



DEAF HISTORY International

An Association for All Interested in the Study, Preservation, and Dissemination of Deaf People's History

Nos. 28 & 29

The DHI Newsletter

FALL / WINTER 2006



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1916 Original Stage Backdrop

**Charles Thompson Memorial Hall Auditorium
Saint Paul, Minnesota USA**

(See articles and photographs on pages 8 to 10)





The DHI Newsletter

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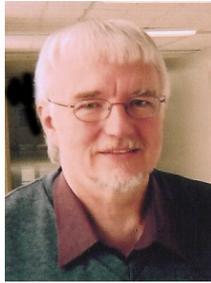
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Notes from the Editor



WHERE DID THE TIME GO? It is hard to believe I have been your *DHI Newsletter* editor for a year now. A big “thank you” goes to everyone who submitted their articles and photographs for possible inclusion. Remember, the liveliness of our quarterly newsletter depends on the submission of plentiful and worthwhile articles pertaining to Deaf History worldwide. For those who have yet to send anything, please let us hear from you.

I would also like to thank the readers who thoughtfully sent me numerous photographs that were taken by them at the 2006 DHI Conference in Berlin, Germany last summer. Because of limited space in our electronic newsletter, I could not include them all. One suggestion would be to add the photographs to a section of past DHI Conferences in our DHI Website, which is currently being overhauled (see *page 3 of this newsletter for more information*).

Some countries have associations / organizations / societies that encourage the study of and/or preservation of Deaf History. For example, the United Kingdom has a British Deaf History Society — see <http://www.deaf-history.org.uk/> Does your country have a similar group? If so, please do not hesitate to share that information with me. Perhaps in the not-too-distant future, our newsletter could print a list of these organizations, including their website URLs.

The DHI Bureau and its newsletter editor wish you all the best in 2007. We hope the New Year will bring you what you have worked hard for and we also hope you will continue your interest in studying and preserving Deaf History.

Finally, my postscript. For your New Year’s resolutions, please don’t forget to add the following to your list of intentions: to submit news, articles and essays, book and film reviews, images and photographs, newspaper clippings, conference and workshop announcements, websites, and other readings of interest for possible inclusion to your dedicated and hard-working DHI editor!



**FOR
FUTURE ISSUES**

The Deaf History International Newsletter welcomes Deaf History-related submissions of news, articles and essays, book and film reviews, images and photographs, newspaper clippings, conference and workshop announcements, websites, and other readings of interest for possible inclusion.

Please submit them to the editor by the following deadlines:

DHI ISSUES	SUBMISSION DEADLINE	DISTRIBUTION DATE
SPRING	March 15	April 15– 30
SUMMER	June 15	July 15 – August 15
FALL	September 15	October 15 – 31
WINTER	December 15	January 15 – 31



President's Column

By Douglas Bahl (USA), DHI President

HAPPY 2007 to one and all! May all good things come to everyone and may this be the best year ever! There is something about a new year, new beginnings, new ideas, new aspirations and new freshness that seems to get us moving.

With a new year in mind, I believe what we need most at this moment is to make our DHI organization, our ideas, and our activities stand out.

We want you to sit back and enjoy some quiet time with a few articles that seem to embrace this time of year. We are grateful for our electronic *DHI Newsletter* that is published quarterly to include pieces as well as to keep everyone informed about what's happening. Since last year, this *DHI Newsletter* has a new format and is richer in content. I want to take this opportunity to thank our DHI Editor Clifton F. Carbin for the excellent work he did in producing the last few

DHI issues. DHI welcomes your ideas and articles. Please submit your ideas for articles and your own articles to the DHI Editor.

Membership is an area in which I have great interest. Historically, it has been an area of great challenge to us. The DHI must grow in membership during 2007. If you have not renewed your membership, please do so and invite another member of the family, or a friend to join DHI.

It is great sadness that we have learned the death of Gilbert Eastman who did extensive research on Laurent Clerc some years ago and published his play "A Profile of Laurent Clerc." Our thoughts and prayers are with June Russi and family.

My best wishes to you all for a fulfilling and prosperous 2007!

DHI WEBSITE — Ideas Needed!

By Gordon Hay (United Kingdom), DHI Webmaster



The development of the DHI website is underway. What I am missing at the moment is CONTENT. I would like to ask you, the readers, to give me ideas on what you would like to see in the DHI website. I would be grateful if you would e-mail me at gordonhay007@hotmail.com and give your ideas / comments / suggestions for the website. Hopefully, the website will be up and running early in the new year. It is important that the DHI website becomes known to all and put onto the Deaf World map as soon as possible.



