

Vocational Training Programs at Utah School for the Deaf

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2015

Vocational training played a prominent role at the Utah School for the Deaf (USD) from its inception. Learning the vocational trades or skills allowed the Deaf or hard of hearing student to become a contributing member of society after leaving the school.

The effort of the USD was to train the young men and women to possess marketable occupational skills as well as prepare them for marketable vocation. Through the provision of communication access, the students were taught to do the industrial work in the industrial arts building with a fully equipped carpenter shop, boot and shoe shop, cabinet shop, and printing office (Robert, 1994).

The general education courses such at arithmetic, higher mathematics, science, geography, history, art, and English were taught at USD (Evans, 1999). While they were taking the classes, they had the privilege of choosing any of the vocational trainings without additional charge (Roberts, 1994).

Vocational Training Program Provides Transition From Vocational Paths to Work

Parents of early USD students came from varied occupational backgrounds. Most of the rural students' parents lived on farms and ranches (Roberts, 1994). John Beck, an USD co-founder in 1884 and father of three Deaf sons, was the owner of the Bullion-Beck Mine, and of Beck's Hot Springs. The general occupations of students' fathers were farming, shoemaking, carpentry, and laborer positions (Evans, 1999). Some parents were employed as butchers, merchants, accountant, mechanical engineer, county recorder, dentist, surveyor, candy maker, eye specialist, and a postmaster (Evans, 1999).

At the time, Deaf students could not compete in many of positions. Some of them joined their parents' occupations while others accepted employment in other fields (Robert, 1994). Nonetheless, they needed vocational training to become independent, self-supporting citizens of society. The USD vocational training opportunities gave the

students a marketable skill and provided transition from vocational paths to work. Additionally, the vocational training program allowed the students to gain an independent life for themselves and their families. The students who attended the USD had greater vocational opportunities than those who did not. Although most of them learned a trade, they did not always follow the vocations they were trained for. They remained in the urban area where a large Deaf community resided, more so than those who returned to live in isolated rural areas (Roberts, 1994).

After leaving school, many young men and women chose to live and work in the metropolitan areas of Salt Lake City or Ogden rather than return to the isolation of the small town in Utah where few other Deaf people lived (Roberts, 1994).

Did You Know?

For a young school ours had a right to feel proud of its graduates, all of whom were respectable, industrious, and self-supporting citizens. We had among nineteen graduates, one surveyor, one teacher, two instructors, one photographer, four farmers, three housewives, two carpenters, one printer, one student, and three laborers. ***** Utah Eagle (The Silent Worker, June 1906).

The Vocational Department for Boys

In 1889, the USD introduced the vocational training programs as part of the curriculum. The curriculum initially included vocational training of various trades and skills such as carpentry, printing and shoemaking. They were the first classes designed for boys. The vocational instruction eventually expanded to include farming, horticulture, blacksmithing, painting, and barbering (Roberts, 1994).

By 1900s, the leather crafts, mechanical drawing, upholstering, and photography were added to the boys' vocational department (Driggs, The Utah Eagle, November 1, 1901). The boys in the top six levels of the school participated in the vocational training programs. During the initial two years, the boys were exposed to each training area. During their last four years in secondary school, they were allowed to choose one area in

which to major. Unemployment among the school's alumni was rare (Utah School for the Deaf Program Book)

Printing

Printing was one of the most popular occupations in the vocational programs at the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind and it was probably popular because of the noise involved in running the press (Roberts, 1994). The printing department published the school newspapers known as "Deseret Eagle," "Eaglet," and "Utah Eagle." Other documents were also printed for the school administration and Utah Association of the Deaf (The Utah Eagle, September 15, 1897).

