

**“God Made Me Deaf”:  
Testimonies from  
Deaf Latter-day  
Saints, 1846–1916**

**Men and Women of Faith  
Lecture Series**

Anne Leahy  
Independent Historian

Doug Stringham  
Utah Valley University



“To me, the world is full of deaf people...To you, there aren’t all that many...the deaf community in the U.S. is like a small or medium-sized town, even though it starts in Maine and goes to California.”

Eugene W. Petersen (1920–1989)

## Fourteenth Ward Assembly Hall



Digital Image © 2007 Utah State Historical Society. All rights reserved.

*Salt Lake Fourteenth Ward Assembly Hall (March 16, 1896)*



AMY DEVINE, Reporter.

# Amy Devine Hawkins (1877-1957)

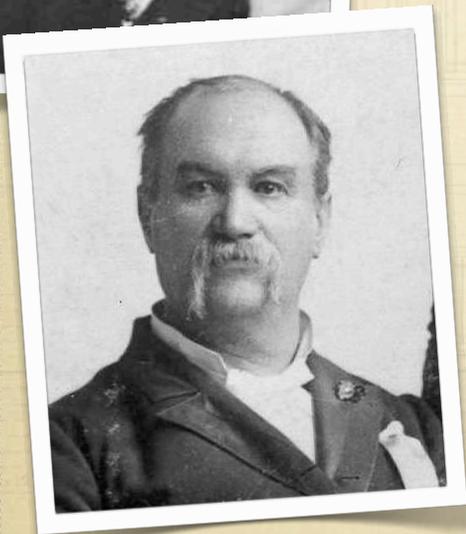
Utah School for the Deaf  
1888-1889

SECTION X-X  
224 \* 16

I used to attend the Baptist Church for one year, but I attended the Latter-day Saints Sunday School for a few years in Salt Lake City, and Ogden. Bro Henry C. Barrell and Laron Pratt were my former teachers. I was baptized by E. A. Stratford of Ogden on the 8 of July 1900 and then I joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I held the Secretary for the Sunday School for the Deaf at the Ogden Fourth Ward for one year. I taught some deaf kindergarten boys and girls. I was married to Leo Hawkins on the 17<sup>th</sup> of June 1903 in the Salt Lake Temple. We have three fine daughters and one son. Our oldest girl is eleven years old and our youngest son is 6 months old. I stay at our own home and am taking care of our children and housekeeper since I was married.

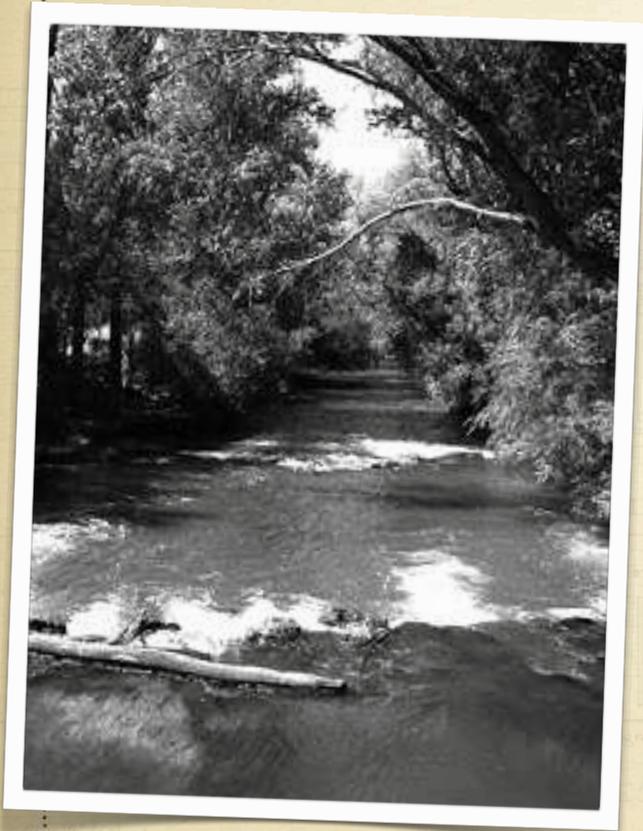
Amy Devine, Bountiful, Utah (1916)

H.C. Barrell,  
Superintendent



Laron Pratt,  
First Assistant

“I used to attend the Baptist Church for one year, but I attended the Latter-Day Saints Sunday School for a few years in Salt Lake City and Ogden. Bro Henry C. Barrell and Laron Pratt were my former teachers...”