Generation Shift

By Odd-Inge Schröder (Norway), Past DHI President (2000–2006)

The Norwegian Deaf History Society (NDHS) had its annual national session in August 2006 in the university town of Tromsø, 1500 km north of Oslo. The topics discussed at this meeting were: Helen Keller and her connection with Norway, the Deaf Club of Oslo, the causes of deafness in students at the first Norwegian school for the deaf (f. 1825) in Trondheim, from 1880 to 1960, the effect of the German, British, French, and Polish attacks on the Deaf community during the Battle of Narvik in April of 1940, the growing number of CODAs (*hearing Children of Deaf Adults*) in the north 70 years ago, the Deaf Jews, and Bjarne Falk, the Deaf Norwegian-American painter. The session also included an overview of the hundred years jubilee of the Deaf Club of Tromsø (f. 1906).

Afterward there was an assembly of the NDHC, where outgoing President Mr. Thorbjorn Sander was applauded for his efforts of more than 16 years of dedicated work. During those years, he was secretary, treasurer, editor and author, all at about the same time. He was the driving force behind the 3rd DHI Conference in Trondheim in 1997, and has written and is writing many books related to Deaf History. Presently, the new NDHC leaders are Mr. Jon Martin Brauti (president), Mr. Oyvind Madsen, M. Trine Austbo, Mr. Joe Murray, Ms. Astrid T.Bo and Mr. Rune Anda. All of them are Deaf, and they are in their 30s and 40s. This is the generation shift I sense in the Norwegian Deaf History organization. Sander, however, will continue as editor of the *Journal for Døve*—a quarterly newsletter.



Deaf History International Conference in Berlin

By Helmut Vogel (Germany)

The 6th Deaf History International Conference took place in Berlin, Germany, from July 31st to August 4th, 2006. Its main topic was the *Holocaust of Deaf Jews*, as reported in the last issue of the *DHI Newsletter* (Summer 2006—No. 27).

This article is only part of a much longer article which I wrote for the German Deaf Newspaper. The focus of this shortened version is on the victims and the survivors of the Holocaust.

Jochen Muhs (Germany) lectured about the case of the Jewish dentist Paul Kroner, who was one of the founders of the swim club for Deaf-Mutes in Berlin (Berliner Taubstumm-Schwimmverein e.V., B.T.S.V.) in 1900. He was in charge of the finances and contributed to the prosperity of the swim club until he was debarred in 1933. For many years, he also supported the Central Association for the Well-Being of the Deaf-Mutes (Zentralverein für das Wohl der Taubstumm) in Berlin. In addition, he was an assessor for two years in the German Imperial Federation of the Deaf (Reichsverband der Gehörlosen Deutschlands, Regede), which was founded in 1927. After being excluded from the Deaf Clubs as “Non-Aryan”, Paul Kroner no longer had the opportunity to join the community of non-Jewish Deaf people. In 1943, he was deported to Auschwitz and killed there. Similarly, 400–600 other Deaf Jews from Berlin died in the extermination camps.

Marijke Scheffener (Netherlands) described the Deaf association “Guyot” in Amsterdam as one of the most powerful in the Dutch Deaf movement. The association had supported the 2nd International Sports Games of the Deaf, which took place in 1928. Several Deaf Jews have achieved great things for this association because of their commitment and hard work. However, after the German occupation of the Netherlands, all Deaf Jews were debarred from the associations and the building which housed “Guyot” was seized. After the restoration of the association when the Second World War was over, the Dutch Deaf community mourned its Jewish members who had been killed. Their deaths were a great loss for the Dutch Deaf movement.

In one of the main lectures “Deaf Holocaust,” Mark Zaurov (Germany) presented the story of Erwin Kaiser

(1880–1943), a well-known personality, who particularly stood up for the Jewish minority. From 1906 on, Kaiser led the association for the promotion of the interests of Jewish Deaf-Mutes in Germany (Verein zur Förderung der Interessen der israelitischen Taubstumm Deutschlands e.V.), that had been founded in 1896. During this time, more and more Jewish Deaf clubs emerged in different European cities. There were four Jewish schools for the Deaf in Europe: in Vienna, Berlin, Budapest and London. In 1931, the federation of Jewish Deaf in Europe (Bund der israelitischen Gehörlosen in Europa) was founded in Prague. Its delegates selected Erwin Kaiser as president. After the exclusion of Deaf Jews from the Deaf clubs, the existing Jewish Deaf clubs were integrated into a federation of the Jewish Deaf in Germany (Bund der jüdischen Gehörlosen Deutschlands) yielding to pressure from the national socialists. Erwin Kaiser was deported in 1943 along with his family to the extermination camp Auschwitz and killed there.

