

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society

The St. Paul Society
for the Hard of Hearing
*Kristin Mapel Bloomberg
and Leah S. McLaughlin*

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Winter 2010

Volume 44, Number 4

Recollections of Cathedral Hill

A Glimpse of Old St. Paul from an Up-and-Down Duplex
on Holly Avenue

Mary Reichardt

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One of the distinguishing features of the up-and-down duplex at 444 Holly Avenue in the Cathedral Hill neighborhood is its spacious front porches that encourage conversation and reminiscing about old St. Paul on warm summer days. Photo courtesy of Mary Reichardt.

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RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 44, Number 4

Winter 2010

THE MISSION STATEMENT OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS ON DECEMBER 20, 2007:

The Ramsey County Historical Society inspires current and future generations to learn from and value their history by engaging in a diverse program of presenting, publishing and preserving.

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A Message from the Editorial Board

Sometimes, reading history fuels our imaginations. This issue contains some great moments that we can conjure up in the comfort of our armchairs. Kristin Mapel Bloomberg and Leah McLaughlin's history of the St. Paul Society for the Hard of Hearing lets us join in when a hard-of-hearing person went to the movies in St. Paul and, thanks to technology pushed by the Society, could for the first time "hear with ease the slightest whisper . . . the baby's gurgle, the villain's chuckle." We are there, too, when Norm Horton inched along drifted roads during the Armistice Day Blizzard to get home to fill the oil heater for his family, after working his shift at the Ford plant. And we share Mary Reichardt's thrill when, on purchasing her house on Holly Avenue, she received a postcard from the Dow family, the house's longtime former owners, opening up a rich vein of family and neighborhood history. Join us to read these stories, and contact our editor if you have your own to share.

Anne Cowie, Chair, Editorial Board

“Part and Parcel of a Great Cause”

The St. Paul Society for the Hard of Hearing

Kristin Mapel Bloomberg

Leah S. McLaughlin

Social attitudes toward individuals who were deaf or severely hard of hearing in nineteenth-century America often consigned this population to lives of social isolation, restricting their access to education and civic participation. Within the context of the club movement of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century that provided middle-class women and men with avenues for self-improvement and community service, deaf and hard of hearing Minnesotans found an outlet for social and civic engagement in the creation of voluntary associations designed to serve their needs. The St. Paul Society for the Hard of Hearing, which identified the association of one group of deaf and hearing impaired Minnesotans from 1936 to 1946, existed within the trajectory of an association of deaf and hard of hearing Minnesotans that spanned the twentieth century and focused on the social, educational, and civic interests of its members.

Early Social Clubs & Organizations, 1885–1936

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century saw a proliferation of social clubs and voluntary service organizations organized around a variety of interests and populations—and Minnesota’s deaf and hearing impaired population participated in this trend.¹ The Minnesota Association of the Deaf, which was established in 1885 at the first reunion of graduates of the Minnesota School for the Deaf, was the state’s earliest organization focused on promoting the social and civic welfare of deaf residents of Minnesota. As the Association’s preamble to its constitution of 1890 stated: “For the purpose of mutual aid in securing moral, intellectual, and social improvement; for the strength and usefulness which union gives; and for advocating such measures as will tend to place the deaf on a higher plane in the estimation of society at large, the deaf of Minnesota do organize themselves into an Association.”² This organization maintained a meeting schedule of biannual con-

ventions, and grew into today’s Minnesota Association for Deaf Citizens.

In addition to the Minnesota Association of the Deaf, the early years of the twentieth century saw other social clubs established, including the Improvement Club of the Minneapolis League for the Hard of Hearing.³ St. Paul established two separate organizations—the St. Paul

League for the Hard of Hearing and the Lip Readers Guild of St. Paul, which would merge in 1936 to become the St. Paul Society for the Hard of Hearing.

Few documents remain relating to the Lip Readers Guild of St. Paul. Its status, however, as the organization that merged with the St. Paul League for the Hard of Hearing merits a brief examination. The Guild’s focus was “to promote the interests and general welfare of all persons who are handicapped by impaired hearing by alleviating their social isolation through efficiently managed social activities,” and to “stimulate the art of lip-reading through regular and systematic practice in classes.” To this end, the Guild maintained clubrooms for use by members in their activities, held regular membership meetings and social activities, and provided instruction and practice in the emerging skill of lip reading. It even arranged for lip reading contests in order “to stimulate interest in the art.”⁴

