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ABSTRACT

A study examined how school newspapers in residential schools for deaf persons acted as a mode of transmission for the issues of the deaf community itself and to the outside world. It investigated the content and format of these newspapers (known collectively as "Little Papers") in four geographic locations in the United States, in an effort to discern some of the uses of this press in the late nineteenth century. Data examined included microfilm copies of the newspapers and collections of histories of residential schools for the deaf. Results indicated that the Little Papers were fairly similar in their formats and general content, which included fictional pieces, inspirational stories, and reprints of articles from general interest publications that related to deafness or deaf people. Findings suggest that the Little Papers did much to perpetuate deaf culture and bind a community which spread across the United States. (Four illustrations and 44 footnotes are included; a 30-item bibliography is attached. (RS)

The Little Papers:
Newspapers at 19th Century Residential Schools for Deaf Persons

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Paper presented in the History Division at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education and in Journalism and Mass Communication in Montreal, August 1992.

Abstract

Residential schools for deaf children in the 19th century United States helped forge the American deaf community. One integral institution at most schools were their newspapers. This research studies the newspapers from schools in four geographic areas. It assesses their form and content so as to understand their role in building a deaf community and promoting its attributes to the outside world.

Abstract

One group that is virtually ignored in the history of newspapers in the United States is the American deaf community, which began forging itself into a distinctive culture in 19th century. Newspapers at residential schools for deaf children in the 19th century contributed significantly to this community building process. They informed the deaf community about itself, as well letting parents, legislators, and other interested persons know about the news and accomplishments of deaf persons.

This study looks at residential school newspapers from four geographic areas of the United States. By assessing the form and content of the newspapers, this study illustrates how communication tools such as newspapers are integral in the formation of a culture. These newspapers provided a repository for any story about deaf persons or deafness and allowed for the transmission of the multifarious deaf world back to itself and others.

Though the voice be silent, the pen is as mighty in the hand of the deaf mute who knows how to wield it, as when held by one whose vocal chords give word to thought in melody of sound.[1]

When media historians study the diversity of ideas within the U.S. press, they focus on groups delineated by their race, gender, national origin, or dissident ideas. They, however, typically miss a segment of the U.S. population that is set apart because of a communication barrier with the larger hearing population. This group is the American deaf community, which began forging itself into a culture in the late 18th century and early 19th century.[2] Deaf people became a cohesive group with the advent of the residential schools for deaf persons, which brought them together to form a community.

The deaf community was enhanced through the newspapers, known as Little Papers, developed at these schools. This study examines how these newspapers acted as a mode of transmission for the issues of the deaf community among itself and to the outside world. Statistically, it is known that 85 to 90 percent of deaf people have hearing parents. And because their children were away from home at the residential schools, the Little Papers were an important way of letting parents know what was going on at the children's schools. "They kept the school's constituencies -- the parents, legislators, alumni, and interested persons -- informed of the progress of the school, and they served to educate an uninformed public about deaf people," according to Gannon's Deaf Heritage.[3]

In 1817, the first permanent school for deaf children began in Hartford, Conn. It was an

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[1] Deaf-Mute Voice, 16 April 1887.

[2] John Van Cleve and Barry A. Crouch, A Place of Their Own (Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press, 1989), p. 29.

[3] Jack Gannon, Deaf Heritage: A Narrative History of Deaf America, (Silver Spring, MD: National Association of the Deaf, 1981), p. 247.

outgrowth of the changes taking place in the expanding United States. People were embracing education as a way to grow economically and to assist people in exercising their democratic rights.[4] The Connecticut Asylum for the Education and Instruction of Deaf and Dumb Persons (later known as the American School) set down a model that many other schools would follow. It drew students from a large geographic area, so it would have enough students. Thus, it was established as a residential school.

Because the students lived away from their families, they began to learn cultural norms and values from their follow deaf students and deaf teachers, rather than their families. They were isolated into a deaf world at school, thus the deaf culture began to form at these schools.[5] At this beginning, the newly developed American Sign Language was the communication method at the schools. In a few years, however, this method was to face a challenge from educators who thought the only correct form of communication was the oral method.

Within the next decades, many other states would develop their own state schools patterned after the Connecticut school. Deaf children were being educated; deaf adults were gaining jobs; and the deaf community was forming. In the pre-industrial United States, deaf persons were channeled into jobs that did not require hearing. Many deaf people continued the agricultural traditions of their families. Others became teachers in schools for deaf people. As industry and literacy grew in the United States, another occupation predominated for deaf men: They were trained as printers. "Throughout the late nineteenth century and well into the

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[4] Van Cleve. op. cit., p. 29.

