LETTERS OF ANNA MARIE KEEN

Anna Keen was a teacher of the freedmen at the Barnes Institute in Galveston, arriving in the spring of 1871. She was transferred by the American Missionary Association from Tangaloo University in Mississippi having offered to go to Texas or to California as she was determined to "spend her life as a missionary."

Her letters are written to her parents and her sister, Minnie, and cover the school year at the Barnes Institute beginning September 17, 1871 through June, 1872. Her observations are significant in Texas history and the institute in that the state at that time was starting a public school system, and the superintendent of public instruction, Jacob Degress, desired to rent the institute building. According to correspondence from Charles Howard of the AMA and a penciled note by Stevenson, the school supervisor for the Galveston district, William Griffin, made demands on the staff that did not sit well with the AMA and the teachers. He did not want to hire the AMA teachers and especially wanted Stevenson out—causing an impasse between the state and the AMA. The school was closed for several weeks during the fall term while the parties negotiated. Anna's letters give a personal touch to all this and reveal details important to the situation.

Anna Keen and the other institute teacher at the time, a Ms. Nichols, stayed loyal to Stevenson, waiting out the difficulties, and the school eventually re-opened as a missionary school—not part of the public school system.

Anna Keen and John Stevenson were "mutually attracted by an esteem and respect" that eventually "ripened into affection" and in December of 1871, he asked her to marry him. A copy of the poignant letter written by him to her parents, and hers to them extolling his virtues, are included herein (The originals have been framed and preserved for family.) At the end of the school term, 1872, Stevenson left Texas for Yale Divinity School. He received a B.D. degree in 1875 and he and Anna were married in August of that year.

Flora Beach Burlingame
Great Granddaughter of
John O. Stevenson and
Anna Keen Stevenson