



Section Fourteen

“The Home that Love Built”

NEBRASKA P.E.O. HOME

*You have to visit to inhale the wonderful smells
of freshly baked bread and ladies who wear lavender.*

This article was written in large part by Nebraska State Chapter Historian Julia McDougal. Contributions to the history of the past twenty years were gathered from the annual reports lovingly prepared by Home Board presidents, including Sue Fisher, EF, Omaha; Chalice Harvey, CT, Fremont; Debra J. Hanlon, EY, Omaha; Kathryn Olson, EE, Lincoln; Anne Baumhover, HK, Fremont, and Pam Kregg, GM, Omaha.

Nebraska P.E.O.’s devoted historian Julia McDougal describes beautifully the early days when the idea of a P.E.O. Home in Nebraska was little more than a dream. In the paragraphs below, she captures for you the essence of an idea as can only be birthed in the heart of a Sisterhood. Here, in Julia’s precise retelling, and with updates from a succession of Home Board presidents, is how it happened.

The Nebraska P.E.O. Home sits quietly on the west side of tree-shaded Fifth Street

in Beatrice, its tranquil dignity unchanged since the day in October 1936, when the committee from Nebraska State Chapter first drove to Beatrice to tour this home belonging to the J. Stewart Elliotts. They had come at the invitation of Elizabeth Robertson, member of the committee who belonged to Chapter Z, Beatrice. She had written to them to say "very gently" that the Elliotts were interested in giving their home to the P.E.O. Sisterhood.

Chairman Ada Mead, BN, Omaha, gave the report to the 1937 Convention of Nebraska State Chapter, in part, as follows:

"So long as I remember anything I shall never forget the joy that filled my heart when I saw that home. Seldom in my life have I seen so beautiful a setting; lovely lawns, beautifully landscaped, a fine brick home with wide verandahs and a tiled roof set on spacious grounds so rarely seen anywhere these days....."

The reality had exceeded their fondest dreams.

The history of how Nebraska P.E.O.s responded from that day in October 1936, through the succeeding three-quarters of a century is a story of extraordinary women responding to an idea—the idea that a gracious and loving home be available to Nebraska members at whatever price a sister can afford to pay. It should be a retirement home for members in need of congenial companionship. The story of how the beautiful house given by the Elliott family in 1937 was transformed so smoothly from a seven-bedroom home with shared bathrooms to its present [1995] capacity of twenty-four residents, each with her private bedroom and bath, is a story of inspired vision followed by unending commitment.

The story features many persons in starring roles. In a sense, all Nebraska P.E.O.s are stars, but most have served in supporting roles. The Home is a success because Nebraska chapters and members have taken the Home and its family to their hearts. Their financial gifts have made the physical plant what it is today, an extremely beautiful building, stately and dignified, making sure that changes made were done without loss of architectural unity and charm. In addition to the dollars given, chapters have poured lavish amounts of concern so that a spirit of love flowed from chapter members to the Home family, bringing reciprocal warmth and appreciation from the residents and the staff. The P.E.O. Home Board of Trustees provided, through its leadership, the opportunity for this chemistry to happen and to develop. Nebraskans have fondly called this project "The Home That Love Built." And so it is.

Chapter communication with the Home has been and continues to be vital to the success of the Home. Newsletters from the Home to Nebraska chapters began after Nettie Brown became superintendent in 1947 and have continued in some format since that time. However, chapter and individual visits have personalized the relationship. Such visits, of course, have been most convenient for those chapters within a distance of about a hundred miles. Occasionally, chapters located in towns much farther away plan for a time when they also may have the privilege of visiting the Home. In addition, delegates to state convention have combined a trip to convention with a Home visit. The Ada Mead Suite on the lower level provides a room in which a chapter may convene for a meeting with some of the Home family as guests. Chapters schedule visits with the Home administrator and enjoy bringing dessert and perhaps a program as special treats for Home residents.

In addition to chapter visits, individual P.E.O.s living nearby often make

personal visits to the Home. These visits provide opportunities for Home residents to join them for drives to see the beauty of the flowers and fields, or perhaps to see the magic of the Christmas lights. As a celebration of the Home's 50th anniversary, Nebraska P.E.O.s provided for the restoration of the lovely antique piano and the purchase of a twelve-passenger Chevrolet sports van, lovingly referred to as "Daisy." During her tenure, Administrator Jeanne DeVore served as chauffeur for drives or for transportation to events in southeastern Nebraska. Beatrice community organizations and local pastors also bring programs of inspiration and enjoyment to the Home.

The daily schedule of the Home provides for a variety of activities. Exercise programs are adapted to each resident's need. Bible study, bingo, and bridge are regular activities. Once a month, "theme" parties bring seasonal or "just fun" decorations, followed perhaps by a movie on the big screen TV. Springtime finds the large screened-in porch ready for the relaxed tempo of some outdoor hours when residents gather to visit over a glass of lemonade or iced tea. The local library brings books that may be enjoyed on the porch on pleasant days or in a cozy room inside when the weather turns cooler. Personal visits are encouraged and guest privileges and fees were set up soon after the Home was opened. In 1938, the first trustees of the Home established that a visitor could stay overnight for fifty cents. Meal rates for guests began at twenty cents for breakfast, thirty-five cents for dinner and twenty-five cents for supper.