Ogden River, Ogden, Utah

“I was baptized [in the Ogden River] on the 8th of July 1900 and then I joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints...”

Sunday.  
"Beautiful Words of Love"  
prayer was offered  
members.  
meeting was adjourned.  
Secretary,  
Emma A. Devine

#  
Sunday, Sept. 28<sup>th</sup> 1902.  
day school for the  
was held in the  
Church at 2:05 P.M.  
called to order by Supt  
members, who presided.  
"Gladly Meeting."  
Assistant Supt. J. P. Bush  
opening prayer.  
"Beautiful Pion."  
Hymn of the Lord's

"I held the [position  
of] Secretary for the  
Sunday School for  
the Deaf at the  
Ogden Fourth Ward  
for one year. I taught  
some deaf  
kindergarten boys  
and girls..."

Deaf-Mute Sunday School Minutes  
(September 21, 1902)



*Salt Lake City (1903)*

“I was married to Leo Hawkins on the 17th of June 1903 in the Salt Lake Temple. We have three fine daughters and one son...”



*Salt Lake City (1903)*

“Our oldest girl is eleven years old and our youngest son is 6 months old. I stay at our own home and am taking care of our children and housekeeper since I was married.”



Leo and Amy Devine Hawkins (1905)



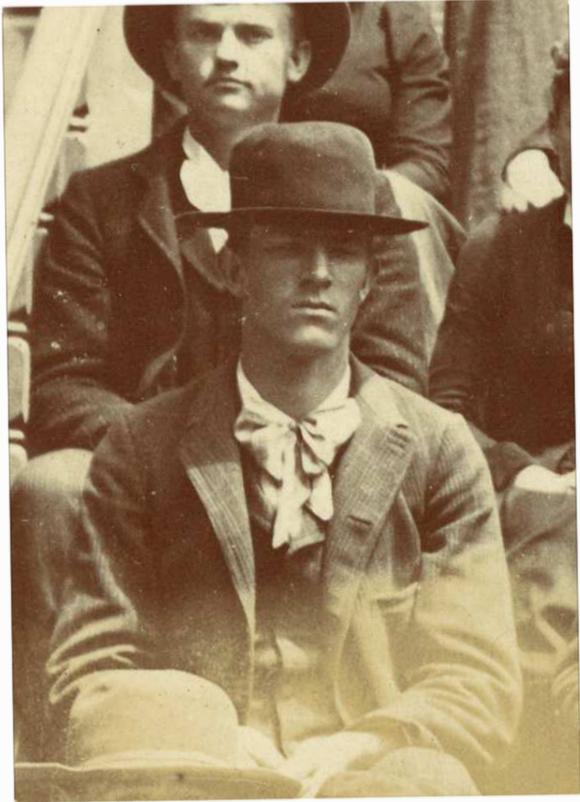
Leo Hawkins

# Leo Hawkins (1873–1961)

Utah School for the Deaf  
1889–1895

I was born in the First Ward, Salt Lake City, Utah on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November 1872. I used to live in the First Ward Salt Lake City for many years. I worked on the farm there for a few years. I started to school for the Deaf in Salt Lake City when I was about 18 years old, and attended there and Ogden for a few years. I work as the carpenter since now. I was married to Amy Devine on the 17<sup>th</sup> 1903 in the Salt Lake Temple at Salt Lake City, Utah. My wife and I moved to Rigby, Idaho from Salt Lake City after one month, when we got married. We lived there for 8 months where I worked as the carpenter. But we moved to Bountiful, Utah since 12 years. I was baptized by John Cottam on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 1883. I attended the Sunday School for the Deaf in Salt Lake City and Ogden for a number of years. I worked in the Salt Lake Temple and my grandmother, Miriam Gore Chase gave me some names of her dead relatives, and I was baptized for them in the temple. I have three daughters and one son, which I feel thankful for the blessing.

Leo Hawkins (by Amy Devine Hawkins), Bountiful, Utah (1916)



Leo Hawkins (~1890-1891)

“I was born in the First Ward, Salt Lake City, Utah on the 23rd of November 1872... I started to school for the Deaf in Salt Lake City when I was about 18 years old, and attended there and Ogden for a few years. I work as the carpenter since now.”