The first copy of a small paper, "The Deseret Eagle" was published on October 10, 1889. The paper continued to be published twice monthly by the printing department and its publication ended in 1894. The other paper, "The Eaglet" was formed and was edited and

published by the
printers who
were students
between 1894
and 1899. While
the Deseret Eagle
was on a break
for three years,
the "Utah Eagle"
began on March

1, 1897. This
magazine was
changed because the word "Utah" was substituted for "Deseret" shortly after Utah
became a state in 1896. The word "Deseret" was the old name given to the
commonwealth by the early pioneers. It was taken from the Book of Mormon and means



Printing Shop at the Utah School for the Deaf, 1940-1960

industry. Since then, the “Utah Eagle” was the official paper of the Utah School for the Deaf and Blind and was edited by the superintendent and his staff. The publication changed to monthly during the school term. These publications gave information on contemporary issues of interest to the Deaf. They covered student activities, news of present and past faculty members, student and their family information, student grades for some years, and news from other Deaf organizations and schools (The Utah Eagle, September 15, 1897; Pace, 1946; Roberts, 1994; Utah School for the Deaf Program Book).

Harry Sanger Smith, Known as “Bob White” In The Silent Worker Magazine

The earliest instructor of Printing and Linotyping at the Utah School for the Deaf was Harry Sanger Smith. Harry was born July 12, 1877 in Rosemount, New Jersey. He lost his hearing at the age of 12 from cerebro-spinal meningitis, allied with pneumonia.

After losing his hearing and finding it difficult to continue his education at the public school, he enrolled at the New Jersey School for the Deaf (The Silent Worker, September 1900). While attending the school, he, as an exceptionally bright student, was placed in the printing office under Mr. Porter’s instruction where he learned basic typesetting and presswork. At first, Harry pleaded in protest for being forced to learn the type case thoroughly before he was allowed to set type. He said where he lived he “made pig pens for a dollar a day.” Mr. Porter convinced him that if he mastered printing, he would make much more than that. So, he remained (The Silent Worker, April 1925).



**Harry Sanger Smith
The Silent Worker, September 1,
1900**

Immediately after graduating from New Jersey School for the Deaf, Harry received a printing job position in Trenton, New Jersey where he worked for five years. At the printing job, he attracted ‘the attention of printers by the excellence of his typographical executions.’ He became a member of the Typographical Union and divided his time between printing, hunting, and fishing (*The Silent Worker*, April 1925). He loved the outdoors.

By this time, Harry became tired of working at the position; he went to New Hope, Pennsylvania to take charge of a country weekly. Two months later, Harry accepted a position as job and advertising compositor in one of the largest establishments of its kind in Philadelphia. About two hundred men were employed in the office, with seventeen cylinder presses, nine linotypes, and its own lighting plant, electrotype foundry and ink factory (*The Silent Worker*, September 1900).



Harry Sanger Smith
The Silent Worker, April 1925

Because of his love for the outdoors, especially fishing and hunting, he moved to Colorado Springs, Colorado. There, he had the opportunity to mix printing with camping, hunting, trapping, fishing, and writing stories of his adventures for the magazines, including the *Silent Worker* (*The Silent Worker*, April 1925). He wrote several stories as “Bob White” in the *Silent Worker* magazine (*The Silent Worker*, September 1900). In 1920, Harry was the one who toured with National

Fraternal Society of the Deaf President H.C. Anderson in Paul Mark’s “prairie schooner” (the Peerless) through the Ogden Canyon in Utah (*The Silent Worker*, November 1920).

In 1923, a strike of the Union was called. Harry walked out with the strikers, as he supported unionism. After being weary from the long strike, he was persuaded to accept a position at the Utah School for the Deaf as a printing and linotyping instructor. Harry moved to Ogden, Utah and accepted a very attractive position with one of the finest printing offices in the West (*The Silent Worker*, April 1925). During the brief time in his effort, he raised the standard of printing the “Utah Eagle” magazine and ‘made it one of the very best from a typographical standpoint’ (*The Silent Worker*, May 1924). Frank M. Driggs, Superintendent of USD praised Harry’s artistic work. He stated, “Never in the history had a printer so splendid, so thorough, so interested in his work and his printer boys. He [Harry] held them and had a splendid influence over them in the shop” (*The Silent Worker*, May 1925).