More than 200 members have called this special place their home since 1938. Residential stays have ranged from a few months to over twenty-five years. Happily, the list of residents includes some who labored long for its success. Two of the best known residents served earlier as administrators of long tenure. Nettie Brown, DX, Lincoln, became a resident in 1960 after thirteen years of dedicated service; and Helen Wallace, also of DX, retired to become a resident in 1980, following sixteen years of energetic activity as superintendent. Two esteemed officers of Supreme Chapter were residents: Rose Owens, BN, Omaha, long time treasurer of Supreme Chapter; and the inimitable Bertha Clark Hughes, M, Omaha, President of Supreme Chapter from 1921 to 1923. Two members of the Home Board have called it home: Ada Mead, BN, Omaha, who had worked for thirty-eight years to benefit the Home and Lucy Livingston, AO, Fairbury, a five-year resident. These four were past presidents of Nebraska State Chapter, as were Mae Bond, AO, Fairbury; Maude Hendy, EB, North Platte; Catherine Andersen, CR, Omaha, and Nelsine Scofield, DN, Lincoln.

By now, the Home had been a much-loved institution among Nebraska P.E.O.s for seven decades, and few recalled its inception. The idea of a retirement home took root in Nebraska in the early thirties. Iowa had opened its Home in 1930 and California was preparing to open its Chapter House. Each of these state chapters had received gifts of large residences that could be transformed into retirement homes with sufficient room for a number of persons to live with privacy and dignity. In Nebraska, Chapter K, Lincoln, had brought to Convention several times the suggestion that the need for a retirement home be studied. At the 44th convention in Lincoln in May 1933, Ada Mead, BN, moved that a committee be appointed to investigate such a need and to report back to the Convention in 1934. The motion carried. State President Dora Wenner, AS, Kearney, named the following to serve as a standing committee: Ada Mead, BN, Omaha, chairman; Floy

Roper, DK, Lincoln; Grace Julian, G, Hastings; Gertrude Dafoe, AT, Tecumseh; and Mary Jane Hughes, DY, Omaha. The committee's task was to enter into discussion with Nebraska chapters to ascertain the amount of interest and support available for this project.

Mrs. Mead reported to the Wayne Convention in 1934 that chapters had indicated interest. Sixty-two chapters were in favor and thirty-six were opposed "at the present time." The opposition undoubtedly was due to the depressed economy in Nebraska. During those years, banks were closing and many families were losing all that they owned. The "thirties" became known as an era of depression, drought, dust storms, grasshoppers, and bread lines, so the caution was understandable. However, Mrs. Mead pointed out that these same economic factors made the need for a Home even more urgent, and State President Josephine Waddell asked the previous committee to serve for the coming year.



P.E.O. Home private room awaits the personal touch of a new resident

The following convention in 1935 found the delegates ready to respond to the committee's request for a transfer of \$5,000 from the General Fund to serve as a nucleus in establishing the P.E.O. Home Fund. They voted favorably to this request and also for the setting aside of four percent of the state dues to be added to this fund, beginning March 1, 1936.

The committee personnel changed in 1936, with Elizabeth Robertson, Z, replacing Gertrude Dafoe and Nina King, G, succeeding Grace Julian. Ada Mead reported widespread interest and growing enthusiasm among the chapters and a balance of \$5,315.69 in the Fund. The spark of hope in this dream becoming reality burned brighter, but even the redoubtable Ada Mead might have had a pang of misgiving about the long road ahead. Then on a day in late summer, the letter to her from Elizabeth Robertson arrived telling her "very gently" (she said later) that the Elliott home in Beatrice might be available to Nebraska P.E.O.s if they wanted it.

Her hasty reply, assuring Elizabeth of their interest, led to the day in October when the committee members were joined by State President Isabelle Nelson to have lunch with her before meeting Mr. and Mrs. J. Stewart Elliott. The P.E.O.s were delighted with the Elliotts and with their beautiful home, which they were offering debt free, with taxes paid and in good repair, to Nebraska State Chapter for the sum of one dollar.

The committee voted to accept the generous offer and to forward it to the Nebraska State Chapter executive board. That board, after a satisfying tour of the residence in late October, voted to accept the house as the P.E.O. Home, pending approval of the 1937 convention.

When the 1937 convention met in Omaha, Mrs. Mead made the report of the offer of the Elliott family to the delegation and moved its acceptance. Then, Elizabeth Robertson, speaking to Convention, described the city of Beatrice and gave the history of the Elliott home.

In 1873, J.E. Smith, a financier from New York, purchased the lot on Fifth Street between High and Grant from Daniel Freeman, the "No. 1 Homesteader." The original house, built in 1880 for \$62,000, had a steeple and was three stories. The property included a barn and the lawn was a block deep. Smith lost the house in the financial crisis of 1893, and it was purchased by R.J. Kilpatrick in 1903. R.J. remodeled it extensively—removing the steeple, increasing the rooms to seventeen, adding electricity with a private generating plant, an elevator, formal gardens and a wrought iron fence surrounding it. Mr. Kilpatrick was a close friend of Stewart Elliott's father, and following the untimely death of the father, young Stewart made his home with the Kilpatricks. R.J. Kilpatrick bequeathed his palatial residence and furnishings to his foster son, J. Stewart Elliot. Elliot and his wife lived there for eight years and then, since their sons were grown, decided to move to smaller quarters and donate their home to a charitable organization. Since Mrs. Elliott was a member of Chapter Z, Beatrice, Elizabeth Robertson presented her with the idea of a gift to P.E.O. Her response was favorable and the rest, as they say, is history. [Reference: *It's in the Blood, The Story of the Kilpatrick Brothers* by Chris Millspaugh and Jean Swartling].

As Mrs. Robertson finished the background material, Mr. Elliott was escorted to the platform of the state convention and was introduced to the delegates. He then graciously presented the Elliott residence to the Nebraska State Chapter of the P.E.O. Sisterhood. The Convention voted its approval and gratitude with a standing ovation.

The executive board recommended that the administration of the Home be delegated to four committees:

BUILDING: Elizabeth Robertson, Z; Carrie Spellman, Z; and Louise Moore, M.

ADMISSION: Anna Loutzenheiser, AW; Gladys Titus, H; Vera Ann Rodman, DT.

