbow.

This program was given for Founders' Day by a "guest" who was invited to the P.E.O. meeting. She was introduced as an elderly great aunt of a chapter member. Her story is told in first person as she remembers her early days circa 1869. Aunt Martha relates:

It is just delightful to be here today with all of you young girls. As I look at you, I can't help but notice that there is something special about each one – perhaps it will come to me just what it is. Well now, you wanted to hear about some of the things that I remember...

When I was a child, I recall the excitement when my Grandmother came to visit. She came from New York City on a train, a then-new Pullman, in 1867. She told us about the "hotel car" with beds that folded up and about the real kitchen and dining room too. There was a "weiner wurst man" at the station who sold little sausages in a bun. This was the first hot dog vendor, you know.

At our house each family member had his or her own chores. As I was the youngest, my tasks were assigned accordingly. The most tedious chore was to clean the kerosene lamp chimneys and to fill the lamps and to trim the wicks.

My clothing was functional, of sensible dark cotton material, but what I remember most vividly was my flannel underwear. It was hot and itchy, worn from early fall to late spring.

My older sister went to Vassar to college where rules were enforced. She wrote home to the family that it was required of young ladies to bathe twice a week. My mother was certain that she would catch a cold and have an unhealthy winter. We children were accustomed to a Saturday night bath in the wooden tub on the kitchen floor, filled from the reservoir at the back of the wood-burning stove.

Our breakfasts were of buckwheat cakes, the yeast "starter" having been saved from the day before. The maple syrup came from the woods at the sugar bush where father and the older children prepared this delicacy.

The chief room of our house was the dining room where the whole family gathered. Our dining room table was expandable to accommodate everyone. We had a ponderous sideboard with an ornamental back piece. There were two drawers in the front, one for the silverware, and the other for the linen. Mother always kept a round tin supplied with sugar cookies in the spring and summer, and doughnuts in the fall and winter.

Our bed mattresses were filled with goose down which was plucked from the live geese at the proper time in the summer when it wouldn't be harmful to the geese. This down

mattress was delightful to sink into on a cold winter night with softness and warmth all around you.

You might be interested in hearing about some of the cures my mother used to use:

TO CURE CORNS – Apply young peach leaves, bruised and moistened, on the corns every night until relieved. This remedy can only be used from May to November, but it is so excellent that it is advisable to cure corns during these months.

TO KEEP MEAT FRESH IN HOT WEATHER – Place meat in a clean porcelain bowl and pour very hot water over it. Then pour oil on the water. The air is thus quite excluded and the meat is preserved.

TO PRESERVE EGGS - Roll each egg in thin paper and put the small end down into a peach basket or crate (This will admit ventilation), then set in cool place where they will not freeze, and the eggs will keep all winter.

CARE OF THE HAIR – Every month the head is shampooed with the yolk of a well-beaten egg; the cleansing properties are wonderful. Then, this rather unpleasant stickiness is removed by the hair being carefully washed in a basin of tepid water to which is added a teaspoonful of ammonia and a pinch of powdered borax

RECIPE FOR SOFT GINGER CAKE – One teacup molasses, half teacup of sour milk, one egg, a piece of butter the size of an egg, one teaspoonful of ginger, one teaspoonful of soda, a little salt, a cup and half of flour (good measure). Put all together and beat hard. Bake in a long pie tin until done.

Our family subscribed to the Harper's Weekly. You might find some of the names and products advertised then familiar to you now. We could buy Weber pianos, Gorham silver, Ferry seeds, Domestic sewing machines and Thompson "Glove-fitting Corsets".

An ad in Harper's reads: "A prompt cure for consumption, weak lungs and general disability. Take Winchester's Hypophosphate of lime and soda. One dollar per bottle." An article in Harper's advises us that the best remedy for hard times is a farm of your own. Free homesteads are available in Nebraska.

The media for our advertisers were billboards, newspapers and magazines. Some of the slogans were: IVORY SOAP – "It floats"; CASTORIA – "Children cry for it"; SCHLITZ – "The beer that made Milwaukee famous" and EASTMAN KODAK – "You push the button; we do the rest."

Our newspapers were the New York Times, The Tribune, The Herald and the Sun. I can just remember when feature stories were beginning to be written on sports and human interest. My mother's favorite columnist was Dorothy Dix. You are all too young to know the cartoons that we read in those days. I loved the Yellow Kid, the Katzenjammer Kids, Happy Hooligan, Buster Brown and Mutt and Jeff.

The books on our library shelves were mostly historical novels. There was Quo Vadis and Ben Hur, but my brothers read the Horatio Alger stories. Of course, my sister and I read the Elsie books. We had paperback editions, too, but they were all stories of the

Old West. We had dime novels in which they always preached that right will triumph. This was evidenced in Pluck and Luck, The Liberty Boys of '76, The Wild West and The Lariat King.

The magazines that I remember having at home were The Atlantic Monthly, Century, Scribner's Monthly and my mother's own magazine, Cosmopolitan. This was \$.15 a copy and quite an extravagance for those days.

