

# Jessie (Aspinall) Freeman

## (1880 - 1953)



Jessie Aspinall was born on 10 December 1880 in Forbes, central western NSW. She attended Kambala in the late 1890s when it was located at Bellevue Hill. She studied medicine at the University of Sydney finishing in 1906. She was offered residency by the Medical Board of the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. However, the Conjoint Board, made up of members from both the Hospital and the University, refused to confirm her appointment. This provoked a strong public outcry. Her father, Reverend Arthur Ashworth Aspinall fought back and published a letter in *The Sydney Morning Herald* protesting against

this decision. In addition, women's groups, the press and members of the public at large, wrote and protested on her behalf until the Board relented and confirmed her appointment. It was determined that she had succeeded in open competition with men and was therefore entitled to the position. The next year she worked at the Hobart General Hospital, before returning to Sydney in 1908 to take a position as Resident Medical Officer at the Women's Hospital, Crown Street. She made a career in private practice and as school doctor for The Scots College.

She married mining engineer Ambrose William Freeman in 1915 and they had four children. The family lived twice in Malaya for his work and later settled in Potts Point. Jessie was a member of the Sydney executive of the Victorian League. She was also on the National Council of Women, and on the Appeals Committee of the Young Women's Christian Association. When the Second World War began she became the vice-president of the Darlinghurst branch of the Australian Red Cross Society. In 1941 she donated her house Berida in Bowral, as well as three acres of her land, to the Red Cross Society to be used as a convalescent home for ex-servicemen. She passed away on 25 August 1953 in Haberfield after a long and generous life.