RULES AND REGULATIONS: Isabelle Nelson, DA; Margaret Clearman, N; and Florence Stewart, CK.

FURNISHINGS: Floy Roper, DK; Amy Grubb, K; and Betty Gass, CC.

The Convention voted that fifty cents of the state dues of each member be added to the P.E.O. Home Fund.

At the 1938 convention, Ada Mead, serving as Nebraska State Chapter president, had the privilege of receiving the report dear to her heart—the successful completion of plans to establish the P.E.O. Home. The committees appointed

to convert the Elliott house into an attractive retirement home reported that Nebraska chapters had responded generously to the project. Bedrooms were furnished by K, DW, DA, E, BK, AS, EG, and CS. Gifts of money, furniture, china, silver and linens came in abundance from chapters all over the state.

The dedication of the Home was held on Sunday, May 15, 1938, with 2,500 persons in attendance. The dedication address was given by Rose Owens, BN, treasurer of Supreme Chapter. Elizabeth Robertson, chairman of the Building Committee, presented the Home to Nebraska State Chapter. Mr. and Mrs. J. Stewart Elliott were honored guests and welcomed as the warm friends they had become. They continued to be strong supporters as Nebraska P.E.O.s' dream became reality.

The P.E.O. Home quickly touched the hearts of P.E.O.s who had the opportunity to see it on its dedication day or in the weeks that followed. Certainly, the heart of the attraction was the charm of the lovely brick home. The half-block setting of green lawns, trees, and shrubs complemented the house itself. In summer, the air was filled with the scent of many flowers, especially the beautiful roses. It was a warm and inviting home to those first few who shared in the venture of this special Nebraska P.E.O. project. A visitor entering the house found a spacious hall with a stately stairway leading to the second floor. A large living room lay to the left where the south windows overlooked the lawn, carefully tended through those dry and dusty years to keep it an inviting area. The dining room graced the rear of the house with the kitchen on its right. An elevator in the hallway provided easy access to the second floor of seven large bedrooms, five single rooms plus five bathrooms.

The committee oversaw the work that summer to complete a new heating system, wiring and fixtures plus necessary painting and cleaning to ensure inviting and comfortable surroundings.

Opening day, September 1, 1938, found Superintendent Gertrude Brown, CM, Crete, and three would-be residents ready to move in. Gertrude, a woman of efficiency and culture, had accepted the offer of \$35 per month salary to guide the opening of the Home. She worked to establish a warm and caring atmosphere for those first Home family residents. She remained at the Home until December 1941, serving with commitment and dedication.

The 1939 state convention approved a recommendation that a Home Board of Trustees should govern the Home and be made up of five members, each serving five years. No limit was suggested on the number of terms a member could serve. First to serve on the Board of Trustees were: Ada Mead, BN; Isabelle Nelson, DA; Gladys Titus, H; Floy Roper, DK; and Anna Loutzenheiser, AW.

The board realized that overseeing the operation of this retirement home would require broad skills. They needed to keep the interest of Nebraska P.E.O.s at a high level, thus assuring both financial and caring support; they also needed to develop practical skills beyond their personal home-managing experiences: the bedrooms must be kept warm enough for elderly residents on a 24-hour basis; much plumbing must be kept in good repair; and seemingly endless maintenance and renovations must be initiated. Each annual report since 1939 has noted work on the building as these vigilant trustees solved homeowners' problems of maintaining the building, in addition to hiring and evaluating staff, recruiting residents, and serving as public relations personnel in spreading the good news about the Home. The first board set a standard of never-ending commitment and enthusiastic leadership that has characterized succeeding boards.

Only months after the Home began to function as the board had envisioned, the United States entered World War II. The extraordinary problems of the complete wartime mobilization meant that vital items were rationed, including meat and sugar. Other goods were scarce, and one wartime report noted the need to make certain of a farm contact for a source of fresh eggs and chickens. Good help was difficult to keep as many women joined the men in factory work and took other jobs that supported the war effort. Travel during the war was difficult and the number of Home residents increased very gradually. Only when the peace returned in 1945 were the activities of the Home and the number of residents to increase.

Developing a "Home family" relationship among the residents was a priority from the beginning. Nebraska P.E.O.s made certain that the first residents were aware of the chapters' feelings of care and concern, and a tradition of chapters giving gifts developed. Popular gifts are: jams and jellies, hams and turkeys, flowers and personal items, as well as money. When the war ended, the rooms were soon filled and furnished and the board began to think in terms of waiting lists and expansion. In 1949, two large bedrooms were partitioned into four smaller ones and the practice of giving each resident a private room came into being.

In the postwar period came the first superintendent who would remain for more than a decade and become a part of the change and expansion that was to come. Nettie Brown, DX, Lincoln, came in 1947, replacing a number of interim superintendents who had kept the Home open during the war years. She was enthusiastic and hard-working, quickly loved by the residents and chapters alike. After thirteen years, she retired in 1960 to become a resident in this Home where she had served so well in previous years.



P.E.O. Home formal entry area

In 1950, P.E.O. Home Board chairman Gladys Titus, H, Holdrege, presented an amendment to the Convention stating that a Building Fund would be added to the

financial structure of the Home. This Building Fund would be used for an infirmary as well as for more adequate housing for Home residents. The amendment was passed and a Building Committee was formed to promote interest and enthusiasm among the chapters statewide, encouraging both individual and chapter gifts to this new fund. The committee represented all sections of the state: Mary Lee Denney, AO, Fairbury, chairman; Florence Knight, AH, Alliance; Dorothy Johnson, E, Omaha; and Norma Carpenter, DN, Lincoln.