The writers I remember best were Mark Twain, Emily Dickinson, Edwin Markham and Henry James. Oh yes, and Walt Whitman – his Leaves of Grass was considered scandalous in 1865, and he was dismissed from a government post for this reason.

The popular song writer in those days was Stephen Foster. He was born in 1826 on July 4, and died in 1864. His first successes were "Old Susanna" and "My Old Kentucky Home." He is remembered for his tenderness which was reflected in all of his songs.

Our education started off with the McGuffey Reader. It was hoped that this would teach us obedience and industry, as the stories always imparted a moral lesson. They were pious tales of exemplary children which extolled their virtues and belabored their vices.

Under the terms of the Morrill Act of 1812, the great state universities were founded as an outgrowth of federal land grants. This brought education to those not able to afford the tuition of private colleges.

Andrew Carnegie established funds for public libraries and cultural programs, and at this time the Chatauqua lecture series was also established. Education was beginning to be the keynote.

As the pattern of American life was changing, so was the use of leisure time. In the cities there were playhouses where for 10, 20 and 30 cents you could watch melodramas. The pitfalls of the big city to the innocent country girl were graphically shown. Available also were vaudeville and burlesque. Most noteworthy, to me, my dears, were the Trolley Parks where we could ride the roller coasters. There were also dance halls and band concerts.

Entertainment in the rural areas was largely found in activities at the Grange Hall. The County Fairs were marvelous, really big events. Of course, the baseball parks were always popular.

We had a "talking machine" in our front parlor. There was a big horn on it, and the picture of a dog listening to 'His Master's Voice.' Our "victrola" was a product of the Victor Company. We listened to records of Old Black Joe, Annie Laurie, Wait 'Til the Clouds Roll By, After the Ball Is Over, The Sidewalks of New York, Tenting Tonight and Buffalo Gal.

Our president was Ulysses S. Grant who stepped from the battlefield into politics. He was a general, and in 1868 the Republican convention nominated him unanimously for president. He was our eighteenth president serving from 1869 to 1877. In his two terms he kept the support and faith of the people.

You may see Grant's tomb today when you visit New York City. Inscribed in granite over the entrance are the words "Let Us Have Peace," which in Grant's acceptance speech for his nomination to the presidency was so meaningful.

After the war, we had a huge national debt and inflated currency. Another problem was with the Negroes who as free men had little idea of how to provide for themselves. There was evidence, too, of the rise of the Ku Klux Klan.

Now I'm thinking of what was happening around us. The status of women was changing. My older sister wanted to get a job! Jobs for women were now available because of the invention of the typewriter, the cash register, adding machines and the telephone.

Fashion was being influenced by the acceptance and popularity of the bicycle. It was becoming the vogue for tailored suits and shirtwaists. I found a beautiful picture of my mother in her cycling outfit as she was on her way to her "sewing circle." Women's clubs were on the rise, and the time was right for organization of philanthropic groups and fraternal orders. We were becoming a nation of joiners.

You girls do remind me of some other girls; there were seven – and now I know! Do let me tell you about them.

It was in Mt. Pleasant, Iowa. There were seven Iowa Wesleyan College girls whose friendship had deepened, and they wanted to make their friendship meaningful and lasting. One of them said, "Let's have a society of our own!" They met in the music room of Main Hall because they could have privacy there. They brought the big Bible down from another room, and here their hopes and plans culminated in P.E.O. as celebrated on January 21, 1869.

The personal background of the seven girls was woven into the fabric of P.E.O, with the Christian ethic and dynamic purpose of living for others being basic. Thus it has endured.

Each founder contributed her own gift: Mary Allen, poise; Alice Bird, literary bent; Hattie Briggs, homemaking; Alice Coffin, education interest; Suela Pearson, gaiety and charming sociability; Franc Roads, vision and progressiveness; Ella Stewart, social service.

An Article in the January 1966 RECORD has us think of these girls as the seven colors of the rainbow. (*Note: Pictures of the founders are placed in a focal point with a ribbon*)

attached to each one. The ribbon colors are significant: red, Alice; orange, Suela; yellow, Hattie; green, Alice Coffin; blue, Mary; violet, Ella; purple, Franc.)

I found this interesting article by Leonora Van Antwerp: I'll just tell you little bits from it. "Man has always admired the rainbow and wondered what caused the beautiful colors, but no one found a scientific explanation until Sir Isaac Newton proved in 1670 that color evolves from light and that light is refracted as well as dispersed. Sir Isaac designed a color chart for which he chose seven colors – red, orange, yellow, blue, green, violet and purple. He correlated the number of colors with the seven planets known to ancients and to the seven tones of the diatonic scale. Seven has been a mysterious number, almost esoteric, and we can add the seven theological pillars of Christianity; Love and Hope, as the two main supports with Faith as the central beam connecting them to the four corner posts of Prudence, Justice, Temperance and Fortitude. Then if we say with Peter "Add to our Faith, Virtue; to Virtue, Knowledge, Temperance, Patience; to Patience, Godliness, Brotherly Kindness and Love, we then have the mysterious choice of the seven founders in their guiding principles innately evidenced in our Objects and Aims. We are using the seven colors of the solar spectrum diffused with the white of all color to express the personalities of our seven founders. (*Note: as the following is read for each founder, remove the ribbon from her picture, and when complete, tie them together, making a meaningful "rainbow."*)

