

# PTA's Visionary Founders

PTA  
A Proud Past  
A Bright Future



(1858–1907)

## Alice McLellan Birney

was born in Marietta, Georgia, was educated in private schools, and attended Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts. Though she lived comfortably as the wife of a Washington DC attorney with their three children, Birney was deeply moved by the miserable lives so many families led.

Her concern for the well-being of all children and her friendship with Phoebe Apperson Hearst would lead to the founding of the National Congress of Mothers, which became today's PTA.

“ I do not believe that happiness is calculated to make us selfish. On the contrary, the highest happiness develops sympathy for those less blessed than ourselves. ”

—Alice McLellan Birney

## Phoebe Apperson Hearst

was born and raised in Franklin County, Missouri. She became a schoolteacher before marrying the influential George Hearst. A philanthropist, she founded and supported free kindergartens and provided thousands of factory workers with regular lunches.

Her belief in the power of education and desire to provide all children the best that life has to offer helped her form a strong bond with the like-minded Alice McLellan Birney. Her connections in Washington DC helped them recruit others to the cause of a national organization.

The organization's first three initiatives have been the foundation for PTA ever since:

- Parent education study groups
- Home-school cooperation represented by the partnership of parents and teachers
- Making families aware of all child welfare services and helping families to use them



(1842–1919)

“ The National Congress of Mothers, irrespective of creed, color, or condition, stands for all parenthood, childhood, homehood. ”

—Alice McLellan Birney



(ca. 1872–1964)

## Selena Sloan Butler

was born in Thomasville, Georgia, graduated from Spelman College, and became a teacher, wife, and mother. In 1911, she organized the nation's first African-American parent-teacher unit. Soon she was helping communities establish other such units across Georgia and the nation.

In 1926, the National Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers (NCCPT) was established to serve states with segregated schools. It worked cooperatively with PTA for years, and the two eventually merged in 1970.