The participants of the conference got a firsthand account of the well-known Jewish school for Deaf children (Israelitische Taubstumm-Anstalt) in Berlin-Weißensee (1873–1942) from Israel Savir. Savir was born in Dortmund, Germany and attended that school from 1927 to 1936. In 1936, he followed his family who had immigrated to Palestine (now Israel) in 1934. Even today, he still remembers Felix Reich, the director of the Jewish

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Israel Savir in front of the Holocaust memory stone at the Jewish School for the Deaf in Berlin-Weißensee, Germany.

Continued from page 4

school for Deaf children at that time, and describes him as a generous and benevolent man, who would always listen to his pupils' concerns. Israel Savir also knew Wladislaw Zeitlin, who became an engineer in 1931 and was involved in the development of television. Zeitlin was allowed to use the laboratory in the upper floor of the school for Deaf children for his experiments. Savir even assisted Zeitlin in these experiments. The Deaf pupils admiringly called Zeitlin "professor". The accounts related by Israel Savir were especially thrilling for the participants of the conference because they contained such vital and interesting information.

DHI Conference Gala



Seated (left to right): Anna Vos van Dam, Lea Huysmans Halpern, Abraham Neumann and Israel Savir

Standing (left to right): Helmut Vogel, Jan Backer, Uzi Buzgalo and wife of Israel Savir

Because of his great commitment for the higher education of the Deaf from 1920 on, the name of Felix Reich shall always be well-remembered in the history of the Deaf, according to Mark Zaurov. His father, Markus Reich, had established the Jewish school for Deaf children in 1873. Felix Reich had grown up there among the Deaf pupils and he was as fluent in sign language as his father was. Starting in 1911, Felix Reich worked as a teacher, and from 1919 to 1939, he was the director of the school. Zeitlin owed to him that he was able to qualify for university entrance (the German "Abitur"). Zeitlin was the living proof that Deaf people as well as others were capable of pursuing an higher education. His success led to the establishment of more classes in the national

school for the Deaf in Berlin-Neukölln from 1927 on, comparable to today's modern secondary schools (the German "Realschule").

Douglas Bahl (USA) gave a lecture on the transport of Deaf children in the summer of 1939. Felix Reich was able to take 10 pre-school age Deaf children to England before the Second World War broke out. This was possible because England had assured the German Jews to allow the transportation of children. Some of the children today still live in England, among them a woman who came to the conference in Berlin. In the end, Felix Reich did not return to work as a teacher for Deaf children and died in England in 1964.

Special highlights of the conference were the reports of the Deaf Holocaust survivors Abraham Neumann (Israel), Jacob Ehrenfeld (Israel), Lea Huysmans Halpern (Belgium) and Anna Vos van Dam (Netherlands).

Anna Vos van Dam told in a very moving way about her deportation to the extermination camp Auschwitz-Birkenau and about the horror that she experienced there. Her expressive narration gave the audience the impression it had happened only recently. In Auschwitz, she had secretly removed the sign "Deaf-Mute" from her shirt, in order not to be killed immediately. During the time she spent there, she saw many people die from hunger and disease. When the camp was liberated, she had lost so much weight that she could not eat for two weeks. Only gradually was she able to regain her strength. At the conference, she showed her thickly swollen legs and the tattoo of a number on her arm. Many participants were very affected by these reports. It was particularly meaningful and touching to a lot of German participants to meet and hear the contemporary witnesses.

Since the focus of the conference was on the time of national socialism and the Holocaust, the tragic history of the Deaf during that era opened the eyes of many participants and reminded them not to forget what happened.



An Undated Early Australian Postcard
(probably 1890s)

Deaf and Dumb Asylum, Sydney

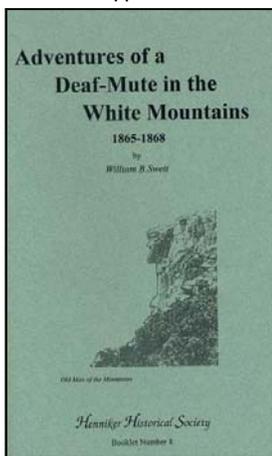
BOOK REVIEW

Adventures of a Deaf-Mute in the White Mountains: 1865–1868.

