



Anna Laura Wright Simpson Jewell (1862–1937)

Anna Laura Wright Simpson Jewell was a deaf woman whose life became closely connected to the early history of the South Dakota School for the Deaf. A former student of the Iowa School for the Deaf in Council Bluffs, she later married educator James Simpson and became part of one of the most influential families in the school's early development.

Born on February 13, 1862, Laura attended the Iowa School for the Deaf in Council Bluffs, where James Simpson served as a teacher during his early career. It was there that the two likely met before marrying in 1879. In 1880, they moved to Dakota Territory when James accepted leadership of the South Dakota School for the Deaf.

The family lived in the Main Building on campus, where the school also served as their home. During their years there, sons Howard, Grant, and Lawrence were born. Howard Simpson would later become the sixth superintendent of the school, continuing the family's connection to the institution.

The couple also had a daughter, Sarah, who sadly died at only one month of age. Her funeral was held in the Main Building, and she was buried at Mount Pleasant Cemetery in Sioux Falls.

As a deaf woman living at the center of the school community, Laura represented an important link between students, families, and leadership. Her presence helped shape the close-knit environment of the campus during its formative years.

After James Simpson's death in 1903, Laura later married Thomas Jewell. She eventually moved to Wichita, Kansas, where she died in 1937. Her body was returned to Sioux Falls for burial at Mount Pleasant Cemetery, reconnecting her final resting place with the community that had shaped much of her life.

Anna Laura's story reflects the important role deaf women and families played in the early history of the South Dakota School for the Deaf.



Anna Laura Wright shortly after her marriage to James Simpson, July 21, 1880

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