

FOUNDER'S DAY PROGRAM

(Based on a Diary that might have been written by a friend of our Founders.)

“Getting to know Alice Wilson Mitchell in Mt. Pleasant, Iowa during the fall and winter, 1868, 1869”

Tips for Props: Make Dates, as Diary Dates, on cardstock. Have one person read the diary, another hold the date cards, have a third person be the Narrator. The Diary reader might be wearing a white apron.

This program could well be presented by one presenter, also.

Written by Nancy Meise, Chapter EQ
Presented to EQ on February, 22, 2005

One of our classmates Dillon Payne, had these words to add about our founders. He knew each of them during our years together at Iowa Wesleyan. I found his recollections to be very interesting observations.

Hattie Briggs was the best hearted girl that ever lived. None knew her but to love Her. She was modest and retiring.

Alice Virginia Coffin was a tall willowy blonde with a stunning personality. She could lay aside her dignity and become a hilarious romp, which she often did.

Ella Stewart was bright and lively and could play and sing. She was cheerful, talkative, and enjoyed entertaining.

Suela Pearson, had talent, could sing and was very attractive. She had more beaus than most of the girls but she was impartial to all of us.

Franc Roads took her place in our class as a substantial member. There was dignity and poise in her manner. She was intellectual, artistic, hearty and cheery and had the faculty to charm.

Alice Bird was a girl to be reckoned with. She was an expert in Latin and Greek. She was in the limelight for all four years. She was always a part of any bold or daring adventure.

Mary Allen was graceful, cheerful and popular with the boys. She had good taste in dress and steed well in her classes. She was a leader, as were all the other P.E.O. Founders.

Alison Wilson Mitchell

September 1875

I'm sure that some of us have kept a diary at some point in our lives. There we recorded those wonderful thoughts that made us happy and sometimes, sad. It was a way to share very private thoughts for us alone. We knew we could go back and remember special times, special people and special thoughts.

This diary could well have been written by a young woman in Mt. Pleasant, Iowa in the year of 1868. Mt. Pleasant enjoyed a reputation as a cultural center and the young women and men who attended Iowa Wesleyan were very interested in what the world had to offer. They worked very diligently to learn in order to be able to contribute to the growth of the United States and its role in the world.

Let us assume that the writer of this diary wanted to share her daily life, thoughts and interests for others to read about at a later time. Here we will see the excitement and enthusiasm of a young woman finding new ideas and meeting people who would greatly influence her life in the years to come.

Let us get to know Alice Wilson Mitchell in Mt Pleasant: Iowa during the fall and winter of 1868 and 1869

September 14, 1868

Dear Diary,

The days are far too busy! My classes take so much of my time, but I am enjoying all of them. My German class and my composition class are by far my favorites. I've also been visiting with Alice Bird in the afternoon before we go home. She is such a wonderful person, full of grace and purpose. Must prepare for classes.

September 28th

Dear Diary,

I can't believe I haven't written a word in two weeks! Where does the time go? I met a young woman from Chicago today who came here with her sister to attend school. She seems nice and is interested in starting a chapter of a women's secret society called I. C. Sorosis or some such name. I will have to learn more

about this organization!

October 4th

Dear Diary,

On the way to chemistry class I met Franc Rhodes. We chatted as we walked. She, too, has heard about the secret society. I asked her what she thought. She said several other close friends had been invited to join but not all of her close friends. This bothered her a great deal. She and her close friends were going to meet to talk about what they would do. I told her I admired her loyalty and devotion.

November 20th

Dear Diary,

I feel I must make time to do some thinking about joining I. C. Sorosis. Those who have been asked all seem to be very interesting, personable and studious, but I am still drawn to Franc and her close friends. What am I to do?

December 12th

Dear Diary,

Well, today was the first meeting of the I.C. Sorosis chapter. I felt badly that I had reluctantly decided not to join. There were five other members plus Libbie Brook at the meeting from what I understand. Franc says that she and her close friends, Mary Allen, Alice Bird, Ella Stewart, Hattie Briggs, Alice Coffin and Suela Person are going to do something about forming their own society. I wonder how successful they will be? Time will tell!

December 15th,

Dear Diary,

Well. I now have a little more information about this new society! It seems as though these seven friends are very serious about what they are doing. Their nicknames, collectively, are the Lifebloods and they certainly do live up to that!

They all spend spare time working to organize a society to meet their needs and commemorate their cherished friendships. I want to learn more about their plans and hope to be invited to join when they have their plans in order.

January 20th 1869

Dear Diary,

The holidays are over and classes are back in session. There seems to be a great deal of activity and quiet conversations going on among Franc and her friends. I wonder what is happening. When will I find out?

January 21st

Dear Diary,

Well NOW I know! Late this afternoon Franc told me about a very special meeting she and her friends had this morning. In the Music Room of Main Hall, Franc and her six closest friends formed a new society. Before the meeting they decided to call the new society P.E.O. and also decided to have a star as its emblem, a suggestion from Alice Coffin. Alice will prepare a Constitution to be presented at the next meeting. Franc is so excited about the whole idea and I must admit, her enthusiasm is somewhat contagious! I begged her for more details, but she said she had so many things to do and would talk to me later. I can't wait to hear more!

January 22nd

Dear Diary,

I learned from Franc today that there will be the first organized meeting of this new society tomorrow night at Mary Allen's home. Franc promised to give more information after that meeting as she can tell I am eager to learn more. This is so exciting!

January, 24th

Dear Diary,

Franc has told me about the meeting. The Constitution that Alice Coffin wrote was read and of course, there were lots of suggestions on additions. They elected officers to serve for six months. President will be Alice Bird. Alice Coffin will be Vice president, Ella Stewart as Secretary and Hattie Briggs as Treasurer. She said they were deciding how they were going to announce this new society and just when they would do it. There are still many details to be worked out, but all seven friends are busy getting things organized.

January 26th

Dear Diary,

The most exciting news of all! I have been invited to join this new organization. I can't wait to be able to join these seven special friends and eight other friends who have been invited to join. Franc said that an announcement will be made in the next several days. How are they going to announce P.E.O.?

January 29th, 1869

Dear Diary

Well, it is official. P.E.O. was announced with much excitement this morning in Chapel. I am sitting here smiling as can recount exactly what has transpired since that first meeting on January 23rd. Franc and the others decided that they needed to have a dignified and dramatic way of announcing the new society. Quite by chance they found out that the I. C. Sorosis society was planning to have its members attend chapel on a specific morning dressed in their distinctive blue calico dresses. The P.E.O.'s decided that they would also march into Chapel that morning with their own outfits. Mrs. Roads. Franc's mother designed a unique apron and helped each of the seven founders get theirs made. The aprons were of white percale and were ruffled all around. The left side was higher because that is where the black and gold enamel pin would be placed in honor. Perhaps the dramatic entrance of the seven founders, marching in single file, was also dignified.

They were very well received and those of us who were also members were filled with great pride. The I. C. Sorosis members were relegated to marching in behind the P.E.O.'s because we got to Chapel first, having sacrificed sleep to finish

the aprons. I don't know how they felt, but we all were so excited. It was a very special day!

Now, I must hurry to class. Enough excitement for one day!

Alice Wilson

EDITORIAL COMMENTS:

To add more "punch" to the ending of this program, search through issues of RECORD, particularly January-February issues for articles on the Founders.

Or make a closing suitable for your own chapter.

Good Luck!!!