William B. Swett, *Adventures of a Deaf-Mute in the White Mountains: 1865–1868*.
Henniker, New Hampshire: Henniker Historical Society. Soft cover booklet #8 (2001), 52 pages. No ISBN.

Reviewed by
Cynthia Peters, Professor, English Department, Gallaudet University (USA).

“Deaf-Mute”??? Who in this day and age is putting out a memoir with such a politically incorrect appellation in the title?! But, look



closely at the cover of this slim volume and the years “1865–1868” beneath the title meet the eye. The disconcerting title and its timeframe pique one’s curiosity, eliciting various and sundry questions.

What is a deaf man doing in the White Mountains, why is a historical society reprinting (originally published for the Boston Deaf-Mute Mission) the adventures of this deaf man, and what’s important about the White Mountains? So, one turns the pages...Indeed, do keep turning the pages, as one will reap historical riches, and appreciate the rhetoric and perspective of an early Deaf American writer in the process.

When it comes to writing style, William B. Swett is an overall effective, surprisingly articulate writer. From time to time his turn of phrase, especially in the beginning, is mundane and choppy. This is either a characteristic of an inconsistent, novice deaf writer or a sign of uninspired editing. For example, some sentences are yanked together by the use of a semi-colon --to avoid too many short, simple sentences? -- whereas other parts verge on the poetic and eloquent (“I was whirled away over the iron track.” “Its sublime appearance gave me much food for thought.” “I met that prince of good fellows...” “A liberal dose of restoratives soon put him all right [sic].”). Admittedly, this is a personal memoir and not professional writing, but at times the reader wishes Swett had gone the extra mile and done more with the material. In any case, aside from his writing style in general, Swett’s focus is more on the visual and physical aspects of his experiences. After all, he’s deaf and a skilled laborer here—as many deaf men were up until the middle of the 20th century—so this is not surprising.

However, as one reads on, one begins to get impressed by this “simple” laborer. Swett is a good enough handyman that he can leave his regular customers to go off and work at a White Mountain resort three summers in a row. How many men—even hearing men—in the middle of the 19th century went off like this to labor in a strange place, especially if one had to resort to communicating by way of pencil and slate? Indeed, Swett not only works as a handyman, he has adventures hiking in the area, often in relation to frequently acting as a guide at the resort. As one reads on, Swett comes across as courageous, forbearing, ingenious, and capable. (Indeed, many deaf men at this time were good with their hands. They were hard-working, stoic, and cooperative because it was not easy to get a job and hold onto it at the time. So, they had to be better than the hearing men at what they did.) Swett even hammered together an 18-foot-long panther and an Indian, twenty feet high with a rifle 16 feet long out of wood—two figures assembled on Eagle Cliff for the enjoyment of the hotel guests a half mile away. (32) And, he was the first to actually measure the Profile so that he could do a hand-held model out of calcined plaster at scale, (30) an accomplishment written up in the *New York Journal of Commerce*. “It was made from actual measurement, taken at great risk of life and limb, [Swett] having been on the brow five times, and is said to be the first, and perhaps the only man, who ever ventured under the chin to get a correct view of the rocks which constitute the face.”

But, William B. Swett (1825–1884) is not your ordinary deaf handyman. He was an explorer, showman, mechanic, writer, and artist. His was a prominent deaf/hearing family, several generations strong, in one of the three deaf communities already flourishing at the time: Martha’s Vineyard, Henniker, NH and Sandy River Valley, Maine, the triangle of deaf communities which gave rise to the U.S deaf community. A founding member of the New England Gallaudet Association in 1854, he was one of the leaders of the New England deaf community itself. In fact, Swett was one of the three founders of the Beverly School for the Deaf, along with William Barley and the Reverend Doctor Thomas Gallaudet who was president of the board for 22 years. Swett is known to have stated, “Deaf children are entitled to the same high quality of education that is offered to hearing children!”

When he passed away in 1887, his daughter, Nellie Swett, one of his two deaf daughters, became principal. Hence, being one of the distinguished natives of Henniker, the Henniker Historical Society Museum is named after him.

Perhaps, another reason that the Henniker Historical Society has issued this 2001 reprint is that the Profile, or the Great Stone Face, the state emblem of New Hampshire (it’s represented on the quarter), around which much of this memoir is centered, recently collapsed in May 2003 after some thousands of years and sundry preventive measures. Measuring 40 feet high and 25 feet wide, the Old Man of the Mountain was made up of five granite ledges stacked horizontally to form a man’s profile on a cliff 1200 feet above Profile Lake in Franconia Notch State Park within the White Mountain National Forest. An impressive geographical formation, the Old Man was memorialized by Daniel Webster—

Men hang out their signs indicative of their respective trades; shoemakers hang out a gigantic shoe; jewelers a monster watch, and the dentist hangs out a gold tooth; but in the mountains of New Hampshire, God Almighty has hung out a sign to show that there He makes men.

