



- *Educator*
- *Founder*

Nina Anderson Pape

1869–1944

Inducted 2005

Nina Anderson Pape, Miss Pape, as she was known, was born into a prominent Savannah family. Her grandfather, Edward Clifford Anderson, was the city's five-time mayor. Nina had access to the finest education available but she never took her advantages lightly. Tutors educated her at Girls High School in Savannah and she completed her schooling at Madame LeFebvre's French Finishing School in Baltimore, Maryland.

In 1895 Nina began her first job, as a first-grade teacher at Massie Elementary School in Savannah, considered the best school in the area. While at Massie, Nina created the Froebel Society, based on the ideas of educator philosopher Frederic Froebel, with the goal of reaching out to the children of the poor with new and innovative teaching techniques. She participated in the creation of seven kindergartens in deprived neighborhoods.

Despite her appearance as a Victorian schoolmistress, complete with long dark dresses and tightly-wrapped collars, Nina's philosophy on education was radical for conservative Savannah. She emphasized love over harsh discipline, creative play over memorization and treating every child as a unique individual.

After teaching at Massie Elementary, Nina dreamed about starting a school that would match her progressive views of education. Six years after she helped found it, The Pape School quickly became one of the nation's highly respected college preparatory schools and was one of the first schools in Georgia to add kindergarten to its regular education program. The school set a standard for the education of girls and challenged teenagers to meet academic standards normally expected of boys.

Inspired by Woodrow Wilson's idealism, Nina reorganized the Pape Upper School to allow students to form their own government and make their own rules. The school principal acted as the executive, the faculty was the Senate and the older students were the House of Representatives. Nina also was against the tradition of single-sex education but by 1927 she had to admit defeat and give into the longtime tradition of private education in the South.

Nina started clubs for adolescent boys and girls in 1908, offering folk dancing, games and nature studies. These were the foundation for what came in 1912 when Juliette Gordon Low, Nina's cousin, came up with the idea for a girl's club which became the Girl Scouts of America. The

"She had a somewhat cavernous voice," one student remembered, "and a way of emphasizing a point by wagging her middle and index fingers at her listener; it did sort of rivet your attention. "

first two Girl Scout troops in the US were the Pape School's sixth and seventh grade girls who were named the White Rose and Carnation troops. Miss Pape was active in training and organizing leaders

and keeping the Girl Scout movement alive.

In the hope of broadening the perspective of Savannah's less affluent youth, she established the Fresh Air Home on nearby Tybee Island in 1898. For some children, this was the one chance they had to see the ocean though it was only 17 miles from their home. She also launched a series of youth festivals in Forsyth Park, an effort to convince Savannah's civic leaders to create public playgrounds, which came into fruition in 1919. The Progressive Education Association was formed in 1919 by hundreds of heads of school and Nina, always ahead of her time, was the lone Georgia member to participate.

Nina's legacy of progressive education remains in Savannah today as the Savannah Country Day School celebrates its 100th anniversary this year after graduating thousands of young adults and sending them on to pursue higher education. Tybee Island's Fresh Air Home continues to provide a vacation and education for 100 children every two weeks during the summer months. And kindergarten programs continue to thrive thanks to the remarkable achievements of this Georgia woman.

Additional Resources

The Georgia Historical Society

"Educating the Daughters of Savannah's Elite: The Pape School, the Girl Scouts and the Progressive Movement" by Paul M. Pressly, *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, Vol. LXXX, No. 2, Summer 1996