

Isaac Leonard Ellwood and Harriet Miller Ellwood

The tenth of eleven children, Isaac was born in 1833 to Abraham and Sarah Ellwood in Salt Springville, New York. As a teenager, Isaac traveled west in 1851, hoping to make his fortune in the California Gold Rush. He spent four years in California, mostly working as a clerk. By spring of 1855, Isaac had had enough of the west and made his way to DeKalb County, Illinois where several of his siblings had already settled. Isaac found work at the Miller farm, where he met his future wife, Harriet.

Harriet Augusta Miller was born near Kingston, Illinois in 1837. She was educated in a local one-room schoolhouse and attended Rockford Seminary, where she would later send her own daughters. Harriet was a talented woman – a gifted singer who was interested in everything from horticulture to art to horses. Once the family fortune increased, Harriet spent her time traveling throughout the United States and around the world. Her trips often lasted several months and resulted in a large collection of souvenirs. In 1905, the collection had become so large that the Ellwoods constructed their own museum on the property. Today, we use this museum building as storage.

Harriet married Isaac Ellwood in 1859. During the early years of their marriage, Isaac made his living owning a local hardware store. In the early 1870s, everything changed when Isaac attended a local fair with Joseph Glidden and Jacob Haish. At the fair, the idea began for barbed wire. Eventually Ellwood partnered with Glidden, acting as the manufacturer of Glidden's barbed wire. Due to the fortune he made manufacturing barbed wire, Isaac was able to construct the mansion in 1879.

Both Isaac and Harriet died in 1910. At that time, the Ellwood estate was estimated at between \$10 and 30,000,000. The mansion was given to Perry. The Texas land was given to Will. And each Ellwood daughter inherited \$1,000,000.

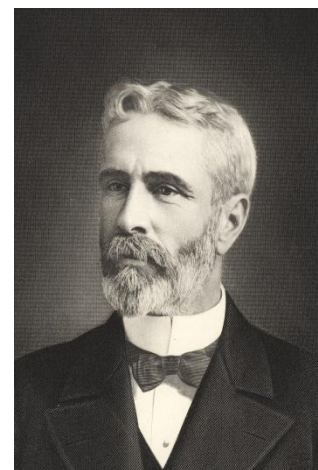


The Ellwood Daughters: Harriet, Mary, and Jessie

Harriet Ellwood Mayo, affectionately known by friends and family as Puss, was born in 1861 in DeKalb, Illinois the second child of Isaac and Harriet Ellwood. Harriet was educated in DeKalb Public Schools and as a young lady she studied at Rockford Female Seminary, focusing on music and art. The DeKalb Chronicle stated she had a “rare talent” in painting. She also briefly studied at the Art Institute of Chicago. To round out her education, Harriet made frequent trips abroad, traveling to Europe, Africa, and the Holy Land. At Rockford Female Seminary, Puss and her sister Mary became good friends with Jane Addams.

On April 8, 1897, at the age of 36, Harriet married a DeKalb physician, Dr. Edward Mayo. They lived together in their elegant home at 105 N. First Street, which was built for the couple by Harriet’s parents. In 1900, the couple had one child together, Edward Mayo Jr. Sadly, Harriet was widowed in 1905.

Harriet lived in her DeKalb home until 1922, at which point she sold her home to the Elks Club, and moved her permanent residence to California, in order to be closer to her only child, Edward. She quickly decided, however, to make DeKalb her primary home again, but unable to purchase her home back from the Elks Club, she had 115 N. First St. built as her new home. Harriet passed away in 1934.



Mary Ellwood Lewis was born in 1863, the third child of Isaac and Harriet Ellwood. Like her older sister, Mary spent her early years at the DeKalb public schools and later attended Rockford Female Seminary. Mary attended Smith College for one year before returning to DeKalb. Like her sister, Mary frequently traveled abroad, including her Grand Tour to Europe in 1883. Mary and Puss took this trip with their dear friend, Jane Addams.

On October 1, 1884, Mary married a DeKalb banker, John Lewis. Lewis was 14 years older than Mary. As per tradition, Isaac and Harriet built their daughter and her new husband a new home on First Street. Mary and John had two children, James Ellwood Lewis (b. 1887) and Harriet Louise Lewis (b. 1895).

Mary was very active in the DeKalb Women's Club and other, social, philanthropic, and cultural activities. One such activity was creating the DeKalb Ladies Literary Society. She was also a prominent member of the DeKalb Congregational Church. Sadly, Mary contracted a sudden illness in December 1903, had an operation, and died on December 20, 1903 at the age of 40.



Jessie Miller Ellwood Ray Bonney was born in 1869, as the fourth of five living Ellwood children. Of the three Ellwood daughters, Jessie was the one who spent the most number of years growing up in the Ellwood Mansion. The family moved into the mansion when Jessie was 10, whereas her sisters were 18 and 16. Like her siblings, Jessie attended the DeKalb Public Schools but broke tradition by attending Misses Grant's School in Chicago instead of Rockford Female Seminary. Jessie frequently traveled with her mother and sisters abroad.