Each reciprocity group in the state was represented by one member, called a Home Builder. Her duties were to help acquaint chapters with the expansion needs and to promote enthusiasm for the solicitation of funds. In 1953, board chairman Helen Riddell, A, York, reported that the total cost of the project would be \$75,000, including renovation of the kitchen and dining room. A new wing would be built to include seven bedrooms and four baths on the first floor; two bedrooms and a four-bed infirmary on the second floor; plus the nurses' station, baths, utility room and kitchenette.

In the late forties, Amber Hartquest, AC, Aurora, had bequeathed \$25,000 to the Home, a sum that was now used as a nest egg for this new fund. The booming economy of the fifties aided the commitment of the committee in achieving the goal set. Other major bequests arrived. Those from Anna Leonard, Chapter K, and Rose Owens, BN, were among the first. Dorothy Mahn, BW, Orleans, never moved to the Home as planned, but in 1952 bequeathed to the Home 160 acres of land in Phillips County, Kansas. This land brought varying amounts of income to the Home for thirty years before it was sold in 1984 for \$60,000.

Chairman Helen Riddell noted in 1953 that eighteen applications were on file from P.E.O.s desiring to live at the Home and that over \$60,000 had been received for the Building Fund so that plans could proceed for ground-breaking in the coming months. The contract with Beall Construction Company was accepted in February 1954, and on February 27th the Home Board braved inclement weather to witness a brief ceremony and to turn the first spade of dirt.

That spring, Alice Dobson, BY, Lincoln, presented to the state convention a copper box made by Walton Ferris to be placed in the cornerstone; and on June 12th a cornerstone ceremony was held in the First Presbyterian Church in Beatrice. Building Chairman Mary Lee Denney organized the event and Home Chairman Lucy Livingston presided. Participating were Ruth Gellatly, Nebraska State Chapter president; Rose Owens and Nettie Brown, representing Nebraska P.E.O.s; and speakers Ada Mead, Anna Loutzenheiser, and Bertha Clarke Hughes.

Residents of the Home,—and of course the staff—lived with the confusion of a major building project during the following year. The outline of the new structure could be quickly seen so that great excitement overshadowed any inconvenience or interrupted naps due to noisy activity.

The 1955 convention heard retiring board member Anna Loutzenheiser speak of the changes during her seventeen-year tenure. She gave the final figures for the cost of the project, a sum of \$94,893.08. This far exceeded the estimate, but the delegates rose in a standing ovation of thanks following Anna's report, knowing that Nebraska chapters would gather the needed funds. (And they were correct.) When convention closed, P.E.O.s joined Supreme Chapter Third Vice President Margaret Emily Stoner in Beatrice for a service of dedication.

Ada Mead spoke at the simple ceremony. Her topic was "Faith Made Perfect."

The keys for the new structure were presented by Martin Aitken, architect, to Nebraska State Chapter President Dorothy Smithberger; P.E.O. Home Board of Trustees Chairman Lucy Livingston; and Home Superintendent Nettie Brown.

The Home family soon increased, filling the extra rooms provided. Beds in the infirmary were utilized for those needing special care. However, the addition of an infirmary did not change the status of the Home to that of a nursing home.

The Home would not become a licensed nursing home until 2013. Up to that time, it was a retirement residence, though it did care for those suffering the frailties of advanced years. The Home is classified as non-profit under the Internal Revenue Service Code 501-C3 and contributions to the Home are tax-deductible. Articles of Incorporation were completed in 1962.

The P.E.O. Home of the mid-1950's reflected change, both because of increased size and because of thoughtful evaluation by the Board of Trustees. A food supervisor began to work full-time, relieving Mrs. Brown of some duties. The Notifier-Alarm system was installed to ensure safety of all residents and staff. The open stairway was closed at the direction of the Fire Marshall. Much repair and many renovations were underway as the Home reached twenty years of age. In addition, appliances—including air conditioners, dehumidifiers, a clothes dryer, a portable TV, and hair dryer with shampoo chair in the beauty shop—were added as funds became available. An alert Home Board oversaw repairs and improvements so that the building was kept in the best possible condition.

Bertha Clark Hughes entered the Home as a resident in 1963 and remained until her death in 1967. In 1968, the board announced plans for a room to be built in memory of Bertha, esteemed member of Chapter M, Omaha, who had worked in Nebraska State Chapter and also in Supreme Chapter for over 60 years. She served as president of both state and Supreme Chapter and also as the Nebraska State Chapter Historian. Nebraska P.E.O.s again responded enthusiastically with gifts for this commemorative family room, built at the front of the house to the left of the living room. Chapter M gave a large framed portrait of Bertha in honor of their distinguished member, and it remains the center of interest in this homey, comfortable room.

The years from 1964 to 1980 are sometimes known as the "Helen Wallace years." Helen came to the job of Home superintendent with good business skills and served the Home efficiently, working always in the most practical and economical way. Her energies were boundless; her day began early and continued late. She was an avid gardener, famous for her work in the rose garden, officially named in her honor. She became most widely known for her ability to gather and use books of trading stamps. It was not unusual for an annual report to show that with 143 books of S&H Green Stamps, she had bought pillows, sheets, pillow cases, nine blankets, a steam iron, a lamp, and a night stand. Often called "the jewel of the Home," Helen was a member of Chapter DX, Lincoln, and a past president of the Lincoln Reciprocity Roundtable. Helen became a resident of the Home in 1980; she died on October 31, 1995.

Communication with the chapters was a priority from the beginning and continued through the years on a regular basis. Nettie Brown began writing letters to chapters, and the board later took up this task, changing first to quarterly newsletters written by one member and then to "Home Happenings," and now to the monthly online posts found on the Nebraska State Chapter website, www.nebraskapeo.org.