[5] Van Cleve, op. cit. p. 30.

twentieth, printing was the most important skilled occupation for deaf men".[6] The best male students were encouraged to learn this trade, and many leaders in the deaf community began as printers.

The printing trade also created a power base for these men once the residential schools began newspapers. In an effort to create a practical experience for its printing classes, the North Carolina Institution for the Deaf and the Blind created its own periodical in 1849. The Deaf Mute was the first of what were to become known as the "Little Paper Family." A significant journalistic and cultural tool had just been launched. Soon most deaf schools had their own newspapers published by their print shop. At one time, 50 periodicals were being published by deaf schools.[7] Other papers not associated with schools but intended for the deaf community, became known as the silent press.

In addition to the practical application of printing, the Little Papers gave deaf people a method of communication among themselves and with the outside world. "They helped forge a network among the widely scattered members of the deaf community. . . .the Little Paper Family provided a way for deaf individuals to keep in touch with their community and their culture."[8]

Deaf printers also gained power from the establishment of this press. The foremen of the printing departments at the deaf schools were experienced deaf printers. Many times, the foreman owned the paper and received the revenue from advertisements and subscriptions.[9] Thus, the

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[6] Van Cleve, op. cit., p. 164.

[7] Edward Allen Fay, ed., Histories of American Schools for the Deaf, 1817-1893, (Washington, D.C.: Volta Bureau, 1893), 3: appendix.

[8] John Van Cleve, Gallaudet Encyclopedia of Deaf People and Deafness (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1987) 2: p. 193.

[9] Ibid.

power of the press gave these men power within the deaf community as well.

The Significance of a Press by Deaf Persons

A press run by an isolated group such as the deaf community fits with other forms of dissident and disenfranchised media. The deaf community was isolated both linguistically and socially. Unlike an immigrant group, rarely would members of the deaf community acquire the verbal language of the hearing majority. Most of the hearing majority also viewed deaf persons as defective because of their lack of hearing. This affected the interaction between the two groups. "Deaf Americans resemble blacks and other minorities in many respects, one of which is their desire to free themselves from the limitations imposed on them by the majority," according to Van Cleve.[10]

Kessler explained how minority groups fit into the U.S. media's marketplace of ideas. Based on the democratic form of government, the goal is that all ideas have the ability to be presented in a public forum. This marketplace should reflect the diversity in U.S. society.[11] The mainstream media may neglect alternative ideas or deny access to minority groups, however.

This exclusion from or misrepresentation in the mainstream media takes several forms. The form that applies to deaf people is the "ridicule, insult, and stereotyping of the group and its ideas rather than discussion, explanation, and debate."[12] Thus, dissident groups create their own marketplace of ideas outside the mainstream press. The U.S. marketplace of ideas, thereby,

[10] Van Cleve, 1989, op. cit., p. 60.

[11] Lauren Kessler, The Dissident Press, (Newbury Park: Sage, 1984) p. 8.

[12] Ibid., p. 14.

expands to encompass all forms of the press, not just the mainstream.

Like many disenfranchised groups, creating their own forum for their ideas had a double significance for deaf persons. It made their community stronger.

> The Little Paper Family was one of the means used by the American deaf community to establish and then to retain its identity. Confronted in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with demands to be assimilated into the hearing world, to abjure their language of signs, to stop teaching deaf children, to marry hearing people, to give up their clubs and associations and periodicals, deaf Americans persevered. They maintained social and professional ties and reinforced standards of acceptable behavior through periodicals, including the school papers, they exchanged.[13]

As an oppressed people, the deaf community had to have a means by which to discuss issues related to them. They also had to have a forum to editorialize their opinions.

This study will investigate the content and format of newspapers of deaf residential schools in a variety of geographic locations in the United States in an effort to discern some of the uses of this press in the late 19th century.

Source Material

Although sources on the history of the deaf community in the United States are not numerous, those that are available are well-documented and thorough. Several of the most recent sources include: A Place of Their Own, Creating the Deaf Community in America by John V. Van Cleve and Barry Crouch, the Gallaudet Encyclopedia of Deaf People and Deafness; Jack Gannon's Deaf Heritage, A Narrative History of Deaf America; and Harlan Lane's When the Mind Hears.

