

Minnesota Home Fund Its Place in History and Its History

1936: What was happening in the world? Events that were happening in the world included the death of King George V of England and the succession by his son Edward VIII. German troops occupied Rhineland. Elections in Germany gave Hitler 99% of the vote. The Spanish Civil War began in July. Gossip was that King Edward VIII was having a relationship with Mrs. Wallis Simpson. Dale Carnegie wrote "How to Win Friends and Influence People." F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote "The Crack-Up." Allen Lane founded Penguin Books. The American comedy by Kaufman and Hart "You Can't Take It With You" won the Pulitzer Prize in 1937. Eugene O'Neill received the Nobel Prize for Literature and Robert Frost's "A Further Range" won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry (1937). Films included "Modern Times" with Chaplin, "San Francisco" with Gable and Tracy and "Intermezzo" with Ingrid Berman, and "The Great Ziegfeld" won the Academy Award. Popular songs were "It's DeLovely," "I'm an Old Cowhand (from the Rio Grande)," "Is It True What They Say About Dixie," and "Pennies from Heaven". In the world of science, technology and growth, Boulder (Hoover) Dam on the Colorado River in Nevada and Arizona was completed creating Lake Mead, the largest reservoir in the world. Dr. Alexis Carrel developed an artificial heart. And, the dirigible "Hindenburg" landed at Lakehurst, NJ after a transatlantic flight.

Other daily life events included the establishment of the Ford Foundation. Mrs. Amy Mollison flew from England to Cape Town in 3 days, 6 hours and 25 minutes. Jean Batten flew solo from England to New Zealand in 11 days and 56 minutes. Jesse Owens won four gold medals at the Olympic games held in Berlin. The population of the United States was 127 million. Henry Luce began the publication of "Life" magazine. The Baseball Hall of Fame was founded in Cooperstown, NY. Bruno Richard Hauptman was convicted of kidnapping and killing the Lindbergh baby. And the Minnesota P.E.O. Home Fund was established.

This fund was established at the 1936 Convention of the Minnesota State Chapter "to consist of special gifts and bequests which were to be kept intact and allowed to accumulate until such time as the Minnesota Chapter shall need to use it in the establishment and support of a P.E.O. Home." The chairman of the Home Fund wrote this in her report to the Minnesota State Chapter, "The ideals of our P.E.O. Sisterhood intertwine and link in natural sequence our spiritual and physical needs. What is more natural and a part of loving than to desire comfort and protection throughout life for those whom we love? What then is more in keeping with the ideals of P.E.O. than the quiet, steady building – year by year – of the funds which will bring reality to these dreams?"

What started this fund? A love gift of \$437 given by members of the convention plus a \$500 gift from state chapter funds. Another action was the vote that 15% of state dues would be allocated annually to the fund. How did the fund grow? Among gifts over the years was a gift of \$10,000 given in memory of Laura Garvey Smith in 1957 and designated toward "furnishings and upkeep of a suite in its P.E.O. Home..."

Another action that affected the Home Fund was the excitement, investigation, and dilemma when the Patton home in Lake City was offered as a P.E.O. Home. This was declined but assessments to the fund were begun and each Minnesota P.E.O. paid \$1 annually to the fund for the next fourteen years. During the 60's a sizable bequest was received and the P.E.O. Foundation was established. Meanwhile, a national survey was made of the seven then existing P.E.O. homes. The results of this survey gave conclusive evidence that the establishment of a P.E.O. Home would be unwise unless a state had a membership of over 10,000. It would create a considerable responsibility for financial support of a home.

By 1973, there was over \$60,000 in the Home Fund through bequests, gifts, and member assessments. Concern grew that this money should be put to good use so a special study committee, the Home Fund Board of Trustees, and the Executive Board of Minnesota State Chapter surveyed members for ideas. The result of this survey was that the dream of a Minnesota P.E.O. Home was no longer realistic or feasible. A new concept was born and presented for making grants from the fund. The 1973 and 1974 Conventions of Minnesota State Chapter

approved the dissolution of the original Home Fund and the P.E.O. Foundation. The Minnesota Non-Profit Corporation, with its North Star P.E.O. Grant program was officially incorporated on May 28, 1974. This program provides assistance to indigent, aged or infirmed persons.

