

Way We Were

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Ella Brown, an accomplished young Parkite

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Ella Naomi Brown was born to Park City police officer Sam Brown and his wife Celestia on July 24, 1905. The Brown family was popular and well-respected throughout town. Ella was one of two children, both girls.

Ella started piano lessons at a young age, developing a strong musical talent. She eventually played for many events all over town including church functions and community concerts. While attending Park City High School, she also became involved in musical theater.

In late March of 1923, the high school put on a production of *Mary's Millions*. The comedy was popular in the 1920s and performed by high schools across the United States. The plot follows Mary Manners, heiress to a newly acquired fortune, and those in her life who want access to her money. Mary's aunt, Jane Stoneham has high ambitions for her niece, and is headstrong and powerful in managing Mary's life. At Park City High School, Stoneham "was exceptionally well acted by Ella Brown. She threw herself into her part in a way very gratifying...and displayed marked ability."

Ella graduated the following year but she continued to appear in the local acting scene. After her appearances on stage in high school, she focused primarily on accompaniment when joining community productions. In 1929, for example, she and violinist John Pike provided the music for the play *This Thing Called Love*. The Farnsworth Players of Park City presented the show at the Egyptian Theatre, which the *Park Record* described as "a good, clean, fast comedy, with a laugh in every line." "Every married woman should see it," the newspaper encouraged. "Every married man should profit by it."

Ella's older sister Leona married fire chief William Berry and moved out of the family home. Ella lived with her parents for many more years. She worked as a bookkeeper for the Utah Power and Light Company.

In addition to their life in Park City, the Brown family spent a lot of time in southern California. In the late 1930s, Ella met Burton Lewis, originally of Nebraska. The two married on January 31, 1937 and spent their honeymoon in Long Beach. They made their home in Los Angeles, where they had their first child, a son, in June 1941.

As Ella's father, Sam Brown, aged and his health began to decline, he started living in Los Angeles for several months out of each year. Ella and Burton were there to help care for him. In March 1942, Sam had just returned to Los Angeles from a winter in St. George, Utah. He suffered a heart attack and passed away on March 17. After his death, Ella and her family moved back to Park City, to be closer to her mother and sister. She and her husband had a daughter in 1946. For the rest of her time here in Park City, Ella remained involved in community affairs. She passed away in 1995.



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Credit: Park City Historical Society and Museum, Anderson Digital Collection

Caption: Ella Brown, the “charming and accomplished” longtime Parkite at age 21, in 1926.