

FOUNDER'S DAY – PATCHWORK QUILT (Reviewed May, 2006)  
Chapter HA, Berthoud, CO

Narrator: Life is like a patchwork quilt: we receive certain material and add to this material as life proceeds. Each piece of a quilt fits into a pattern and hopefully develops into a picture of beauty and of a full life. Most of us need a pattern in order to make a quilt. Our seven founders gave us a pattern. They constructed a design so simple and pure and full of idealism which could only be completed through a lifelong effort.

Faith is the thread that holds the pieces of our life together. It may appear faded, but has not lost its strength even though at times it seems weak at the seams. Love, purity, justice and truth bind the edges of our lives. In January of 1869 when women were beginning to reconstruct and grow out of the rigid atmosphere in which they lived, seven young women decided to have a society of their own. Active plans for organization were put into action that very month, and from these women the star of P.E.O. was born.

Mary Allen Stafford had good taste in dress and made smart clothes look even better. She was graceful and popular with the boys. Mary's wise and kindly interpretation of P.E.O. laws and activities helped to create the image of P.E.O. for those who came later. She stressed the necessity for good order in conducting business meetings.

Mary: I chose the classical courses at Iowa Wesleyan and entered the university and received my A.B. degree and an honorary A.M. degree in 1872. I was in no hurry to get married. I enjoy the country dance and entertaining in my home. Practical Christianity is my natural way of life and I treasure my friends. Yes, I do believe that order is necessary in life and feel that we are undisciplined if we cannot endure the quiet restraint of listening.

Narrator: Alice Bird Babb was 15 when she entered Iowa Wesleyan. Taking long strides, with her hair thrown back and her dark piercing eyes, she soon became a figure to be reckoned with. She was in demand by all downtown and college literary programs as she was a forceful reader and singer. Virgil, Cicero and Socrates were not to be slighted and she was not hesitant to enter bold or daring adventures. Thus she was an enthusiastic participant in P.E.O. until the end of her life. She made a tremendous contribution to the phraseology at Grand Chapter, notably in the

preparation of resolutions, laws and ceremonies. Alice Bird was a gifted and lifelong student quick to share her talents with those she knew and loved.

Alice: My friends all call me Allie. Reading Hiawatha to a literary group is a true joy of my life. I do not worship boys as many students do, but meet the boys like brothers and generous to all of them in my attentions. I was associate editor of the P.E.O. RECORD during the first 3 or 4 years of its existence and often write under the name of Avis.

Narrator: Harriet Briggs Bousquet was the best hearted girl that ever lived. To know her was to love her. She was modest and retiring and the five words of the pointed star were innate with her. She is remembered best for her radiant smile.

Harriet: Everyone calls me 'Hattie' and my home is always open to my friends. I chose scientific courses while in school and received my B.S. degree in June of 1869. I taught music and art after graduation. In 1873 I created excitement among the congregation of my father's church of the regular Sunday service, when at the end of the regular Sunday service, Henri Bousquet and I met at the alter and my father united us in marriage. This was a complete surprise to most of the congregation which made me smile and laugh with joy.

Narrator: Alice Virginia Coffin was a tall willowy blond and combined all the qualities of a stunning personality. Alice could be a queen in the drawing room, a first lady at a ball and could also lay aside her dignity and become a hilarious romp, which she often did. One student wrote of their teacher, Alice - "She was the kind of teacher that the girls copy and boys silently worship."

Alice: I have had several offers of marriage and at one time was engaged; however, I wanted to be a devoted and imaginative teacher. Each of my students are a challenge to me and I try to encourage them to become a total person. My church rituals and ceremonies are held in my heart, but my fondness of dancing is frowned on by my Methodist church. My ethical standards, however, are high and I know that they have lifted many young people to higher levels.

Narrator: Suela Pearson Penfield was charming, gay and gracious, beautiful and intelligent. She became an excellent musician and was outstanding in dramatics. She always seemed to have a ring of boys around her, and the heartthrob of many. None of the other girls were ever jealous of Suela and would not have dreamed of leaving her out of the original seven founders. Her light shone on all and no one wanted it put

under a bushel.

Suela: While in school something told me not to be too quick about picking a husband so I waited. Luckily, I did and in 1876 I married Frank Penfield. We lived near the Rockefeller home and held a prominent place in Cleveland Society. I still enjoy continuing my education and make sure that our daughter, Rose, has the same advantages. However, all is not an enchanting storybook life as I lost my father, brother and then my son. My mother became an invalid and for many years my daughter and I cared for her until her death. I designed the banner that for many years was awarded to the Iowa Wesleyan University Cadet Corps. This banner now hangs in the P.E.O. memorial rooms at Mount Pleasant.

Narrator: Frances Elizabeth Roads entered Iowa Wesleyan at the age of 14. She had dignity and poise in her manner and kindly eyes that danced with the fullness of life and merriment. Her face was serious and thoughtful, but pleasant and engaging. Frances was the gyroscope when all was rocking about. She herself never rocked the boat. Frances practiced art as a profession and traveled around the world to study. She was associated with the art department at the University of Nebraska.

Franc: I like to be called Franc. I pride myself on never being late for class and take life a little more seriously than my six sisters. Changing social conditions for women is a lifelong challenge for me. I have a crusading spirit and count among my friends Susan B. Anthony, Lucy Stone and many others interested in the women's movement. My mother helped me design the aprons that we seven girls wore as we marched to chapel to introduce P.E.O. to the world. We caused quite a stir that day.

Narrator: Ella Stewart qualified as a founder of P.E.O. She could sing, play, was neatly dressed, and was bright and lively. Ella was forced to drop out of college because the need for her help at home was so great. She did, however, keep her place in all the group entertainments and was a splendid hostess. Ella's pin is the only one of the original seven pins in existence. She bequeathed it to Alice Bird Babb. It is on display in Memorial Hall in Mount Pleasant.

Ella: For many years I taught piano lessons. Then I felt a need to make a change and became a teacher at the Iowa Industrial School for wayward boys. Even though I am not able to continue my education I still participate in many school activities with my sisters. I love to be with people and few can match my keen wit. Violets are my favorite scent to wear and many say this sweet smell follows in my wake.

(Seven founders remain on stage and stand behind the seven candies.)

Narrator: Today as we remember these charming women who began the quilt of P.E.O., let us light a candle for each.

Each of the founders will then light a candle and say -

Mary Allen: Did you keep the star a beacon? Did your path lead down its rays?

Alice Bird: Did its fivefold points inspire you, brighten up your darkest days?

Harriet Briggs: Did you hear our girlish laughter, feel the love we seven shared?

Alice Coffin: Did you look beneath the surface, feel our strength in, what we dared?

Suela Pearson: Did you give your hand in kindness? Were you loyal as a friend?

Franc Roads: Did your love enfold each sister? Were you faithful to the end?

Ella Stewart: Did you learn your worth as women, know the value of your mind, realize your great potential, find your place in humankind?

All seven together: Do you ever think about us? Are you guided by our aims? Do you Look back in remembrance? Do you even say our names?

Narrator: Would you all please stand and sing the Opening Ode.

END

Note: This program was given at the Founders Day Luncheon for chapters from Berthoud, Johnstown, Windsor, and Eaton at the Presbyterian Church in Berthoud. Members of the chapters had brought heirloom quilts and had them displayed at the front of the church. Very effective. All participants were in costume with appropriate hairdos.

Idabelle Arndt

ch. History Committee, 1982-1983

Note: There was an old trunk in front of the church where people were sitting. Each founder picked her picture from the trunk and set it on a rack. The setting has to suit available facilities.

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