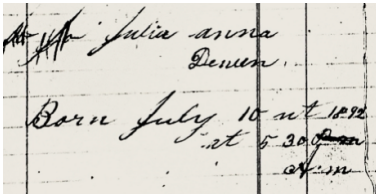


4. Julia Anna Deneen—*Anna*

July 10, 1892—September 17, 1974

Great Grandaunt



The fourth child of Patrick and Julia was born on July 10, 1892, and named Julia Anna in honor of her mother. While her family always called her Anna, her first and middle names flipped at some point in her life, and she officially became known as Anna Julia.

Following in her older siblings' footsteps, Anna attended St. Mary's School before moving on to the Corning Free Academy. She completed her second year of high school there around 1908, marking the end of her formal education. Her academy yearbook featured her photograph alongside a short poem penned by her peers. In those hallways, her classmates called her Julia, affectionately teasing her for her chatty nature and tendency toward "profuse explanations."



ANNA JULIA DENEEN

"But still her tongue ran on, the less
Of weight it bore, with greater ease;
And with its everlasting clack,
Set all the teachers upon the rack."

We are sure "Julia's" chatter will be greatly
missed by all underclassmen but they will be glad
to know that, if her profuse explanations (in
Virgil) do her a good turn, she will soon be teach-
ing in some district school.



Anna Deneen
Circa 1907

From 1915 to 1930, state and federal census

records listed Anna's occupation as a stenographer—a role where her speed and communication skills surely served her well.

However, the 1940 and 1950 censuses list no occupation or employment for her. Anna was 27 when her father passed away in 1920, and 36 when her mother died in 1929. She lived her entire life in the Corning family home, sharing the residence with her older sister, Mary.

For subsequent generations, Anna's life was often shrouded in mystery. In her early adulthood, she experienced a severe medical trauma that left her deeply scarred and permanently disfigured on one side of her face. Later in life, her great-niece Maureen Kelly (Kate's granddaughter) remembered meeting her and noting that her face was heavily bandaged on one side. This physical trauma, paired with a vibrant, outgoing personality, made Anna a formidable force within the family. She was a woman who commanded attention, and for decades, Deneen family life seemed to revolve around her. While later generations occasionally discussed her mental health, it was rarely spoken of with clarity but rather presented as a strict matter of fact.

The surviving records paint a much more nuanced picture of Anna. Piece together the paper trail with the memories of those who loved her, and a complex woman emerges.

As a young woman, Anna suffered from severe acne. At the time, an accepted and standard medical treatment for benign skin conditions like acne, eczema, and ringworm was x-ray therapy. Anna and her parents chose this

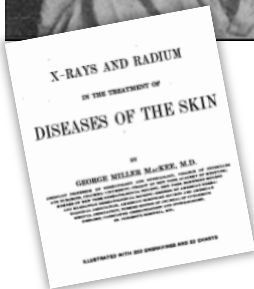
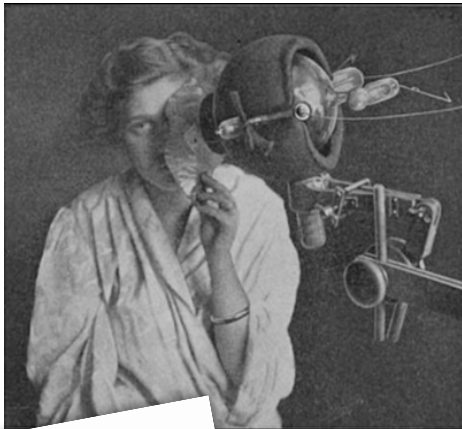
Family Group: DENEEN | KEOHANE

aggressive course of treatment. Because of the frequency with which it had to be administered, the procedures likely took place locally in Corning, though the exact timeframe—whether she was a teenager or in her early twenties—is unknown.

During the early 20th century, x-ray therapy was delivered in weekly sessions over extended periods. Radiation dosage measurements were crude compared to modern oncology standards; clinicians often judged the dose simply by waiting for a slight reddening of the patient's skin. The radiation was largely unfiltered, though a sheet of lead with a cutout was sometimes utilized as a "localizing shield" to protect the surrounding tissue.



Anna Deneen
Circa 1910



Woman receiving X-ray treatment for Acne in 1915 Medical Journal. We do know Anna's image was in a medical journal for her X-ray treatments, this may be the journal and her image.