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[13] Van Cleve, 1987, op. cit., p. 194.

The Gallaudet University Archives contains much historical documentation on the early deaf residential schools and the development of Gallaudet University. Dr. Edward Miner Gallaudet began a history of Gallaudet University in 1895. The handwritten manuscript was finally published as History of the College for the Deaf, 1857-1907 in 1983. In 1893, Edward Allen Fay, the long-time editor of The American Annals of the Deaf, assembled individual histories of schools for deaf persons around the United States and created a three-volume set, Histories of American Schools for the Deaf, 1817-1893.

All the Little Papers are on microfilm at Gallaudet University as well. This study looks at residential school newspapers before 1900, and copies of the newspapers were less available before 1900, limiting the sample of newspapers somewhat. Poor quality of the microfilm, making the paper impossible to read eliminated a few more. This study tried to focus on several different Little Papers from four main geographic regions: the south, the midwest, the west, and the northeast. See Tables 1 and 2 for a list the general silent press and the Little Papers that were being exchanged in 1893.

TABLE 1
General silent press

The American Annals
Deaf-mute Journal (New York City)
Supplement to the Arkansas Mite
The Silent Educator
Silent Press
Critic
Topic (run by a black deaf person)
Source: Wisconsin Times[14]

[14] "Our Deaf-Mute Exchanges," Wisconsin Times, 21 September 1893.

TABLE 2
Little Papers

Name	City
Deaf-mute Register	Rome, N.Y.
LeCouteulx Leader	Buffalo, N.Y.
Daily Paper of Our Little People	Rochester, N.Y.
Silent Worker	Trenton, N.J.
Maryland Bulletin	Frederick, Md.
Silent World	Philadelphia, Pa.
Goodson Gazette	Staunton, Va.
The Tablet	Romeny, W. Va.
Palmetto Leaf	Cedar Springs, S.C.
Institute Herald	St. Augustine, Fla.
The Messenger	Talladega, Ala.
Deaf-Mute Pelican	Baton Rouge, La.
Deaf-Mute Voice	Jackson, Miss.
Silent Observer	Knoxville, Tenn.
Ky. Deaf-Mute	Danville, Ky.
Mutes' Chronicle	Columbus, Ohio
The Mirror	Flint, Mich.
Silent Hoosier	Indianapolis, Ind.
The Advance	Jacksonville, Ill.
New Method	Englewood, Ill.
Wisconsin Times	Delavan, Wis.
The Banner	Devil's Lake, N.D.
Dakota Advocate	Sioux Fall, S.D.
Hawkeye	Council Bluffs, Iowa
Critic	Dubuque, Iowa
Missouri Record	Fulton, Mo.
The Optic	Little Rock, Ark.
Texas Mutes' Ranger	Austin, Texas
The Juvenile Ranger	Austin, Texas
Nebraska Mute Journal	Omaha, Neb.
Kansas Star	Olathe, Kan.
Desert Eagle	Salt Lake City, Utah
Colorado Index	Colorado Springs, Colo.
The Weekly News	Berkeley, Colo.
The Sign	Salem, Ore.

Source: Wisconsin Times[15]

[15] "Our Deaf-Mute Exchanges," Wisconsin Times, 21 September 1893.

The Little Papers functioned through exchanges with other newspapers, letters, and submissions, rather than sending reporters to events. Their newsgathering techniques were similar to some of the late 18th century country weeklies in the south and western United States. As Mott explained, "Most of their content was acquired by means of scissors and paste-pot."[16]

This study looks primarily at the Mute's Chronicle from Columbus, Ohio; the Mute's Companion of Faribault, Minn.; The Deaf Mute Optic of Little Rock, Ark.; the Deaf Mute Voice of Jackson, Miss.; and the Wisconsin Times of Delavan, Wis. Much other information about Little Papers during the later 19th century came from Fay's collection of histories of residential schools for the deaf in the United States.

The Character and Content of Selected Little Papers

After the first school newspaper was begun at the North Carolina residential school in 1849, many of the residential schools for deaf children followed suit. Because printing was such an important trade for deaf men, newspapers were a natural offshoot of efforts to train printers. The newspapers gave the printing students consistent practice even when printing jobs were limited.