P.E.O. Home parlor grand piano

The maintenance of the beautiful decor and appointments in the Home has been possible because of the number of major donors from among the members of Nebraska State Chapter. Jane Robertson Layman's gifts and bequests have amounted to over one million dollars, all given in memory of her mother Elizabeth Robertson, chairman of the first building committee and original contact person with the Elliots. Both Jane and her mother were members of Chapter Z, Beatrice. Clarice Goodall, CL, Ogallala, provided funds to completely redecorate the foyer, living room, and dining room, including a Strass crystal chandelier. Amber Hartquest's gift, used for the construction of the building addition, has been previously noted. Rose Owens, BN, Lila Leonard, K, and Ivan Fletcher were early donors and many Home residents and their families are among those who have helped the vision become reality.

A substantial addition to the lovely building is the enlarged and stately dining room, added in 1983-1984. The earlier dining room was inadequate since the building addition naturally increased the number of residents. Some funds were available as interest rates on savings and investments had risen in the late 1970's. However, the Home Board of Trustees again turned to the Nebraska State Chapter membership for support. They declared 1984 "The Year of the Home" to serve as a focus on the special project and as a reminder of the need for extra funds. Each chapter was sent a red paper sock and encouraged to fill it with a gift to be used for the new dining room. The economy of the 1980's had brought higher interest rates, but also resulted in inflated prices, so costs were much greater than costs for the earlier projects. The total costs went over \$127,000, but this included a completely new kitchen. Chapters HH, York, and CJ, Burwell, were honored for chapter gifts of \$1,400 and \$1,000 respectively. All who attended the grand opening celebration agreed that the elegant dining room is a fitting addition to the beautiful building.

That project is another indication of the high standard of excellence to which the P.E.O. Home Board of Trustees has adhered since it began work in the 1930's. Members who have agreed to serve have been vigilant and keenly aware of the necessity of maintaining the integrity of the original building and of providing a quality living facility. Nebraska State Chapter has been blessed in the ability and commitment of these women and has benefitted by the length of tenure of many board members.

Heading the list of dedicated leaders is Ada Mead, BN, Omaha, who served from the time of the inception of the idea of a Home in 1933 until 1971, a total of thirty-eight years. Many of those years, Ada served as chairman. The Ada Mead Suite honors her work and provides a pleasant meeting room for the trustees and a place for visiting chapters to hold meetings. Anna Loutzenheiser, AW, Gothenburg, served for seventeen years; and later her daughter, Carolyn Hedstrom, GK, Hastings, served where her mother had worked in earlier years. Carolyn gave fifteen years of leadership, sometimes assisted by her BIL Elton when the "work of the day" involved redecorating. Isabelle Nelson, DA, Hastings, and Gladys Titus, H, Holdrege, were two early members who served over a decade in leadership roles. Other trustees who have served ten years or more are: Dorothy Yeager, E, Omaha; Ethelyn Hermanson, AI, Lincoln; Joan Donley, GP, Grand Island; Bernadine Wherry, AV, Pawnee City; Mary Mice Pumphrey, EP, Wisner; George Ann Ludlum, EE, Lincoln; and Beverley Karrer, FD, Omaha.

There is no way that these women may be adequately thanked for their work; however, each trustee has expressed the sense of fulfillment which has been her reward as she has seen the Home continue to provide a high level of care and concern. The board has done an important part of its work at state convention and area reciprocity meetings when trustees have presented workshops, displays, and talks to Nebraska chapter members to help them to be well-informed and up-to-date on the needs of the Home. Their energies have been put to use many times in both conversation and correspondence to interpret the Home to any member who may be seeking a retirement home that provides a high quality of care and a congenial and homelike atmosphere. Members from other state chapters are accepted when rooms are available.

A 2010 amendment which passed at Convention of Nebraska State Chapter allowed the Home to open its doors not only to P.E.O. sisters, but to the close female relatives of a P.E.O. The bylaws now state that residency is open to "active members of the P.E.O. Sisterhood, and the eligible mother, mother-in-law, aunt, niece, sister, daughter, grandmother or great-grandmother of an active member."

The P.E.O. Record featured a photograph of the P.E.O. Home in Beatrice on its cover in 1940, some months after the opening of the Home. Ada Mead wrote the accompanying article. Fifty years later, The Record again carried a story on the Home, by another Trustee and past state president, Mary Ruth Wilson, AU, Peru. Entitled "Buckeyes for Luck," the story tells of the buckeye tree which stood for many years near the southwest corner of the house and of Administrator Helen Wallace's enjoyment in placing a bowl of buckeyes by the front door. "Take a buckeye with you," she would say to visitors as they were leaving. "It will bring you good luck." Her article also tells of the fiftieth anniversary birthday party given by the Board of Trustees, including the following paragraph:

“September of 1988 marked 50 years of operation of ‘The Home that Love Built,’ as Nebraskans fondly call their P.E.O. Home. The Board of Trustees, the governing board composed of seven P.E.O.s from all over the state, designated the 1988-89 year, convention to convention, as a 50 Year Jubilee. On September 25, a birthday party was held at the Home to which all chapters in the state were invited. To celebrate the event, the family room was completely redecorated, and gorgeous floral arrangements were placed throughout the Home. Resident-guests gave tours of the Home to callers, and members of the Board of Trustees served as gracious hostesses. Refreshments were served in a beautifully-appointed dining room, with soft lights reflected on the gleaming silver, set on tables covered with apricot satin and lace. Former Trustees presided at the punch bowl and coffee service, while background music came from the newly-renovated concert grand piano left in the Home by the Elliots...Pianists were past state president Bernice Zajicek, BF, Wilber, and BIL Harold Larmon (husband of past state president Marion Larmon, X, McCook). It was quite a party.”

The 1990's found the Home humming along under Administrator Jeanne DeVore, FM, Beatrice. Jeanne, a former Home Board Trustee from CL, Ogallala, served through 2004—nearly nineteen years—as administrator, and the residents enjoyed her creativity and sparkle.