The dangerous, destructive side effects of radiation were discovered almost immediately after the x-ray was first identified in November 1895. Early injuries included open sores, deep ulcers, and severe tissue necrosis. Beyond immediate burns, these primitive treatments carried devastating long-term health risks. Decades after exposure, many patients developed chronic radiation dermatitis or various forms of skin cancer, including basal cell carcinoma, in the treated areas.

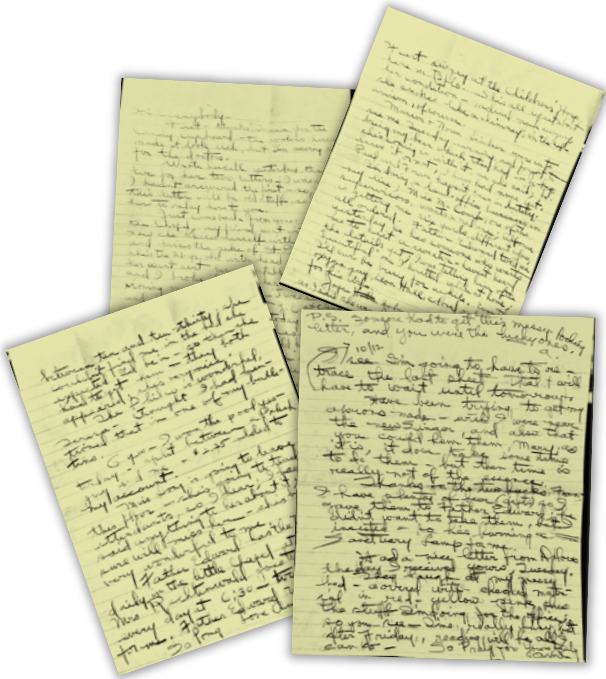
The permanent physical damage from the x-rays eventually deterred Anna from working outside the home. By the late 1950s, the physical toll and isolation severely impacted her mental well-being, leading to her admission to the Willard State Hospital in Ovid, New York. Operating from 1869 to 1995, Willard was a massive psychiatric facility designed for long-term care. It was progressive for its era, featuring patient amenities like a bowling alley, a movie theater, a gymnasium, and working farms.

While it is difficult to know the exact nature of the treatment Anna received as patient #37015, her stay concluded in May 1960. Her surviving discharge papers—discovered among her niece Julia Kelly's belongings long after both had passed—show that she signed herself out of the facility. The paperwork mandated that a family member assume custody to ensure her continued care and supervision. Anna was required to regularly attend a Mental Hygiene Clinic in Corning, with her first appointment set for May 25, 1960. As a specific condition of her release, she was strictly forbidden from operating a motor vehicle until she successfully applied for and was granted a new driver's license from the Motor Vehicle Bureau in Albany.

Anna was 68 years old when she returned home. A little over a year later, in the fall of 1961, she found herself at the Roswell Park Memorial Institute in Buffalo, New York, awaiting surgery. Founded in 1898, Roswell Park was the nation's very first dedicated cancer research and treatment center. Given her history, there is little doubt that the aggressive x-ray treatments from her youth had ultimately materialized as skin cancer.



Family Group: DENEEN | KEOHANE



Yet, a letter Anna penned to her sisters from her hospital bed reveals that her sharp personality, wit, and support system remained entirely intact. Writing in pencil on yellow lined tablet paper, she utilized an old stenographer's trick: she used carbon paper to duplicate her letter so she could send identical updates to at least four of her sisters—Catherine, Mary, Teresa, and Fran. Her sister Jo, then living at the St. Francis Asylum for the Aged in downtown Buffalo, likely received a copy as well. To a reader blind to her history of severe acne, radiation damage, and psychiatric institutionalization, the letter reads simply as the work of a quirky, spirited, and deeply loved woman rallying her family for support.