At the Texas residential deaf school in Austin, the Texas Mute Ranger was begun because of discrimination in job contracts. The state legislature established the printing department at the school to teach the students as well as to have them do state printing.[17] The intention was that having the school do the printing would save the state much money. While waiting for printing

[16] Frank Luther Mott, American Journalism, (New York: MacMillan Company, 1950), p. 137.

[17] Harris Taylor and J.H. Williams, "Texas Deaf and Dumb Asylum," Histories of American Schools for the Deaf, 1817-1893, Edward Allen Fay, ed., 2:12-13.

jobs, the foreman of the printing department had the students re-print the state constitution for distribution to all state departments with the remainder to be sold.

Many Texas newspapers owners became outraged, however, and the constitutions had to be withdrawn from distribution.[18] It seems likely that the newspaper owners were upset because in addition to publishing newspapers, they did job printing. They probably saw the deaf school as an economic threat. The federal government, for example, used private newspapers for printing before the Government Printing Office was set up in 1860.[19]

Because the students' printing work had been limited, "the Texas Mute Ranger, a monthly paper, was started to give the pupils practical experience, and to supply the institution with an organ."[20] This newspaper became the only printing job allowed for the deaf students as hearing printers took over the department and turned it into the State Printing Office. "The pupils were forced to occupy a subordinate position in an office that was originally intended for the deaf only. While the pupils knew something of straight newspaper work, they had learned very little of the general principles of the trade,"[21] according to Taylor and Williams' history of the Texas school.

Most schools for deaf children did not have a bad experience with their printing department, however. In fact, for many schools the printing office was the crown jewel and a source of pride. The history of the Wisconsin school in Delavan explained that its eight-page

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[18] Taylor and Williams, op. cit., p. 12.

[19] William David Sloan, James G. Stovall, and James D. Startt (eds.), The Media in America. (Worthington, Ohio: Publishing Horizons, 1989). p.

[20] Taylor and Williams,op. cit., p. 13.

[21] Ibid.

weekly, The Wisconsin Times, focused on school news and issues of deaf education. It was printed and partially edited by the students at the school.

> Its editorials on leading topics pertaining to the education of the deaf, its spicy locals on life in the institution and its general matter of valuable information reflect a great deal of credit on its editor and on the institution and its extensive exchange list attests its popularity with not only other institutions but also the press of the state.[22]

Other schools had similar pride. In 1893 the Ohio school in Columbus reported that its printing office "has printed the Mute's Chronicle for a quarter of a century with signal success."[23]

Many of the schools had the most modern printing equipment of the day. From a beginning with a small supply of second-hand type, the Minnesota school built its printing office into a well-equipped department. "It contains two presses, a paper cutter, proof press, a fine assortment of type, and all the furniture of a well equipped printing office. Besides publishing The Companion weekly, it does a great amount of job work for three State Schools," according to Smith's history of the school.[24]

Format and General Content

Despite their geographic separation, the Little Papers were fairly similar in their formats and general content. Like many newspapers of the day, they included more than just news. There was poetry, fiction, and a standard page describing the administration and instruction of the

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[22] Edward E. Clippinger, "Wisconsin School for the Deaf," op. cit., Histories, 1:17.

[23] Robert Patterson, "History of the Ohio Institution, op. cit., Histories, 1:30.

[24] J.L. Smith, "Minnesota School for the Deaf," op. cit., Histories, 1:77.

school. The front page usually had a short poem in the upper left corner. The front page articles might be long fiction pieces or inspirational stories as well as numerous stories gleaned from general interest publications. Van Cleve explained that these articles "tended to be either morally uplifting or bizarre or sensational."[25]

The nameplates for the papers were eye-catching as well. The North Carolina school's early nameplate was adorned with angels, encircling a drawing of the school. (See Illustration 1.) Later issues of the Arkansas school's newspaper The Optic featured a drawing of a large eye in the name plate. (See Illustration 2.) Most of the newspaper was type, however, although drawings cropped up periodically. The Minnesota school published a large picture of its building on the from page of the Mute's Companion in 1879. The engraving work was extremely detailed. The drawing was used to promote the school. (See Illustration 3.) And an 1893 issue of The Wisconsin Times used a detailed drawing of Santa Claus on an inside page to illustrate a plea for Christmas gifts for the children at the school. (See Illustration 4.)