The Guild viewed itself as “an asso-



Attendees at the ninth convention of the Minnesota Association of the Deaf gathered in St. Paul in 1907. This organization was one of the predecessors of the St. Paul Society for the Hard of Hearing. Photo by Blakemore & Skage. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

ciation of active, aggressive workers,” and underscored this point by noting in its constitution that “there shall be only one class of members, namely—ACTIVE.” It did allow a provision, however, for honorary membership to be bestowed upon persons who furthered the work of the Guild but were unable to become active members; it also encouraged participation in the Guild’s activities by interested non-members. As a result of its strong focus on its

ness. The League also encouraged “welfare work among the less fortunate hard of hearing and deafened,” and set as a goal work “to aid and ameliorate the social and industrial conditions of the hard of hearing.”⁶ The League also maintained its own clubrooms for use by membership activities. Membership was made up of both hearing-impaired and hearing persons. For example, a 1934 summary of its membership noted a total membership of 83; 71 deaf or hard of hearing members,

zational membership in the Minnesota State Conference of Social Work and also federated with the American Federation of Organizations for the Hard of Hearing, to which it sent delegates to its annual conference. Local club work focused on educational campaigns relating to deafness prevention and amelioration through various forms of publicity, including radio and newspaper advertisements and distributed literature. In addition, the League engaged in a number of activities designed to provide direct service to the community. To this end, the League provided speakers for educational programs, such as one for the Jefferson School PTA unit composed of mothers of hard of hearing children, and provided employment service and vocational guidance to deaf and hard of hearing persons in cooperation with the State Industrial Commission and other social service agencies. The League also purchased an audiometer, which it used to conduct hearing tests in schools across the state.⁹



Members of the St. Paul League for the Hard of Hearing gathered in 1926 for sewing and other handicraft projects. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

The Merger of the Lip Readers Guild and the League for the Hard of Hearing

In the mid-1930s the League experienced financial stress, and in the spring of 1935 its members were grateful to receive notice that it had been taken into the Community Chest of St. Paul (the forerunner to today’s United Way organization).¹⁰ However, the Community Chest expressed a concern about funding two organizations with similar and overlapping missions and programs. As a result, the Community Chest suggested that the two organizations “combine and reorganize the work for the hard of hearing on a city-wide basis, sponsored by the Community Chest.”¹¹

So it was that in the summer of 1935, representatives of the League and the Guild met with Pierce Atwater, the executive secretary of the Community Chest from 1930 to 1940, to discuss a merger of the two organizations.¹² The Lip Readers Guild sent two of their active members as their representatives, Father Byrnes and Miss Waters. Rev. James A. Byrnes, who would serve as a vice president for the merged organization, was

membership, the Guild viewed itself as an organization engaged in activities designed to mutually benefit members; for example, it planned to cooperate “in all scientific activities in the prevention of deafness.” In addition, the Guild collected and administered funds “for purposes of emergencies in connection with the needs of the unfortunate.”⁵

The St. Paul League for the Hard of Hearing, which was established in 1928, espoused goals similar to those of the Guild, including the teaching of lip reading, the promotion of “educational opportunities in practical and cultural lines,” opportunities for social interaction and other “wholesome” recreation activities, and work toward the prevention of deaf-

and 12 members who were interested in the League’s work, though not hard of hearing themselves.⁷

The League offered a variety of activities for its members, including a Tuesday Day Group that focused on a variety of social activities and a Monday evening lip-reading class, lip-reading tournaments, and variously attempted to support the organization of a “Junior Club” or “Young People’s Club” within the League, which held its own socials and lip-reading classes. The eight weekly lip-reading classes offered between the fall of 1934 and the spring of 1935 enrolled 125 students—the majority of them nonmembers.⁸

The League maintained an organi-

also the Archdiocesan superintendent of Catholic schools between 1919 and 1938 and helped establish the Diocesan teachers college in St. Paul in 1927.¹³ Miss Florence A. Waters, another vice president in the merged Society, was “a valued asset” to the work of these organizations “because of her experience with hearing-handicapped children”; she also worked to provide a uniform hearing aid for the Society.¹⁴ The only member to be identified as “totally deaf,” Waters penned an article titled “The Deaf Penitent,” which addressed the complexities of being both deaf and Catholic.¹⁵



Pierce Atwater about 1930. As executive secretary of the Community Chest in St. Paul in the 1930s, Atwater encouraged the Lip Readers Guild to merge with the League for the Hard of Hearing. In 1936 the combined organization became known as the St. Paul Society for the Hard of Hearing. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

Representative board members of the St. Paul League for the Hard of Hearing¹⁶ included C. Witt Pfeiffer, a graduate of the University of Minnesota who was dedicated to public service. Pfeiffer preceded Atwater as the first executive secretary of the Community Chest of St. Paul from 1920 to 1930. Following ten years as executive secretary of the Community Chest, Pfeiffer moved on to a similar position in Kansas City. Ten years later, he became the executive director of the welfare planning council in Los Angeles

