

Ella Stewart

b. Oct. 8, 1848 in Pittsburg, IA Ella never married d. Dec. 12, 1894 at age 46

Ella had curly, auburn pompadour hair, dressed neatly and in style, had energy and enthusiasm and could play piano and sing nicely. She was interested in all whom she met, was talkative and strong in her likes and dislikes. She was of Irish descent and had a keen sense of wit. She was the daughter of an itinerant minister of the Methodist church, born in a small village of southeastern Iowa. Her father was Rev. Isaac Stewart who was later appointed financial agent at IA Wesleyan. After funds were assured for Main Hall, the family moved to Keokuk, IA where he resumed a pastorate. He died years later so her widowed mother, in 1864, returned to Mt. Pleasant so the family could have the benefit of the Iowa Wesleyan College and she opened a boarding house for students. Ella's family circumstances, helping her widowed mother raise her five siblings, probably prevented her from graduating from college, however it didn't stop Ella from taking courses at the university and later teaching piano. Seeking a change, she consulted a friend of her father's who suggested that she teach the boys at the Iowa Industrial School in Eldora which was a reformatory. This gave purpose to her life that she never gave up, until ill health forced her to resign.

Ella was the first secretary of Chapter A, PEO. Being the oldest Founder, she administered the oath to Alice Bird and installed her as the first President. Then Alice presided at initiation of the other six. Ella suggested each new chapter be named after a constellation but with only 88 constellations, it was decided letters would last longer! Her pin is the only one of the 7 Founders in existence. It is at Centennial Center in Des Moines. (Another source said the pin is in Memorial Hall in Mt. Pleasant) She also suggested the Marguerite as the choice for the PEO flower with its colors of yellow and white.

Ella devoted her life in service to others. Her life symbolized love and compassion. She died of a lingering lung disorder.

She once wrote: "When I think of the past and look at the present and dream of the future, I am filled with hope and great expectations lure me onward. I trust that our little effort, like the ripples on the lake, will widen and extend."

Ella's bio begins on p. 27 in Out of the Heart.