

## W.A.E.

by Shane Dundas

We Are Equal (W.A.E.): The National Fraternal Society of the Deaf exhibition grand opening was a great success. After over a year of hard work by the Gallaudet Museum staff researching and designing this exhibit, it has come to its full fruition.

The messages of the speakers at the grand opening event, which took place in the Chapel Hall, had a common theme: community. Summing up the meaning of the N.F.S.D. boils down to its strong sense of community and collectivism that can't be found elsewhere during its time. However, as President Roberta Cordano, who was a dynamic speaker filled with vivid memories of community spirit through the N.F.S.D., pointed out, the sense of community that self-sustains and its spirit of mutual support remains the same in another name: "Deaf Ecosystem." It happens when the Deaf community supports Deaf owned businesses that result in stronger financial autonomy and having a spirit of entrepreneurship within the community.

The Gallaudet Museum team want to thank all

of those who came to the grand opening, for the wisdom of former N.F.S.D. leaders/members, inspiring words of the speakers, financial support of this exhibition project through the Frank B. Sullivan Memorial Foundation and donors like you.

You will find more information about the exhibit, photo gallery, and the grand opening video on our website: [www.gallaudet.edu/museum](http://www.gallaudet.edu/museum).



**The NFSD Exhibit is unveiled for the first time.**  
President Cordano, The Frank B. Sullivan Memorial Foundation Board Members, and Meredith Peruzzi unveil the exhibit.

Photo courtesy of University Communications.

## 200 Years of ASD is Coming to Gallaudet Museum

by Shane Dundas

Deaf life in America has been forever changed since the American School for the Deaf was established in 1817. The story began when Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet brought Laurent Clerc from France, fostering the development of American Sign Language and many schools for the Deaf across the nation.

Starting this Spring at the Gallaudet University Museum, you will see these stories coming from ASD through narratives and treasured artifacts. Items belonging to Laurent Clerc, Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, and many other notable people will soon find their temporary home at the Washburn Art Building where delicate artifacts can be preserved and protected from the elements.

This exhibit is on loan from the [Connecticut Historical Society](#) that ran the exhibit earlier this year

for six months, and will be shown here for a few months beginning this spring. Keep an eye out for more details, so that you can take a once-a-lifetime chance to see, up close, the stories that impact many of Deaf Americans.



ASD Exhibit at the Connecticut Historical Society. Photo by Trevor De Rosch.

## Time Capsule

### If Walls Could Talk: Chapel Hall Part 1

by Trevor De Rosch

Editor's note: The *Time Capsule* is a series of articles featuring the people and places of Gallaudet University's history.

Over the past few years, one question has been repeatedly asked by our visitors. As they enter the museum in Chapel Hall, they wonder as to the purpose of the room, and how it has been used over the years. We have shown them photos from the 1880s and the 1950s that have come up in past research and discussed a variety of ways in which this room has been used. Today's publication starts a new section of the newsletter, in which we will examine the ways the chapel in Chapel Hall has been used through the years by decade, starting with the 1870s.