County. After his retirement in 1956, he continued to serve as a consultant for various regional social welfare programs in Los Angeles until his death in 1960.¹⁷ Dr. J.F. Fulton, a specialist in eye and ear ailments, was one of St. Paul’s most well-known physicians as a result of practicing in the community since 1882. He was a member of the original faculty of the St. Paul Medical College and, according to his obituary, “gave freely of his medical services to charity.”¹⁸

Not surprisingly, several of the League’s board members were associated with educational institutions in St. Paul. Mrs. Ella B. Goodwin was a teacher of elementary school children and a graduate of the Mankato Teacher’s College who had early declared her intention “to make teaching her life work.”¹⁹ L.L. (Lu Lester) Everly was another teacher who served on the League’s Board. Everly taught at Winona’s State Teachers College, and in 1909 came to St. Paul as director of normal training division of St. Paul schools. He later worked as research director in the city’s public schools and in 1924 also took over directorship of special classes in the schools. For example, he began classes for gifted children and also began audiometer tests for children with defective hearing.²⁰ Dr. William J. Little was a well-known educator in St. Paul who served as director of high schools and “director of hygiene,” throughout the 1920s. He later served as principal of Johnson and Humboldt high schools.²¹

Prominent members of the League who joined Byrnes and Waters of the Guild in becoming active members in the merged Society included League secretary Laura Hough who later served as the Society’s co-chair of the Membership Committee and served on the Education Committee.²² Dr. Merritt W. Wheeler, who served as president of the League, later became a member of the board of directors for the Society. He graduated from the University of Minnesota Medical School in 1910 and was active in the Ramsey County Medical Association, the Business and Professional Men’s post of the American Legion, and the Masonic Order.²³

The Community Chest favored the merger of the Lip Readers Guild into the St. Paul League for the Hard of Hearing



In early 1936 the St. Paul Society for the Hard of Hearing moved all its activities to new club rooms in the Frontier Building on Robert Street. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

on the rationale that the League was the older and more robust organization, as well as for the fact that it was the organization that had most regularly appealed to the Community Chest for funding. What was more, the Community Chest believed “that the problem while large, is a field not sufficiently large to permit successful operation of more than one agency.”²⁴ For a short time after the merger, the new association was known as the St. Paul Chapter of the American Society for the Hard of Hearing, and the former members of the St. Paul League for the Hard of Hearing maintained a presence within that chapter as the “League Group.” This group remained in the League’s club rooms through the end of 1935 when all members of the combined organization established new club rooms at 306–310 Frontier building at Fourth and Robert streets.²⁵

The St. Paul League Changes Its Name

At the January Board of Directors meeting in 1936, the minutes noted that in order to conform to the constitution of the American Society for the Hard of Hearing, a national organization which did not allow chapters, it was necessary to change the newly merged organization’s

name to the St. Paul Society for the Hard of Hearing.²⁶ Its purpose was similar to that of the Guild and the League, and was “to promote the interests and general welfare” of all persons with impaired hearing by reducing their social isolation through participation in recreational and social activities, encouraging education in lip-reading, participating in scientific studies and other activities related to the prevention of deafness, and helping individuals procure suitable employment.²⁷

Membership and Organizational Structure

Membership in the Society was extended to all adult persons who expressed interest in the Society’s objectives after payment of a membership fee of \$1.25. Membership ranged from 46 at the time of incorporation in 1936 to 240 in 1941.²⁸ Like its predecessor organization the Guild, the Society placed an emphasis on active, dues-paying members. For example, the Society’s newsletter noted, “Membership in the Society . . . confers certain privileges which it is right that only members should enjoy. Otherwise, there would be no advantage to be gained by paying dues. Unless you are a member, you have no right to belong to any of the groups within the society or to take part in the business meetings. If you *are* a member, you may belong to any or all groups which interest you. Light, heat, a comfortable room in which to read, talk or relax, the use of the kitchen and the group hearing aid are made possible by the people who support the organization financially.”²⁹

The Society’s Board of Directors included members from both the League and the Guild, as well as new members, and was made up of both those with deafness or hearing impairment and those interested in hearing impairments.³⁰ Board members were often involved in education, medicine, or other social justice organizations.

The new Society’s executive board included President Frederic S. Power, president and general manager of the St. Paul Foundry; Vice President Byrnes; and Vice President Waters. The treasurer was Hugo V. Koch, a longtime state of Minnesota employee who worked as

an adjuster for the Minnesota Industrial Commission. He graduated from the St. Paul School of Law and later worked as the Director of Employment Service in Minnesota during World War I. A Spanish-American War veteran, he was also involved in veteran’s affairs.³¹ The Society’s first secretary was Margaret Weikert who, following her tenure as secretary with the Society, was resident director of the Children’s Preventorium (a convalescence facility for children with tuberculosis) in Shoreview on Lake Owasso. She was a graduate nurse of St. Luke’s hospital and had served with the American Red Cross during World War I. An active clubwoman, she maintained memberships in the Women’s City Club, the Meridian Club, and the Zonta Club.³² Following Weikert’s departure, Miss L. Hayes Wakefield assumed the duties of Board Secretary.

