

Alice Bird Babb – she was called Allie

b. May 8, 1850 in Mt. Pleasant, IA      d. Nov. 21, 1926 in Aurora, IL      age 76

Alice was medium height with dark brown eyes and hair. She was a voracious reader and singer and was known as the literary expert among the founders. She was not a man worshipper, but knew boys as "brothers." Her father was the first physician in Henry Co, IA. She graduated with an AB degree in classical studies in June 1869 and in 1872 received an Honorary Masters degree then taught at IA Wesleyan as a Greek & Latin instructor from 1872-1876. She was 15 when she entered IA Wesleyan. After teaching for three years, she married in 1873 to Washington Irving Babb, a lawyer in Mt. Pleasant, IA and later taught law at IA Wesleyan. They were married 52 years. After she married, she gave class plays at IA Wesleyan. Her home was filled with culture & refinement and was open at all times to Wesleyan students. Alice was a presence in her community – a forceful speaker, a talented writer and a rare conversationalist. A job change took Allie and family to Aurora, IL where she lived until her death. She had 4 children and was the associate editor of the Record for several years and wrote for other magazines under the name of Avis.

As she was charged with preparing the oath, pledge (which became our Objects and Aims) and Constitution, she wrote years later in The Record, "It seems to me but yesterday, that I had laid upon me the heavy burden of writing our P.E.O. primitive constitution. I am glad to remember today that I left the sitting room, where just the common family sat, and went into that 'Holy of Holies,' the SPARE bedroom! My father gave me assistance, but told me that I must compose the oath myself, and not show it to anyone, even to him. So there I sat, looking at the cold, bleak landscape outside the window, and longing for inspiration. I recall the objects in the room, the high feather bed, over which was spread my mother's Irish chain bed quilt, - so beautifully pieced and quilted; and those fluted pillow shams, - with a great wreath of braiding in the center and a huge B,' as if anybody on earth would want to steal those impossible shams! The next day, January 21, 1869, I took the oath to the old music room of Iowa Wesleyan College and the girls gobbled it right down, so anxious were they to get moving. It was arranged that I take the oath first, as I had written it, and Ella Stewart read it to me, as she was the oldest of the seven; but we could find no Bible and Sue Pearson picked up a Greek dictionary, and said to pretend that was a Bible, but Ella Stewart thought not, so we lumbered up into the chapel, and brought down the family Bible on the pulpit and used that." She was the first PEO President and was the first founder to receive her pin which was made at Crane Jewelry Store in Mt. Pleasant, IA.

She wrote that they hoped to have bylaws written at the first meeting, but it took several meetings to finish them. She was likely the busiest PEO, writing articles for

the Record and maintaining membership all her life in Chapter A in Mt. Pleasant, IA. She had a remarkable memory, often reciting many pages from some classic she loved; she could quote Charles Dickens verbatim. She was also interested in great songs of the world and their history and was known for giving literary direction to PEO.

No one was more surprised at the growth of PEO than the founders. Allie Bird wrote, "The growth of this society will always fill me with wonder and amazement, for truly tall oaks have grown from very small acorns. I try to think sometimes in my sober moments that we original seven foresaw all this greatness and built accordingly; but not so. We were no wiser than any chance seven you may select from any P.E.O. society, but the soil was ripe for just such an organization."

Allie also noted, "I earnestly hope the true spirit of P.E.O. will not be smothered in form, but that the original idea of kindliness, helpfulness, and charity will forever exist, and thus we will become a potent factor in the world's welfare."

Alice's bio begins on p. 11 in Out of the Heart.