




Early Deaf Utahns (c. 1900)

'Far Away, In the West'

The Emergence of Utah's Deaf Community, 1850–1910

Doug Stringham & Anne Leahy · To UVU ASL490R | January 2013


Most traditional *early* Utah Deaf histories highlight two events:



University of Deseret, Salt Lake City

1884 Utah School for the Deaf

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742 21st Street, Ogden, Utah

1917 L.D.S. Branch for the Deaf

Stringham & Leahy, 2013

If your research subjects tell
you “I’m the first to do/be/go...”
they probably aren’t.

Utah's Deaf history is
cleverly hidden and woefully
underchronicled.

Existing scholarly works:

Pace, I. A. (1946). *A history of the Utah school for the deaf*. (Unpublished master's thesis, University of Utah).

Roberts, E. (1994). *The early history of the Utah school for the deaf and its influence of a cohesive deaf society, circa. 1884–1905*. (Unpublished master's thesis, Brigham Young University).

Evans, D. (1999). *A silent world in the intermountain west: Records from the Utah school for the deaf and blind, 1884-1941*. (Unpublished master's thesis, Utah State University).

proto·community

Greek *prōtos* 'first'; original; earliest form of;
anterior; relating to a precursor

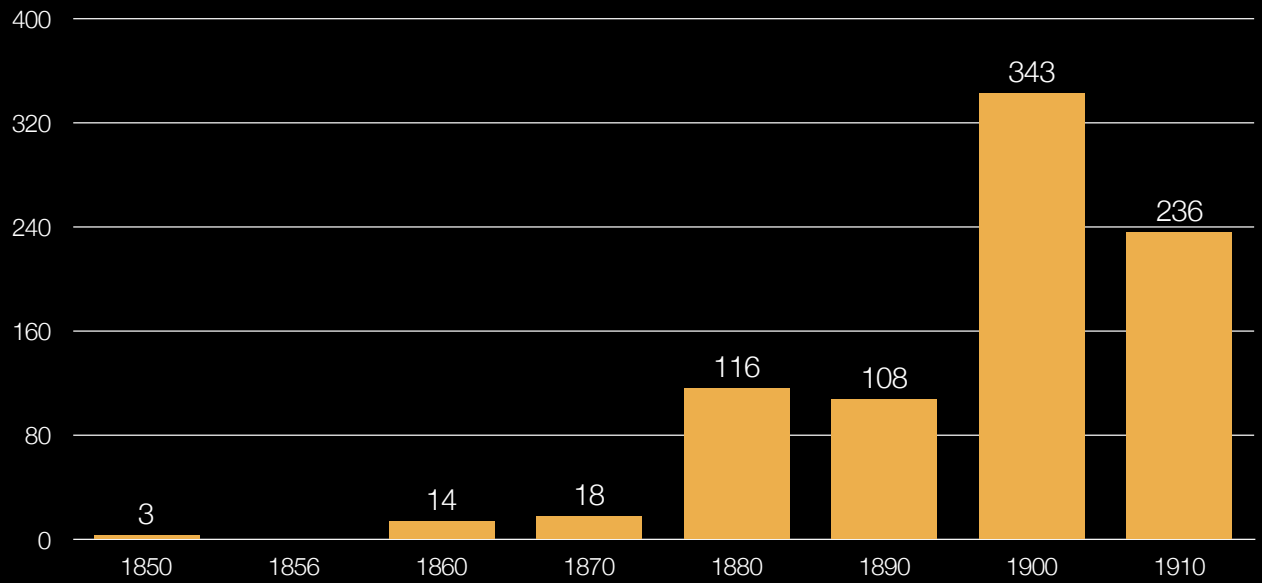
Populations of Deaf
people began forming in
Utah beginning in 1849.