The Society’s activities were governed by four committees overseeing membership, equipment, programming, and education. The Membership Committee was originally established to collect member dues; later, its responsibilities included member recruitment and initiating collaboration with other organizations for various events and projects. In 1938, this committee secured memberships in the American Society for the Hard of Hearing for all local members. The Equipment Committee, formed in September 1936, focused on member support by maintaining the Society’s clubrooms, including decorating the club rooms with rugs, drapes, linens, and furniture; stocking the kitchen with food and silver; and managing hearing aids and related equipment used by members. In 1939, comfortable chairs and special lighting for lip-reading classes were purchased. An electric refrigerator was added to the club room in 1941.³³

With a focus on reducing the social isolation of members and building community among the Society’s membership, the Programming Committee, initiated in December 1936, organized at least four all-Society functions during the year such as a fall homecoming get-together, a Christmas party, the annual meeting, and a summer picnic, all of which were free of charge to members and prospective members. These events proved to be quite popular; for example, total attendance



The first treasurer of the newly established St. Paul Society for the Hard of Hearing was Hugo V. Koch. He had served in the Spanish-American War and at one time had been the Department Commander of the United Spanish War Veterans. Photo by Algot Anderson. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

for these activities in 1939 was 325. In 1938, the Programming Committee was changed to the Planning Committee, and its responsibilities were expanded to include planning Society-wide fundraising activities. Reflecting its complex membership, club activities beyond all-Society functions planned by the Programming Committee were divided among different member groups, which were added as membership expressed interest. Groups maintained their own rules, officers, and plan of activities which were approved by the Board of Directors.³⁴

As groups proliferated, the Society found it necessary to institute a monthly Group Officer meeting with the Board’s executive secretary and the chairs of the four standing committees—this provided an opportunity to not only relay information between Groups, but also inform individual Groups about Society activities, and in general provide avenues for membership to take responsibility for Society affairs. As the Secretary’s Report for May

1936 to May 1937 noted, “The Board of Directors are not primarily interested in the day by day social events of the Society, though they are fully aware that the social side of our work is most important. They believe the Groups are perfectly capable of planning their affairs and have no desire to interfere. They are *very* interested, however, in directing the laying of the ground work for building a strong Society and in guiding us as we attempt to broaden the scope of our activities.”³⁵

The Society’s Education Committee, formed in January of 1937, had the broadest charge in that it was responsible not only for member improvement and education, but also for community activism and education on behalf of the deaf and hearing impaired. This committee organized lip-reading classes, contacted organizations to help fund the classes, hired teachers, and registered students. In addition, the Education Committee collaborated with the Membership Committee to promote the work of the Society by creating community presentations for National Hearing Week, and in organizing the Society’s exhibition at the Minnesota State Fair and the State Conference for Social Work. Society activities for National Hearing Week included an open house as well as posters and window displays in downtown St. Paul designed to attract new members and inform the community of the work of the Society. For example, in 1940, the Society’s State Fair booth included daily lip-reading demonstrations and literature distribution, that same year, the Education Committee organized lip-reading demonstrations for student nurses, otologists, school nurses, and school teachers.³⁶

Day and Evening Groups

The two groups—the Evening Group and the Day Group, which was also known as the Tuesday Group—dominated the Society. The Tuesday Group’s membership was almost exclusively women; its purpose was expressed in three goals: “first, to provide a social outlet for people who are hard of hearing; second, to give service to others; and third, to raise money to carry on our work.” However, as one Tuesday Group secretary noted, “Our social activities are in my opinion the most



After it was established in 1935 as a part of the Roosevelt administration’s New Deal, the Works Progress Administration employed nurses who went into the St. Paul public schools and administered audiometer tests to children to determine whether any of the students had serious hearing problems or deafness. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

important for they are the basis on which we construct our other aims. The first reaction of anyone who suffers the loss of hearing is to withdraw from all social contacts and become morose and martyred, but those of us who have the good fortune to benefit from the work of the St. Paul [Society for the Hard of Hearing] know that social isolation is not necessary.”³⁷