ALICE BIRD BABB, RED. RED for Alice! Red for power and fire. She was cheerful and bright, exciting and stimulating with vitality and action. Alice had real community fervor. She was the key speaker on Decoration Day and the Fourth of July. Her outstanding presentation of the Gettysburg address and the Preamble to the Constitution, her inspiring talks at conventions and meetings, made her in great demand. She also trained young orators and speakers. Alice was a writer on many subjects and a great reader. It was said that she read a new book before the ink was dry. She prepared our sisterhood's first constitution. She was elected president that first day, held office for three years but was never able to be president again. She said later that, "for such giddy girls, they showed wonderful maturity in the P.E.O. conception. " When P.E.O. became a real force in the country," she said, "In the order of the universe, the time was ripe for such an organization." Another evidence of being in the right place at the right time.

SUELA PEARSON PENFIELD, ORANGE. For gay, warm and sunny Suela, we chose orange. She was the youngest, the prettiest and sunniest of the seven. She had the finest clothes, the most beaus and the most of this world's goods. With all her advantages, she did not recognize class or circumstance, but admired and exemplified true character. Suela was a famous hostess and a lady with intuitive nobility. She gave generously of her talents in music and dramatics. Her marriage took her to Ohio, and afterwards her sisters of the original group rarely saw her.

HATTIE BRIGGS BOUSQUET, YELLOW. We've chosen yellow for Hattie. She was happy and smiling with a sunshiny quality. Hattie suggested the Society to her friend. Must we mention that another society that had just been organized may have spurred

her suggestion? She was a sweet and understanding woman but lived less than a decade after graduation. Her life was full and happy with her husband and two small sons. The founders spoke affectionately of Hattie's sunny disposition, her radiance of spirit and her beautiful faith.

MARY ALLEN STAFFORD, BLUE. Mary Allen's blue symbolizes heaven, constancy, truth, peace, spirituality and tranquility. Mary was the first to wear the star in public. She married a minister who later became president of Iowa Wesleyan, the birthplace of P.E.O. As first lady on campus, Mary was in her element serving as a leader of girls. She remained in Iowa and served P.E.O. until the end of a long life. She was with us longer than any other founder. Mary had a deep religious conviction and great strength of character. It was she who said, "P.E.O. is love in action."

ALICE VIRGINIA COFFIN, GREEN. For Alice, we chose green – for spring, hope, rejuvenating joy, happy tranquility and music. Alice was a devoted teacher and counselor. She loved beauty and rhythm. She could be the 'jolliest of the jolly.' She loved the poetry of motion,, and quote, "her Methodist foot was in grave danger under the spell of rhythmic motion and general merriment." Because she enjoyed dancing, she left the Methodist church to affiliate with the Episcopalians where she was an active participant in church activities. Her niece says that on Sunday mornings she would dress in her dainty best and walk to church carrying her Bible in a beige velvet case. It was Alice who suggested the star as our emblem, the star that gave the society its early nickname of 'the pleiades.'

ELLA STEWART, VIOLET. Although Ella Stewart chose the colors for the new society, we have chosen for her own color the lovely violet that symbolizes love, dignity, patience and sacrifice. Ella did not marry, but she lived with her widowed mother cheerfully caring for her until her death. The State Industrial School for boys in the mid '70's and '80's was not a pretty place, but Ella taught there for years reclaiming many boys for worthwhile citizenship. Such schools were the forerunner of our present juvenile court system. Ella's philosophy was the unselfish gift of service to others. She was a truly lovely, great and dedicated woman.

FRANC ROADS ELLIOT, PURPLE. For Franc we chose the purple of the law. Franc had the mind of a statesman and was progressive to the end of a long and useful life. She worked intimately with such great workers for women's rights as Juliet Ward Howe, Susan B. Anthony and Frances E. Willard. She was a close friend of John Greenleaf Whittier. Franc had a keen sense of justice and a vision of a better womanhood, a vision being fulfilled today in our five projects. Her advanced ideas in women's forward movements helped many causes and through her work women were admitted to the General Conference of the Methodist Church. Franc was lovely, smart and talented, calm, courageous and self-controlled. She did beautiful artwork and was art supervisor for the Quotata, Illinois Public school. At 67, she attended several courses at the University of California in Berkeley.

It all started so simply – a sisterhood to perpetuate friendship. Each of the seven was different as is each of you. (*Note: tie ribbons together*)

With the golden star set in pure white, white created of the merging colors exemplified in the personalities of the seven, hopes are extended for each member and for each chapter in a gay, vibrant song of promise, beauty and living color.

THIS IS YOUR HERITAGE!!

Michigan State Chapter