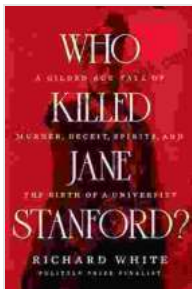


# Who Killed Jane Stanford: Unraveling the Mysterious Death of a University Founder

Jane Stanford, the co-founder of Stanford University, was a remarkable woman whose untimely death in 1905 remains shrouded in mystery. The circumstances surrounding her demise have fueled speculation and intrigue for over a century, with various theories and suspects emerging over the years. This article delves into the enigmatic case of Jane Stanford's death, examining the evidence, suspects, and historical context to shed light on one of the most enduring unsolved mysteries in American history.



## Who Killed Jane Stanford?: A Gilded Age Tale of Murder, Deceit, Spirits and the Birth of a University

by Richard White

★★★★☆ 4.1 out of 5

Language : English  
File size : 15975 KB  
Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 377 pages



## The Tragic Demise of a Philanthropist

Jane Lathrop Stanford was born in Albany, New York, in 1828. She married Leland Stanford, a successful businessman and politician, in 1850. Together, they amassed a vast fortune through investments in railroads,

real estate, and other ventures. In 1885, they founded Stanford University in memory of their only child, Leland Stanford Jr., who had died of typhoid fever at the age of 15.

Jane Stanford was deeply involved in the establishment and development of the university. She served as a trustee and oversaw the construction of many of the iconic buildings on campus. She was also a generous philanthropist, donating millions of dollars to support education, healthcare, and the arts.

On February 28, 1905, Jane Stanford suddenly fell ill while traveling in Honolulu, Hawaii. She was experiencing severe abdominal pain and vomiting. Within hours, her condition deteriorated rapidly, and she died at the age of 76. The cause of death was initially reported as "acute indigestion," but subsequent investigations raised suspicions of foul play.

### **The Prime Suspect: Sarah Althea Sherman**

The primary suspect in Jane Stanford's murder was Sarah Althea Sherman, a former nurse and close companion to Jane Stanford. Sherman had been hired by the Stanfords in 1893 to care for Jane Stanford, who was suffering from chronic health problems. Over time, Sherman gained the trust of the Stanfords and became a fixture in their household.

After Jane Stanford's death, Sherman became the beneficiary of a significant portion of her estate, including a bequest of \$100,000 and the use of the Stanford Mansion in San Francisco for life. This inheritance aroused suspicion, and investigators began to look into Sherman's background.

It was discovered that Sherman had a history of mental instability and financial problems. She had been previously accused of theft and had been fired from several nursing jobs. Witnesses reported that Sherman had made threats against Jane Stanford and had been seen arguing with her on the day of her death.

In 1908, Sherman was arrested and charged with Jane Stanford's murder. The prosecution presented evidence that Sherman had purchased strychnine, a deadly poison, before Jane Stanford's trip to Hawaii. Experts testified that the symptoms Jane Stanford exhibited were consistent with strychnine poisoning.

Sherman's trial was a sensational event that gripped the nation. The defense argued that Jane Stanford had died from natural causes and that Sherman was innocent of any wrongdoing. However, the jury found Sherman guilty of murder in the first degree. She was sentenced to death by hanging.

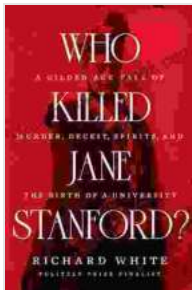
### **Alternative Theories and Suspects**

While Sarah Althea Sherman was the prime suspect in Jane Stanford's murder, other theories and suspects have emerged over the years.

One theory suggests that Jane Stanford was killed by her husband, Leland Stanford. Leland Stanford was a ruthless businessman who was known for his temper and his ambition to control his wife's fortune. It is possible that he saw Jane Stanford's philanthropy as a threat to his wealth and had her killed to gain control of her inheritance.

Another theory implicates Jane Stanford's physician, Dr. Thomas Addis Emmet. Dr. Emmet was a controversial figure who had been accused of malpractice and unprofessional conduct. It is possible that he prescribed Jane Stanford a fatal overdose of medication, either intentionally or accidentally.

Other suspects include Jane Stanford's secretary, Bertha Berner, who had a grudge against her, and a disgruntled employee of the Stanford family, who may have sought revenge. However, there is no concrete evidence to support these theories.



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