Harry gained a reputation for being an excellent printer; he was selected by the Chairman of the Industrial section to read a paper at the convention of Principals and Superintendents of the Deaf in Cincinnati, Ohio in the summer of 1925. However, Harry died suddenly of acute indigestion early in the morning of March 2 of that year and was buried in the Ogden City Cemetery, just a block from the school gate (*The Silent Worker*, April 1925). Harry’s writing talent led him in the office of the Silent Worker where he entered the mysteries of the Printers’ Art and where he was persuaded to give up the idea of building pig pens for a dollar a day (*The Silent Worker*, May 1924).

Many students were trained as printers, but few worked in the printing trade for any length of time as professionals. Those professionals were: William “Bill” Cole, Charles Roy Cochran, Keith Nelson, David Mortensen, and Kenneth Kinner. They spent much of their professional life as a printer at the various printing shops such as Ogden Standard-Examiner, Salt Lake Tribune and Newspaper Agency Corporation.

William “Bill” Cole, An Ogden Standard-Examiner Typographer

The earliest Deaf printer was William “Bill” Cole. He was born in England on June 15, 1884 and immigrated to America when he was a boy. After the death of his father in a coalmine accident, he quit his education at the Utah School for the Deaf in 1904 to help his mother support the family. On April 10, 1912, William began to work for the old Ogden Standard as a galley boy. When the Ogden’s top newspapers, the “Standard” and the “Examiner” were consolidated, several employers were laid off, but Bill was fortunate for not losing his job, as he was recognized as one of the fastest “make-up men in the city” (White, *The Silent Worker*, June 1920).

Bill was employed at this company for fifty years and he is believed to be one of the oldest full-time veterans in length of service for one newspaper among typographers in the American newspaper industry (UAD Bulletin, March 1984). During his various careers, he worked as a “head setter,” make-up man, ad man, floor man and shop foreman. William retired on April 10, 1962. He did not let his Deafness hold him back (UAD Bulletin, Summer 1962).

In 1941, he was featured in a story in Editor and Publisher. In that story, he stated:

“My Deafness is to my advantage. The noise in the composing room tends to distract some



William Cole
The Silent Worker, June 9, 1920

workers – but me. I never hear it. Thus, I am better able to keep my mind on my work.”

Editor and Publisher commented:

“He is one of the fastest make-up men in the Intermountain country” (UAD Bulletin, Summer 1962).

Bill was very popular in his work place as well as with the Deaf community. After traveling around the country, he worked as a makeup and operator at the “Standard” (White, *The Silent Worker*, April 1920).

Some Deaf employers worked in the newspaper printing industry for a short period of time and they eventually found other ways to make a living. For instance, Charles Martin worked for a paper in Nephi. Later, he resigned to join his family in southern Idaho where he spent the rest of his life farming. John H. Clark graduated in printing but went to Gallaudet College where he graduated. By the time, he returned to Utah, he worked in building and road construction rather than in the printing industry (Roberts, 1994). G. Leon Curtis worked in a printing industry but resigned to attend a graduate school at the University of Arizona (Leon Curtis, personal communication, February 7, 2009).

Blacksmith Trade

Utah School for the Deaf taught students blacksmithing skills. A Deaf student, Hugh Jacob spent most of his working life as a blacksmith in Heber City, Utah. This blacksmithing trade was part of the curriculum. Later, the blacksmithing trade was available in auto mechanics and machine shops located at many residential schools (Roberts, 1994).

Carpentry

Carpentry was one of the early popular vocational programs. A carpentry shop was established before the Utah School for the Deaf moved to Ogden, Utah. This shop grew steadily after the school moved into its new facilities. Nephi Larsen, a Deaf carpentry graduate, taught carpentry classes and mentored many students. They learned to make tables, cabinets, cases, sash, doors, window, and frames (The Utah Eagle, September 15, 1897; Roberts, 1994).



Carpentry Shop at the Utah School for the Deaf, early 1900s

Additionally, the carpentry shop performed many of the minor repairs needed to maintain the school facilities. Many pieces of carpenter-work made by the students can be found in all parts of the USD buildings (The Utah Eagle, September 15, 1897).

In 1960s, a Deaf instructor, Donald Jensen, taught carpentry classes at

school. Lloyd Perkins worked as a carpenter in the construction industry after graduating from school and was the one who designed the new chapel/ward for the Salt Lake Valley Deaf Ward.