Many Nebraska members and BILs, in addition to the Board of Trustees, are enthusiastic boosters of the Home. Perhaps the need for members to have a “sense of place” is a motivating force, undergirding the strong support Nebraska chapters give to this project. Some might say that the buckeye did indeed bring the needed good luck, and others might credit the charm of the warm and cozy atmosphere of this extraordinary home. Maybe it is simply the Nebraska way of bringing to life the vow to “express a loving concern for each sister” that has given more than 200 members the opportunity to live in this very special place, “The House That Love Built.”

A letter from a family member of one of the residents during the 90's gives expression of her personal experience regarding her mother's care:

“I never cease to marvel at your staff and the really warm care they gave her. I think they had more patience with her than I might have been able to maintain. I could tell when I visited that the pleasant interactions she had with the staff were an everyday occurrence; she wasn't in a condition to fake anything.”

P.E.O. love is a way of life at the P.E.O. Home.

In 1991, a change in the minimum wage law had a great impact on the Home, and of necessity the per member assessment increased to two dollars.

An endowment opportunity launched in the late 1990's culminated with 124 chapters accomplishing the remarkable commitment of contributing \$1,000. Fifty-seven additional chapters nearly accomplished that same goal.

Chalice Harvey, who served on the Home Board for a multitude of years, said in her 2004 final report as board president:

“I have said this so many times, and am saying it for one last time. ‘A picture is worth a thousand words.’ You have to visit the Home to

experience the love and care that abounds there. You have to visit to inhale the wonderful smells of freshly baked bread and ladies who wear lavender. You have to visit to hear the stimulating conversations from octogenarians. You have to visit to marvel at the lushness of the grounds and serenity of the sun porch. You have to visit."

In the spring of 2004, the Nebraska P.E.O. Home had the pleasure of being visited by the P.E.O. International Executive Board. Nebraska's own Joyce Goff, HJ, was serving as president of International Chapter. The visiting officers had the privilege of seeing firsthand the beautiful Home supported by the Nebraska State Chapter of the P.E.O. Sisterhood. Director Jeanne DeVore and the residents rolled out the red carpet and welcomed the visitors warmly. The International officers were most impressed with our beautiful Home.



Residents enjoy the lovely P.E.O. Home formal dining room

Later in 2004, the State of Nebraska notified the Board of Directors that the P.E.O. Home would no longer be grandfathered as an assisted living facility and would need to apply for licensure in the state of Nebraska. The Nebraska P.E.O. Home Board of Directors, under the leadership of Debra Hanlon, EY, began the process of applying for licensure. Other members of the board at this time were Kathryn Olson, EE, Judith Workman, EE, Lucille Wolvin, CL, LaVonne Rowe, AT, Sharon Hammar, HB, Robley Garrigan, HL, Nancy Meyer, BE, and Mary Kay Tuma, HJ.

It's true that most P.E.O.s could not resist a smug smile when the State discovered that in nearly every way, the Nebraska P.E.O. Home already exceeded the state's highest standards. Not only that, but it had achieved that condition by the mere diligence and devotion of its superb administrators, the dedicated Home Board, and the Sisterhood's commitment to its senior members who sought residence there.

Still, coming into compliance meant installing an enhanced sprinkler system; a complete overhaul of paperwork for staff, residents and the board; electrical and

telephone updates; changes to the kitchen and nursing areas, and more. As the Home began to scale these new hurdles, there was one more major change they had to face. Administrator Jeanne DeVore announced her retirement.

Jeanne resigned as administrator of the P.E.O. Home in the spring of 2005. A reception thanking her for her service to the P.E.O. Home was held at state convention in Grand Island in June of 2005. Tracy Magill, AT, assumed the helm in 2005 and capably assisted the board in completing the necessary requirements for licensure. In October of 2006, the Nebraska P.E.O. Home was granted licensure as a Nebraska assisted living facility. The board and Tracy are to be commended for their hard work and tenacity in completing the lengthy process for licensure.

But it had been no simple feat. To apply for a license to become an assisted living facility, the Home had first to pass Nebraska Fire Code and Food Code requirements. Once that was accomplished, the Home also met assisted-living requirements by Nebraska Health and Human Services. Some requirements meant a different way of doing things, with the Home's historic commitment ever in mind: *Take care of our sisters in a loving, caring environment.*

Amid all the construction and turmoil, that's just what Tracy Magill and her staff did. With their competent and kind care, the residents weathered the changes with dignity and grace intact.

The sprinkler system was the most costly piece of the licensure process, requiring an investment of over \$100,000. A less costly alternative was considered, until the board discovered that it meant in an emergency the residents would have to be evacuated without benefit of electricity (in other words, without elevators) in less than thirteen seconds. With the 13R sprinkler system in place, the residents could stay in their rooms. All closets, bathrooms and storage rooms were retrofitted with sprinklers. Getting the water to the Home from several blocks away and with the right size of pipe cost nearly \$19,000. Three sets of fire doors costing approximately \$6,000 were needed, as well. When at last all was installed, the Home's talented maintenance/gardener/wallpaper and paint person Deloris had to repair the areas torn up during the installation.



Once reconciled to the costs which amounted to more than \$150,000, the Home faced yet another rude awakening. The on-going costs of licensure would be higher than they had been led to believe. For example, thermometers were needed for each refrigerator and freezer, and daily charting and recording of the information is mandatory. The kitchen staff can no longer use cloth dish towels and cloth hand towels. Only expensive, disposable paper products can now be utilized.

Undaunted by these and many more unexpected budgetary blips, the fundraising began, and Nebraska P.E.O.s answered the need. Home Board members wore umbrella pins throughout convention that year, to remind delegates of the need to “Sprinkle” the Home with dollars.

