

Lewis Lorraine Louthan

1886 - November 20, 1898

Lewis Lorraine Louthan, known as Lorraine, of Spearfish, South Dakota, passed away at 8:15 p.m. on Sunday, November 20, 1898, while attending the South Dakota School for the Deaf in Sioux Falls. Contemporary newspaper accounts described his passing as the first death of a pupil at the school since its establishment more than seventeen years earlier.

Lorraine was the son of Dr. John Meredith and Rosalia (Lewis) Louthan. He had lost his hearing through illness approximately six years before his death and had attended the school for several years. Although deaf, he retained his ability to speak.

About four years before his passing, Lorraine had suffered a serious episode of what physicians then called inflammatory rheumatism, which affected his heart. In September 1898, his mother visited him at school and took him to Dr. J. C. Morgan for an examination so that his instructors and the school matron could better understand his care needs.



During his final illness, Lorraine developed severe joint inflammation, followed by complications involving his heart. His mother was notified and arrived on Sunday morning, November 20. She remained at his side throughout the day until his death that evening. The immediate cause was reported as secondary inflammation of the heart.

Lorraine received devoted care from the school community. Miss Gentry, the matron, and Miss McDonald, an instructor, took personal responsibility for his care, with one or the other remaining with him continuously during his illness. Superintendent James Simpson praised their dedication. Dr. Morgan observed that the loss was felt much like the death of a family member.

Lorraine was remembered with affection by both students and staff. In a resolution of sympathy, his schoolmates described him as a Christian boy whose friendly, gentlemanly manner had endeared him to those around him. They extended their condolences to his parents, sisters, and other relatives. The resolution was signed by Jessie Beardsley, Chris A. Hanson, and Fred A. Campbell on behalf of the pupils.



A funeral service was held at the school on Tuesday afternoon, November 22, 1898. Afterward, Lorraine's body was taken to the Illinois Central depot for the journey home to Spearfish. Superintendent Simpson accompanied Mrs. Louthan and her son's remains as far as Sheldon. Lorraine was laid to rest at Rose Hill Cemetery in Spearfish, South Dakota.

Though his life was brief, Lorraine left a lasting impression on his school community. His classmates and teachers mourned a cherished friend whose kindness and companionship would be deeply missed.