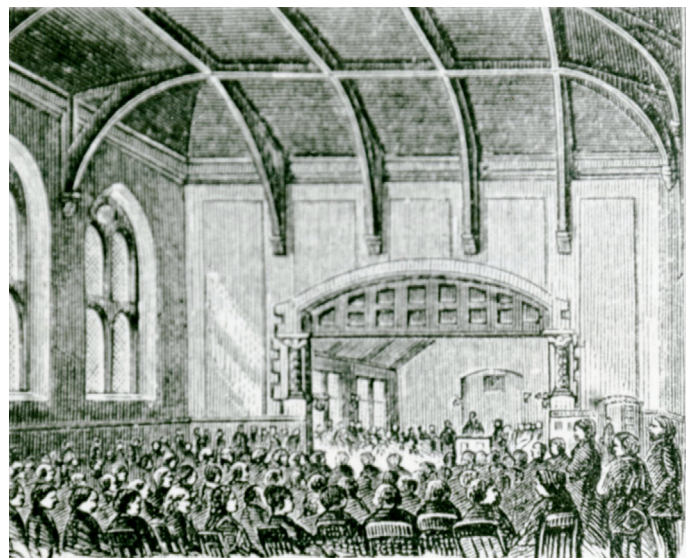
Construction on the Main Central Building (as Chapel Hall was known at the time) started in 1867; it wasn't until the last months of 1870 that the building was completed and ready to be used. The first event to be held in the building was its dedication on January 29th, 1871. In attendance were numerous government officials who had lent their support to the institution over the years, including Senator James A. Patterson of New Hampshire, Governor Jewell of Connecticut, and Representative James A. Garfield of Ohio. Even Ulysses S. Grant, the President of the United States, fulfilled his capacity as patron of the institution by participating in the event. Students, government officials, and institution officials gave speeches on various topics or offered prayers; their speeches can be found in the 14th Annual Report of the Columbia Institute. Other events recorded as occurring in Chapel Hall in the 1870s include:

- Commencement exercises, June 26, 1872
- Commencement exercises, June 25, 1873
- Meeting of the board of directors, February 16, 1877 (25th anniversary)
- Presentation Day, May 1, 1878, which Edward

Miner Gallaudet comments on with the following: "The number of visitors present far exceeded the capacity of the hall, many being unable to secure even standing room."

Unfortunately, due to the lack of any student productions until the 1890s, everyday events held in Chapel Hall are not readily known. It appears as if, due to the small number of graduates in the 1870s, the main room was the perfect place to host Presentation Day, at least until the later part of the decade. As we move on through the years, more sources, such as the Buff and Blue, Tower Clock yearbook, and others will allow us to get a feel for the everyday use of Chapel Hall through the years. Join us next time to see how the space was used in the 1880s!

P.S. Many people have asked me the dimensions of the room over the years, particularly the height. According to Edward Miner Gallaudet's official notes, the room is 56 feet square and 38 feet tall!



**Dedication of Chapel Hall, January 29, 1871.**

This is one of the earliest images we have of the interior of Chapel Hall. Notice the depth of the stage in this 1871 sketch of the opening ceremonies of Chapel Hall. Image courtesy of Gallaudet University Archives.



# Slovak Deaf Day Conference

by Meredith Peruzzi

In September, I had the honor of representing Deaf museum professionals in the United States at the Slovak Deaf Day conference in Trnava, Slovakia. Organized by Jaroslav Cehlárik of the Trnava Organization for the Hearing Impaired (TASPO), the conference featured a full day of presentations by directors and staff of various Deaf-related museums around the world. In addition to my presentation from the Gallaudet University Museum, there were presentations by Helen Pizzacalla, '76, of the Deaf Culture Centre in Toronto, Caroline Brizard of the Museum of Deaf History and Culture in France, and Tali Elimelech of Invitation to Silence in Israel.

Although the conference was organized to bring international perspectives to Slovakia in support of developing a Slovak museum of Deaf history and culture, I had the privilege of learning about Slovak Deaf culture as well. After a trip to the Sereď Holocaust Museum, where Jaroslav worked with curators to provide video translations of the exhibit labels into Slovak Sign Language, we visited the TASPO club space, which reminded me of every Deaf club I've been to in the US...on the second floor, a small bar in the corner, and lots of lively conversation! Helen and I

also had the privilege of attending the Slovak Deaf Day gala dinner, which – as with most parties in Slovakia, we learned – went until 5:00am! It featured multiple performances by The Maloes Show from Spain, door prize drawings, dancing, and a couple of very exhausted North Americans.

I'm glad to have been able to present what we have learned in operating the Gallaudet University Museum to Jaroslav and other members of the Slovak Deaf community. He will be visiting us in early January to tour our museum and discuss further how to establish one in Slovakia – who knows, maybe someday soon *Our Story* will feature another article about the opening of a Slovak Deaf museum!