In 2006, Board President Debra Hanlon reported that the licensure process was not quite complete. Though much had been accomplished, there remained some paperwork and inspections. But late in the year, the work was at last completed and the inspections made. As board president, Debra Hanlon stated in her 2006 report, Nebraska P.E.O.s did not seek this licensure, which dramatically impacted the finances of the residents. But because by law the Home must be licensed, Home residents who cannot afford the costs for their appropriate level of care now had other state and federal resources available to them to meet the financial need. In addition, some long-term health care policies now covered living at the Nebraska P.E.O. Home.



The formal ambiance of a high ceiling and marble fireplace and hearth grace the Home's elegant living room.

In 2009, Past State President Anne Baumhover became president of the Home Board. At the time, her mother was a resident at the Home. In her 2011 Report to Convention, Anne said:

“Quoting my mother, who is a resident there, ‘This place just takes too good care of me. I should have met my Maker a long time ago.’ Mother is 95 and has lived at the Home for five years. When she first came to the Home, we all believed that because of her health, she would be at the Home only a short time. Yes, this is a Home that Love has built.”

In 2013, the Nebraska P.E.O. Home celebrated 75 years of providing the kind of retirement life that only a loving sister might envision.

A 2014 report from the Home Board summed it up this way:

“The Nebraska P.E.O. Home continues to provide quality assisted living in a gracious home atmosphere to our residents. Our ladies enjoy musical presentations from local artists, trips to surrounding shopping venues and area attractions in addition to regular visits from nearby P.E.O. chapters. From homemade bread to the TLC administered by the staff, our Home continues to be “The Home that love built.”

What refreshing, recurring themes we hear about our Home—tender care, sisterly love, commitment to providing a gracious home environment, and so much more. Maybe you, too, should visit and “inhale the wonderful smells of freshly baked bread and ladies who wear lavender.” Then you, too, will know that it is indeed true. Yes, it cannot be denied. 413 North Fifth Street in Beatrice will forever be “The Home that Love Built.”

Sources used for compiling this report were *The Saga of Nebraska P.E.O.*, 1975, section by Ada Mead; *The History of the P.E.O. Home* by Clarice Hicks, DN, Lincoln; *Spirit of the Prairie* edited by Robley Garrigan; historical articles by Julie McDougal; *It's in the Blood - The Story of the Kilpatrick Brothers* by Millspaugh and Swarthing; and Annual Reports written by recent chairmen of the Nebraska P.E.O. Home Board.

P.E.O. HOME BOARD MEMBER AND PAST STATE PRESIDENT PAM KREGG



Nebraska P.E.O. Home Administrator Tracy Magill, AT, Tecumseh at right with Director of Nursing Barb Freese, FM, Beatrice, at left



P.E.O. Home recreation room



This portrait of Bertha Clark Hughes in her golden years is admired by all who enter the Nebraska P.E.O. Home

ADMINISTRATORS OF THE P.E.O. HOME

Gertrude Brown, CM Crete	1938-1941
Nora Killian, AS, Kearney	1942-1943, interim
Edith Williams, CC, Seward	1943-1944, interim
Beatrice Craig, K, Lincoln	1945-1946
Cordelia Brown, AN, Lexington	1946-1947
Nettie Brown, Z, Beatrice	1947-1960
Alta Stark, AO, Fairbury	1960-1962
Mary Hobbs	1962-1964
Helen Wallace, DX, Lincoln	1964-1980
Katherine Little, AT, Tecumseh	1980-1981
Mavis Booth, T, Clay Center	1982-1984
Jeanne DeVore, CL, Ogallala & FM, Beatrice	1984-2005
Tracy Magill, AT, Tecumseh	2005-present

MEMBERS OF THE P.E.O. HOME BOARD

* indicates President

Corinne Adams, AU, Peru	1988-1993
Anne Baumhover, HK, Fremont *	2006-2015
Carol Bohling, CT, North Bend	2009-present
Patsy Bridge, FO, Hay Springs	1999-2000
June Brunmeier, FB, Lincoln	1993-1997
Barbara Brunzell, EH, Grand Island	2002-2004
Dori Bush, II, Grand Island	1988-1993
Doris Cunningham, CS, Lincoln	1977-1982
Gertrude Dafoe, AT, Tecumseh (Committee)	1933-1937
Josephine Davis, FV, Nebraska City *	1974-1976
Shirley Deyke, CH, Columbus	1988 -1994
Alice Dobson, BY, Lincoln	1953-1956
Joan Donley, GP, Grand Island	1970-1980
Jeanne DeVore, CL, Ogallala	1982-1985
Joanie Evans, IH, Elkhorn	2000-2005
Sue Fisher, FI, Omaha *	1987-1999
Delight Fox, GG, Kearney	1981-1987
Robley Garrigan, HL, Blair	1997-2006
Pat Gloor, AG, Fullerton	1993-2004
Georgia Griess, K, Lincoln	1944-1948
Sharon Hammar, HB, Kearney	2005-2014
Debra J. Hanlon, EY, Omaha *	1998-2007
Bonnie Harrington, HI, Ogallala	1999-2003
Chalice Harvey, CT, North Bend *	1994-2004
Carolyn Hedstrom, GK, Hastings *	1973-1988
Ethelyn Hermanson, AI, Lincoln	1958-1967
Chelys Hester, BY, Lincoln	1983-1992
Barbara Hinze, EH, Grand Island	2004-2005
Carol Ann Huckfeldt, EB, North Platte	1996-1999
Grace Julian, G, Hastings (Committee)	1933-1936