“I was baptized by John Cottom on the 1st of May 1883. I attended the Sunday School for the Deaf in Salt Lake City and Ogden for a number of years. I worked in the Salt Lake Temple and my grandmother gave me some names of her dead relatives and I was baptized for them in the temple.”



*Leo Hawkins (~1896)*



*Salt Lake City (1903)*

“I was married to Amy Devine on the 17th of June, 1903 in the Salt Lake Temple...My wife and I...moved to Bountiful, Utah since 12 years. I have three daughters and one son, which I feel thankful for the blessing.”



Deaf Sunday School, Bountiful First Ward (1921)



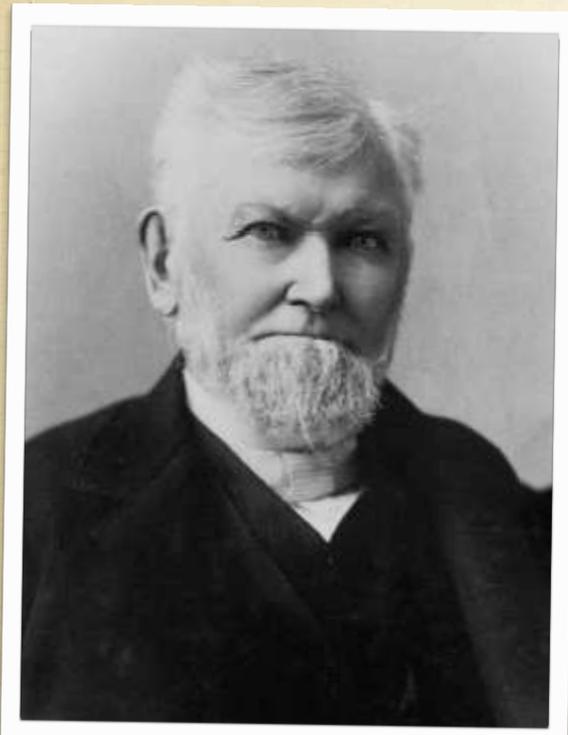
Laron Pratt

# Laron Pratt (1847–1908)

Spiritual Forefather  
of Deaf Latter-day Saints



- His English skills were superior
- He was well-informed on both the Gospel and secular issues
- He could place articles about Deaf people in the newspaper
- He was respected in the community



“A Snowy day...  
Conversation with Laron  
Pratt who had been Def &  
dumb through sickness.  
He felt as though he  
would like to go and teach  
the gospel to the Deaf &  
Dumb mutes. He is vary  
intelligent and Can talk so  
I Can understand him.”

Wilford Woodruff Journal, v. 8, p. 8,  
January 24, 1881

“Our heavenly Father gave us mortal existence for a little season to see what use we will make of it...My brothers and sisters let us be faithful, earnest and valiant in the good work.

May the Spirit of God rest upon you that your joys and pleasures be unbounded this day, in the name of Jesus. Amen.”

SECTION X-X  
Scale 3/4" = 1'

“It has pleased an All-wise Providence, through his servants to call you on a mission to the nation [sic] of the earth, to disseminate such principles and doctrines as will tend to save the human family.”

(Special thanks to Dr. Kenneth R. Beesley for the transcription.)

SECTION X-X  
Date 1/1/10

“...we all sincerely, and with one accord, wish you God speed in the work you have been called to perform, trusting that your ability and integrity of heart and a firm faith in the guiding hand of an Omnipotent Being...that you will perform all the duties assigned you in faithfulness...”

Approximate present ground line

“May the Lord God of heaven and earth bless you, and open the way for you from day to day, and show you the path wherein you should walk...that you will be permitted to return home again to [our] presence, with ten fold experience and an abiding faith in the mercy and goodness of God. This is our wish which may God grant in the name of Jesus Christ.”

