

Dora Edith *Donald* Humbert

July 7, 1869 – September 3, 1934



Dora Edith Donald Humbert, a pioneering educator and administrator in the education of deaf and blind students in South Dakota, passed away on September 3, 1934, at her home west of Gary, South Dakota, following a lengthy illness. She was 65 years old.

Born on July 7, 1869, in Marysville, Kansas, to Samuel A. Donald and Ellen Norris Donald, Dora devoted her life to education and public service. After completing her schooling, she served as an instructor at the Iowa College for the Blind in Vinton, Iowa, where she also worked closely as a special teacher to Linnie Haguewood, a deaf-blind student whose education later influenced the establishment of South Dakota's state schools for sensory-impaired students.

In 1903, Dora Donald succeeded James Simpson as superintendent of the South Dakota School for the Deaf (SDSD), becoming its fourth superintendent. She formally assumed her duties on August 1, 1903, and served until 1908, overseeing significant growth and institutional development during a formative period in the school's history.

Prior to her leadership at SDSD, Donald was instrumental in the founding of the South Dakota School for the Blind in Gary. She became its first superintendent when the school opened in 1900, holding that position for six years. Her leadership helped establish the educational framework and campus infrastructure that would serve generations of blind students in the state.

During her tenure at SDSD, several major physical improvements were made to the campus, including the construction of a power laundry plant, sewer connections, and the completion of a hospital building, later repurposed as a girls' dormitory and kitchen facility. Under her administration, SDSD also held its first formal graduation at the close of the 1907–1908 school year, marking an important milestone in the institution's history.

On July 31, 1907, Dora married Leroy August Humbert, a music instructor at the School for the Blind. Following her marriage, she returned to Gary, where she again served as superintendent of the School for the Blind and remained there until her death in 1934.

Beyond her professional achievements, Mrs. Humbert was deeply involved in civic and community life. She was a charter member of the Women's Study Club of Gary, served for approximately fifteen years on the local public school board, and was a member of the Order of the Eastern Star. She was widely respected for her leadership, compassion, and dedication to education.

She is survived by her sister, Ida Donald Elliott of Colorado Springs, Colorado. She was preceded in death by her parents and three brothers. Dora and her husband also raised Myrtle Hendrickson from the age of five, to whom she was a devoted and loving mother figure.

Funeral services were held on September 6, 1934, at the Humbert home and at the School for the Blind auditorium in Gary. The large attendance and the closure of schools and businesses during the services stood as a silent tribute to the esteem in which Dora Edith Donald Humbert was held by the community she served so faithfully.

Her legacy endures through the institutions she helped shape and the countless lives she touched through her lifelong commitment to education, service, and leadership.



Linnie Haguewood and Dora Donald. Photo from *The Deaf-Blind: A Monograph* (1901).