Boasting an average attendance of 90 each month, Tuesday Group member activities included luncheons, book reviews, sewing groups, and Dime Finding parties—“for an afternoon of real hilarity you should hear how some of our members can extract a dime from an unsuspecting purse,” noted a Group report. The Day Group’s activities were scheduled around the afternoon lip-reading classes, including preparing and serving Tuesday luncheon at the Club’s rooms which, during the course of a month, might serve more than 100 people. The Day Group also sponsored teas; on one occasion it was noted that more than fifty people were present. In 1937, the Day Group sponsored a Parliamentary Law class, which although sparsely attended, was reported to be enjoyed. In order to allow more collaboration with the other groups and participation in all-Society

events, Day Group fundraisers were reduced to four per year in 1938. Picnics were a new social activity added in May 1939; invitations were also extended to members of the Evening Group. Starting in 1939, educational lectures and classes were given using the club room’s hearing aids on topics such as Home Hygiene and Care of the Sick, color harmony and balance, food preparation, and gardening. In October 1942, the Group assisted the Red Cross by sewing forty children’s night gowns, ten women’s skirts, and hemming more than 300 diapers.³⁸

Mutual aid and community support were also on the Day Group’s agenda. For example, the Group established a Friendly Fund, and routinely sent cards of sympathy to members. In addition, the officers of the Day Group acted on behalf of members who experienced quality of life issues related to hearing; for example, members were informed of changes in the sound of telephones for a particular exchange—when members reported having difficulty hearing their telephone bells, names were collected in order to inform the telephone company of their difficulty.³⁹

The Tuesday afternoon Book Review discussions held prior to the lip-reading classes were enormously popular and at-

tracted a core group of members. Topics included discussion of popular fiction such as Rose Wilder Lane's *Free Land*, and Pearl Buck's *This Proud Heart*. The group also noted their study of St. Paul author Laura Krey's *And Tell of Time*, which ranked eighth on the best-seller list of 1938 that was topped by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings's *The Yearling* and included Daphne DuMaurier's *Rebecca*.⁴⁰ Member Adele Dion, who frequented the Book Reviews and other activities sponsored by the Day Group noted their importance: "The principal attraction when I first came [to the Society] was the book reviews—and these have far exceeded all my expectations. I can't begin to tell how much I have enjoyed them. Even the lip reading classes, which did not interest me at first, I now find very interesting."⁴¹

The Evening Group began meeting on February 25, 1936, and was a coeducational group of those who were unable to meet during the day due to employment or other obligations. Following a course similar to that of the Day Group, the Evening Group's activities included Friday night suppers as well as book reviews and other social activities. In 1936, the Group reported organizing social activities that allowed members to "have a good time" while also fundraising for the Society and other community causes—these included card parties, raffles, and dances. Fundraising activities in 1939 included a barbeque, a Halloween party, a smorgasbord, vanishing parties, a Christmas pageant, and an open house. In 1940, the Group presented a Christmas program and party; admission was a donation of a toy which was later distributed by local charities. Like the Day Group, the Evening Group held lectures and educational classes on topics such as journalism, cosmetology, and hearing aids.⁴²

In the spring of 1938, the Evening Group established a Men's Club, with a goal of increasing the number of male members in the Society, which at the time of the Club's organization was about forty. Membership in the Men's Group was always lacking, however, as noted in several annual reports.⁴³ Perhaps the lack of interest by men in the Society's activities result from the fact that male members who were deaf or hearing impaired

experienced less discrimination and isolation purely because they were men. As a result, they did not need the same social support the Society provided for women.

The Evening Group also nurtured the participation of young people, initially known as "juniors," whom the Society believed were important to support. This much was noted in an article featured in the Society's newsletter that described one member's experience at a national meeting: "Our young people in the St. Paul Society have so far chosen to work with the Evening Group, but we should like them to feel that they are part of a national movement and have a definite and important work to do. One of the most interesting sessions at the Conference in Boston was that devoted to the Juniors; and it was an inspiration to see so many fine, intelligent, good looking young folk accepting their handicap as something to be taken in their stride, mingling with others, and having good times on the excursions and at the parties, though there were some among them who could not hear even with an instrument."⁴⁴ Later, the participation of young people formally expanded to include both the Day and Evening groups. Officially called the Teen-Age Group, they were affectionately known as "The Chips," which was the name claimed by the group, after agreeing "we did not want to be called 'Juniors' forever." The Chips' activities primarily consisted of assisting the Day and Evening Groups by acting as hosts or servers, submitting columns to the newsletter, and hosting holiday parties.⁴⁵

Lip-Reading Classes and Other Activities

An important objective of the Society was to "encourage lip-reading through classes."⁴⁶ Soon after the Society was established, it offered regularly scheduled lip-reading classes from December until June. Through the years, lip-reading classes were cosponsored by several state agencies, including the Works Progress Association (WPA), which included the Society's lip-reading project in their adult education program and paid the salaries of two teachers, allowing the Society to offer classes free of charge. Courses were offered in beginning, intermediate, and

advanced levels, and a high school class was added in 1941. Classes cost members \$4.00 per school year; nonmembers paid \$6.00 per school year; and individuals were allowed to audit for 25¢ per lesson. Attendance fluctuated between 132 in 1938 to 100 in 1941. Students were encouraged to enter competitions sponsored by the American Society for the Hard of Hearing, as well as the Home Folks Lip Reading Tournament and the National Lip Reading Tournament. At the end of the semester in 1941, the Education Committee decided to host a Society lip-reading contest. Building on the success of the lip-reading classes, in 1942 the Society began teaching voice-training classes for those who were hearing impaired, underscored by the rationale that once hearing is gone or limited, voices become "distorted and unnatural."⁴⁷

