

History of The P.E.O. Record

Bring several issues of The Record to pass around during the program. You might even want to read one of the membership articles (for example, "Mystery Meals" in the Nov/Dec 2011 issue) to subtly show chapter members that The Record is worth reading – it has relevant ideas in it.

More than 100 years ago, December 27, 1888, the first issue of The P.E.O. Record rolled off the press of Johnson and Shakley Brothers in Oskaloosa, Iowa. Volume 1, No. 1, 1889, was a brave venture in publishing backed by little money and great optimism.

The fact that the magazine has survived and flourished over all these years is a tribute to the Sisterhood which believed in it and needed it. The Record has changed with the times, but always its intent has been to serve as a bond between chapters and members. It is a personal communication of news and inspiration, from officer to member and member to member.

The P.E.O. Record was born of need. In the beginning P.E.O. chapters exchanged letters. They shared chapter happenings, marriages, babies ... all sorts of news. But, as P.E.O. grew in number of chapters, letter writing became more of a burden. There was a real need for another means of communication.

By 1883 seven chapters had been formed and Grand Chapter came into being. Official information, including lengthy convention minutes, had to be hand written and sent to all chapters. For the most part, this duty fell to the corresponding secretary and recording secretary of Grand Chapter. No doubt the secretaries breathed a sigh of relief when the 1888 convention voted to table the cookbook proposed at the 1887 convention and publish a monthly paper. Funds were meager with only \$531.53 in the treasury for all Grand Chapter expenses, but the faith and courage were there to try a needed project.

The committee of three appointed to work out the plan included Effie Hoffman Rogers, who was serving as Grand Chapter president. The committee met between sessions of the 1888 convention and chose Effie Rogers as editor, set the subscription price at 75 cents, determined the publication to be monthly, named it The P.E.O. Record, and voted the editor a salary of \$40 monthly. All chapter corresponding secretaries were "commanded" to prepare material for the paper.

The first issue in January 1889 was a 16-page magazine filled with historical and inspirational articles, home hints, Grand Chapter news, chapter letters and much more. Effie hand addressed all 451 subscribed copies of the magazine. As editor, Effie also assembled the 16-page folios as they came off the press by running them through her sewing machine to bind them. In her first report to Grand Chapter ten months later, she noted that she had stitched 26,666 yards, or more than 15 miles, binding the magazines. Her report also stated that the 4,850 copies mailed in the 10-month period cost \$378.50 with postage an added \$6.37.

The magazine was a great success. Members enjoyed it and it answered a very real need of the society, but finances were a problem. With the actual printing costs at 6 ³/₄ cents per copy (81 cents per year) an annual subscription price of 75 cents was not adequate. Local advertising was not successful since subscribers lived in a dozen or more states. At the 1889 convention, President/Editor Effie made a number of suggestions: (1) The subscription price should be raised

to \$1 per year; (2) Each chapter should send at least one advertisement; and (3) The publication fulfills a need and should be continued. The committee accepted the report and re-elected Effie as editor.

The faith with which the magazine was launched held out, but the money did not. By the end of the second year, the advertising and subscription increase was not sufficient to overcome the deficit and there were rumblings of discontinuing the publication. The editor's salary was cut from \$40 to \$25 a month. Effie declined re-election as editor, so Mary Osmond of Osceola, Iowa, was elected. Mary was not at the convention and had never attended a P.E.O. convention. She had no expectation or desire for the position she was elected to fill, although she was the owner and publisher of the *Osceola Gazette*. In fact, it was several days before she even knew she was elected editor ... a friend attending the convention told her.

With a reduced salary and Mary's use of her own writing instead of paying for literary material, the cost of the Record was cut almost in half. After Mary served three years as editor, the magazine was let out on bids, with the bidder assuming all responsibility both editorially and financially. The bid went to Siddie Richards of Waterloo, Iowa, whose husband was the editor of the *Waterloo Courier*. Siddie introduced a cover design and ran pictures of prominent members. She was obsessed with the idea of making the magazine pay for itself. In some issues she cut the number of pages and twice she combined issues, but it was not enough. The list of subscribers needed to grow. In 1895 Siddie proposed the establishment of a P.E.O. Record Fund with 25 cents added to the annual dues of each P.E.O. whereby each member would receive an annual subscription to the magazine. The plan was presented to the convention and passed. Thankfully, this financial policy worked and continues today (although the allocation has obviously increased).