Her cheeky humor shines through the pages. She wrote to thank Teresa first, noting: *"The candy cupboard — the wolves have made it look sick, but I'm saving some for the doctors."* Later in the letter, she added, *"The Philco [radio] is wonderful, Teresa — thought I had mentioned that in one of*

my bulletins." Turning her attention to Fran, she wrote, *"Thanks for the two bucks, Fran. I have plenty of beer (gifts) so I gave them to Father Edward; he didn't want to take them, but I insisted — so he's burning a sanctuary lamp for me."*

Father Edward was a frequent and welcome fixture in her updates, providing both spiritual comfort and a match for her quick wit: *"Father Edward has the Rosary daily in the little chapel at 5:30. Mrs. Rochtenwald goes to Mass every day at 6:30 — too early for me. Father Edward razzes me."*

Her days were filled with a steady stream of correspondence and visitors from her wide social circle. *"Wrote Lucille yesterday, thanking her for her two letters,"* she recorded. *"Dr. Holman told me today he saw Ceil last night - she has a Coxyx (sp.) virus but is better... Marion & Norm Lindner were in to see me Tuesday evening... Paul and Fran haven't been in lately... Had a nice letter from Delores."* She even playfully called out the Lindners for a minor oversight during their visit, writing that they *"forgot to bring my beer."* She had no immediate need to use Fran's gift of money to restock, however, confidently stating, *"I have plenty of beer."*

Ever the extrovert, Anna quickly turned strangers into companions. *"I have a new friend in semi-private room, Mrs. Rochtenwald,"* she shared proudly, before detailing their trips to the hospital chapel together: *"Just came back from you-know-where the Chapel, my friend went with me - now she blesses herself with Holy Water, and kisses the relic of St. Peregrine [the patron saint of cancer sufferers]; she's the 21-yr. old with head surgery."*

Hospitalization did nothing to slow down Anna's industrious spirit or her love for crafting. She set up a veritable sewing shop right from her hospital bed, writing: *"Have been trying to get my aprons made — wish I were near the new singer, and also that you could hem them, Mary; as it is, it does take some time to do them — but then time is really not of the essence."* Her bright, chaotic workspace amused the medical staff: *"They laugh at my messy bed — covered with checked material in red — yellow — pink."*



Family Group: DENEEN | KEOHANE

Messy or not, her craft was a massive success. *"I'm doing a land-office business in my line,"* she boasted. *"Miss McComb, one of the supervisors, wants a red one; Alforna is getting me six yards, different colors, all ordered. Father Edward told me yesterday he has someone who wants me to knit a sweater - haven't heard the details yet; I was telling him of the 'beautiful' one I knitted while at home; I'll sure be busy for a while. Even the oxygen guy, Leon Hall, colored, ordered one for his wife."*

Perhaps in relaying Anna's story, a great deal of time has been spent dissecting this single letter. Yet, it completely humanizes a person who loomed large over our entire lives while previously being identified only by her disfigurement and mental illness.

Whatever surgery Anna underwent at Roswell in 1961 appeared to offer an improvement to her health. Years later, she was independent and capable enough to serve as the executor of Mary's estate following her sister's death in 1968. By 1974, Anna

either returned to or remained at Roswell, passing away on September 17, 1974, following a lengthy illness. She left behind her sisters Kate, Teresa, and Fran, her niece Julia, her nephews Jim and Jack, and twelve great-nieces and nephews.

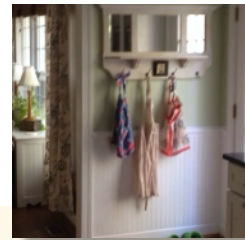
Through her own words, we are granted a better, truer understanding of Anna beyond her immense travails. We are left to remember the quirky, crafty, and deeply kind person who made genuine connections with others—bonds that endured for decades, or at least long enough to

ensure she always had a few more beers.

Children: None.



"So Proud for Yours Truly"



The REST of the STORY....

In a beautiful twist of fate, Anna's letter provides the provenance for a collection of aprons that were rescued decades later, illustrating how the threads of family history tie generations together. When Catherine's family home at 39 Prospect Avenue in Batavia, New York, was cleaned out after her daughter Julia moved, several handmade aprons were discovered tucked safely away in a drawer in the small sitting room. Charmed by their vintage style, Catherine's granddaughter, Maureen, saved them from being lost to time. Today, those very aprons hang in the kitchen of the home shared by Maureen and her sisters, Meg and Beth. They stand as a tangible bridge across the decades—almost certainly a few of the very aprons Anna crafted from her hospital bed, perhaps eventually hemmed by Mary and sent to Catherine as a token of love and connection. Written in the fabric is the story of sisters who supported each other through life's hardest trials, a bond that now quietly lives on in the hearts of the next generation of sisters.