TASPO Deaf Club, Trnava, Slovakia.

Photos courtesy of Meredith Peruzzi

# It's All in a Name

by Meredith Peruzzi and Shane Dundas

Earlier this month, the Gallaudet University Museum invited the Gallaudet campus community to offer feedback and insights about changing the name of the Gallaudet University Museum. Coming in 2018, we will gather input from various stakeholders, including Gallaudet University alumni, to further determine an appropriate name that fits with our vision and mission.

Although Washington, D.C. is a prime spot for many national museums, there are none about Deaf people. And since 2007, the Gallaudet University Museum mostly focused on stories about or relating to Gallaudet University and all its past and alumni. There are so many stories about Deaf people outside of Gallaudet University by Deaf people that haven't been

told. We are looking forward to expanding our historical content and to begin changing our approach on how to bring stories of diverse people of different backgrounds.

Names are powerful - it's a way to identify people and things that fits with the notion of their identity. We use names to call someone to attention - we use them as reference in our conversations - and we use them to help us connect the dots. We want people to connect with our mission and vision - with a better name that best exemplifies who Deaf people are.

Please keep in an eye on our social media and e-mail announcements in 2018 that invite your participation on getting the name right.

# Missing: Your Information

by Shane Dundas

The Gallaudet University Museum and the Gallaudet University Archives need help getting more information about the National Fraternal Society of the Deaf from you. In a recent opening of the NFSD exhibition, there is a new addition to our standard panel exhibit: cases of artifacts and an interactive display. This article is about the interactive display, which is an iPad with a stand.

It contains a map with a list of all 168 NFSD divisions in the U.S. and Canada, which shows each division's profile, Charter, notable members of this division, and more. It also contains several photo galleries, video galleries, documents, Division Charters (scanned), selected issues of *The Frat*, and other information relating to the exhibit.

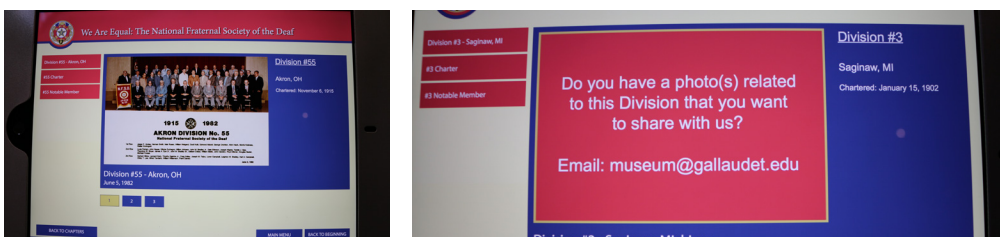
This is our wish list:

- Photos of your past local division
- Photo(s) of notable persons or past members of a local division
- Division Charter
- Any documents from a local division
- Any items or artifacts from a local division
- If you decide to donate any from the wish list, it will be done through the Gallaudet University Archives where the artifacts would be safely stored and preserved for many generations to come.

For more information, visit this website: [Gallaudet University Archives](http://Gallaudet University Archives). Carefully send donated items to:

Gallaudet University Archives  
800 Florida Ave NE  
Washington, D.C. 20002-3695

For questions, contact: (202) 250-2604 or email: [archives@gallaudet.edu](mailto:archives@gallaudet.edu).  
You can also contact us for any questions as well: [museum@gallaudet.edu](mailto:museum@gallaudet.edu).



NFSD Interactive Exhibit. Some Chapters have photos while others don't.  
Photo courtesy of Shane Dundas and the Gallaudet Museum.

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The Gallaudet University Museum publishes the *Our Story* newsletter bi-annually. We welcome photographs and stories of historical significance relating to Gallaudet University and Deaf History.

In between newsletter issues, please visit our website for more information: [www.gallaudet.edu/museum](http://www.gallaudet.edu/museum). We update the website frequently.

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**Click here** to see the Gallaudet Museum Mission & Vision, or visit the above mentioned website.