

The Holidays at Gallaudet



Photo Courtesy of Gallaudet University Archives

In honor of the holiday season, the Museum staff has been reflecting on how our predecessors here at Gallaudet University celebrated their holidays in the 1890s. We examined the earliest issues of the *Buff and Blue*, focusing on columns such as “Alumni Corner,” “Locals,” and general announcements. We found no mention of any other holidays celebrated around this time, with only Christmas and New Year’s being included. Hanukkah doesn’t appear in the *Buff and Blue* until the 1970s, and Kwanzaa even later. This probably reflects the early Christian influence at Gallaudet, as Edward Miner Gallaudet’s father and brother were ministers.

Many references were found to how people spent the Christmas vacation. However, compared to today, not many people left Kendall Green during winter vacation. In the January 20, 1893 issue of the *Buff and Blue* (one of the earliest issues available), it is stated that twenty students left campus for the Christmas holidays.

That means out of a class of 103 students, 80.6% of them stayed on campus for the holiday break. Some, such as Waldo Rotherth, ’98, who went home to the Iowa School for the Deaf, were able to make the trip because home was close by. However, traveling across the country in the 1890s was not nearly as quick as it is today.

Railroads by that time were the primary means of long distance continental travel. According to an article from Mother Nature Network, it would have taken roughly a week to get to the Iowa School for the Deaf from Washington, DC in 1857; in 1930, the next year available, it would have taken just over a day. If we were to roughly guess that Rotherth’s travel time would be halfway between those, at four days, he would have had about a week to spend at his home, as Christmas vacation in December 1897 was two weeks long.

Due to the times and distances involved in traveling home for the holidays, a vast majority of students stayed on campus. This led students to come

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Homecoming at the Museum



By Alix Kraminitz, Graduate Assistant. Several of our Museum staff spent Homecoming in Chapel Hall, overseeing the museum, greeting students and alumni, and running our Tower Clock fundraiser. Alumni from graduating classes from a range of decades stopped by to take a look at the new “Gallaudet at 150 and Beyond” exhibit and get their photos taken in the historic—and usually off-limits—Tower Clock. Many of the visitors had not yet seen the new exhibit and were eager to take a look around and get a glimpse into Gallaudet’s past. Staff Writer and Researcher Trevor De Rosch and Graduate Assistant Alix Kraminitz oversaw the exhibit, fielding questions and listening to the stories the panels inspired. Looking at the pictures and accounts on these panels

jogged the memories of several alumni, reminding them of their own experience at Gallaudet or history they had learned while here. One or two people even found pictures of themselves or classmates among the exhibit photos! Meanwhile, a line formed outside the door to the Tower Clock, as alumni, visitors and students waited, tickets in hand, to get their pictures taken inside the Gallaudet landmark. Multi-Media Coordinator Shane Dundas and Graphic Designer Rani Alameh guided each person or group up to the first landing of the tower, where they posed for photos next to the stained glass window. Many alumni dressed in their Gallaudet class garb for the occasion, and one or two even brought in extra props like hats, pins, and banners. The photos turned out great, and since Homecoming Shane and Rani have been hard at work processing them and emailing the souvenir pictures to everyone who had them taken. All in all, this year’s homecoming in Chapel Hall was a success for visitors and Museum staff alike!

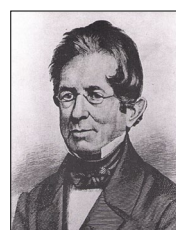
By Simi Zfati, Intern. I would like to share my experience during the Gallaudet Homecoming. It was a nice experience for me, because I haven’t worked at a booth during Homecoming until now. I had a good time, though it was really quiet at our booth, since many people didn’t want to purchase Tower Clock Photos, probably due to the fact that most of our visitors were college students. Another reason many people declined to purchase tickets was probably due to the fact that they had already experienced the Gallaudet 150th Anniversary, Graduation, and the Reunion; the Museum had offered Tower Clock photos at all those events. Due to this, our sales were lower than they probably would have been. I tried to encourage a few students to participate, however, despite the discount for students, many felt that it was too expensive to afford. They offered suggestions for what they felt would be a good cost, and we will take that under advisement, though the costs of maintaining the museum may make it difficult to change this. All in all, I thoroughly enjoyed my day in the wonderfully warm weather!



Tax Deductions

If you donated to the Gallaudet Museum in the past year, or purchased any item from our store, then get ready to smile this April! You can put these down as tax-deductible purchases on your tax forms, and save some money when you

file your taxes. Contact the Museum staff at museum@gallaudet.edu for more information. If you haven’t had the opportunity to make a purchase, then [click here](#) visit our store, or [click here](#) to donate online.