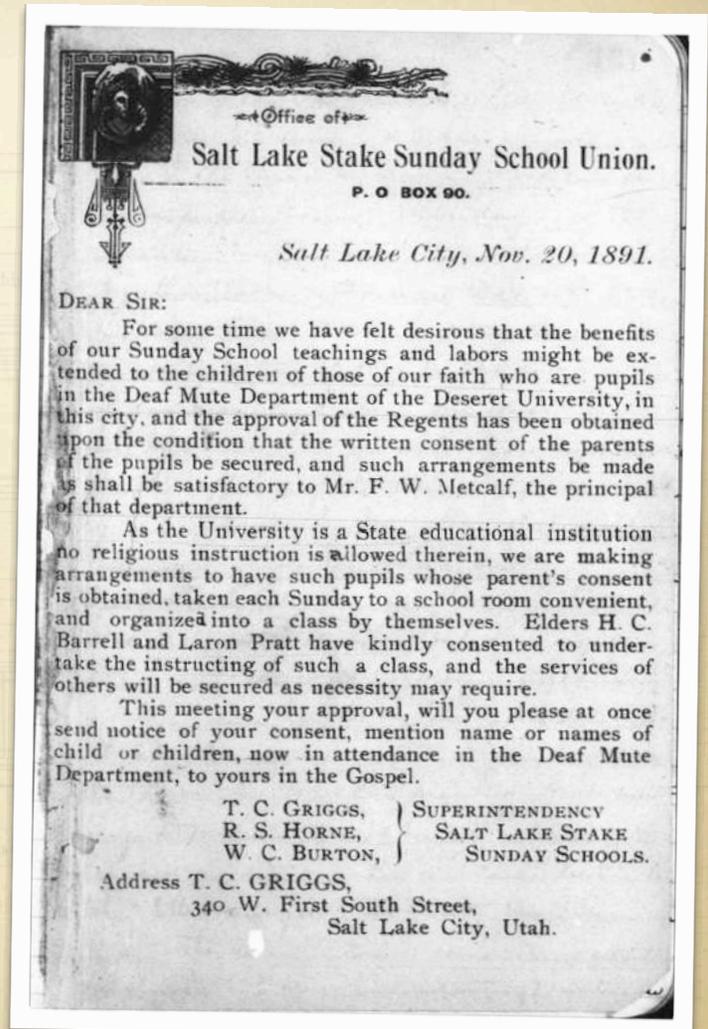
MS 1846 2 Patriarchal Record; Milando Pratt, 1848–1930

CT/ON X-X  
Salt Lake

November 20, 1891

Letter to parents of  
pupils in the Deaf  
Mute Department  
at the University of  
Deseret

Classes began  
January 10, 1892





Deaf-Mute Sunday School (1902-1917)



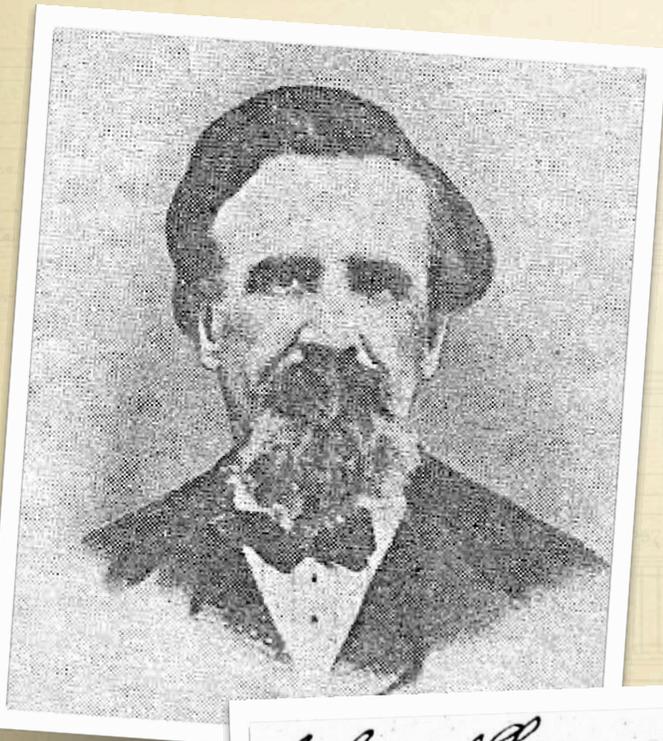
September 14, 1894  
Elder Laron Pratt  
Addresses the  
Brighton Ward

“...in a speech of some ten minutes’ duration, [Elder Laron Pratt] bore a strong testimony of the truth of the Gospel and pointed out to his attentive audience the Divine providence in his behalf in placing him under what most people regarded as an affliction, but in which he realized a blessing for the situation in life which he had occupied.”

SECTION X-X  
Scale 3/4" = 1"

“...his testimony made a deep and lasting impression upon the people, who felt the force of a remark by him to the effect that his apparent affliction was proving a blessing from which the disguise was being removed to his own comprehension.”