In addition to lip-reading and voice training, the Society engaged in a number of activities designed to connect members to the hearing world. For example, the Dramatic Club, which began meeting on January 9, 1939, performed several one-act plays each year, and in 1940, a Christmas play was presented to an outside audience of approximately 200 at the Hamline Methodist Church.⁴⁸ Another example of how the Society worked to connect members to the hearing world and integrate the deaf and hard of hearing into social activities enjoyed by hearing persons was work done to encourage St. Paul's Paramount Theater to install earphones. The Society's newsletter described their success:

When the silent movie ceased to be shown in our city theatres, many people whose hearing was not good were deprived of an important means of recreation. It was too hard to follow the action in a talkie without familiar screen aids which revealed to the eye the contents of letters or hinted at the villain's wicked designs. To understand a play which depended for its interest on the exchange of smart conversation was impossible; to sit with an intent look on one's face while everyone around roared with laughter at the wise cracks issuing from the corner of an actor's mouth was humiliating. They ceased to go or went only to the musicals, the historicals, or the films based on well known books.

For those who have given up the struggle to extract entertainment from the screen, a rare treat is in store. They may now go to St. Paul's finest cinema house, sit in a choice seat, and hear with ease the slightest whisper or sigh, the baby's gurgle, the villain's chuckle, the heel taps of the gay and sophisticated young thing. They may even have the advantage over those with normal hearing for all sounds are shut out but those recorded by the sounding device. A control enables one to suit these sounds to his own degree of hearing loss. . . . The Paramount Theater's recent installation of twenty-five phones gives the first real enjoyment of motion pictures in years.

There is no extra charge. Courteous attendants wait upon one until he is seated and has the phone adjusted. Seats are roped off so that there are always some available. Theater parties will now be possible. And OH! *What a thrill to Hear!*⁴⁹

Member Adele Dion expressed her enthusiasm for the Society's work in this area by noting, "The work the Society has been doing to induce the management of some of the theatres to procure ear-phones for the use of their patrons means much to every deafened person—he gets less from social contacts than other people and must necessarily fall back on the theater for a great part of his amusement and recreation."⁵⁰

Conclusion

In a March 1937 issue of the Society's newsletter, member Adele Dion sums up the good work of the Society beyond social activities and community activism: "There is something else which my membership in the Society has done for me," she wrote, "I was inclined to be a little bitter about my infirmity. All my friends seemed to take their keen sense of hearing so much for granted that it made me feel cheated and discriminated against; but since I have begun to realize how many people there are whose hearing is worse than mine, I am thankful for what I have and much more contented."⁵¹ But other Society members believed their work went beyond connecting with others and gaining contentment with life. Margaret E. Cooper, reporting on her participation at a Central Zone Conference for the American Society for the Hard



This 1936 photo shows a lip-reading class in St. Paul for adults who were hard of hearing. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

of Hearing, noted the call for service outlined by the conference's keynote speaker: "Reminding us that we are *normal people*—with a handicap—she cautioned us against using this handicap as an alibi for shirking responsibility either in public service or in our society activities." But more than that, Cooper expressed the sentiment felt by many who found community in the St. Paul Society for the Hard of Hearing when she concluded, "Truly, one forgets he is hard of hearing in the spiritual up-lift that comes from the realization that he is part and parcel of a great cause."⁵²

As deaf and hard of hearing Minnesotans organized through voluntary associations, they not only became more visible, but also worked to improve the problems of social isolation and community awareness of issues relating to the deaf and hearing impaired in order to better both self and society. Their success is exemplified by the fact that between May 1941 and May 1942 alone, the Society hosted more than 161 social activities—not including business meetings, classes, and committee meetings—that were attended by more than 4,260 individuals.⁵³

Wanting to create a more positive public image and emphasize hearing and open membership, in 1946 the Society changed its name to the St. Paul Hearing Society.⁵⁴

Finally, in March 1999, the organization's name was changed to Doorways to more clearly represent its goal of improving communication between hearing society and individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. Shortly after the Society's name was changed to Doorways, however, financial problems forced the organization to close its doors.⁵⁵ But what should be remembered about this association is its truly revolutionary nature—in spite of the isolating social environment of the turn of the twentieth century that promoted negative stereotypes about persons who were deaf or hard of hearing, this organization was not only able to exist, but to thrive for decades. And because of its work, this group of committed individuals succeeded in their mission of creating a supportive, socially active community in St. Paul dedicated to the interests of all who were affected by hearing loss.

