

1877 - 1968

Anna Spencer was born to Daniel and Ruth Jerrett Spencer in New Haven, New York. She had three brothers, being the only girl she was expected to help with all the household chores, cleaning dishes, serving meals, etc. She longed to be outdoors with her father and brothers. Today we would call these feelings, that of a "tomboy".

One day when she was about nine, the call of summer activities beckoned her to go out in the fields with her father and brothers, not doing the dishes or the other chores given. When she returned home, the kitchen chores were waiting! She remembered over fifty years later, that day. Her mother did not speak to her for over a week. She said that "Silent Treatment" was the worst kind of punishment for a child. She never forgot it!

Anna had hoped to become a registered nurse but never found the time to attend a hospital school of nursing... Her education in the Dowd country school, a mile from home gave solid teachings attested to by her achievements. She never left home in New Haven except for a brief time when she nursed her brother Daniel, who had T.B. and was sent to Saranac Lake for treatment. After his death, she returned to the 110 acre brick homestead on NY 104.

In 1937, she opened her home to taking in a person to care for as she had her brother and parents. By the second year, she had five patients. In those days there were no nursing homes. Her brother, Richard, unmarried, lived in the family home too. He helped care for the patients. She never had intentions of operating a nursing home, but her skill was widely known to others. She soon had a large number of patients and a state license for operating a nursing home. Her brother, Richard, not only helped with the breakfast but helped her by raising fruit, vegetables, beef, pork and poultry for their diets.

Her hobby and love were flower gardens, especially the roses. She had many rare species. She would spend all of her free moments working in her flower beds alone on the west side of the driveway. At the age of eighty-nine, she was allowing most of the nursing care of the patients to be done by her able assistants. But the ordering of foods, supplies, bookkeeping, payroll, and patients' records were still ably done by her until one week before her death at age ninety-one. At the time of her death, three of the assistants had been there for over twenty, fourteen, and nine years which indicated the loyalty, confidence and pride in their work at the Spencer Nursing Home. With the death of Anna Spencer, her legacy was carried on by Mary Searles. Mary continued to operate the nursing home for two more years and then converted it into an adult home. The adult home operated until 1984, when due to state regulations it was forced to close. The brick structure still remains today, much as it did in 1877 the year Anna was born. It is again a private home.

Sources: Compiled from an article in the Palladium Times Newspaper, 1965 and from personal knowledge.

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