Barbering

After the Utah School for the Deaf moved to Ogden, a barbering program was established where it trained Deaf students who eventually worked in the barbering trade. The barbering department offered grooming needed for students and staff. Arvel Christensen, a former USD student, became a barbershop owner.

Barbering was an alternative occupation of other students who wished to learn another trade while attending school. One of the students, Andrew Madsen, learned carpentry; when he returned to Ephraim, Utah, barbering became his profession (Roberts, 1994).

Arvel Christensen, A Barbershop Owner

In 1973, Arvel Christensen was honored at an open house to mark his retirement from the barbering business. He is believed to be the only Deaf barber to wield scissors in Utah where he owned a barbershop at 908 Washington Boulevard in Ogden.

After his graduation from Utah School for the Deaf, he attempted to find a job. However, he did not have much luck during the Great Depression in the early 1930s. Arvel decided to establish his barbering business. Before he did that, he enrolled at the Moler Barber College in Salt Lake City, and after five months of training, he passed his state examination.



**Arvel Christensen
UAD Bulletin, Summer 1968**

For starters, Arvel's first shop was set up in his parents' front porch on 13th St. in Ogden. In 1940, he struck out on his own and leased a lot on Washington Blvd where he built a shop with living quarters in the back. This shop was located across the street from Ogden High School, one of the largest high schools, so he had good business.

By that time, Arvel married Berdean and they moved into their home at 908 Washington Boulevard. Their front porch was converted into a barbershop. In May 1973, he suffered a mild stroke and with his heart condition, he decided after 40 years of service that the time had come to enjoy the fruits of his labor (UAD Bulletin, November 1973).

Shoemaking

Students who were enrolled in the shoemaking program learned the construction and repair of shoes. Most of the students were trained in this program and eventually worked in jobs in the shoemaking industry. Additionally, the shoemaking department

repaired shoes for students and staff (Roberts, 1994).



Shoes and Horse Ladies Shop at the Utah School for the Deaf, 1897

A student, John Alvey, ran his own shoe repair shop while other students worked throughout the state in the shoe repair business. Paul Mark and Lee Shepherd were shoe repair shop owners.

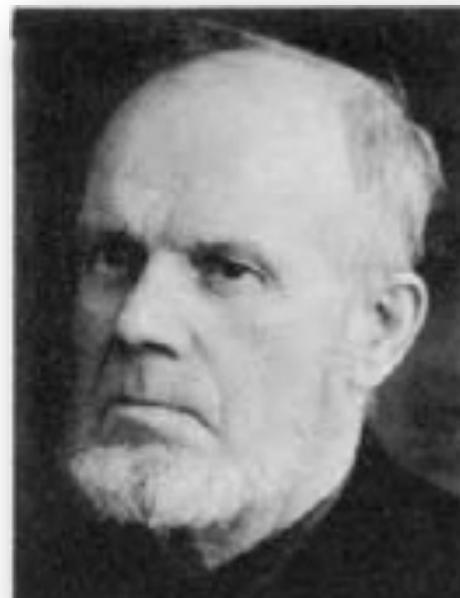
Paul Mark, A Shoe Repair Shop Owner

Paul Mark owned a shoe shop called “Dunn and Bradstreets” on 25th Street in the 1920’s. He had a most lucrative business and was a stockholder in several of the leading industries in Ogden, Utah (White, *The Silent Worker*, April 1920; White, *The Silent Worker*, October 1920). Sometimes more than 15 pairs of shoes were repaired in a single day. One day his business had become so busy that he had been compelled to work long after his regular closing hours. Cyril Jones (a Deaf father of two Deaf sons, Von and Rollin Jones) of Logan became his assistant and eventually secured his employment with Paul (White, *The Silent Worker*, June 1920).

If members of the Deaf community wanted to know the latest news among the Deaf, they would invariably call on Paul Mark. He held

meetings

in his shoe shop and invited Deaf members from many miles around (White, *The Silent Worker*, April 1920). While Paul was running his shoe shop in Ogden, another Deaf individual by the name of John McMills, a former USD student, ran his shoe shop in Salt Lake City (White, *The Silent Worker*, June 1920).



