

Henry C. White

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Henry C. White was born hearing on November 9, 1856. He became Deaf at the age of 4 from scarlet fever (Census of Henry C. White). He was a native of Roxbury, Massachusetts. He first attended the Horace Mann Day School for the Deaf in Boston. In 1866, at the age of nine, he attended the Hartford School for the Deaf as a pupil (The Utah Eagle, February 1922). Upon graduation from Hartford in 1880, he entered Columbia Institute for the Deaf and Dumb (later renamed Gallaudet College) in Washington, D.C., where he received the degree of Bachelor of Arts (Gallaudet University Alumni Cards, 1866-1957; The Utah Eagle, February 1922). During the same year, he attended National Association of the Deaf first Cincinnati convention attendees (Gannon, 1981).

Soon after graduation, Henry became manager of a home for aging Deaf persons in Allston, Massachusetts (Gallaudet University Alumni Cards, 1866-1957). In 1884, upon recommendation of Dr. Edward M. Gallaudet, president of Gallaudet College, Henry was appointed principal of the Utah School for the Deaf (its first) in Salt Lake City by Dr. John R. Park, president of the University of Utah. The school, established by the Legislature as a department of the state university through the efforts of John Beck and William



Henry C. White (Center) at the first convention of the National Association of the Deaf in Cincinnati, Ohio, 1880. His Mary E. Mann is standing behind him.

Photo courtesy of "Deaf Heritage: A Narrative History of Deaf America"

Wood, both parents of Deaf children, was opened in a room in the University building on August 26, 1884 (The Utah Eagle, February 1922). Henry remained at USD as teacher, principal and head teacher until 1890.

Upon Henry's resignation from his position at the Utah School for the Deaf in February

1890, he moved to Boston, where he became a printer at the firm of Acheson & Co., and published his paper, The National Gazette (The Silent Worker, June 1895; The Utah Eagle, February 1922; Gannon, 1981).



Henry C. White as a young man
Photo courtesy of the Gallaudet University Archives

He eventually became an attorney and served as a legal advisor. He also authored a book called Law Points for Everybody and sold 60,000 copies in New England within a month, with copies of a second edition already on order. His book on law covered New England and New York (The Silent Worker, June 1898). Sometimes he associated with other lawyers in court cases involving the deaf and frequently served as a court interpreter on behalf of other Deaf individuals. He once assisted John L. Bates, a

former Governor of Massachusetts in an

important case. While Henry didn't engage in the practice of the law, he gained a reputation as a teacher of the deaf in eastern cities (The Silent Worker, July 1912). He was a brilliant man.

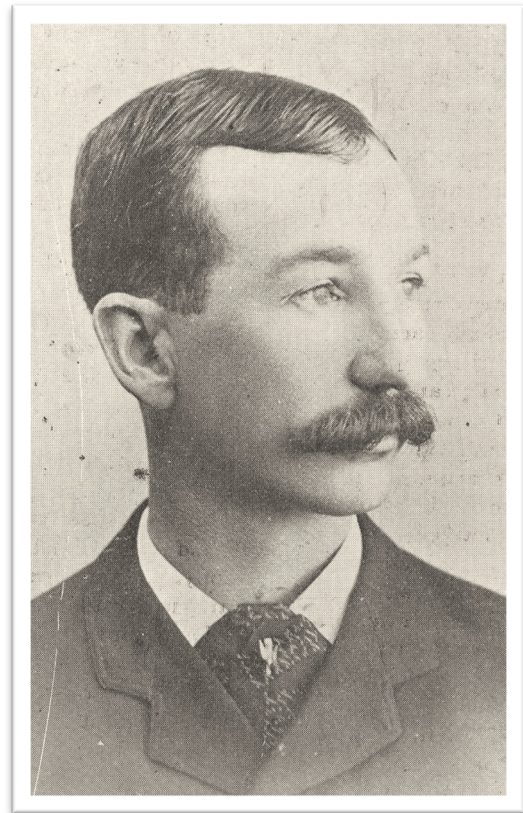
Edward Allen Fay, a professor at Gallaudet College and an editor of the American Annals of the Deaf, described Henry's strong English ability in March 1916 (The Silent Worker, April 1916):

“The value of this means of acquiring languages seems to have been discovered by a man who was himself deaf Henry C White, then a student at Gallaudet College. Seeing that some of his fellow-students who were congenitally or quasicongenitally deaf had a much better command of the English language than others of equally good natural advantages and an equally long term of instruction, he sought the cause of this difference. He found it in the circumstance that those who understood and wrote English well were eager reader of books, while those whose command of English was inferior bad, like the great majority of deaf-born people, no taste for reading, and did little more of it than was required by the instructors.”

In June 1885, Henry married Mary E. Mann, also Deaf and a graduate of the Ohio School for the Deaf (Gallaudet University Alumni Cards, 1866-1957; The Salt Lake Herald, June 20, 1885; The Utah Eagle, February 1922).

In 1911, Henry founded the Arizona School for the Deaf at the University of Arizona, an arrangement similar to the one in Utah. During his three years of service as a principal, “he devoted his time conscientiously and unselfishly toward the best interest of the school and the students.” When ASD was converted into an oral school, Henry’s employment was terminated through no fault of his own in the middle of the school year and it was impossible for him to secure other employment (The Silent Worker, March 1920). In March 1913, Henry published his opinion about oralism in the “The Silent Worker” magazine:

“Oralists never taught by any method but their own and cannot be expected to appreciate the utility of other methods than their own. They are not in touch with the deaf at all, for their own graduates turn against them and their method, after they have gone out into the stress and strife of life’s battles and



**Henry C. White at the Utah School for the Deaf
in Salt Lake City, Utah
The Utah Eagle, February 1922**

found themselves worse handicapped than their more fortunate brethren and sisters whose lives had been rounded out by the combined system.”

After a lapse of some years, a legislative bill was brought up by John T. Hughes, Chancellor of the University of Arizona, to recognize and honor Henry’s services at the ASD on March 12, 1919 (The Silent Worker, March 1920). Henry passed away on December 31, 1921, at the County Hospital in Chicago (Gallaudet University Alumni Cards, 1866-1957; The Utah Eagle, February 1922).

Did You Know?

Dr. Edward Allen Fay said, “One of the most important aids in the acquisition of language by the deaf is much reading of books. From the frequent repetition of words and phrases, by which the hearing child unconsciously acquires language through the ear, the deaf are wholly shut off: reading and reading alone can give them this needed repetition”(The Silent Worker, April 1916).

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