



The History of Kansas Association of the Deaf...

(Based on Georgette Graybill's story)

Prior to the establish the Kansas Association of the Deaf in 1909, it was a custom for the deaf people of parts of Oklahoma and Kansas in the early 1900's to meet a picnic in Wichita, Kansas on or around the 4th of July every year. This was such a great event for them because, due to lack of fast transportation like we have now, they could not go far to visit friends as often as they wished. This group was called the Southern Kansas and Oklahoma Association of the Deaf. In about 1907, the Oklahoma deaf people decided to form the Oklahoma Association of the Deaf, which put an end to the Southern Kansas and Oklahoma Association of the Deaf. However, the deaf Kansans continued to hold the annual 4th of July picnic in Wichita and called themselves the Central Kansas Association of the Deaf (CKAD).

Updates: Recently it was discovered that the CKAD was originated in 1890 and closed sometime in 1927. During that time, Emmette Simpson was the president for a long time before he moved to Colorado. It was believed that he was appointed as the temporary chairman of the first KAD Convention while he served as the president of CKAD.

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The birth of the Kansas Association of the Deaf began at a picnic and annual meeting in North Riverside Park in Wichita, Kansas on July 5, 1909. Wheat fields surrounded North Riverside Park, but many shade trees of the park provided a comparatively cool spot for the celebrating group. Deaf people came by train, buggy, streetcar and by foot on a swelting day. The late William Wait drove a car, a second hand Reo. At that picnic a teacher from the Kansas School for the Deaf, J.J. Dold suggested the idea of forming Kansas Association of the Deaf. A meeting followed and Homer E. Grace (now Rev. Homer E. Grace, D.D.) made a motion to elect Emmette W. Simpson the temporary Chairman. Iona A. Tate was elected the secretary and William E. Wait, the treasurer. A committee of three, J.J. Dold, Homer Grace and Isomer P. Haworth, was formed to draw up the constitution and by-laws, which were patterned after the Constitution and By-Laws of the Illinois Association of the Deaf. The purpose of the Kansas Association of the Deaf was "to promote the physical, moral, social and educational welfare of the deaf person of Kansas, to establish home for the blind, aged and infirm deaf people of Kansas" (quoted from the charter of the Association).

The KAD was formally begun after 42 persons paid their dues of one dollar each and the election was held: The first KAD officers were J.J. Dold, President;

Iona A. Tate (Iona Simpson), First Vice-President; Edward S. Paxton, Second Vice-President; Emmette W. Simpson, Secretary; and William E. Wait, Treasurer. It was decided to hold meeting every two years.

After the meeting and picnic at North Riverside Park, the Wichita Eagle had this brief item in the July 3, 1909, issue: "The Deaf Mutes will gather in North Riverside Park Monday." The July 6, 1909, issue of the same newspaper reported: "The Deaf Mutes held their annual meeting and picnic at North Riverside Park." Very small and unimportant news, indeed, but what the newspaper did not know was that in that particular meeting, the "Deaf Mutes" started the framework for the Kansas Association of the Deaf, the organization that would help the deaf people of Kansas in various ways, and the organization that would survive many tough years to this day of the Conference.

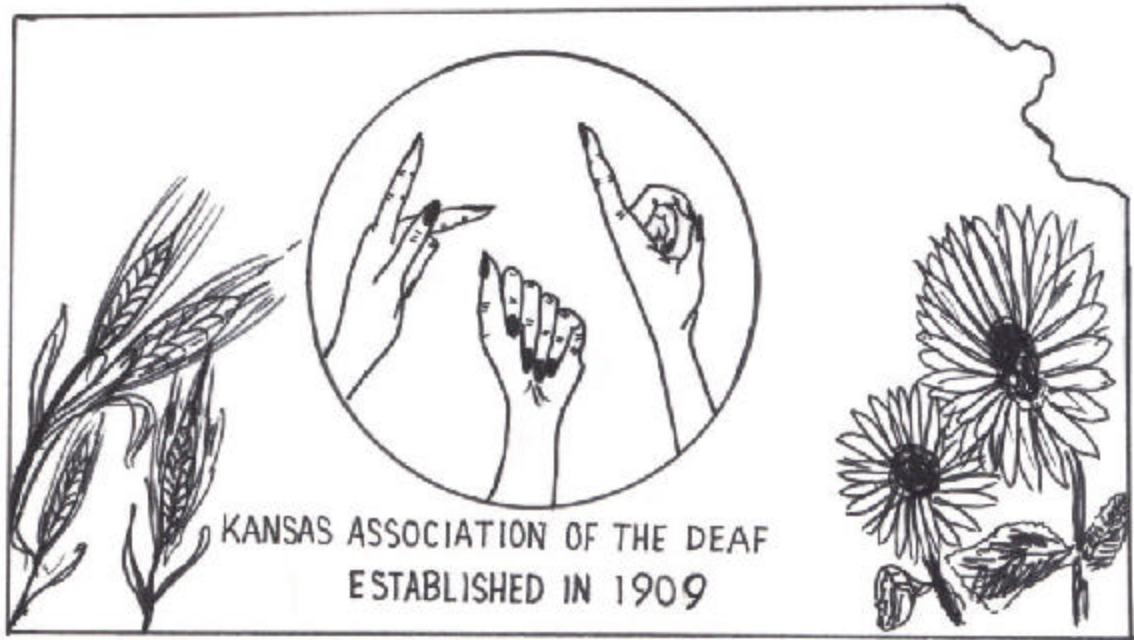
After the first convention in Wichita, all the officers got busy getting the organization incorporated on January 25, 1910.

In 1911 the KAD voted to become affiliated with the National Association of the Deaf, now in Silver Spring, Maryland. The National Association of the Deaf was established in 1880 in Cincinnati, Ohio. KAD Enrollment, Necrology, Nominations and Resolutions Committees were established.

In 1981 the Frank LaRosh family established the Frank LaRosh Scholarship for the youth. The first recipient was Lloyd High from Tonganoxie who attended the Kansas School for the Deaf for his vocational training in Salina. The first Miss Deaf Kansas Pageant was shown during the convention. Lori Winter was the first winner of the pageant.

Seven years later, Kristy Heustis was crowned the second Miss Deaf Kansas. She won the second runner up position in Miss Deaf America Pageant.

The word, "convention" was changed to "conference" in 1999.



By Rita J. Cooper