

STYLE FROM THE STILE:

A Tribute to 1869 Fashion and the Founding of the P.E.O. Sisterhood

During a meeting of **Chapter CD in Lake Wales, Florida**, member Mary Martha Henderson pitched an idea for the next Founders' Day program: "We're already going to be talking about the Founders, why don't we dress like them, too?" The idea was to present a fashion show inspired by the portraits of the seven P.E.O. Founders featured in the 150th anniversary book, "We Who Are Sisters." Enthusiastically, the sisters of Chapter CD supported the idea of recreating the 1869 fashions.

Mary Martha orchestrated every detail of this monumental undertaking. Her passion and experience for creating costumes to pair with opera performances served her well. Using more than 120 yards of fabric, detail trim and authentic period patterns, Mary Martha sewed each of the seven costumes, including accompanying hoopskirts and bustle pads, to replicate the outfits worn by the seven Founders.

Although it was a gargantuan task that spanned 10 months, skilled members of the chapter made the process easier. Anne Marcure, a talented seamstress in her own right, cut out all of the pieces of fabric for the costumes and provided necessary support through design ideas, assisting with the multiple fittings and alteration

suggestions during the creation of the dresses. Other chapter members contributed by covering buttons, hand sewing small details and researching and writing the narrated program.

On January 22, 2022, the Ridge Reciprocity Founders' Day Luncheon in Winter Haven, Florida, included P.E.O.s from Chapter CD in Lake Wales, Chapters U, BN, CH, and DP in Winter Haven and Chapter IA in Sebring. Chapter CD presented its unique program, "Style from the Stile: A Tribute to 1869 Fashion and the Founding of the P.E.O. Sisterhood."

Seven Chapter CD sisters served as models to represent each of the founding members. Laura Hunt narrated the fashion show and introduced each "Founder" individually by highlighting intriguing facts and anecdotes as her costumed counterpart strolled around the room through the nearly 80 guests in attendance. Having the opportunity to see and touch the dresses up close enriched the experience for everyone.

In addition to the display of historical costumes, the program included an educational "underwear demo." Mary Martha stepped onto the stage simply clad in a chemise and corset. With

assistance from Nancy Turnquist, she demonstrated the step-by-step procedure that showcased the various garments a lady would have worn under her clothes during the 1869 time period. To the delight of the crowd, Mary Martha then sashayed through the sea of P.E.O. ladies in a hoopskirt and crinoline.

The Founders' Day fashion show was an enormous success. The program not only highlighted the fashions of our Founders, but also illuminated who these seven women were as individuals. Now, Chapter CD is exploring ways to use it to raise money for scholarships. A few ideas being considered are producing an official video, renting the costumes and script to other chapters and reprising the show at the Florida State P.E.O. Convention. The possibilities are numerous.

Throughout this remarkable endeavor, Chapter CD bonded more deeply as sisters and represented our P.E.O. Founders in a unique and unforgettable way. ★



Sisters from Florida chapters CD, U, BN, CH and DP at the Ridge Reciprocity Founder's Day Luncheon were treated to a Founders' Day fashion show



PICTURED: Mary Kolling as Hattie Briggs, Beverly Lynne as Alice Coffin, Lynne Hulen as Ella Stewart, Paula Templeton as Suela Pearson, Mary Martha Henderson as Franc Roads, Chris Waters as Alice Bird, Anne Marcure as Mary Allen.