So, the Profile is gone as is the Profile Hotel—lost to a fire in 1923—Swett worked at those three summers. This resort hotel was at the northern end of the notch near the renowned Flume Gorge and about where the Cannon Mountain Aerial Tramway is nowadays. It was a busy hotel (400 windows, several hundreds guests, and an extensive stable full of 350 horses) due to the many nearby natural attractions long the 8-mile long notch. With its demise came the end of the inns and hotels in the notch.

So, this memoir is also a historical gem in documenting life in this part of New England in the 1860s, a time it was transitioning from transportation by means of horse, stagecoach, carriage, and sleigh to the railroad and its “iron horse.” The many historical, biological and geographical nuggets include one hiking party going off so many “rods” in search of quartz crystals. And Swett relates how in clearing out the Flume of fallen rocks and trees, the workers made use of fires and

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“150 Years on Kendall Green: Celebrating Deaf History and Gallaudet”

Kellogg Conference Hotel at Gallaudet University
Washington, D.C.

April 11–13, 2007

KEYNOTE PRESENTERS:

James M. McPherson

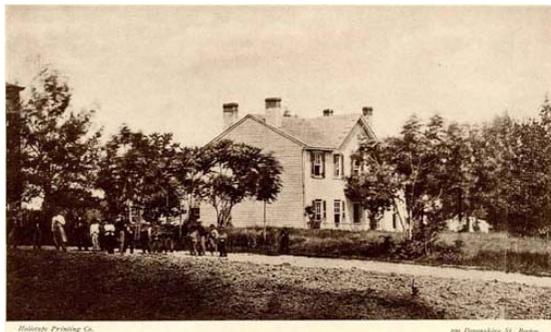
1989 Pulitzer Prize Winner

Professor Emeritus, Princeton University

Paddy Ladd

Centre for Deaf Studies

University of Bristol



Building First Occupied By the
Columbia Institution for the Deaf and Dumb,
1857

TOPICS:

- Intersection of Deaf Education and Immigration Policy
- Manifestations of Deafhood
- Women at Gallaudet
- Evolution of Deaf Theatre
- Gallaudet College and American Deaf Citizenship in Progressive-Era America
- Education of Deaf African Americans in Washington, D.C.
- THG/Alice Cogswell Statue Controversy

PRESENTERS INCLUDE:

- Joe Murray
- Harlan Lane and Ulf Hedberg
- Lois Bragg and Diana Gates
- Aaron Kelstone
- David de Lorenzo
- Rebecca Edwards
- Doug Baynton
- Chris Krentz
- Chris Kurz
- Lindsey Parker
- Sandra Jowers-Barber
- Michael Olson
- Rachel Hartig

Viewing of PBS
Documentary
“Through Deaf Eyes”
after dinner
(April 12)



Kendall School Girls, 1880s

— EARLY BIRDS —

For a discounted “Early Bird” registration fee,
register before **FEBRUARY 15, 2007**

Registration includes ticket to Sign Me Alice (April 11).

Sign Me Alice will run on April 6, 7, 11, 12, 13 and 14

(Gallaudet University Theatre Arts Department presents
a student production of Gilbert Eastman’s play, *Sign Me Alice*.)

For further information and registration forms, go to

<http://gupress.gallaudet.edu/gupiconference>

Photos courtesy of Gallaudet University Archives. This conference is sponsored by the Gallaudet University Press Institute, with additional support provided by the Gallaudet Research Institute, the Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center, Gallaudet University Department of Government and History, and Gallaudet University Archives.



Minnesota's Deaf Clubhouse Celebrates 90th Anniversary

by Douglas D. Bahl (USA)

Established 90 years ago as a civic and social clubhouse for the Deaf Minnesota Community in Saint Paul, Minnesota USA, the Charles Thompson Memorial Hall celebrated its 90th anniversary on November 9–11, 2006. Almost 450 people were in attendance for the three-day events: Open House for Deaf school-age students on Thursday, November 9th, Vaudeville (play) on Friday night, November 10th and banquet on Saturday night, November 11th. Artifacts, photos, and documents relating to the Deaf clubhouse's 90th year history were displayed.

