

Suela Pearson Penfield – pronounced Soo-EE-la

b. Aug. 24, 1851 d. Sept. 20, 1920 in Cleveland, OH at age 69

She was beautiful, bright, had dark brown, dancing curls and brown eyes. She was just a sophomore when she became one of the founders. Suela had a beautiful voice and was noted for her dramatic ability as well as her gracious manner. The girls enjoyed going to her home for meals. She lived in a two-story brick house with a broad porch across the front. Dr. Pearson, her father, was a practitioner of homeopathic medicine and had the most pretentious home, and the most beautiful team of horses. Suela was not only the prettiest, but the gayest and she had the finest clothes and the most beaux of all the founders. She was a little flirt as you might guess from her curls, her white fur scarf, muff and her feathers. She was always an attraction, like a magnet, bringing joy to all around her.

Suela was the socialite of the seven Founders and was an intelligent beauty. She was always the “Belle of the Ball,” or as some said, would have been called the “flapper” of the seven. The other six thought she was the most popular; she was gracious and cultured and offered P.E.O. the spirit of merriment, charm and sociability. Suela took an extra year to graduate in 1871 with an AB degree which meant she studied Greek and Latin. Three years later she won an Honorary MA degree. The family then moved to Washington, DC so they could enjoy more culture and educational opportunities. They also spent time in NYC. She studied music and voice training in the east after graduation from IA Wesleyan. She was related to President Wm. F. McKinley and was a member of DAR.

She married Frank Penfield in 1876, who worked with Standard Oil Co. and later was a real estate developer in Cleveland. They were prominent in Cleveland society. She had a son who died of a football injury while a freshman at Yale and one daughter. After moving to Cleveland she was out of touch with P.E.O. until 1881 when a group of sisters called on her. When their marriage failed after 25 years of marriage, she moved back to New York and declared bankruptcy and received \$50,000 in alimony. Her daughter Rose was a charter member of AH in OH in 1938.

In her later years, after many financial reverses and sadness from the death of all the men in her life: her father, son and brother, she took care of her invalid mother. On the occasion of PEO's 50th Anniversary in 1919, she sent a letter of greeting, which in part, said, *“Looking over the yesterdays I can find no hour in which my heart has not turned to all (the Founders) in loyal devotion and a proud thrill of enthusiasm at the onward advancement of God's starry dwellers.”*

She suffered a long illness later in life.

Suela's bio begins on p. 24 in Out of the Heart.