



Harry Lee Welty

October 24, 1882 – June 21, 1954

Harry Lee Welty served as superintendent of the South Dakota School for the Deaf (SDSD) from 1920 to 1925, succeeding Superintendent Howard W. Simpson during a period of transition following World War I.

Before coming to South Dakota, Welty served as principal of the Nebraska School for the Deaf, bringing with him experience in Deaf education and school administration.

His leadership at SDSD was marked by stability and steady operation rather than expansion. During his tenure, the school focused on routine maintenance, repairs, and equipment purchases approved by the Board of Charities and Corrections. He also supported agricultural experimentation on campus by permitting South Dakota State College to use approximately ten acres of school farmland for fruit and rose research. Welty guided the school through these routine but important postwar years until leaving SDSD at the close of the 1924–1925 school year to accept a position at the Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind.

After his years in educational leadership, Welty later lived in Lewis Township near Council Bluffs, Iowa. He died on June 21, 1954, at age 71, from injuries sustained after a fall from a ladder while trimming a tree at his home. He had been hospitalized since the accident earlier that month. In addition to his educational career, he was active as an elder in Grace Presbyterian Church and was remembered as a long-time instructor in Deaf education, having taught for more than forty years



Supt. Welty standing at the center back row of 1923 Boys football team



He was preceded in death by his parents, George Howard Welty and Elizabeth “Eliza” Iberg Welty. Survivors included his wife, Jane Esther Jones Welty; son Arthur of Lincoln, Nebraska; daughter Elizabeth (Mrs. Elizabeth Meyer) of Grand Island, Nebraska; brothers Will and Fred; sister Lizzie Snapp of Freedom, Oklahoma; and six grandchildren. Funeral services were held at Grace Presbyterian Church in Council Bluffs, with burial at Cedar Lawn Cemetery. Harry L. Welty’s tenure at SDSD may not have produced major construction or sweeping reforms, but his steady administration ensured continuity and stability for the school during a period of national transition. His long career in Deaf education left a lasting impact on the institutions and students he served.