Jessie married her first husband, Benjamin Franklin Ray on May 28, 1890. The couple lived in Chicago for a number of years, but eventually settled in Denver. Despite moving away, Jessie maintained strong ties to DeKalb, becoming the Crimson Day Queen at the Opening of Normal College (today NIU) in 1898. Jessie's only pregnancy resulted in a stillbirth in the early 1900s.

Jessie and Frank's marriage ended in divorce on November 25, 1911. Four years later, Jessie married Dr. Sherman Bonney, a wealthy doctor from Colorado. Jessie and Dr. Bonney had no children. As an elderly woman, Jessie returned to DeKalb where she died on May 23, 1956.

William Leonard Ellwood and Jennie Allen Ellwood

William Leonard Ellwood was born on November 6, 1859 in DeKalb. He was the oldest child of Isaac and Harriet Ellwood. His formative years were spent in the family's typical middle class home located on North Third Street in DeKalb. His father owned a hardware store in downtown DeKalb and also worked occasionally as an auctioneer. Will's early education was in the town's public schools.

When Will was fifteen, his father began manufacturing barbed wire. Isaac's business venture proved to be extremely lucrative and dramatically altered the lives of the Ellwood family. Will's education was rounded out with private tutors and travel. In 1879, when Will was twenty, the family moved into the opulent mansion on North First Street.

As a young man, Will ventured into different business avenues, but never seems to have taken part in his father's barbed wire interests. Animal breeding and sales were Will's most keen interests and in 1882 he began to import horses from France, England, and other countries, focusing on Percheron draft horses. With the support of his father, Will created a massive horse breeding complex on the Ellwood estate called Ellwood Green. Later, Isaac put Will in charge of his extensive west Texas land holdings and Will spent more time in Texas managing the Ellwood ranches. Due to his work in Texas, Will eventually closed Ellwood Green.

On June 29, 1883, Will married Jennie M. Allen of DeKalb. For the first years of their marriage, Will and Jennie probably made their home with Isaac and Harriet (this is not substantiated), but by 1885 the couple were having a large brick home constructed for them down the street from Isaac and Harriet's mansion. (Will's home has since been torn down, but would have stood across from the museum at the corner of N. First and Augusta)

The couple had two daughters, Jessie Jean, born August 22, 1884 and Harriet Elise, born May 15, 1886. The girls were more commonly known as Jean and Elise. While Will's time was spent superintending his many business interests, Jennie was busy with the education and care of her two daughters, travelling, managing her household, and taking a leadership role in DeKalb civic and cultural events.

In 1910, Will's parents both passed away. As the estate was settled amongst Isaac and Harriet's four surviving children, it was decided that the youngest son, Perry, would move into their parent's home. Will and Jennie then decided to sell their own home and buy Perry's house (today's Ellwood-Nehring House) for \$22,000. They extensively remodeled the house and by 1912 were moved into their new home where they promptly celebrated the marriage of their youngest daughter Elise to Robert

Leland Keeney on September 12, 1912. This marriage was followed by their older daughter, Jean's wedding to Franklin Huntington Chappell Jr. on June 18, 1917.

In later year, Jennie spent much of her time at her daughters' homes in Connecticut while Will's business interests required him to spend most of his time in Texas. Jennie died Dec. 4, 1929 and Will died on Dec. 29, 1933.



The Children of Will and Jennie:

Jessie Jean Ellwood Chappell and Harriet Elise Ellwood Keeney

Jean and Elise Ellwood grew up in a home located on property adjoining their grandfather Isaac Ellwood's estate. They had an idyllic childhood filled with ponies, dogs, bicycles, and a wonderful playhouse (today's Little House).

Born only twenty-one months apart, the girls spent time together in their play and education. As young ladies, they were sent east for more advanced study, attending Miss Scoville's School in New York City. The school had the full advantages of a New York location, as well as the chance to study at its annex in Paris. Miss Scoville's provided a classical education including classes in art, music, and language. Besides academics, the school offered access to a gymnasium, horseback riding, and outdoor exercises. Attending Miss Scoville's School allowed the girls to make social connections and friendships with prominent east coast families. Both Jean and Elise would eventually marry the brothers of classmates from Miss Scoville's.

Most wealthy young ladies finished their education with extensive travel, and Jean and Elise were no exception. They ventured all over the world, visiting Europe several times, as well as the Middle East and Africa. These trips were made in lavish style, and the girls were often accompanied by their mother Jennie. Between trips, Jean and Elise spent time in DeKalb with family and friends, although both young ladies settled on the east coast after the marriages.

On September 12, 1912, younger sister Elise married Robert Leland Keeney, the brother of her school friend Leonara. The wedding took place in the spacious music room that had recently been created in Will and Jennie's new home. The Keeney family had manufacturing interests in Connecticut, and the young couple chose to settle in the town of Somersville, CT to raise their family of six children.

