



The [Franke Tobey Jones](#) senior living facility at the [mouth of Point Defiance](#) was formed 100 years ago and is celebrating this milestone with a year of events and celebrations to mark the landmark formation of the facility.

Franke Tobey Jones spans 20 acres and offers the full spectrum of senior-living options to serve its residents and live out the vision of its founding matriarch, Franke Tobey Jones.

The Life of Francis “Franke” Martha Tobey

The woman herself has a storied history all her own. [Francis “Franke” Martha Tobey](#) was born in Jay, New York, on May 22, 1845, and found herself working as a teacher in Menominee, Michigan, where she met and married Charles Hebard Jones in 1872.

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Charles Hebard and Franke Tobey Jones had their portrait taken in Michigan before they moved to Tacoma. Photo courtesy: Tacoma Public Library/General Photograph Collection TPL-4347

Charles owned several business and investment ventures that were hit hard by the [Panic of 1873](#). They found their way to Tacoma in 1888 and pooled their money with Henry Hewitt to found [the St. Paul & Tacoma Lumber Company](#). The state-of-the-art facility used the newly adopted band saw rather than a circular saw to turn logs into lumber faster and more efficiently.

Franke was active in every business decision for the company, which rapidly became Tacoma's largest employer.

The [dynamic Jones couple](#) then bought the [Northwest Lumber Co. Mill](#) in Hoquiam in 1907 and even found themselves building boats during the "War to End All Wars. [Charles died on November 28, 1922](#), leaving all his wealth to Franke.

She then leveraged that wealth to help finance key developments in her adopted city that remain today. Before Charles' death, he pledged \$25,000 to build a new Puget Sound College campus (now the [University of Puget Sound](#)). On the morning of the groundbreaking ceremony, upon hearing of her husband's pledge, Franke promptly offered an additional \$175,000.

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The first residents and staff of the retirement home that the current centennial effort hopes to recreate on the same steps.
Photo courtesy: Franke Tobey Jones

Support for the Aging at Franke Tobey Jones

Franke had already started forming the retirement center that bears her name since she was one of the founding women behind a company to run a retirement home. They named it "Restholme" and operated the facility at 424 N. D Street for 14 elderly people. The first resident was a retired teacher with her cat and a cage full of canaries.

The home soon proved too small, so Franke announced in 1923 that she wanted to donate a building site near Point Defiance Park and \$150,000 toward a larger facility.

Mrs. Franke Tobey Jones, Donor of New Restholme



With a trowel in her hand as she assisted in laying the cornerstone of Franke Tobey Jones Hall at Point Defiance, to replace the present Restholme, old people's retreat, Mrs. Franke Tobey Jones, who donated \$150,000 to finance the construction of the building, and a site of five lots on which to build it, was snapped by a Ledger staff photographer during the ceremonies Tuesday.

Franke Tobey Jones lays the cornerstone of the namesake facility. Photo courtesy: Franke Tobey Jones

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On July 16, 1924, the Franke Tobey Jones Home cornerstone was laid on a five-acre site with views of Commencement Bay and Mount Rainier. Pushing a ceremonial wheelbarrow and swinging a spade, Franke, at the age of 80, presided over the groundbreaking ceremony. The Tudor-style building opened the following March. What made it unique was that it was design-built by the noted architectural firm [Heath & Gove](#) as a retirement facility so it had no stairs, instead using ramps between floors to ease mobility.

Franke was recognized by the Tacoma Chamber of Commerce in 1930 as "having rendered distinguished service in the community and set an example of citizenship which, if followed by others, would make Tacoma a better city" and was described by a friend as "the biggest heart ever found in such a small body."

[Franke died](#) in her home on April 25, 1931, and rests beside her husband in Tacoma Mausoleum in South Tacoma. She had no children. Her impact on Tacoma didn't end with her death, however, since her will included donations totaling \$920,000 toward the Salvation Army, the YMCA, and various churches.



Franke Tobey Jones has grown over time, as has the area around it, judging from this 1971 aerial photo. Photo courtesy: Tacoma Public Library/ Richards Studio D160364-25

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100 Years of Franke Tobey Jones

Franke's life, contributions, and the facility that bears her name have countless stories worthy of telling, and that is precisely what the Resident Centennial Committee wants to do in the form of a centennial video and a coffee table book "Franke Tobey Jones: 100 Years, 100 Stories."

Events include a Spring Tea in May 2024, an annual event that dates back to the facility's opening in 1924. This year's event will mark the official kickoff of the centennial celebration, with noted [historical reenactor Karen Hass](#) attending as Franke herself, which she will expand for a one-woman monologue at an event in July. The late summer will offer donor and board reception before the August 1 Summer Concert and a 1920s-themed picnic for residents the following day. Historical displays are in the works for walls and gathering places around the campus.

Since today is tomorrow's history, the centennial celebration will include the creation of a time capsule in which future residents can learn about our "modern life" 100 years from now.