

## Mary Jane Allen Stafford

b. Dec. 30, 1848 in Mt. Pleasant, IA    d. July 10, 1927 at age 78

Mary Jane was tall and slender and a blonde with blue eyes. She had good taste in clothes and was graceful, cheerful and popular with the student body and had a good sense of humor. She was musically inclined and a pianist. Mary Jane was the daughter of Reuben and Evelyn Allen. Reuben was a businessman who dealt in real estate. She married Charles Stafford, taught briefly, had 3 sons and a daughter and experienced many moves (10 in all) during his ministry. She was active in P.E.O. and transferred to 5 different chapters. They enjoyed 56 years of marriage. Church elders had advised Charles against marrying her, saying, "Mary Allen is not the girl for a poor struggling preacher to marry. She's too fond of parties and clothes!" As it was, she was preeminently a homemaker and mother, "keeping the home fires burning" for her family and their friends. Being the wife of a minister, she was active in Christian life and often ministered to those in distress or need, comforting the bereaved and sorrowing. She and Charles were married 56 years.

She received a classical AB degree in 1869 and an Honorary AM degree 3 years later. Charles was the President of IA Wesleyan from 1891-1899. She attended the groundbreaking and cornerstone ceremony of Memorial Library at IA Wesleyan which was a memorial to the Founders.

She was the parliamentarian of the initial P.E.O. and insisted on proper procedures when conducting business. Most of the organizing of the 7 Founders occurred in her home. Mary was the first to wear the star in public, served P.E.O. all of her life and was the last surviving founder.

Mary had a deep and abiding faith in God. She spent a year in CA in 1922 and made many P.E.O. appearances. The first Founders' Day in P.E.O. was held in her honor in Long Beach, and was attended by 240 P.E.O.s. She attended several chapter organizations, the fifteenth anniversary of Chapter S, and the state convention in Pasadena, where she presented charters to chapters CK through CR and attended the 1923 Convention of Supreme Chapter held in Seattle. Later in life, she considered The Record as the uniting agency of P.E.O. She said "it not only disseminates P.E.O. news but it unites our interests, our thoughts and our policy." Her contribution of spirituality and poise transferred from her to P.E.O.

She once stated, "*Love, first among ourselves, and then in our activities reaching out to all others. It should be our purpose to not only make P.E.O.*

*greater, and better, all the time, but womanhood and humanity, greater, and better, because of P.E.O."*

Mary Jane's bio begins on p. 9 in Out of the Heart.