

Luella Kimball (1854 – 1891)

Not much is known about Luella Kimball, who was sometimes called Luella Rankin. She was the fourth child of Holt Kimball and Harriet Rankin. Her siblings were Ellen J. Kimball, Joseph Kimball, and Emma Rankin Kimball. They were all probably born around 1854 in New Hampshire.

Before Luella moved to Bloomington, Illinois, her mother, Harriet, passed away in 1858 or 1859. After that, Luella and her siblings were raised by her aunt Melinda Rankin. Melinda didn't like Holt Kimball, their father, for reasons we don't know. It's possible that Luella and her sister Emma were told their father had died. Melinda wrote in her letters, saying she hoped Holt would "finish up his miserable existence." She added that the children wouldn't want to see him, as they disliked him greatly.

Melinda was the first Protestant missionary to Mexico and worked in that field for the rest of her life. In her letters, she said she tried to care for Luella and her siblings as their mother would have, even though it was hard. Melinda said the children, especially the girls, were "smart and interesting."

At some point, the Rankin family lived in Haverhill, Ohio, and Luella might have been raised by a relative there. The Kimball, Rankin, Ela, and Rowell families all moved to Bloomington, Illinois, together. It is also believed that the Rankins and Rowells were related.

Luella worked as a schoolteacher for several years, teaching in Danvers Township and Bloomington. In the 1880s, she stayed at the home of George P. Ela in Bloomington at 309 East Locust Street. Sadly, Luella developed mental health problems. Her aunt Melinda and her sister Ellen took her to court to have her declared insane. Their first two attempts failed, but they succeeded on their third try after March 3, 1889, when Luella threw carbolic acid at a woman, a girl, and a man at church just as Sunday School was starting. Luella was arrested after the woman's husband filed a complaint. *The Pantagraph* newspaper reported that her actions were caused by a mental illness, not anger toward the people she targeted.

Luella was sent to the Eastern Illinois State Hospital for the Insane, which later became Kankakee State Hospital. She tried to fight the charges by bringing witnesses to defend her. Luella's sisters, Ellen and Emma, were very close to each other. They lived together almost their whole lives, went to school together at Western Seminary in Oxford, Ohio, and were both members of the Second Presbyterian Church. They died within a day of each other—Emma on November 25, 1918, and Ellen the next day. They became sick while visiting Emma's son, Carl R. Dick, in Decatur. *The Pantagraph* wrote about the strong bond between the sisters, calling it "a most lasting love and respect for each other."

Luella died in April 1891, and the cause of her death is unknown. It's not clear if she died at the state hospital, but she was buried in Evergreen Memorial Cemetery in her family's plot on April 11.