Paul Mark



John McMills

Lee Shepherd, An Owner of the Shoe Repair Business

Lee Shepherd's family all settled in Spanish Fork, Utah at the turn of the 20th century, but, during the Great Depression, Lee's father moved the family to Salt Lake City to look for work. Lee was born in Salt Lake City in 1926, then moved back to Spanish Fork in 1928, shortly after he became Deaf. Lee entered Utah School for the Deaf in Ogden in 1932 and graduated in 1946, in a class of between eight to ten other students (Doug Stringham, personal communication, April 29, 2009).

While at USD, Lee did most of his in-school apprentice training with Paul Mark, a Deaf man who owned a shoe repair business in Ogden. Mr. Mark was what Lee called a "weekend teacher," who would come to USD on Fridays and Saturdays to work with Lee and others in training them in shoe repair. By his senior year, Lee became so adept at the trade while in the training program, he was asked to teach and train other students. Lee also apprenticed with Grant Morgan, a Deaf man living in Spanish Fork who also owned a shoe repair business. Lee credited most of his training to Mr. Mark, however (Doug Stringham, personal communication, April 29, 2009).



Lee Shepherd during his shoemaker class at the Utah School for the Deaf in 1946

After being employed, for some time at the Modern Shoe Clinic in Ogden, Utah, Lee decided to venture into business himself and opened a shoe repair shop in Spanish Fork, Utah in March 1947 (Burdett, The Utah Eagle, January 1947). His first store in 1947 was located on the northwest corner of 100 North and 100 West in Spanish Fork. He later bought a bigger and better trafficked shop in 1956 on the northeast corner of 200 North Main Street (Doug Stringham, personal communication, April 29, 2009).

Lee decided to move to Spanish Fork while a large Deaf community resided in Ogden and Salt Lake City because he felt that, his family, extended family, and the general Spanish Fork community already knew him. It would be easier to build up a clientele. Opening a business in SLC or Ogden would have been much more difficult, he felt, because of a larger and unknown client base (Doug Stringham, personal communication, April 29, 2009).

Lee was well known to everyone in Spanish Fork, Utah for his ready smile and quick services. In 1985, he sold his business and retired. For many years, he sold western boots and repaired shoes. He is believed to be the last Deaf business owner graduated from the Vocational Department at Utah School for the Deaf. Besides his business, he served as a board member of the Utah Association for the Deaf and Utah Valley Chapter (Doug Stringham, personal communication, April 29, 2009).

Learning Agriculture and Farming Skills at Utah School for the Deaf

When the Utah School for the Deaf moved to Ogden, Utah, 200,000 acres of land was located on a high plateau where it was surrounded by lawns, beds of flowers, trees, orchards, farm, and garden. It was big enough to raise “garden sass” to feed the students and grow crops (The Silent Worker, January 1897).

The students were taught by skilled workmen in such trades as gardening, farming, and horticulture to prepare them to return to their agricultural roots (The Silent Worker, January 1897).

Did You Know?

Mr. Driggs gave us ten dollars to deposit in the Commercial National Bank ; we got a checkbook and when we buy chicken feed, we write a check to pay for it. When Mr. Driggs pays us for eggs, we deposit that money in the bank. When we have enough, we will pay back ten dollars to Mr. Driggs. – Utah Eagle

No wonder they grow rich and prosperous out in Utah, when even the girls, in additions to learning poultry management in a practical, common-sense way, are given the excellent course in business methods which the above extract from a girl's description of her poultry studies shows she is receiving (The Silent Worker, November 1916).



Main Building (R) and Annex Building (L) of the Utah School for the Deaf in 1896

Photo courtesy of the APH Callhan Museum

Gardening

The size of the new location in Ogden allowed the Utah School for the Deaf to begin a horticulture program. Mr. Kremer and Mr. Hickenlooper, the gardeners and staff members, taught the students about agriculture and farming. Later, two students, Joseph Beck and Alfred Young, were employed as gardeners on a 10 acre Temple Square owned by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in downtown Salt Lake City (Roberts, 1994).

