

International Cottey Day

Celebrating an extraordinary woman whose dreams have changed the lives of thousands of women



Virginia Alice Cottey was born in a log cabin on a farm in Knox County, Missouri, on March 27, 1848, to Ira and Sara Cottey. Her parents, Ira and Sara Eads Cottey, valued education and actively pursued opportunities for their children. Cottey's founder was an avid reader, and largely self-taught as there simply weren't a lot of educational possibilities for girls in Missouri in the Civil War era. The love of teaching and learning that she developed in her youth led to a passion for giving young women the opportunity to learn.

In 1883, after studying a book on the life of Mary Lyon and the process she went through to establish Mount Holyoke, Alice was ready to pursue her dream. Armed with \$3,000, she took the plunge.

After receiving an encouraging response from Reverend W.T. McClure in Nevada, MO, Alice visited the city. Pleased with her visit in 1883, Alice proposed that if the city donated the grounds, she would proceed at once to erect a three-story building sufficient to accommodate eighty students. Leaders of the community realized the opportunity a college would provide for the townspeople and offered six acres of a cornfield on the western edge of town for her school.

In 1884 she began with a little brick schoolhouse, that still stands today. It was originally named Vernon Seminary, but the townspeople refused to call it that, referring to it as the "Cottey sisters' school" or Cottey College.

In 1926, Mrs. Stockard, as she was known after her marriage, was

introduced to the P.E.O. Sisterhood and its dedication to womens' programs. She was so impressed that a thought came to her, and in 1927, Virginia Alice Cottey Stockard presented her life's work to the Sisterhood, with no debt against it.

For nearly 80 years, the College, its alumnae, and the P.E.O. Sisterhood have worked together to realize Virginia Alice Cottey Stockard's premise that women should have excellent educational opportunities—the 14 building and 11-block campus that stands today is a testament to that.

To learn more visit the "Our Founder" section on the Cottey Web site at www.cottey.edu

Help us celebrate Virginia Alice Cottey's accomplishments by wearing Cottey Apparel, holding student gatherings in her honor, or by remembering her at a chapter meeting.

March 27th