Beck Family, 1880
Utah Federal Census

Line	Name	Sex	Age	Relationship	Occupation	Mar.	Swed.	England
20	Willa	W	20	Wife	Washing house			
21	Carlson	M	20	Son				
22	Joseph	M	22	Son				
23	Mary	W	22	Old Daughter				
24	20 21 Clark	W	22					
25	Jane	W	27	Wife	Washing house			
26	Mariah	W	15	Daughter	At home			
27	Juliett	W	17	Daughter	At home			
28	Agatha	W	16	Daughter	At home			
29	Siela	W	7	Daughter	Attending school			
30	21 22 Wessner	M	20		Carpenter			
31	Caroline	W	28	Wife	Washing house			
32	William	M	7	Son	At home			
33	Hellen	W	6	Daughter	At school			
34	Charles	M	5	Son				
35	Emma	W	3	Daughter				
36	F. W. Lewis	M	12	Child in law	House Keeping			
37	22 Leroy	M	28		Labourer			
38	23 23 Erikson	M	27		Barman			
39	Christina	W	28	Wife	Washing house			
40	24 24 Jina	W	28	Wife	Washing house			
41	Beck	M	27		Barman			
42	Jane	W	21	Wife	Washing house			
43	John	M	13	Son	At home			
44	Jacob	M	8	Son				
45	Joseph	M	7	Son				
46	Mary	W	6	Daughter				
47	Kyrlene	W	5	Son				
48	Thetilde	W	4	Daughter				
49	Samuel	M	2	Son				
50	Rebecca	W	20	Wife in law	House Keeper			

NOTE D.—In making entries in columns 9, 10, 11, 12, 16 to 23, an affirmative mark only will be used—thus /, except in the case of divorced persons, column 11, when the letter "D" is to be used.
 NOTE E.—Question No. 12 will only be asked in cases where an affirmative answer has been given either to question 10 or to question 11.
 NOTE F.—Question No. 14 will only be asked in cases when a gainful occupation has been reported in column 13.
 NOTE G.—In column 7 an abbreviation in the name of the month may be used, as Jan., Apr., Dec.

“Deaf/Deaf & Dumb” mentioned/counted in Utah Federal/Territorial Censuses, 1850–1910



1849–1868

Surveys of United States 1850, 1860, 1870, and
1880 Federal Censuses, state/territorial censuses,
Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel records

~60,000 total overland travelers

~40 Deaf overland travelers

(Stringham & Leahy, 2012)

1850

3 “Deaf” people reported:

Allen Burk, 4; Farmington, Davis Co. (b. IA)

Harriet Atwood Newell Russell, 22; Davis Co.
(b. NY), Deaf but not marked

Eleanor Winal, 17; Salt Lake City (b. Canada),
marked Deaf but not

1856

Utah Territorial Census

Only first/last names and towns, no vitals/
demographics; cross-referencing required

Analysis in progress

1860

14 Deaf people reported
Salt Lake, Davis, Utah, Iron*

“A person is to be noted deaf and dumb who was born deaf, or who lost the faculty of hearing before acquiring the use of speech.” (Census Instructions, p. 16)

1870

18 Deaf people reported
Salt Lake, Davis, Utah, Beaver, Iron,
Washington, Juab, Sanpete, Uintah

“Deafness merely, without loss of speech, is not
to be reported.” (Census Instructions, p. 11)

1880 (1886)

118* Deaf people reported

Pockets still in Salt Lake, Davis, Utah, Iron; as state population recentered, Deafness followed

Used for pupil recruitment to the new SftD

Many listed are aged 60–80 (likely late deafened). Also likely many miscounted or babies that would become Deaf through illness

1890

108* Deaf people reported
Deaf population recenters in
Salt Lake, Davis, Weber, Utah, Iron

“...enumerators in 1880 and 1890 were required to obtain for each deaf person enumerated certain data not called for by the population schedule, receiving 5 cents additional pay for each name thus reported.”

1900

343* Deaf people reported

Deaf population in Salt Lake, Davis, Weber

1910

236* Deaf people reported

Deaf population in Salt Lake, Davis, Weber, Utah

“The proportion was lowest in Utah, from which only 24.6%, or practically one-fourth, of those reported as deaf and dumb returned schedules; this low percentage is partly explained by the fact that there was a considerable duplication in the returns, since many of the students at the...[deaf] school...were enumerated both at the institution *and* with their families.”

(Deaf-mutes in the United States: Analysis of the census of 1910 with summary of state laws relative to the deaf as of January 1, 1918)

	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910
Utah Deaf	3	14	18	117	108	343	236
Utah Total¹	11380	40273	86768	143963	210779	276749	373351
US Deaf Total²	9803	12821	16205	33378	40592	24369	44708

1. United States Resident Population by State, New Jersey Department of Labor ([lwd.dol.state.nj.us/labor/lpa/census/1990/poptrd1.htm](http://wd.dol.state.nj.us/labor/lpa/census/1990/poptrd1.htm))

2. Deaf-mutes in the United States-1910 Census & Summary of State Laws as of 1 Jan 1918.



Expectations and Questions

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In the Utah Deaf proto-community,
typically Deaf = Mormon

Several Deaf non- & plural married multi-sibling families made up the Community.