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Notes

1. The Twelfth Census of the United States revealed that of the more than 85,000 deaf persons in the United States, 1,738 resided in Minnesota in 1900; nearly two-thirds of whom were born deaf or lost their hearing in childhood. Minnesotans were most likely to report their cause of deafness as a result of disease and infection; one-quarter of its deaf population reported deafness from birth; less than ten percent as a result of military service or falls and blows; and only a small minority as a result of old age. See also *The Blind and the Deaf 1900* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Commerce and Labor, 1900), 114, also pp. 99 and 100. In the United States, congenital causes of deafness were in the majority, deafness was also caused by catarrh (a form of rhinitis), scarlet fever and other infections, military service, or falls and blows. Nationally, more men experienced deafness than women.
2. *Report of Proceedings of the Second Convention of the Minnesota Association of the Deaf Held at the School for the Deaf, Faribault, Minnesota, June 25, 26, 27, 1890* (Faribault, Minn: School for the Deaf Steam Print), Minnesota Historical Society (hereinafter MHS).
3. Noted as a women's club, only a few documents survive in the collection of the Minneapolis Public Library (see collection M/A 2000.133.01).
4. Constitution and By-Laws of the Lip Readers Guild of Saint Paul, Folder, "St. Paul League for the Hard of Hearing" in Doorways Organization Records 152.F.14.4F (Box 3), MHS. Unless otherwise noted, all subsequent citations are drawn from the Doorways Organization Records.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Articles of Incorporation of the Saint Paul League for the Hard of Hearing. Folder: "St. Paul League for the Hard of Hearing 1933-1935." 152.F.14.4F (box 3), MHS.
7. Untitled document, April 5, 1935, Folder: "St. Paul League for the Hard of Hearing 1933-1935." 152.F.14.4F (box 3), MHS.
8. See the minutes of Board meetings for February 5, 1933; March 8, 1933; June 14, 1933; and March 12, 1935; as well as the untitled document of April 5, 1935, which notes 50 members and 75 nonmembers enrolled in the year's lip-reading classes. All in Folder: "St. Paul League for the Hard of Hearing 1933-1935." 152.F.14.4F (box 3), MHS.
9. See the minutes of Board meetings for April 12, 1933; May 9, 1934; March 8 1933; December 13, 1933; and May 9, 1934; as well as the untitled document of April 5, 1935. All in Folder: "St. Paul League for the Hard of Hearing 1933-1935." 152.F.14.4F (box 3), MHS.
10. See minutes of the Board meeting for May 8, 1935, Folder: "St. Paul League for the Hard of Hearing 1933-1935." 152.F.14.4F (box 3), MHS.
11. Minutes of the Board meeting for July 10, 1935, Folder: "St. Paul League for the Hard of Hearing 1933-1935." 152.F.14.4F (box 3), MHS.
12. Atwater (1897-1944), a seasoned social-work professional, taught sociology at the University of Minnesota and published *Problems of Administration in Social Work* (St. Paul: McClain & Hedman Co., 1937; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1940). Additional information about Atwater can be found in the small collection of his papers at the Minnesota Historical Society.
13. See the *St. Paul Dispatch*, January 30, 1964, p. 37 and the *Catholic Bulletin*, January 31, 1964, pp. 1, 2.
14. *St. Paul Society for the Hard of Hearing News*, September 1941. HV 2561.M69 S3 vol. 1; Secretary's Report from May 1936 to May 1937.
15. See "The Deaf Penitent," *The Priest* 12 (1956): 412-15.
16. The League's Articles of Incorporation lists fifteen members for its first Board of Directors, and includes: Mrs. Harvey Barnett, L.L. Everly, Dr. J.F. Fulton, Mrs. Ella B. Goodwin, Miss Laura M. Hough, F.T. Howes, Mrs. T.E. Jones, Dr. William J. Little, C. Witt Pfeiffer, Mrs. Marie Rhein, Dr. M.L. Stiffler, Miss Mata Westerman, Miss Mary Wheeler, Dr. Merritt W. Wheeler, and Albert Wunderlich. All were listed as residing in St. Paul. Board members were not identified as either hearing or hearing impaired. Folder, "St. Paul League for the Hard of Hearing, 1933-1935," 152.F.14.4.F (Box 3), MHS.
17. See "1st Chest Secretary, C. W. Pfeiffer, Dies," *St. Paul Dispatch*, May 6, 1960, pg. 7.
18. "Dr. J.F. Fulton Dies; Long in Practice Here," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, February 2, 1932, p. 1.
19. See "Alumni Directory, Class of 1888, Elementary Course," *Condensed Biographical Sketches of the Alumni of the Normal School, Mankato, Minn.* (Mankato, Minn.: Free Press Printing Co., 1891), MHS.
20. See the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, June 1, 1936; and the *Minneapolis Journal*, June 1, 1936, p. 9.
21. See the *St. Paul Dispatch*, November 21, 1932, p. 1; and *St. Paul Dispatch* 18 July 1946, p. 17.
22. Secretary's Report from May 1936 to May 1937; Education Committee Report, Board of Directors Minutes 1935-1938.
23. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, June 23, 1954, p. 17; Secretary's Report from May 1936 to May 1937.
24. Minutes of the Board meeting for July 10, 1935, Folder: "St. Paul League for the Hard of Hearing 1933-1935." 152.F.14.4F (box 3), MHS.
25. Minutes of the Board meeting for October 9, 1935, which report discussion on constitution and by-laws for the newly combined organization. Folder: "St. Paul League for the Hard of Hearing 1933-1935." 152.F.14.4F (box 3), MHS.
26. Minutes of the Board of Directors, January 24, 1936, Folder "Board of Directors Minutes 1935-1938" 152.F.14.2F, (box 1), MHS.
27. Articles of Incorporation of the St. Paul Society for the Hard of Hearing, folder "Articles of Incorporation." 152.F.14.2F (box 1), MHS.
28. Articles of Incorporation of the St. Paul Society for the Hard of Hearing, folder "Articles of Incorporation"; Secretary's Report from May 1939 to May 1940, and Secretary's Report from May 1940 to May 1941, Folder "Board of Directors Minutes 1939-1941." All 152.F.14.2F, (box 1), MHS.
29. *St. Paul Society for the Hard of Hearing News*, April 1936. HV 2561.M69 S3, MHS.
30. The Board of Directors for the Society included: C.H. Bigelow Jr., Dr. E.R. Bray, Rev. James A. Byrnes, Mrs. Everett Geer, Mrs. Hendri Grant, Miss Emma V.A. Jensen, Hugo V. Koch, Mrs. Gertrude Lyons, Frederic S. Power, L.A. Shedorsky, Mrs. Ethel B. Webster, Dr. Merritt Wheeler, Miss Florence A. Waters,