A second wedding occurred in the music room on June 18, 1917 when Jean married Frank Huntington Chappell Jr. The Chappell family, also from Connecticut, ran a tugboat and shipping company. After the DeKalb wedding, the couple moved to New London, CT where they raised a son and daughter. Jean Ellwood Chappell died in 1965. Elise Ellwood Keeney died in 1971.



Erwin Perry Ellwood and May Gurler Ellwood

Erwin Perry Ellwood, better known as Perry or E.P., was Isaac and Harriet's youngest child and second surviving son. Born August 10, 1874, Perry spent most of his formative years growing up in the Ellwood mansion and enjoying the privileges of great wealth.

His early education was in the DeKalb public schools followed by a period at the Michigan Military Academy. Starting in 1890, he spent two and half years at the Beloit College Academy, a preparatory department of Beloit College. Perry finished his education at the Metropolitan Business College in Chicago in 1894. He made his career in banking, starting out at the First National Bank of DeKalb as an assistant cashier. By 1903, Perry became president of the bank.

Perry invested in many area businesses and was a large land holder in DeKalb County. Besides banking, Perry also spent time managing the holdings and estate of his father. Upon the death of his parents in 1910, Perry inherited the mansion along with land holdings in Texas. In the two years following his inheritance of the mansion, Perry and his wife May completed extensive renovations on the home, including expansion and updating.

LuLu May Gurler, generally known as May, was the daughter of Henry B. Gurler, a prominent dairyman of DeKalb. As a promising vocalist, May was given private musical training. She even sang light opera in Chicago prior to her marriage! May and Perry Ellwood were married on September 6, 1898. As a wedding gift, they received the Tudor style home next to the mansion (today's Ellwood-Nehring House). The couple had three children – Isaac Leonard Ellwood II, Patience Allen Gurler Ellwood, and John Fiske Ellwood. Beyond spending time managing the education and care of her children, May's interests including travel, horseback riding, gardening, needlework, volunteer work, and, of course, music.

After Perry's death in 1943, May continued living in the Ellwood Mansion. Shortly before her own death in 1964, May and her three children gifted the Ellwood Mansion to the DeKalb Park District for use as a historical museum.



The Children of Perry and May:

Isaac Leonard Ellwood, Patience Ellwood Towle, and John Fiske Ellwood

Isaac Leonard Ellwood was born in 1909, the first child of Perry and May Ellwood. Named after his grandfather, young Isaac was often known as I.L. I.L.'s education began in DeKalb, but quickly took him elsewhere, including Principia and Lake Forest Academies, and the University of Illinois. As a young man, I.L. travelled around the world, studying and visiting the famous sites. I.L. was a very active child. He competed in sailing events and won several.

In 1933, I.L. married Margaret Stoy Riach of Evanston, Illinois. Only months after marrying Margaret, the young couple moved south to the Ellwood ranches in Texas. There, I.L. took over the running of his family's ranch. I.L. and Margaret had one child, Perry William Ellwood. I.L. died in 1990.



Patience Ellwood Towle was born in 1911 as the only daughter of Perry and May Ellwood. Affectionately known as Patty, she grew up in the Ellwood Mansion with her two brothers. For 7th and 8th grades, Patty attended the Training School at the Northern Illinois Teachers College (now NIU). She also attended public high school – it was so close she roller-skated to school! – but only took a few courses at a time and therefore took two years to complete what other students did in one. Patty frequently traveled with her parents and this likely interfered with her schooling. After completing high school, Patty attended boarding school in Chicago and finishing school in New York.

In 1934, Patty married Joseph W. Towle Jr. in the mansion's gardens. The Towles moved to St. Louis where Joseph became a member of the business faculty at Washington University. They had three children. When May donated the mansion in the 1960s, Patty quickly took an interest in the

museum. Over the years, Patty made significant financial contributions to the museum and donated many cherished objects to the Ellwood House Association. Patty passed away in 2004.



John Fiske Ellwood was born in 1919, the youngest child of Perry and May Ellwood. John is the only Ellwood child to have been born inside the mansion. During the birth, May was attended to by long-serving nanny and nurse, Amy Sickles. Young John is notorious among the family for his fun-loving ways – John is frequently seen in photographs sticking his tongue out. As adults, Patty and John were once interviewed about growing up in the mansion. Patty talked about how formal the living room always was, but John commented that as a young boy he remembered riding his tricycle through the elegant room.

As an adult, John tried his hand at multiple business ventures. At first, John raised cattle on a large Ellwood farm property on N. First Street (DeKalb). Eventually, John moved to Florida where he opened a Volkswagen and Porsche dealership. John was married three times, to Doris Kathryn Hammill, Norma Wood, and Elizabeth Hurst. John died in 2001. Today, John's male descendants are the only ones who carry the Ellwood name.