In 1978, a perpetual trust was established through the generosity of Mary Burnham Patton for the express purpose of “building and/or maintaining a P.E.O. Home.” Mary Burnham Patton was originally a member of Chapter BN. The Patton family maintained a summer home in Lake City and a home in Pasadena, California where she became a member of Chapter AU. Knowing of P.E.O. Homes in California, and finally, herself living in a retirement residence in Oregon, it was her wish to provide this opportunity for P.E.O.s in Minnesota. After her death in 1977, it was learned that her will provided monies for a perpetual trust for the purpose of “building or maintaining a P.E.O. Home” in Minnesota.

As noted before, a single structure home was deemed not feasible so the Home Fund Trustees began to explore other options that would satisfy the terms of the Trust. In 1985, a new concept was finalized. It was the “home within a home” idea. The idea was to allow a P.E.O. to reside in a special P.E.O. room in an existing facility and if necessary, receive financial assistance and other services through a Mary B. Patton Grant; the original intention was to determine certain designated “P.E.O. rooms” in specific retirement complexes. After only a short time, the Board realized this was not the best use of the funds, and after discussion with the Home Fund lawyer and the Patton Trust lawyers, the Patton money was released to be used as grant money in the same way as the North Star program.

Now for a few facts:

- Recipients may be male or female, children as well as adults, P.E.O. or non-P.E.O.
- The Home Fund Board of Trustees consists of 5 members and 2 ex-officio members. They are appointed for a 5-year term by the Minnesota State Chapter Executive Board. It consists of one from the north, one from the south, two from the Twin Cities area, and one at large. One Past President of the Minnesota State Chapter must be a member of the Board of Trustees plus the State Chapter’s President and 1st Vice President are ex-officio members.
- The Home Fund helps people of all ages and the grants vary in amounts. Applicants must meet criteria set forth in the Home Fund Bylaws. One unusual grant that was awarded was for a “helping paws” dog to a little boy in need of a companion to help him pick things up and to play with him.
- This is a Minnesota project.
- Assets of the Home Fund are well over a million dollars, but the only money that may be used for grants is the interest from the investment.
- The Home Fund Board of Trustees grants an amount in excess of \$15,000 a month.
- An individual may make a contribution to the Home Fund in a variety of ways. Gifts are tax-exempt.
- The Annual Report of the Minnesota P.E.O. Home Fund is distributed at the annual State Convention to each chapter. It indicates all giving, including the 5% of State dues allotted annually.

- To acquaint all Minnesota P.E.O.s with the Home Fund's activities and services, each Chapter has a Home Fund Chairman or committee who makes periodic reports at meetings. Also, the name of the Chairman of the Trustees is printed in each Chapter yearbook to facilitate recommending possible grant recipients.

Two case examples:

- James is a 49 year old bachelor who lives alone in a very isolated, non-producing farm in a rural area. He was recommended by a County social worker. He has cardiomyopathy and is becoming progressively worse even to the point of having difficulty walking to the mailbox. His parents are some distance away and one is in a nursing home. He is monitored by telephone by the U of M and the VA but had no phone until the Home Fund interceded. His monthly income consists of \$203 from General Assistance and \$111 from Food Stamps.
- Jeff, 34, is a former city fireman with aplastic anemia for which he received a bone marrow transplant. He has continued rejection problems and has not been able to work since 1988. With these continued rejection problems, he finds his desire to go to school and become a provider for his wife and 3 children is not attainable. His physician has stopped the antirejection drugs because of the harm that has been incurred by his muscles and liver. The Home Fund was able to help with his monthly health insurance premiums.

Growth of the Fund and its use for care and support of those P.E.O. sisters and others in need continue as priorities for the years ahead. The history of the Minnesota P.E.O. Home Fund is a continuing thread of caring and sharing.

Written in 1997
Revised in 2002 and 2009