November 5, 1916 stands a red letter day in the history of Deaf Minnesotans. It marked the dedication and formal opening of a new three-story brick Classical Revival clubhouse which has continuously served as a social and cultural meeting house for the Deaf Community. It hosted numerous banquets, meetings, weddings, and other occasions. The club has also sponsored various social activities over the years, perhaps most notably in the 1920s when the second floor assembly hall served as a movie theater showing such films as "The Mark of Zorro" with Douglas Fairbanks, "Pollyana" with Mary Pickford, and "My Boy" with Jackie Coogan. The bowling alley in the basement was removed in 1920, and a snack area was added. The original ladies' parlor is now a billiard parlor where you can see the billiard table which belonged to Charles Thompson himself.

The force behind Thompson Hall was done by Margaret Brooks Thompson, wife of the deceased Charles Thompson who was the Deaf son of one of the wealthiest St. Paul families. His father, Horace Thompson, and uncle, James Thompson, founded the First National Bank of St. Paul, later known as US Bank. Charles Thompson is referred to as the "Great Deaf Gatsby" because he was an ardent entertainer in that flapper era. When Charles died in 1915, he left a large inheritance to Margaret. Known as a very generous person and staying true to Charles' dream that a clubhouse be established for the Deaf Minnesotans, she donated a large sum of his inheritance to establish the clubhouse in memory of her husband.

A famed Deaf architect, Olof Hanson, a long-time friend of her and her belated husband, was hired to design the clubhouse. This was Olof's last architectural design prior to his new career as Episcopal minister for the Deaf in the State of Washington. Because architect Olof Hanson himself was Deaf, he incorporated into the building several features to suit the needs of the Deaf people. The large windows, both bow and double-hung, on all floors and in the raised basement, were included to allow much natural light as possible so people using American Sign Language can see each other clearly. The second floor assembly hall was built with a light switch on stage, rather than at the back of the room, so the speaker can flash the lights to get the attention of the audience.

In addition to paying for the clubhouse, Margaret Thompson bequeathed another \$45,000 as a trust fund for its upkeep. Today interest on that money pays for maintenance of the building.

Because of Margaret Thompson's gift, Charles Thompson Memorial Hall remains the only free club for the Deaf in the United States. In other Deaf clubhouses they have to charge membership fees. As a result, they have been closed or moved for rental spaces due to rising costs.

Margaret Thompson initiated a corporation of five members, the Board of Trustees that managed and supervised the trust fund. The first Board of Trustees had four hearing members of the Thompson family and one Deaf person. Today, it is managed entirely by Deaf persons since the last of Mrs. Thompson's family member retired in 1951. Under the articles of the corporation, the trustees hold their lifetime positions. They can resign or be removed by a majority vote of other trustees.

In January at the Annual Mass Meeting (*an old traditional name since 1916 for present-day Annual General Meeting*), a House Committee is elected to direct and manage the activities of the clubhouse. Today, the clubhouse hosts many Deaf organization meetings. Among those who use the building are: Deaf Snowmobile 72 Club, Minneapolis (athletic group playing softball and basketball), Minnesota ASLTA Chapter, National Black Deaf Advocates—Minnesota Chapter, Vikings Club, Minnesota Association of Deaf Citizens, Deaf Senior Citizens and the others. Families celebrate their anniversaries and host birthday parties there, and community members attend lectures or plays given by Deaf people.

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Minnesota's Deaf Clubhouse...

(Continued from page 8)

Each year a Deaf Easter bunny and a Deaf Santa Claus visit the clubhouse. Holiday parties are particularly well attended. For most Deaf people in Minnesota, thanks to the generosity of Margaret Thompson, the clubhouse continues to serve as a second home!

Charles Thompson Memorial Hall remains strong in its historic commitment to public service through civic enhancement, conservation and the environment. This clubhouse is currently designated as a historical landmark since 1995. The Heritage Preservation Commission had a program to find three historically significant buildings in St. Paul deserving historical landmark status. Out of 300 buildings considered, Charles Thompson Hall was one of ten finalists, and after presentations to the city commission and council, it was one of the three finalists chosen on February 2, 1995. A local architect, Thomas Zahn serving as a consultant for the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission, said it is very rare to find examples of buildings that have retained their

original use for such a long period of time. He also said this clubhouse is a unique example of a Deaf architect designing a building for the Deaf Community.