After Siddie Richards, several editors filled the role ... including Effie Rogers, the first editor. Effie served from 1913 until her death in 1918. Winona Evans Reeves, past president of Supreme Chapter, was appointed to fill Effie's term of office and served as editor of The P.E.O. Record for 31 years until 1949. During this time, the Record blossomed from a 6 1/2- x 9-inch pamphlet into its present size and different cover designs were used each month. Edith Wallace filled the spot left by Winona's resignation. Edith, past president of Supreme Chapter and a published writer, had written extensively for magazines in the 1920s and 1930s. Edith served as editor for 11 years.

Office space was included for The P.E.O. Record when the Executive Office was built in Des Moines, Iowa, in 1960-1961. Edith did not care to move to Des Moines so she resigned as editor. Up until that time the Record was printed in the town of the editor. Alvina Mattes, whose home was in Des Moines, took over as editor and served until her retirement in 1969. Anne Johnson was elected the seventh editor of The P.E.O. Record, serving in years second only to Winona Reeves. Today, Becky Frazier serves as editor of the Record.

During the 1965-1967 biennium, zip codes were added to all mailing addresses and it became each member's responsibility to submit her own change of address to The P.E.O. Record (prior to that the chapter corresponding secretary submitted the change). Address changes may be submitted via www.peointernational.org, mailing in the form on the back of the Record, or by calling 800-343-4932. Sadly, thousands of dollars are lost each year simply because of returned Records due to change of address.

The P.E.O. Record is the official publication of P.E.O. It has been communicating news of P.E.O. to members ever since that first January 1889 edition, reporting convention proceedings, informing members about P.E.O. projects, acquainting members with officers and activities of International Chapter, as well as sharing activities of the organization.

Don't toss the Record in the nearest drawer when you receive it ... read it. It is a wonderful way of learning more about P.E.O. and the important projects that we support. It's also a good source of award-winning ideas for chapter fundraising activities and growing chapter membership.



OUR FIRST ISSUE: a society paper born of need



FIRST YEARS: All type cover was used from 1890 to 1895



MARGUERITE BORDER: used from 1900-1904



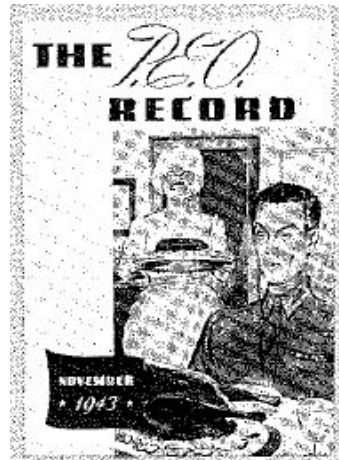
MARGUERITES OVER A STAR: design became part of title from 1907-1909



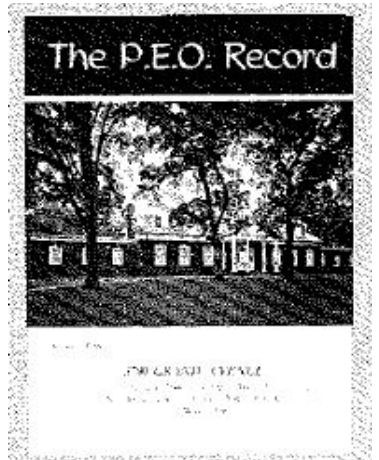
FIRST 2-COLOR COVER: a bed of marguerites centered with a star, 1913-1918



50th ANNIVERSARY: first used in gold tone, then in different colors from 1918 until 1925



VARIED DESIGNS: magazine size enlarged 1923, different design used each month



FIRST 4-COLOR COVER: featuring the new P.E.O. Executive Office, 1961