

Alice Coffin - like Alice Bird, she was often referred to as Allie

b. Mar. 29, 1848 in Louisville, KY d. July 28, 1888 in Newton, IA at age 40

Alice was a tall, 5 foot, 11 inch, willowy blonde with blue eyes. She had a stunning personality; she had excellent taste, was keen, sarcastic, yet warm-hearted and quick tempered, yet ready to make amends when necessary. She had the grace and charm of a well bred southern girl, which she was. She was an extremely neat and tidy person which made her a great organizer. An ancestor of hers, Tristram Coffin, was one of 10 who bought Nantucket Island in 1660 and started a settlement there.

Her mother died when Alice was 9 and when she was about 15, her father, who had served in the Civil War, moved the family of 6 children to Mt. Pleasant hoping all the children would get a good education from IA Wesleyan. Every morning as he left home to work, he spoke a special reminder to his children which is how our motto originated!

She suggested and designed the star as the PEO emblem, wrote the oath and was the first to receive a pin since she designed it; she needed little time to decide that the star would be their emblem because she was so intrigued by the vastness of the sky and universe. Because 5 virtues were beliefs of the group, the 5 points of the star served to remind them of those virtues. She was the first to serve as vice-president. She received a BS degree and 3 years later earned an honorary MS. She was a fine teacher in Des Moines, then Chariton, IA. One of her students was Mabel Davenport Dowd who became President of the Supreme Chapter in 1933.

Alice often provided her own funds for her scholarly students. She was an elegant dancer but Methodists didn't dance, so she later changed to Episcopalian as they allowed dancing. She once had a beau, Will Pearson, brother of Suela, but she broke off the engagement and never married after that. She was an excellent seamstress and made almost all her own clothes. Alice brought education to PEO. She ended up living with her sister in Newton, IA, which is where she died. She had Bright's disease, a disease of the kidneys.

A quotation from Alice is as appropriate today as when P.E.O. was founded:
"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."

Alice's bio begins on p. 17 in Out of the Heart.