



JAMES SIMPSON

EDUCATION

The youngest of his family of six children with deaf brothers, Mr. James Simpson was born in Milford County, Michigan, January 21, 1855. He attended the Michigan School for the Deaf in Flint, MI and then moved to Fanwood School for the Deaf in New York City. In both schools, Simpson surpassed his classmates in education. He was the valedictorian of his class and received honorary mention from the Fanwood School for the Deaf Faculty. After he graduated, Simpson moved to Attica, NY, to work in the jeweler's trade, but his older brother Delos had other ideas. Delos, who graduated from Gallaudet College (now Gallaudet University), was offered a job to teach at Iowa School for the Deaf (ISD). It didn't appeal to him, but he suggested to ISD's superintendent that Simpson would be an ideal candidate to teach. Simpson taught at ISD for three years. During this time, he married Laura Wright, an ISD student.

In the summer of 1880, Simpson was in poor health and sought rest at his brother in law's home in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Jennie Wright, Simpson's sister-in-law, was working at SD School for the Deaf (SDSD) as a teacher for about one year before she became the 2nd Superintendent. When Simpson arrived in Sioux Falls, he ended up taking over teaching. During that year, residents of Sioux Falls came to his aid, fundraised and built an institution. On October 21, 1880, SDSD was opened and Simpson became the third Superintendent and holds the status as the first deaf superintendent at SDSD. Under Simpson's administration from 1880 to 1903, the school grew from one building with seven students to six stone buildings, including a girl's dormitory and 30 acres of farmland to provide food for 54 students.

When Simpson handed in his resignation in 1903, he moved to the Black Hills for his health. In the same year, he later returned to Sioux Falls to settle down in his own home but during his transit, he fell sick and died in his brother in law's home surrounded by his family on November 16, 1903. He was buried in Mount Pleasant Cemetery. Simpson is known as an architect in deaf education in South Dakota.