It is unclear how the newspapers came to be known as the Little Papers, but this was a term that came into general use. In a letter on the front page of the Minnesota school's Mute's Companion, a New York writer addressed her letter "For the Little Ones. Dear Little Paper:". She then proceeded to relate a story about two deaf girls.[26]

The inside pages of the Little Papers were more directed toward deaf issues and presented reprints of articles related to deafness or deaf people. They featured exchange information from other Little Papers and the silent press. They ran letters from prominent people and printed

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[25] Van Cleve. op. cit., 1987. p. 194.

[26] "For the Little Ones.", Mute's Companion. 9 December 1880.

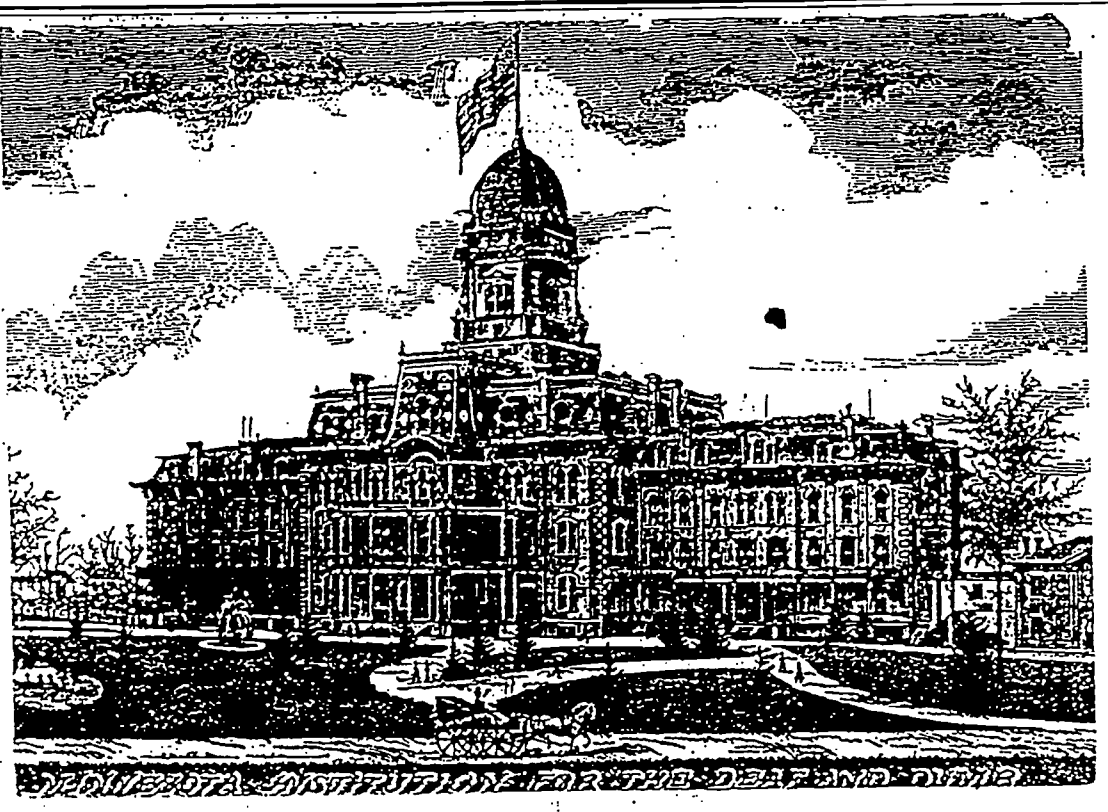
ILLUSTRATION 1

The nameplate of the first Little Paper in 1849, The Deaf Mute of the North Carolina Institution for the Deaf and Blind.

ILLUSTRATION 2

The nameplate of the Deaf Mute Optic of the Arkansas School for the Deaf, 1886

« An Educated Head and a Skillful Hand ! »



« An Education and a Trade Free ! »

« A Free School for the Deaf and Dumb of Minnesota. »

ILLUSTRATION 3

An engraving from the from page of the Mute's Companion of the Minnesota Schoo for the Deaf, 1879.

ILLUSTRATION 4

An engraving of Santa Claus from the Wisconsin Times of the Wisconsin School for the Deaf, 1893.

sentence-long blurbs about deaths, visitations, and student activities. Many Little Papers printed an entire page of short items from students who would write a sentence about the weather or a recent picnic.