Cindy Kadavy, (CR) CR-DZ, Omaha	2007-present
Dorothy Kain, AN, Lexington	1956
Beverley Karrer, FD, Omaha	1975-1986
Katheryn S. Killenger, AE, Hebron *	1960-1967
Nina King, G, Hastings (Committee)	1936-1938
Pam Kregg, GM, Omaha	2009-present
Carolyn Dinsmore Lee, IG, Imperial	1998-2001
Rebecca Lee, AJ, Fremont	1949-1958
Lucy Livingston, AO, Fairbury *	1955-1959
Anna Loutzenheiser, AW, Gothenburg	1938-1955
George Ann Ludlum, EE, Lincoln	1968-1981
Karlynn (Susie) Mann, CI, Chappell	2014-present
Carmen Maurer, EE, Lincoln	1997-2000
Jane Dudgeon McCoy, DL, Lincoln	1974-1979
Catherine Mattoon, BO, Sidney	2011-2014
Ada Mead, BN, Omaha * (Committee)	1933-1976
Nancy Meyer, BE, Pierce	2004-2007
Thelma Millen, DJ, Albion	1966-1970
Isabelle Nelson, DA, Hastings	1938-1950
Kay Norden, S, Broken Bow	2007-2012
Marilyn Nunn, GW, Lincoln	2012-present
Kathryn Olson, EE, Lincoln	2000-2009
Wyladee (Billy) Pecka, CM, Crete	2007-present
Mary Alice Pumphrey, EP, Wisner	1959-1972
Helen Riddell, A, York *	1949-1954
Patricia Robertson, BX, Omaha	2001-2002
Floy Roper, DK, Lincoln (Committee)	1933-1943
Lavonne Rowe, AT, Tecumseh	2004-2013
Marcia Schlegelmilch, A, York	2014-present
Lenore Schwentker, CL, Ogallala,	1962-1965
Dorothy Simmons, ET, Scottsbluff	1996-1998
Jane Smith, HB, Kearney	1993-2000
Dorothy Smithberger, DF, Stanton	1978-1982
Marie Sorum, GC, Alliance	1992-1996
Barbara Spencer, CL, Ogallala	1985-1992
June Steggs, S, Broken Bow *	1988-1993
Eunice Stuart, IP, Fairbury	2013-present
Gladys Titus, H, Holdrege *	1938-1952
Mary Kay Tuma, HJ, Grand Island	2005-2006
Barbara Vondras, AN, Lexington	1995-1996
Bernadine Wherry, AV, Pawnee City	1978-1988
Mary Ruth Wilson, AU, Peru	1982-1988
Lucille Wolvin, CL, Ogallala	2003-2011
Judith Workman, EE, Lincoln	2000-2009
Dorothy Yeager, E, Omaha *	1965-1974



P.E.O. HOME BURIALS IN P.E.O. PLOTS
AT EVERGREEN CEMETERY, BEATRICE, NEBRASKA

The following information was found in *The History of the Nebraska P.E.O. Home—1933-1970* by Clarice G. Hicks, Chapter N, and *The Spirit of the Prairie*. *The Spirit of the Prairie* lists the date of death of P.E.O. Home residents, but makes no mention of burial location. The pages referenced are from *The History of the Nebraska P.E.O. Home—1933-1970*.

Page 11—She (Carolyn Miller of Chapter H, Holdrege) passed away January 27, 1944, and was buried in Lot 43 of the recently purchased P.E.O. plot in the Beatrice cemetery—the first one to be interred there.

Page 12—The Board, too, took note that a number of the original cemetery lots had been used and voted to purchase the next plot of eight lots for \$200. (January 5, 1943)

Page 34—The Home owns three plots of eight graves each. To date there are seven sisters buried there. (The context appears to be November 1963-April 1964)

The following are interred in the P.E.O. plots at the Beatrice Cemetery. Noted are date of death, name with chapter and city from *The Spirit of the Prairie*, and discrepancies found.

- 1-27-1944 Carolyn Miller (Stone states Carrie E. Miller), Chapter H, Holdrege
- 3-18-1946 Jesse Zachary (Stone states Jessie A. Zachary), Chapter E, Omaha.
Spirit of the Prairie states date of death 3-19-1946
- 6-20-1946 Nellie N. McKay (Stone states Nellie A. McKay), Chapter AG, Fullerton
- 2-19-1949 Grace E. Clark, Chapter U, Rogers, Arkansas.
Spirit of the Prairie states date of death 2-18-1949.
- 9-5-1955 Blanche Deary (Stone states Blanche Waldo Deary), Chapter P, Bloomington. *Spirit of the Prairie* states name as Blanch.
- 7-5-1958 Grace E. Oldham, Chapter I, Wahoo.
Spirit of the Prairie states year of death 1955.
- 11-19-1963 Mae Street Morgan, Chapter F, Plattsmouth.
Spirit of the Prairie states name Clara Mae Morgan.
- 10-28-1970 Helena W. Render, Chapter CU, Norfolk
- 9-8-1971 Nellie Baker Scott, Chapter CR, Omaha
- 9-27-1971 Edna Fulton Kissell, Chapter AC, Minnesota and Chapter K, Lincoln
- 1-26-1975 Fay W. Towl, Chapter CR, Omaha
- 8-14-1976 Mary E. Ogg Delzell, Chapter DA, Hastings
- 2-20-1994 Edith C. Giesler, Chapter FM, Beatrice
- 10-31-1995 Helen D. Wallace, Chapter FM, Beatrice.
Helen served as superintendent of the P.E.O. Home from August 1, 1964-1980, Chapter DX, Lincoln. She became a resident of the Home 9-1-1981.

It is noted that Helen N. Birch, Chapter Y, Red Cloud, date of death 3-3-1967, is interred in the Evergreen Cemetery. There is no grave marker on the P.E.O. plots.



R.E.O.

*is women who care
helping women who dare*