**Deseret News**, 49(13) p. 399, September 15, 1894



John Sherratt  
(1828–1899)

“Tompats”

*John Sherratt*



“It is well known to this community that the above named gentleman is deprived of hearing and speech; and being naturally free and generous hearted, advantages are often taken of him...”

**The Frontier Guardian, April 4, 1851 p. 2**



“to the prodigal squandering of his property by which himself and family may be reduced to want...no debts of his contracting will be paid, unless his trustee authorize the said debts.”

**The Frontier Guardian, April 4, 1851 p. 2**

LECTON X-X  
“Tompats”: ‘Can’t Talk’

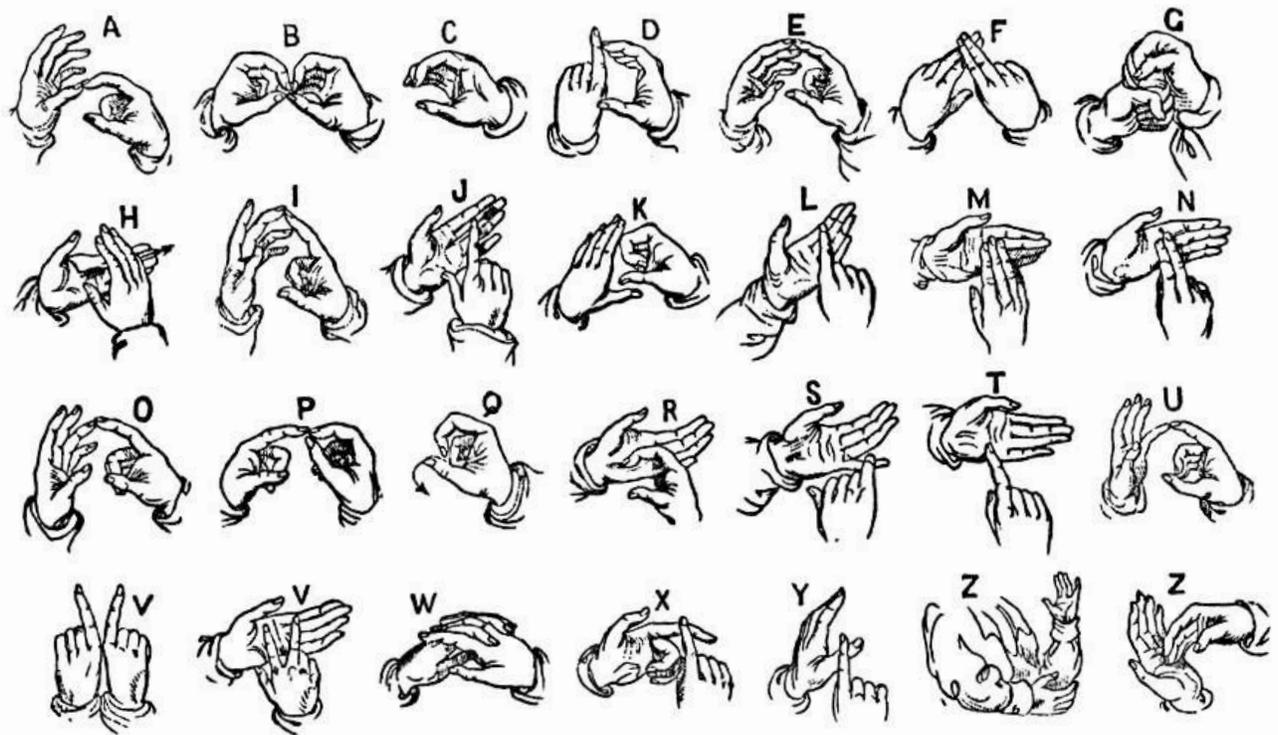


Paiute Indians (~1900); top: Plains Sign Language ('sleep')



Early Deaf Utahns (c. 1900)

# British two-handed alphabet



SECTION X-X  
Scale 3/4" = 1'

Name and Surname.	Age.	Rank or Profession.
<i>John Herratt</i>	<i>Minor 20 years</i>	<i>Gentleman</i>

REFLECTIONS BY A DEAF AND DUMB YOUNG MAN.

The following are the reflections of a young man, between 18 and 19 years of age, to whom we administered baptism a few days ago. He is deaf and dumb, and it will be seen by this, that persons educated from sight alone, unaided by sound, construct their sentences after the idiom of a foreign language, proving that the construction of our language is quite unnatural.

