

MINI-MOMENTS OF P.E.O. HISTORY

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#1

In February, 1917 Chapter A invited Chapters B, C, D, E and F as guests to a convocation to be held in Milwaukee for the purpose of organizing a State Grand Chapter. On September 28, 1917 at the Plankinton Hotel in Milwaukee, the meeting was called to order by Mrs. Olga M. Iddiols, Supreme Organizer. After taking the password, the opening ode was sung and devotions were conducted. Mrs. Morris, Chapter C read the following resolution: "That the Wisconsin Grand Chapter in convocation assembled request the formation of Wisconsin Grand Chapter at this time." The motion was carried. Charters were granted to three new local chapters: G, Beaver Dam; H, Madison; and I, Stevens Point.

There were 13 delegates. Officers were elected. Also present at this meeting was Nellie Hayes Scott - - the first initiated member into P.E.O. Her daughter, Russella Scott, F, was elected as the first President of the Wisconsin State Chapter.

In the years from 1917 until 1947, Mrs. Winona Evans Reeves (President of Supreme Chapter from 1909-1911 and the Editor of the P.E.O. Record from 1918 to 1949) attended all but four of the Wisconsin State Conventions.

The first annual Convention was held in Appleton in 1918. Alice Bird Babb, one of our Founders, attended the second annual Convention in Milwaukee in 1919. Franc Roads Elliot, another Founder, attended the third annual convention at Beaver Dam in 1920.

In 1924, at the seventh annual convention, held in Stevens Point, Mrs. Reeves read a paper by Mrs. Babb. This convention was the last time that Wisconsin State Convention had any direct contact with our Founders.

#2

Chapter A, Wisconsin, was organized on March 31, 1906 in Milwaukee. Mrs. Winona Evans Reeves, Supreme Organizer, presided. There were 11 charter members. In 1946, at Chapter A's 40th birthday, Mrs. Reeves was the guest of honor.

Chapter B, Appleton, was organized 2 days after Chapter A – April 2, 1906. Mrs. Reeves took a train from Milwaukee after A's organization, to Appleton to organize Chapter B.

Chapter C, Milwaukee was organized in 1909. Chapter members in that chapter were the daughter-in-law and granddaughter of Alice Bird Babb, one of the seven P.E.O. Founders.

Do you have any idea in which month most Wisconsin chapters were organized? It is May. There are 51 chapters that celebrate birthdays in that month. In fact, there are 8 chapters that were organized on the same day – May 18th:

Chapter AN,	Menomonie	in 1940
BB,	Beloit	in 1948
BI,	LaCrosse	in 1951
BQ,	Milwaukee	in 1956
CH,	Eau Claire	in 1967
DL	Waukesha	in 1985
DZ	West Bend	in 1991 and
EG	Waukesha	in 1996

Only 3 chapters were organized in February and only one in the month of July.

#3

Our Star, as a badge, what could be more significant?... The stars of heaven are bright because they are reflected upon. Likewise should our lives be made radiant by the reflection of God's love upon our hearts, giving us light and wisdom.

Our star,... with its five shining points directing us... in the paths of virtue, and with those mystic letters, P.E.O., telling their own sweet story. The points radiating from them bear their message of faith in God and in each other. Purity in thought, speech and action. Justice to all in deed and opinion. Truth in speech and conduct. Love to God, to our friends and to each other. With the five lessons of virtue ever before us, their principles embodied in our own beautiful star, let us keep strict watch that its brilliance is not dimmed nor the beauty of a single point marred by ought we do or say.

But let it shed over our hearts and lives a golden splendor and point us ever to God who guides us with his love. Our lives should be affected by our emblem in that we are pure minded, truthful, faithful and loving in character, wearing upon our hearts the zeal of our Master's love.

■ Ella Stewart, 1890

#4

The first initiation ceremony was the oath, written by Alice Bird on the day P.E.O. was founded and used that afternoon for the initiation of the seven Founders. The oath consisted of 35 words and was a simple pledge of secrecy. It was used to initiate prospective members until 1877.

The regular initiation ceremony was written by Nellie Ambler Campbell (Original A) in 1882. There were two minor changes before it was adopted: Hope was changed to Justice and Fidelity to Truth. The ceremony was enlarged in 1886. All changes since then have been minor except for those required for the addition of the initiatory emblem in 1899.

A revised ceremony presented to the Supreme Grand Chapter in 1907 also changed the password. It was so used until 1921 when it was changed back to the original form.

#5

P.E.O. CREED

I BELIEVE in P.E.O. and all that it stands for, not alone in fact, but in act.

I BELIEVE in my sisters, in the honest of their intentions, in the purity of the motives, in the integrity of their character, and in the loyalty of their friendship.

I BELIEVE in the sweetness and helpfulness of friendship, and in the joy of serving others.

I BELIEVE in the virtues of Faith, Love, Purity, Justice and Truth, and in the hope that lures us on.

I BELIEVE that life does not consist in the abundance of the material things we possess, but in the abundance of things we are and do.

I BELIEVE that it is within our power as P.E.O.s to help each other, that the rough places may be smooth, and the crooked places straight, the burden less heavy and life a continual joy and blessing, ever increasing, growing richer and richer.

I BELIEVE in the present of our Sisterhood with its opportunities in the future with its obligations, in the divine joy of living here and hereafter, in the enlarged and ever enlarging sphere of usefulness that is opening up before us each year.

-- Effie Hoffman Rogers

(Written near the turn of the century)

#6

It was not uncommon for a P.E.O. to be initiated twice – it was sometimes simpler than to decide how to transfer membership.

Gavels were scarce in some of the early chapters. There is record of one chapter using a large crochet hook for a gavel. Another chapter used a cane for a gavel at its organization meeting. There must have been many strange substitutions until gavels became an item of supply.

Caroline Kettle, G, Colorado wrote our Opening Ode. It was adopted at the Convention of Supreme Chapter in 1921.

A “model meeting” was given at the Oregon State Convention in 1933. It was recommended to the Sisterhood by Mrs. Grace Runyan Parks, a Past President of Supreme Chapter, to be a part of all State Convention programs.

FROM THE CONSTITUTION, 1881 --- Article 5, Section 2

“This star, although it may be worn at other places, will find its properly acknowledged place in the left shoulder and when in that place may be touched at times as a signal of distress.”