At the clubhouse's dedication 90 years ago there were 500 people in attendance, including Deaf Architect Olof Hanson who was quoted saying "I do not speak for the building; the building speaks for itself". Certainly the clubhouse is one of Olof Hanson's best legacies as well as Charles Thompson's whose profession was philanthropy!



Deaf Clubhouse in Minnesota: Biographies



CHARLES THOMPSON
(1864–1915)

"GREAT DEAF GATSBY"

Charles Thompson was born in St. Paul, Minnesota on March 15, 1864. Deafened at birth, Charles was enrolled at the Minnesota Institute for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb in Faribault when he was 9 years old. Following his high school graduation in 1884, his parents presented him with a beautiful 850-acre stock farm near Windom, Minnesota as a graduation gift. Charles became a well-known gentleman farmer and spent almost \$150,000 in land, buildings and stock. His farm was a showplace where many visitors had come far and near to see it.

During his spare time, Charles practiced target shooting with firearms and in time developed into a skilled game hunter. He had an excellent collection of guns that were imported from England and had won many trophies at trapshooting tournaments.

Charles craved more fun and recreation than his four-legged farm animals so he sold his farm and moved back to St. Paul where he often threw parties for his Deaf guests at his home. In 1896,

Charles decided to give up his bachelorhood to marry Margaret Brooks. Charles hired his longtime friend Olof Hanson to design a three-story colonial house as a wedding gift to the bride.

The couple also had a summer home on the shore of Lake Darling near Alexandria, Minnesota. Other Deaf people were soon attracted to the scene and built cabins on adjoining lots. It later became known as the "Deaf Colony" and Charles was often called the mayor and the first citizen. He always set up parties with all sorts of games and contests so there was never a dull moment during the long summer days.

His chief recreation at the lake was croquet, a game in which he never got tired. He and other Deaf men would ignore the call for supper and finish the croquet game by the light of kerosene lanterns after sunset.

For a change in the fall of 1914, Charles and Margaret Thompson went to Pasadena, California to settle in their winter home. On his way back to St. Paul, Minnesota by train, Charles died of a heart condition on April 22, 1915. He was buried beside his parents in St. Paul, Minnesota.



MARGARET BROOKS THOMPSON
(1870–1929)



Margaret Brooks Thompson was born in Scotland on November 1, 1870 and immigrated to America with her family when she was young. She was then enrolled at the Minnesota Institute for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb in Faribault, but later moved with her family to the state of Colorado. She there attended the Colorado Institute for the Education of Mutes in Colorado Springs until her graduation. While attending the Alumni reunion at the Minnesota Institute, she met Charles Thompson and later became his wife. She was known as a very generous person.

Following her husband's death, Margaret decided to donate a large amount of her inheritance to establish the clubhouse for the Deaf in memory of her husband and hired Olof Hanson to design a three-story building in St. Paul. Since the Board of Trustees was established in 1916, Margaret continued to serve as a Board member until her death on June 14, 1929. She was buried next to Charles Thompson in the family plot.

Continued on page 10

Deaf Clubhouse in Minnesota: Biographies
(Continued from page 9)



**OLOF
HANSON**
(1862–1931),
Deaf Architect

1890s Photo:
Gallaudet University Archives

Olof Hanson was born in Fjelkinge, Sweden on September 10, 1862. Following his father's death in 1874, the Hanson family, headed by his older brother named Hans, came to Minnesota in the spring of 1875. Upon his arrival in Minnesota, Olof became Deaf and then entered the Minnesota Institute for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb in Faribault where he graduated with the class of 1881. He then began his studies at the National Deaf-Mute College (now Gallaudet University) and graduated in 1886 with a Bachelor of Arts degree. Olof started working as a draftsman for an architect in Minnesota and later decided to go to Europe for further studies in architecture during the years of 1889-90. In 1891 Olof returned to

Minnesota where he taught physical education for two years in Faribault until the economic climate improved so he was able to begin a private architectural practice in the same town. During his professional practice, he prepared his blueprint plans for 24 residences, 18 store buildings and hotels, two churches and ten school buildings. His architectural career in Faribault was to prosper between 1895 and 1901.

On July 3, 1899, Olof was married to Agatha Tiegel, who was then a teacher at the Minnesota Institute for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb. Agatha was the first Deaf woman to graduate with the Bachelor of Arts degree from the National Deaf-Mute College in 1893. Three daughters were born to Olof and Agatha.

With a successful business established, Olof was offered a partnership with Frank Thayer, an architect from Mankato, Minnesota. They then moved to Seattle, Washington in 1902 to set up a new practice in the West. Thayer soon became ill and retired from professional leaving Olof to fend for himself in his new environment.