We publish it as a curiosity. The style, though simple, is forcible, expressive, and weighty. It was found upon his table in his own hand-writing in the evening, while his parents were absent on a visit. On returning late in the evening, they found these thoughts lying upon the table, and himself sleeping in bed.

Elder O. Hyde baptized me, and then my mother and step-father, brother Hewitt, and sisters Belinda Hewitt and Bond, were re-baptized for the remission of sins, on Saturday, 5th December, about one or two o'clock. Who sent them? God sent them, to baptize, or bury down in the water. I love only best, God. Simeon Carter confirmed me, and under his hands, I, and all the brethren and sisters who were baptized, received the gift of the Holy Ghost. I wish all people to be baptized. I am very sorry that Joseph Smith and his brother were shot and killed—The bad mob shot them.—God knows all about them.—They were very good, and preach. I wish Joseph Smith was not killed. When Jesus Christ comes here, he will rise from death. The Bible says, "thou shalt not kill." I love all Saints. I read in the Bible that John baptized Jesus Christ, and Peter baptized three thousand people. The Bible says, "that God can give to hear and speak, even the deaf and dumb."—God made me deaf and dumb. I am very glad to learn, by brother Taylor's letter, that he has baptized eighty-five persons near Birmingham, and I am glad that I was baptized. I wish all people would obey God. I am sure I am for Mormonism; God knows, I must never be cut off from the church. I wish to go to California soon—before five years, because Jesus Christ will come there, and he may go into the temple. I was very glad to read a *Star* about brother Pratt and he was escape from jail, at Missouri, in

Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star, p. 179-180 (December 19, 1846)

to God may give good to his people.

SECTION X-X  
Scale 3/4" = 1'-0"



Artificial  
Detail  
1/2"  
1/4"

SECTION X-X  
Scale 3/4" = 1'-0"

"I am glad that I was baptized. I wish all people would obey God. I am sure I am for Mormonism: God knows, I must never be cut off from the church....I am sure I never hate Saints..."

finished grade  
base level floor  
Approximate present ground line

SECTION X-X  
Scale 3/4" = 1'-0"

"I must pray to God may give  
good to his people. If I was bad  
and quarrelsome, God will be  
angry with me. I wish to be good,  
and obey God and my parents,  
and love the Mormons and Bible,  
and have care to be good..."

Reasoned floor  
Approximate present ground line

SECTION X-X  
Scale 3/4" = 1'-0"

"I wonder Almighty God made all earth and mankind. When Joseph Smith was killed, God sent all Saints people to be removed...from Nauvoo...Jesus Christ was crucified in Jerusalem, and he has gone into heaven. Tell people, must not kill and murder...."

SECTION X-X  
Scale 3/4" = 1'-0"

“When I go to church of Latter-day Saints, I cannot hear from preacher, but I can read a Bible or Book of Mormon...”

**Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star,**  
December 19, 1846, p. 179-180

# Acknowledgements

Dona Barlow

Jodi Becker-Kinner

Kenneth Beesley

Rhonda Bell

Amy Bennett

Joan Brunson

Jay Burrup

Brittany Chapman

Roy Cochran

Penny Coombs

Mark Ellison

Keith Gamache, Jr.

Jeanne Goodman

Bernice Griggs-  
Nelson

Maris Hanson

Melissa Johnson

Carolyn Jorgensen

Carol Kennard

Lenichek

Kenneth Kinner

Michael Landon

Marian Lansberry  
Stamas

Cormac Leonard

Lynn Losee

Dan Mathis

J.R. Nelson

Ron Nelson

Ardis Parshall

Kleda Quigley

David Samuelsen

William Slaughter

Jennifer St. Clair

Rachelle Stringham

Kristie Teames

Emily Utt

Nathan Van De  
Graaff

Rodney Walker

Linda Weaver

Clarke

April Williamson

Max Woodbury III

Linda Woodbury

The background of the image is a faded architectural drawing of a building facade. It features a series of columns supporting an archway. The drawing includes various labels such as 'SECTION X-X', 'Scale 3/4" = 1'-0"', 'Artificial stone', 'Dust line', 'Artificial stone', 'Finished grade', 'Approximate present ground line', 'beveled floor', and 'Setting'.

history.deaflds.org

mail@anneleahy.com  
dstringham@gmail.com