SISTER ANNETTE RELF (1840-1915)
Episcopal Homes Founder; Relentless Servant Leader

By 1894 Sister Annette Relf had been named first Episcopal deaconess in Minnesota, parish teacher in Faribault and head matron and nurse in charge of Cottage Hospital in Minneapolis. This time of industrialization and rapid urban growth produced a dramatic increase in neglected and abandoned children, poverty and urban poor of all ages alongside unprecedented wealth.

Sister Annette demonstrated an uncommon dedication to the needs of the least fortunate. As the number of orphaned children increased so did their numbers at poorhouses across the country. She turned her focus to creating a safe home for babies and children, Sheltering Arms, in Minneapolis. In 1894, Sister Annette began shaping her work of housing for poor elderly women in a house in Saint Paul. She was willing to sacrifice all she had to make the new home a success. Seemingly ahead of her time, she solicited for a home close to shopping and churches noting the desire “to see a little of the outside world passing our windows.” Her early vision of a place of comfort for aging individuals blossomed and continues today as Episcopal Homes of Minnesota.