During that time, Olof's interest in serving the Deaf Community grew and was involved with the local division of the National Fraternal Society of the Deaf as

well as the Washington Association of the Deaf. He became the president of National Association of the Deaf. In 1909 he started a Bible class for the Deaf at Episcopal Church. During World War I, he returned to the Midwest and secured drafting positions in St. Paul and later in Omaha, Nebraska and then returned to Seattle in 1918. During his stay in Minnesota, Olof was hired by Margaret Thompson to design a Deaf clubhouse in memory of her beloved husband.

Back in Seattle, Hanson found employment as a draftsman at the University of Washington and eventually filled the Chair of Landscape Architect at the university. At the same time Olof entered the Episcopal seminary and was ordained a deacon in March, 1924 and an Episcopal minister in 1929. For financial reasons, he continued to work at the university while providing spiritual service to Deaf people in Seattle, Tacoma, Vancouver and Portland.

Olof died in Seattle, Washington on September 8, 1933.

In 1988, State Highway #198 on the campus of the present-day Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf was renamed in honor of Olof Hanson. The school's current address is 615 Olof Hanson Drive, Faribault, Minnesota 55021 USA.

COMING UP IN FUTURE ISSUES

Delving into the History of the Deaf in Amsterdam by Werkgroep Amsterdamse Doven Historie (Study Group Deaf History Amsterdam)

EELKE JELLES EELKEMA: The Dutch Deaf Master of Still Life Painting by Henk Betten (Netherlands)

The Deaf Presence in Literature by Anja Becker (USA)

Adventures of a Deaf-Mute... (Continued from page 6)

accompanying smoke to fend off the clouds of midges. Swett also mentions obtaining chewing gum from spruce trees, fashioning a makeshift birch torch, and collecting a "purse" for various hiking feats such as a climb up Eagle Cliff utilizing only some stout twine. There is a visit by Admiral Farragut, a waiter-girl only 11 years old, and cakes of ice scattered about one nearby town one spring. And, of course, the term "deaf-mute" is used matter-of-factly.

This White Mountain resort was no utopia as Swett endured compassion, prejudice, and misconceptions during those three summers. The first summer at the hotel, "My signs and gestures, and my little slate, of which I made free use in talking with my companions" attracted attention and prompted a guest to make a blessing over

him."(4) And Swett was much amused by the whisperings and pointings of his fellow workers. "They regarded me, for some time, as a strange person, and seemed to be much afraid of my slate and pencil. One of them, who stood near me one day when I pulled out my slate for some purpose, ran away as fast as possible, showing fear on his face.... In course of time, they got over this, and treated me as one of themselves."(6) As for the guests, at least one guest wouldn't accept a "deaf-mute" as a guide. But, when this very same guest became lost on a hiking trip in the White Mountains, it was Swett who ventured out and rescued him. (27)

Disappointingly, there is little mention of other deaf people. Early on in his memoir (4), Swett notes that "The deaf-mutes who composed the party, which visited the Profile House and went up Mount Lafayette, in 1858, will remember Mr. Bell [the hotel proprietor, not Alexander Graham Bell]...I shall

elsewhere give an account of the adventures of this party, in connection with my own." However, there is no later mention of this deaf party (of hotel guests?)

Overall, this is a good read, especially in the context of the New England deaf community, the historical milieu, and the geographical wonders of the region.



Original
publication, 1875

DHI CONFERENCES: Past and Future



First-Ever International Conference on Deaf History

Washington, D.C., USA / June 20–23, 1991



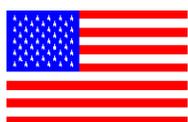
Second DHI Conference

Hamburg, Germany / October 8–11, 1994



Third DHI Conference

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Fourth DHI Conference

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Seventh DHI Conference

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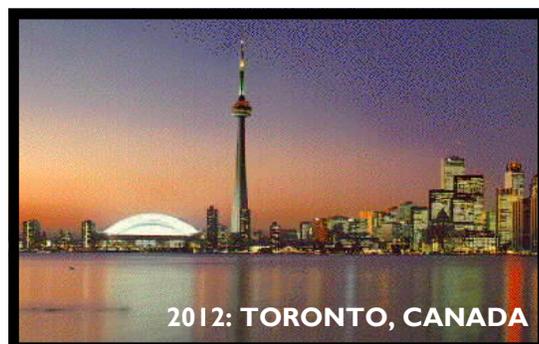


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