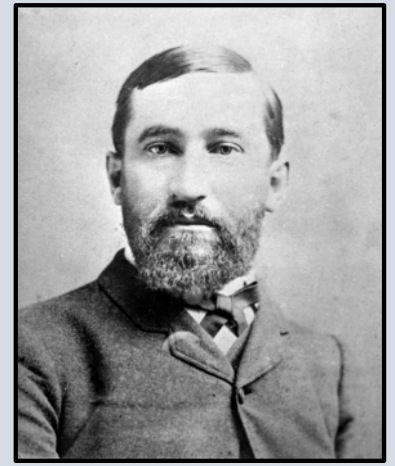


# James Simpson: A life Dedicated to Education

James Simpson was born deaf on January 21, 1855, in Oakland County, Michigan. He was the youngest of six children, with two sisters and three brothers. Remarkably, two of his brothers, William and Delos, were also deaf.

During his youth, James worked on his father's farm and did not begin his formal education until the age of 14. At that time, he entered the Michigan School for the Deaf in Flint, where he studied under the tutelage of Thomas L. Brown for five years. Following this, he attended the Fanwood School for the Deaf in New York City for three years, where he was selected as valedictorian of his graduating class at the age of 21.



3<sup>rd</sup> Superintendent James Simpson

Encouraged by his mother to use his voice, James developed the ability to speak and also became a skilled lipreader. Tragically, both of his parents passed away during his time at the Michigan School for the Deaf

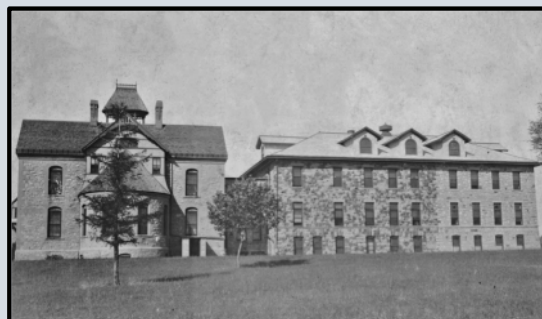
After graduating, James worked in the jewelry trade in northern New York for three years. He later returned to Michigan and resumed farming until the age of 25. In 1878, he began his career in education, teaching at the Iowa School for the Deaf in Council Bluffs. During his three years there, he rose to prominence, eventually leading the highest class. In his final year, nine of his students were admitted to the National Deaf-Mute College in Washington, D.C., eight of whom were his pupils.

In 1881, James visited Sioux Falls, South Dakota, at the invitation of E. G. Wright. Impressed by the prospects of the newly established South Dakota School for the Deaf, he immediately became involved with the institution, taking on its management. Under his leadership, the school flourished. Prof. Simpson was highly regarded not only as an educator but also as a respected businessman and community leader.



School and Boy Dormitory building 1885 (distance) and Main Simpson building 1883 (Right) were built during Simpson's era.

During his tenure, the school benefited greatly from the generosity of local philanthropists who donated land and funding for its development. This support led to the construction of several key buildings, including the Main (Simpson) Building, the School/Boy Dormitory Building, the Vocational Building, additional of Girls' Dormitory building, the Boiler Building, and a Barn with a first concrete silo in South Dakota.



The barn 1887 (left above), the additional for girls' dormitory 1889 and 1901 (middle above) and Vocational building 1887 (Right Above) were also built during Simpson's era.



The boiler plant 1900 (left above), the first state concrete silo 1892 (middle above) and the barn 1901 (Right Above) were also built during Simpson's era.

In 1880, James married Anna Laura Wright, a former student of the Council Bluffs school. The couple had four children: Howard (who later became the sixth superintendent of SDSD), Grant, Lawrence, and Sarah. Tragically, their daughter Sarah passed away at just one month old. Her funeral was held in the Main Building, and she was laid to rest at Mount Pleasant Cemetery in Sioux Falls.

James continued his work at the SDSD until 1903, when his health began to decline. Hoping to recover, he traveled to the Black Hills, but the trip did not bring the improvement he sought. He returned to Sioux Falls, where he passed away on October 16, 1903.

For more details about James Simpson's years at the South Dakota School for the Deaf, refer to [Transcendent Territory, pages 7-11](#)



Laura (Wright) Simpson



The tombstone of James and Laura Simpson is located at Mount Pleasant Cemetery