Generally news about deaf issues fell into numerous categories. In some cases, the Little Papers published long profiles of famous deaf people. On Nov. 14, 1868, the Ohio School's Mute Chronicle published a full-page biography of Albert Newsam, a deaf artist. Newsam achieved renown as a portrait artist and was even commissioned to make lithographic portraits of several of the U.S. President's cabinet. In addition, to lauding Newsam, the article reinforced how good values made him a great man. "In all the relations of life in which we have beheld him, his conduct is marked by an undeviating course of temperance and morality."[27]

The Little Papers also published reprints from mainstream newspapers on the activities of deaf people. Ironically, the newspapers, by printing the stories seemingly verbatim, showed how the general press reported on deaf people as a strange oddity. For example, the Mute's Chronicle ran a front page reprint of an article from the Memphis Bulletin on the marriage of a deaf couple. The story focused primarily on the oddity of a ceremony in which neither the bride nor the groom could speak verbally. "Tender words, sweet and winning, never passed between the couple who stood at the alter. . . .(They) were able to tell their thoughts only to those who had been initiated in that most wonderful and useful invention, the 'sign language.'"[28]

The Little Papers informed the deaf community about the goings-on at National Deaf-Mute College in Washington, D.C. (which would later become Gallaudet University). Minnesota's

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[27] "Albert Newsam. The Distinguished Deaf and Dumb Artist," Mute's Chronicle, 14 November 1868.

[28] "A Mute Marriage," Mute's Chronicle, 9 January 1869.

Mute's Companion published a letter from Gallaudet in 1881 that explained changes in the preparatory classes at the college.[29] And the Mississippi school's The Deaf-Mute Voice ran a letter from Gallaudet in 1887 about the decision to allow women into the college.[30]

Other stories in the Little Papers warned deaf people of the dangers that might confront them in life. In a Mute's Chronicle article in 1868, the editor prefaced an story about a deaf man being hit by a railroad car with the following admonishment: "We find in the Indianapolis (Ind.) Journal an account of a sad accident, which shows the necessity of extreme caution on the part of persons who cannot hear."[31]

Readers of the Little Papers also learned about controversial issues within the deaf community such as the discussion of a colony for deaf people. An 1884 article in Arkansas' Deaf Mute Optic reported that 24 deaf families had settled in Winnipeg, Manitoba, in Canada and more deaf people were expected to move there.[32] Another controversy in the deaf world revolved around the Gallaudet memorial statue at the Washington, D.C., college. The sculpture job was given to a hearing artist and rumor leaked out that the memorial committee had implied that a deaf artist was not capable of sculpting the statue. The Deaf Mute Voice reprinted the articles from the New York World and letters about the issue in 1887.[33]

The Little Papers also reprinted articles related to hearing problems. The Deaf Mute Optic ran an article from the Rome Register in 1884 about detecting deafness and how important early

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[29] "National Deaf-Mute College, Kendall Green," Mute's Companion, 5 March 1881.

[30] "National Deaf-Mute College Open to Young Ladies," The Deaf-Mute Voice, 9 April 1887.

[31] "A Deaf Mute Killed by the Cars," Ohio Chronicle, 14 October 1868.

[32] "Deaf Mute Colonization," The Deaf Mute Optic, 11 October 1884.

[33] "The Gallaudet Memorial," Deaf Mute Voice, 23 May 1887.

detection is.[34] The newspapers also printed statistical information keeping readers up to date on how large the deaf community was. An 1884 story in the Deaf Mute Optic reported that the total number of deaf people in the United States and territories in 1880 was 33,878.[35]

The Little Papers even reported on internal controversies among themselves. In 1885, the Deaf-Mute Optic wrote about an incident in which the Deaf-Mute Voice accused the Star of stealing from its pages. The Optic reported that it too reprinted any stories it wanted but was not guilty of plagiarizing.

> If the Voice looks sharp it will catch us every week in the same act. We use the scissors freely, and we do not give credit for news articles. We do not know any paper that does. For opinions and real literary work we always give credit, but we take it for granted that people of common sense will know that we have no correspondents or reporters in Paris. When we get one we will claim him loud enough to be heard.[36]

The incident gives insightful information about how the Little Papers filled their pages.

Readers of the Little Papers also learned about life in other schools for deaf children and the deaf community in other parts of the country. An exchange story in 1884 in the Arkansas Deaf Mute Optic told of the 20 deaf people in Norwich, Conn., and the Congregational church they attended.[37] Another article in the Optic in 1884 reprinted a piece from the Connecticut Herald describing the Whipple Home School for Deaf-Mutes located in Mystic River, Conn.[38]

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[34] "Defective Hearing," The Deaf Mute Optic, 1884.