Non-plural Deaf multi-sibling Deaf families (n=20)

- Jacob, John, and Joseph Beck (Lehi)
- Allen, Eva, and Gladice Burk (Farmington)
- Irene and Elizabeth Ann Egginton (Sandy)
- David, John, and Lucinda Heiner (Morgan)
- Alfred, Joe, and Kate Keeley (Salt Lake)
- Alexander, Harry, Naomi, and Pearl Wright (Bountiful)
- Alfred and Emma Young (Kanab)

Plural married/cohabited Deaf multi-sibling Deaf families (n=7)

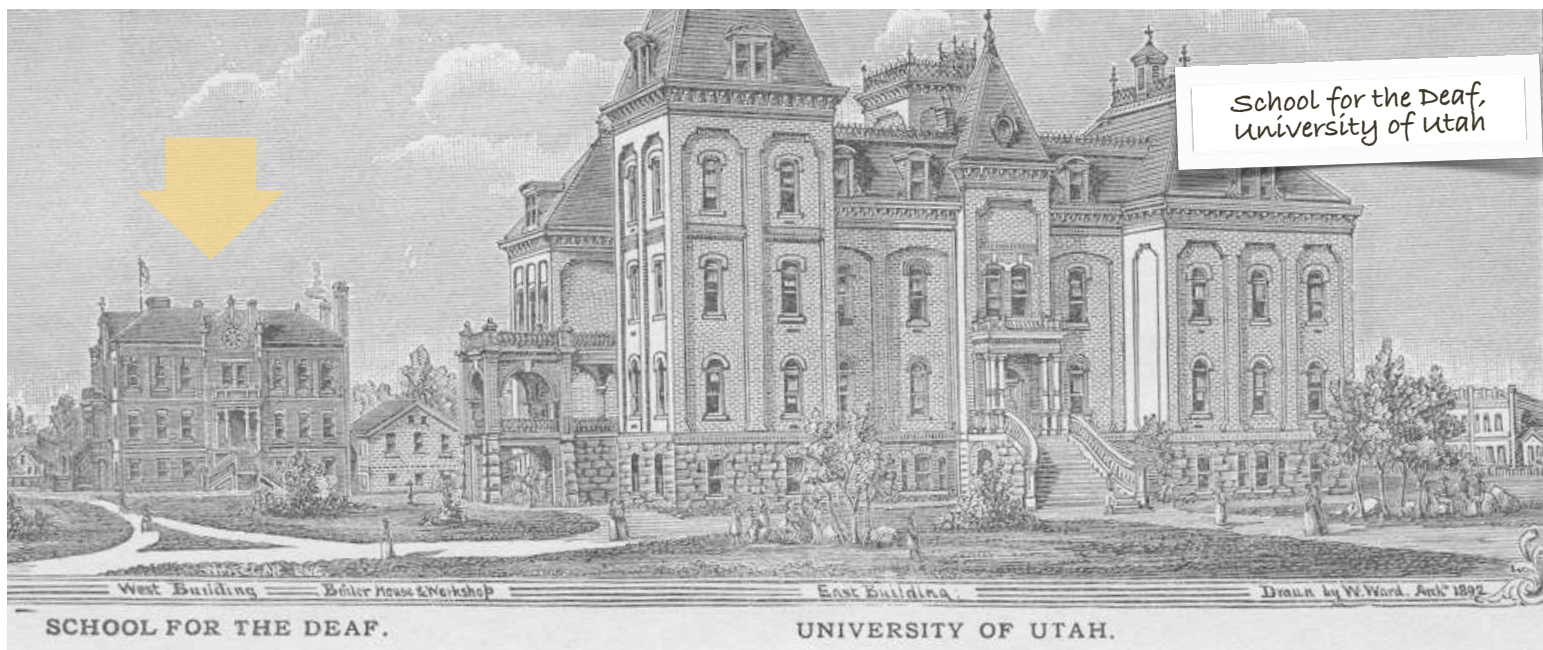
- Mary Irene, Artemesia, and Clarissa Foote (Glendale)
- Harriet (Russell) and Maria Newell (Payson)
- Isabella (Jacob) and Emma West (Pleasant Grove)

What did Milan mean for Deaf Utahns?