Farming Animals and Tending Orchard

In 1897, Utah School for the Deaf had quite a large orchard, embracing almost every fruit. The cooking department preserved fruits and vegetables by canning. They had put up ‘over 3,000 quarts of fruit, several hundred quarts of jelly, pickles, tomatoes, chow-chow, ketchup and etc.’ (Roberts, 1994).

The boys were taught how to farm animals and grow orchards. Moreover, they learned about agriculture in order to develop their work skills which would help them as they returned to their rural homes (Roberts, 1994).

The Vocational Department for Girls

Through early training at USD beginning in 1897, the girls were taught to make tea cloths, table doilies, throws, sofa pillows, pillow shams, handkerchief cases, bed quilts, and photo-holders. The homemaking classes also included instructions on how to

cook, clean and sew. The girls received instruction in homemaking skills, including how to do embroidery and needle work, drawn work, crocheting, knitting and paper flowers. The commercial subjects such as typing, filing and the proper operation of office machines were also included (The Utah Eagle,



Cooking Class at the Utah School for the Deaf, 1903

September 15, 1897). At the time, the goal of the USD was to show that every Deaf child should be sent to this school campus where the opportunity was offered to make children happy and contented in this life (The Utah Eagle, September 15, 1897).

The girls' vocational department paralleled that of the boys' program during the top six levels at USD. The girls received instruction in art, cookery, sewing, dressmaking, fancy work, and

housekeeping (Driggs,

The Utah Eagle,

November 1, 1901).

The girls were

required to study the regular courses in domestic science and assisted in the domestic work of the institution (Utah

School for the Deaf

Program Book).



Dressmaking Class at the Utah School for the Deaf, 1903

With students' marketable skills, the USD aided them in providing an independent life for themselves and their families (Roberts, 1994). Through vocational training programs, they became self-sufficient and relied less on their family members. In addition, the Deaf community began to form and the Deaf individuals began to relate to each other in ways that had been impossible before the establishment of the USD in 1884 (Roberts, 1994). After leaving USD, many young men and women chose to live and work in the metropolitan areas of Salt Lake City or Ogden rather than return to the isolation of the small towns in Utah where few other Deaf people lived (Roberts, 1994).

While boys and girls participated in vocational training programs, equal experience was gained in each program. Several young women like Sarah Abby worked

as dressmakers, while Ivy Griggs Low was employed as housemother at the Montana School for the Deaf (Roberts, 1994).

Did You Know...

Clara V. Eppy (Deaf) was appointed to the position of art teacher at the Utah School for the Deaf (The Silent Worker, January 1898).

Vocation Training Program Continued at the Utah School for the Deaf in 1968

For years, the Utah Association of the Deaf (UAD) advocated vocational training, as mentioned in the History of Utah Association of the Deaf. While the vocational training programs were still running at USD in 1968, the UAD proudly recognized that

history revealed that Deaf students usually took their places in the society as useful tax-contributing citizens in one of the vocations rather than in one of the professions (The Utah Eagle, February 1968).



High School boys, under the direction of Herald Green, taking on job training as machinists at old Weber College during the World War II, 1944

During the 1960s, the boys' vocational program offered a few more trades and skills, such as welding, sheet metal, electrical and plumbing repair, as well as auto mechanics. The facilities at Weber State College were used by students who were able to meet the requirement set forth by the school (The Utah Eagle, February 1968).

Around that time, the girls' vocational training consisted of home nursing, family living, beauty culture, and data processing (The Utah Eagle, February 1968).

Conclusion

Starting in 1889, USD successfully provided vocational training programs for Deaf and hard of hearing students despite years of budget cuts (The UAD Bulletin, Winter 1961). However, due to promotion of general education rather than school-based vocational training and the growth of mainstreaming, vocational programs at USD gradually declined and eventually closed in the 1990s. Today, individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing receive vocational guidance and assistance to obtain employment from the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. In the advanced educational technology society, learning to read and write is critical and it is the foundation to an individual's academic, potential, and professional success. Hence, it is imperative for Deaf and hard of hearing individuals to become functionally literate and tax paying citizens of society.

Note

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