

# The Legacy and Philanthropy of Anna Thomas Jeanes

March 1, 2020 By Kay Sackett Fitzgerald and Eleanor Reinhardt



Portrait of Anna T. Jeanes painted posthumously by Esther Heacock. Image courtesy of the Anna T. Jeanes Foundation.

## Tumultuous Times

Anna Thomas Jeanes (1822–1907) is a relatively unknown yet visionary Quaker philanthropist. She lived in Philadelphia, Pa., during the nineteenth and early twentieth century: a time of tumultuous change. Quakers and others led the antislavery movement. A bloody civil war ensued. “Negros” and Whites migrated south to north where they faced dreary, dangerous work and poverty due to industrialization. Social unrest was coupled with a call for women’s rights. The Orthodox and Hicksite schism occurred within the Religious Society of Friends.

“Annie” was the youngest of ten children born to Isaac and Anna Jeanes. Anna was four when her mother died of pneumonia. She was raised by her family. Anna’s father

and two brothers Samuel and Joshua were merchants; her brother Joseph owned coal and mineral fields; her brother Jacob was a medical doctor and homeopathic physician; her sister Mary was a philanthropist and abolitionist. The family lived between homes on North Front Street and Arch Street in Philadelphia and Stapeley Farm in rural Fox Chase. The family were liberal Hicksites.

Anna was remembered as insatiably curious, a strong-willed, indulged child who could read by age five. Around age 30, avid reader Anna turned her attention to history and travel books on India, China, Egypt, and Japan, with a special interest in the religions of the world. She published two religious books: *The Sacrificer and the Non-Sacrificer* and a book of poetry, *Fancy's Flight*. She enjoyed memberships in the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences, the Philadelphia Zoological Society, and the Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts.

## **Death Doth Part Us**

Motherless and raised by a close-knit family, it appears that Anna had few intimate friends but many acquaintances. Anna's beloved father, Isaac, died in 1850. Married brother Jacob lost his only child in infancy and died in 1877. Brother Joshua died in 1880, sister Mary nine years later in 1889. Five years after that, in 1894, brothers Samuel and Joseph died.

At 72, Anna was left alone with no nieces, nephews, nor first cousins by the name of Jeanes. She inherited the family fortune. To honor her family and in recognition of the myriad social ills of the time, Anna was determined to give away her entire fortune to better humanity. Over the last 13 years of her life, she did just that.

## **Paying It Forward**

### ***Aging***

Unwilling to live alone at the family home, Anna embraced a request by the Philadelphia Women's Meeting to build a boarding home "for aged Friends and those in sympathy with us." The first was built at 1708 Race Street. Not satisfied with one, she personally supervised and carefully monitored the finances and building of a second named Stapeley in the Germantown neighborhood of Philadelphia. Upon completion, Anna rented two second-floor rooms with a bath for \$12 per week and promptly moved in. Upon Anna's death, Stapeley was deeded to the quarterly meeting of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. In 2010, it was sold to a retirement community network, but today Friends Fiduciary continues to hold Jeanes family money in trust to fund new homes for the aged.

## ***Education***

Southern primary education was of great concern to Anna. A few months prior to her death, Anna prepaid an endowment fund to assist community, county, and rural schools for “colored people” in the southern states. The Negro Rural School Fund, later renamed the Jeanes Fund, was created. Anna made three stipulations: (1) There would be a racially integrated foundation board, the men to be chosen by Booker T. Washington (Tuskegee) and George Frissell (Hampton); (2) both Washington and Frissell must travel to Philadelphia to receive the \$1,000,000 check; and (3) the fund must be incorporated and the first meeting held prior to her death. Each request was met. Virginia Estelle Randolph, the first Jeanes Supervisor, created the “Henrico Plan,” which became the Jeanes Fund’s model. Recently, an economist at Georgia State University used economic modeling techniques and determined the Jeanes Supervisors closed the Black–White literacy gap by up to 5 percent. The Jeanes Fund, combined with others, became the Southern Education Foundation, still in existence today.

## ***Compassionate Care of the Sick***

Driven by personal experiences and living with a painful diagnosis of carcinoma scrofulous of the breast, Anna left a generous bequest to build a hospital. Her desire was to establish a hospital specializing in cancer, nervous, and disabling ailments. Jeanes Hospital was established on land that had been the Jeanes family farm in Fox Chase and placed under the control of the Incorporated Trustees of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of Friends. Following WWII, Jeanes Hospital became an acute care general hospital. Later, consistent with Anna’s will, the Institute for Cancer Research and American Oncologic Hospital relocated to the Jeanes campus. These two institutions merged to become Fox Chase Cancer Center. Today, Jeanes Hospital and Fox Chase Cancer Center are members of the Temple University Health System. The Anna T. Jeanes Foundation continues to fund compassionate care of the sick.

## ***Vulnerable and Disenfranchised***

Concerned by the burdens of life experienced by immigrants, the marginalized, and those forgotten by society, Anna provided funds to the following: the Houses of Industry; the Penn Asylum for Widows and Single Women; Homes for Destitute Colored Children; Homes for the Aged and Infirm Colored Persons; Firemen’s Pension Fund; Pennsylvania Working and Industrial Homes for Blind Men; Pennsylvania Society to Prevent Cruelty to Children; Sanitarium Association of Philadelphia (for sick children); Spring Garden Institute; soup kitchens; and children’s nurseries. Several of these organizations exist to this day.

## **A Legacy of Philanthropy**

Left with incredible wealth late in life, Anna T. Jeanes became a philanthropist and advocate for the aged, “Negro” primary education, healthcare, and care for the vulnerable and disenfranchised. She carefully and wisely invested with a vision that spoke to her Quaker values and vast understanding of and commitment to activities to lessen human suffering in a changing America. Her commitment lives on today, embodied by her phrase, “the next needed thing.” An early advocate for cremation, Anna’s ashes rest at Fair Hill Burial Ground, a Quaker cemetery located in North Philadelphia near Temple University Hospital. Last fall, a Pennsylvania Historical Marker was dedicated to her at the Central Avenue entrance of Jeanes Hospital.

### **Kay Sackett Fitzgerald and Eleanor Reinhardt**

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