



History of the P.E.O. Sisterhood

Founded on January 21, 1869, the P.E.O. Sisterhood is one of the oldest women's organizations in North America. It was established at Iowa Wesleyan University, Mount Pleasant, Iowa, by seven young college women who wanted to perpetuate their friendship.

P.E.O. quickly changed from a campus college sorority to a city organization. Today more than 225,000 women are active members in P.E.O. chapters founded throughout each of the fifty United States, six of the Canadian provinces and the District of Columbia.

More than 113,000 women seeking opportunities in higher education have received more than \$366 million through the projects of the P.E.O. Sisterhood. The philanthropy of P.E.O. includes scholastics loans, scholarships, grants and awards. In addition, P.E.O. owns and supports Cotter College, a baccalaureate-granting liberal arts and sciences institution located in Nevada, Missouri.

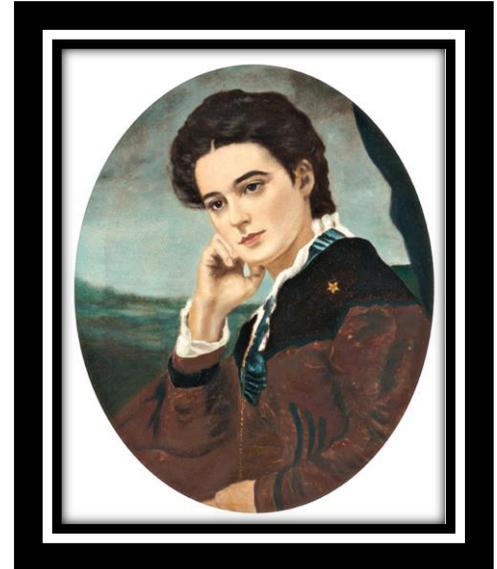
This philanthropic educational organization has a strong and vibrant history of *Women Helping Women Reach for the Stars!*

Information from [We Who Are Sisters](#)

The following tidbits on our Founders were taken from an article by May Brooks Snider. May was initiated in Chapter Original A in 1875, is past president of Iowa State Chapter, and was personally acquainted with all the Founders. She died in 1944.

P.E.O. Founders

ALICE BIRD BABB (1850-1926) was medium in height, with dark brown eyes and hair, she was a forceful reader and singer. She was not a man worshipper, but met the boys like brothers, and was generous in her attentions to all. She was an ardent student, an omnivorous reader, and most generous hostess. Her home was filled with culture and refinement and was always open to the students of Wesleyan, who basked in the sunshine of her presence as she was a rare conversationalist. She had a remarkable memory, often reciting many pages from some classic that she loved.



MARY ALLEN STAFFORD (1848-1927) was a blonde with fair hair and blue eyes. She had good taste in dress, and always wore her clothes well. She was graceful, cheerful and popular with the whole student body, and active in all Christian work. As a minister's wife she was ideal, sympathetic and kind, ministering to those in distress or need, and comforting the bereaved and sorrowing. She was preeminently a homemaker and mother, "keeping the home fires burning" for the comfort of husband, children and friends, a blessing to all who came under her influence.

HATTIE BRIGGS BOUSQUET (1849-1877) was a blonde with unusual deep blue eyes. "The best hearted girl that ever lived." She was modest and retiring. Her classmates called her the "Mother Superior" and "Patron Saint", and went to her in all their troubles and always received help and consolation. It was she who first proposed forming a society to which the other six readily agreed. She wore the star only seven years, but one of her associates said, "It was hers to give to our Sisterhood a note of joy that has grown sweeter and stronger as the years have come and gone."



FRANC ROADS ELLIOTT (1852-1924), a brunette, was strong and vigorous in mind and body. There was dignity and poise in her manner. Of stock form, broad forehead, kindly eyes, a wealth of dark brown curly hair, her face was serious and thoughtful, pleasant and engaging. Her character was needed in the building of the new temple of P.E.O. The structure must be decorated within and without. She became a devotee of art in the early years of her life, and acquired fame in her chosen field.



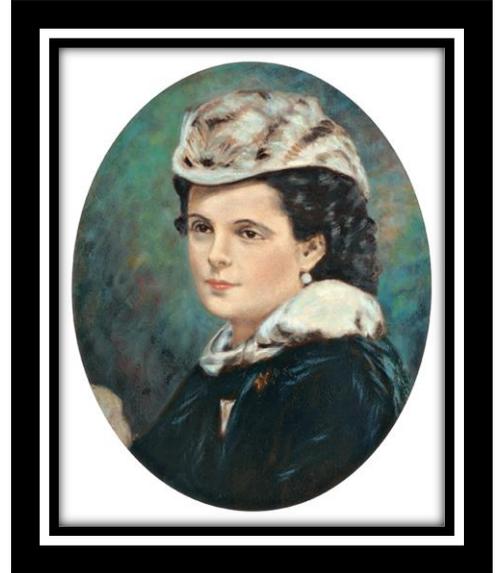
ALICE VIRGINIA COFFIN (1848-1888) has been described as a "tall willowy blonde" with blue eyes. She combined all the qualities of a stunning personality. In the drawing room she would be a queen; in the ballroom, the first lady. She had excellent taste, was keen, sarcastic, yet warm-hearted, quick tempered, yet ready to make more amends than necessary. A fine teacher, and valuable as an organizer. She ornamented the Star.



ELLA STEWART (1848-1894), winning in face, interested in all whom she met, lively, talkative, and strong in her likes and dislikes. She was of Irish descent and had a keen sense of wit, and quick repartee so often found in that race. She had auburn pompadour hair, florid complexion, dressed neatly and in good style, and was bright and lively and could play and sing nicely. She always graced all social functions and took an active part in all the amusements.



SUELA PEARSON PENFIELD (1851-1920), beautiful, bright, fluttering in the sunshine, bringing joy to all around her. She was lovely as a dream. All remarked her rare beauty. She was also a woman of rare dramatic ability and a fine musician. She was always surrounded by a galaxy of young men ready to pay her homage. In this day and age, she would be called the flapper of the Seven. No one could resist her loveliness. She had a plump and chubby face, beautiful dark brown curly hair, and winsome ways. She was always an attraction, a magnet.



**Louisiana State Chapter
salutes our
P.E.O. Founders!**