- USD founded post-Milan in Fall 1884
- Metcalf/Combined Method came in 1889
- Articulation classes followed in the 1890s

What did 1896 Statehood mean for Deaf Utahns?

- Utah was the 45th state admitted to the union, but USD was the 48th state SftD.
(excluding private religious institutions and manual/oral day programs, n=~250)



1884 Utah School for the Deaf

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U. Deseret Deaf Department and USD were not denominational.

- Rejected LDS services (church/state); offered protestant services, however:
- All members of first graduating class were LDS
- Federally-installed territorial governor established school outside of LDS influence

Educated Deaf European students enrolled at USD.

- Deaf immigrant LDS convert children in first USD graduating classes
- c.1903 Park Literary Society (internal USD student group) debate: “Resolved: two-handed fingerspelling is superior to one-handed because it is easier for hearing people to learn.”

USD graduates formed political organizations and enrolled at Gallaudet.

- Graduates begin attending Gallaudet University in 1897; Elizabeth DeLong first USD GU student
- DeLong became *first* female NAD state chapter president in 1909 (NAD founded 1880)

CREATING THE COMMUNITY

Representative* confluence of Utah's Deaf peoples and communities

COUNTIES/
ORGANIZATIONS

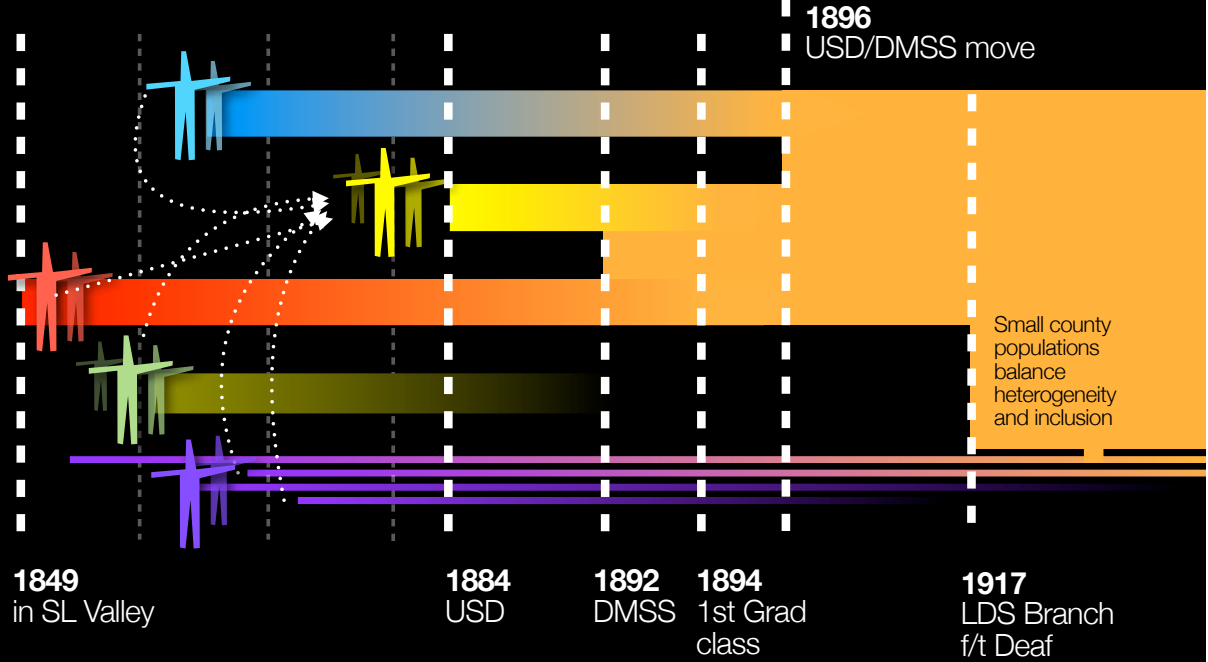
Weber

USD (Ogden)

Salt Lake/
Utah

Iron
(1860/70 Deaf 'spike')

Other
counties
(small populations)



mail@anneleahy.com
dstringham@gmail.com