Birthday of a Legend Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet

The Museum staff is taking a moment on December 10th to remember and celebrate Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet’s 227th birthday. The co-founder of the American School for the Deaf, and father of Edward Miner Gallaudet, was born in 1787.

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up with ways to spend the time. One way to keep oneself entertained was to have guests on campus, though this was mainly seen amongst the faculty. In December 1892, Allan and Sidney Fay, along with Lindsey Denison, were welcomed visitors to the campus for the holidays.

Another way students kept themselves entertained was by setting up games and performances for the students. In December of 1893, a chess tournament was organized; however not enough students showed interest, and it was canceled. However, the students were excited about the bowling tournament between classes during the same month. The following year, the *Buff and Blue* would host a Christmas writing competition; only three students participated that year, but in later years, stories and poems would appear in the *Buff and Blue*. Bowling became more important later to the students staying on campus in subsequent years. By December 1899, the winning class would receive a trophy cup with their class name engraved on it, and they would become the social leader for the year.

In December of 1896 there were other forms of entertainment offered, primarily in the guise of plays and performances. The Thursday before Christmas day in 1896 the “co-eds” (then the term for female students) offered an “impromptu rendition of Mrs. Jarley’s Universal Wax Works” (Jan 1897). According to the *Buff and Blue*, the campus thoroughly enjoyed the performance, calling it “good...laughable...jolly.” (Jan 1897). The students remaining on campus also made a major effort to celebrate the New Year. For December 31, 1896, students who had remained at the college went

all out, finding anything that would make a lot of noise, and arranging for the Tower Clock bell to be rung at midnight.

Our staff was surprised by the short break given to students. According to the December issue of 1896, term examinations were held on December 21-23, with Christmas Vacation beginning on the 24th. In the January 1898 issue, it is mentioned that the Christmas holidays were only two weeks long. Despite this, in December 1897, the *Buff and Blue* mentioned that many students had indeed left campus. Despite a short break, and long travel times, many students did leave the campus for the holidays.

This is very different from the five weeks students will receive this coming winter break, lasting from December 14 to January 19. This seems strange, as it takes much less time to travel today; however, more emphasis is placed on the holidays occurring during this time period: Hanukkah from December 17-24, Christmas on the 25th, Kwanzaa from Dec 26 to Jan 1, New Year’s Day, and Orthodox Christmas and New Year’s Jan 7 and 14, respectively. Also, because it is easier to travel today, it makes sense that more people would take advantage of it.

Today, we take the ability to pack up and go home for the break for granted. In fact, except for a few who hold certain positions on campus, students cannot stay for the break, and are required to leave. There are no tournaments held to entertain us during this time, no performances, and all holiday celebrations will be completed by the time the dorms close on December 14.



Linda Herenchak (left) and Nancy Lundborg (right).

During Homecoming Day, two women celebrated the 40th anniversary of the Class of 1974. Linda Herenchak and Nancy Lundborg came into the Gallaudet Museum and saw themselves in the photograph at the exhibition featuring the history of Gallaudet Dance Club. They were exhilarated. They began telling their stories about the Gallaudet Dance Club and that the photograph brought memories back for them.

This demonstrates the success of the Gallaudet Museum's goal in preserving and illustrating stories to be passed down onto generations to come. As the Museum continues to grow and thrive - we always need your stories. *Together we will tell our story.*

Year in Review...



Gerald "Bummy" Burstein gives a thumbs up approval of the Museum.



Andy Tao and FYS students visit the Museum.



Charter Day Ribbon Cutting.



A Panoramic view of the new exhibit.



Museum staff on Opening Day.



Restoration work on the Chapel Hall roof.



President T. Alan Hurwitz, Dr. Jane Norman and Fred Weiner at the Kojo Nnamdi Show.

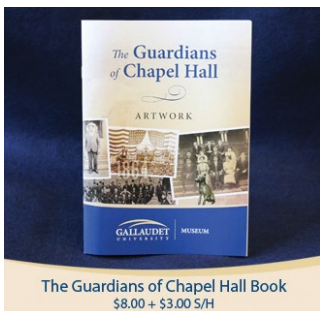


Exhibit installation begins.

Click to shop for a holiday gift from the Museum Store.



A Piece of Original Floor from Chapel Hall
\$25.00 + \$10.00 S/H



The Guardians of Chapel Hall Book
\$8.00 + \$3.00 S/H

Winter Break
Dec. 15th to Jan. 20th

Monday and Friday
10:00am to 4:00pm

Tuesday to Thursday
By appointment only

Please visit the Gate House or email Museum@gallaudet.edu for an appointment.

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The Gallaudet University Museum publishes the Our Story newsletter bi-monthly. 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.html. We update the website frequently.

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