

*"The Kiss of the sun for Pardon
The Song of a Bird for Mirth
We are nearer to God's heart in a Garden
Than any place on Earth."*

God has freely bestowed upon us the gift of faith. In faith, we plant our garden, believing that it will burst forth in splendor. Carefully selecting a shaded area between shrubs, under a small tree where the soil will be moist, we tenderly plant our first bulbs. Soon, the bright yellow trumpets of the daffodil herald the approach of spring, defying icy winds and lingering snow. Our random planting has created a joyful corner in our Garden.

Standing firm in her convictions, displaying strength of character, courage and initiative, tall and graceful Hattie Briggs Bouquets is naturally represented by the daffodil. She originated the idea of a secret society and assembled the group to organize the first chapter, just as this lovely flower braces winds and snow to be first in our garden. This was the springtime of our Sisterhood. Quick with gentle repartee, Hattie enjoyed a lively discussion, and as a trained musician, she filled her home and her life with song. As with some strains of daffodils, while sturdy and tall, blossoms are of short duration, so it was with Hattie, she being the first to fade from the garden.

In shades of pink, white, lavender, lilac and blue, and with a delicate aroma and dainty blossoms, the violet is the reward for the love with which we have tended our garden. Free flowering, and self-sowing with abandon, violets shyly require lightly shaded areas. Needing reasonably moist soil and minimal attention, these small plants will give their beauty to all who pass by. Shy with a trace of melancholy and small of stature describes Ella Stewart, yet she whole-heartedly completed whatever she proposed. She was an instructor of instrumental music in Mt. Pleasant and surrounding communities, and became a teacher at a boys' reform school. Her innovations in education and exemplary character inspired many of her delinquent students to become men of honor. It was she who administered the pledge to Alice Bird and installed her as the first president. Just as the violet imparts its free flowering fragrance to our garden, Ella, lovingly and freely gave of herself wherever there was a need, in an unassuming manner, devoting her life to others.

In the purity and grandeur of the lily, we see Alice Virginia Coffin. The lily is symbolic of Easter and God's promise of eternal life. Tall, regal, and elegant of blossom, these hardy plants will flourish in a variety of soils and multitude of surroundings. Some lilies blossom quickly, others may require years, all exhibit purity of strain. Alice was statuesque, blond and precisely groomed. She had a successful teaching career and often provided funds for deserving students. Such gifts were always tactfully administered, avoiding embarrassment to donor and recipient. Her lofty ideals, care in selections of associates, and purity of character naturally led to our selection of Alice as our lily, and to her selection of the star as our emblem. Her pure, idealistic lady-like nature was an inspiration to all who knew her, and we strive always to exemplify her in our Sisterhood.

A gentle curve in our shaded garden path brings us to the bright sunshine of the pansies. Being slightly mounded, the well-drained soil of this bed nurtures the long flowering season of their blossoms. The thoughtful faces of these flowers appear in many colors and combinations. Able to tolerate hot days, but preferring cooler temperatures, pansies flourish from year to year. The dark hair, pensive eyes and mischievous face of Alice Bird Babb are as the blossoms of the pansy. Knowledge of literature, ready wit and delightful humor drew people to her home through the fifty-two years of her married life. Alice instituted and directed class plays at Iowa Wesleyan for seventeen years. Through her literary efforts she was able to write for magazines and was associate editor of THE P.E.O. RECORD for many years. With her ready pen and command of language, she wrote the pledge of membership and the first P.E.O. Constitution. Her charming and delightful manner and thoughtful consideration of others are indeed an emulation of the pansy.

In the light of full sun, the carnation showers us with its profusion of blooms and remarkable scent. Carnations lend themselves well to flower borders and frequent cuttings, and mingle nicely throughout our garden. Their spicy fragrance haunts our garden. Vivacious Mary Allen Stafford's profusion of activities, brightness of character and charm imparted a spicy element and carnation-like sunshine and fragrance to the lives that touched hers, so of course, she is our carnation. She involved herself in many P.E.O. activities, freely gave of time and talent toward church and academic projects, and her associations were always open and just. Her longevity exceeded that of the other six founders, and she was successful in church ministry for the majority of her lifetime. Her fine sense of humor helped extend her life so that she saw the birth of Cottey College, the establishment of a national loan fund for women, and the beginning of the P.E.O. Memorial Library at Iowa Wesleyan College.

There are a vast number of types and varieties of roses. Their exquisite blossoms are suited to any occasion. Majestic colors, indescribable aroma and lovely form cause them to be among the most beautiful in the garden. Her elegance, stately beauty and social grace easily liken Suela Pearson Penfield to a rose. She lived truth, just as the rose displays true color and form. This magnificent flower, in its many varieties and colors suits all tastes and climates. Roses will thrive with little attention, but added care will increase their true beauty, just as we increase beauty and truth by nurturing the lives of our sisters. The exquisite fragrance and rich beauty of the rose set it apart as one of the more elegant flowers in our garden. Elegance of character was personified by Suela. She is sometimes referred to as the most beautiful of the seven founders. Intelligence, social grace, vocal talent, and love of people led her to be a philanthropic and social leader.

Bordering our walkway, its golden blossoms of copper and bronze defining the limits of flowerbeds, the marigold dances through summer and autumn. These saucy little plants will thrive in barren places and abound in good soil with moderate watering and regular care. Franc Roads Elliot's love of companionship, sparkling eyes and personality, appreciation for and instruction of arts are as the marigold when watered and tended. Her ability to maintain poise and beauty while struggling for improved school conditions and women's rights against opposition, reminds us of the marigold, which can bloom in challenging conditions.

Unblemished pure white petals with the gold of the sun for its center describe the marguerite. Simplicity of form, purity of color, and sunlight radiance are signified by this blossom. As the seven founders of our sisterhood have selected the marguerite as our flower, so have we chosen this flower to enhance our garden, and for its qualities to surround our lives.

In this garden rampant with a myriad of blossoms, are seven plants whose variety, growth and bloom, foliage and fragrance are subtly apparent above all the rest. These seven blossoms, having been nurtured to fulfillment, form the nucleus of our garden with its plants, trees and flowers, all requiring different degrees of care and attention.

Although our garden will grow with minimal care, other elements will cause it to flourish. Care in selecting plant stock, provision of proper conditions for growth and tender loving care will cause a garden to erupt in a beauty beyond description.

Our garden had its beginning with seven flowers of unique variety. Each plant grew in its unique way, yet shared its beauty and characteristics in a compassionate manner with all the rest, causing each blossom to emanate its radiance more fully.

Love that is boundless caused God to give all, that we may be eternal. As our original seven blossoms returned their ultimate to their Creator, so must every lovely flower in our garden, for to withhold aught is to perish.

Mary & George Brox, AF, WY, 1993