



Jane Elizabeth Lathrop Stanford (1828 – 1905) was a co-founder of Stanford University in 1885 (opened 1891) along with her husband, Leland Stanford, as a memorial to their only child, Leland Stanford Jr., who died in 1884 at the age of 15. After her husband's death in 1893, she funded and operated the university almost single-handedly until her unsolved murder by poisoning in 1905.

After Leland's death on June 21, 1893, Jane in effect took control of the university. The university suffered severe financial hardship because of Jane's poor management ability and the trustees advocated a temporary closure of the university until tax and legal issues could be resolved, but she insisted it remain in operation. From 1893 to 1898 she collected \$10,000 per month from the University, as the remaining co-founder. The estate left probate in 1898. As the remaining founder she wielded a great deal of legal control over the university until her death on February 28, 1905.

It was at her direction that Stanford University gained an early focus on the arts. She also advocated the admission of women; the university had been co-educational since its founding. She figured prominently in the issue of academic freedom.

In 1905, Jane Stanford was at the center of one of America's legendary murder mysteries. She died of strychnine poisoning while on the island of Oahu, in a room at the Moana Hotel. Evidence around the case also leaves the door open for self-poisoning, due in part to financial issues with the University, inability to generate a source of income to support the university long term (i.e. selling jewelry), and the loss of her husband and only child.