[35] "Deaf Mute Statistics," The Deaf Mute Optic, 25 October 1884.

[36] "The Deaf Mute Voice," The Deaf Mute Optic, 30 December 1885.

[37] "Norwich Deaf Mutes," The Deaf Mute Optic, 22 March 1884.

[38] "Home School for Deaf-mutes," The Deaf Mute Optic, 1 March 1884.

Thus, deaf children learned of the deaf community outside the walls of their school.

Discussion and Conclusions

It seems clear that the Little Papers did much to perpetuate deaf culture and bind a community spread across the United States. Because of the Little Papers exchange system, stories on deafness and deaf issues were seen in the deaf community nationwide because of the strong exchange system the newspapers had. The Little Papers provided a repository for any story about deaf persons and deafness from any U.S. newspaper. The variety of topics about deaf people and deaf issues reviewed in this research paper illustrates that the Little Papers did an superb job of transmitting the multifarious deaf world back to itself.

One ex-editor of the Arkansas Optic even wrote about the Little Papers' striving for some semblance of objectivity. He admonished the Little Papers to avoid questions of politics, explaining that "political news is dangerous ground. Any news about the deaf, their welfare, honors they have won or difficulties they have overcome, is always appropriate; but let us bar out the club quarrel."[39] He added that the Little Papers should also beware of criticizing the school administration. His only exception to that rule was if the school appointed an unqualified person as head. Then he said it is in the best interest of the deaf children statewide to fight against the appointment.

Another important result of the Little Papers was their dissemination of information to hearing people. Kessler explained that one of the roles of the dissident press is that of an external communicator, trying to educate the general public about issues that the mainstream press

[39] Francis Devereux Clarke, "Our Press and Its Relation to the School," Wisconsin Times, 19 October 1893.

neglects.[40] The Little Papers may have done this more successfully than other types of dissident press because they had a ready audience of hearing people - the hearing parents of the deaf children at the schools. Publications about deaf persons understood how critical it was that hearing people be knowledgeable about deaf issues. After all, it was primarily hearing people who maintained control over the schools for deaf children. In lauding the accomplishments of several deaf men who started newspapers, the Deaf-Mutes' Journal explained the significance of the event:

> The above will suffice to show that it is possible for those who can not hear to maintain important public relations with those who can, and that to be an 'opinion moulder' does not necessarily require the senses of hearing and speech. Though the voice be silent, the pen is as mighty in the hand of the deaf mute who knows how to wield it, as when held by one whose vocal chords give word to thought in melody of sound.[41]

It seems clear that the newspapers run by deaf people were an important educational tool for hearing people. They showed that deaf people have the capabilities of tackling almost any task.

Related to this growing esteem given deaf editors was the establishment of the Little Papers Family Editorial Association in 1893. When forming the organization at the Chicago Congress, the deaf editors had to contend with the hearing editors of some of the Little Papers, who were usually principals at the schools. The hearing editors did not want to associate with the deaf editors, according to an article in the Deaf-Mutes' Journal. To show their self respect, the editors unanimously elected a deaf president for the editorial association.[42] The membership

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[40] Kessler. op. cit., p. 158.

[41] Deaf-Mute Voice, 16 April 1887.

[42] Free Lance, "A Bird's Eye View of the Congresses," Deaf-Mutes' Journal, 17 August 1893.

of the Little Papers Family Editorial Association over the years contained the names of many of the leaders within the deaf community. And in recent years, awards from the organization have been coveted.[43]

The significance of the Little Papers is born out, too, in the fact that many of the Little Papers still exist today. They provide a similar function as they did more than 100 years ago. One study shows that schools for deaf children in North Carolina, Ohio, Illinois, Kentucky, Michigan, Nebraska, Virginia, Colorado, and Kansas continue to publish school newspapers that were begun in the 1870s and before.[44] Their durability illustrates that they provide a vital forum for the audience they serve. And they continue to inform the deaf community about the critical deaf education issues of the day.

[43] Fred R. Murphy, "Little Paper Family -- An Unique Organization," The Deaf American, 25:8, pp. 11-12.

[44] Gannon, op. cit., p. 239.

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