Notes (continued)

and Miss Margaret Weikert. Byrnes and Waters had served the Lip Readers Guild; Wheeler the St. Paul League for the Hard of Hearing. No other information on other board members' relationship to either the Guild or the League could be determined from these records. See the Articles of Incorporation for the St. Paul Society for the Hard of Hearing filed April 27, 1936, folder: "Articles of Incorporation," 152.F.14.2F (Box 1), MHS.

31. See *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, December 8, 1960, p. 10.

32. See *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, March 13, 1953, p. 9.

33. Secretary's Report from May 1937 to May 1938; Secretary's Report for January 26, 1937; Report of the Executive Secretary to the Board of Directors, February 25, 1938; Secretary's Report from May 1936 to May 1937; Secretary's Report for January 26, 1937; Secretary's Report from May 1938 to May 1939; in folder: "Board of Directors Minutes 1935–1938." Also Secretary's Report from May 1940 to May 1941, folder: "Board of Directors Minutes 1939–1941." All 152.F.14.2F (box 1), MHS.

34. Secretary's Report from May 1938 to May 1939, folder: "Board of Directors Minutes 1939–1941"; Secretary's Report for January 26, 1937; Report of the Executive Secretary to the Board of Directors, February 25, 1938; Secretary's Report from May 1937 to May 1938; in folder: "Board of Directors Minutes 1935–1938." The Programming Committee was terminated in 1939 because individual activity committees were able to more efficiently carry out the work of the Society; see Secretary's Report from May 1938 to May 1939. All 152.F.14.2F (box 1), MHS.

35. Secretary's Report from May 1936 to May 1937, folder: "Board of Directors Minutes 1935–1938." 152.F.14.2F (box 1), MHS.

36. Secretary's Report from May 1936 to May 1937; Secretary's Report for January 26, 1937; Secretary's Report from May 1936 to May 1937; in folder: "Board of Directors Minutes 1935–1938." Secretary's Report from May 1938 to May 1939; Secretary's Report from May 1939 to May 1940; Folder: "Board of Directors Minutes 1939–1941." All 152.F.14.2F (box 1), MHS.

37. Report of the Tuesday Group for the Board of Directors Meeting of January 24,

1936, folder: "Board of Directors Minutes 1935–1938." 152.F.14.2F (box 1), MHS.

38. Report of the Tuesday Group for the Board of Directors Meeting on January 24, 1936; Report of the Day Group for the Board of Directors Meeting on January 26, 1937; Report of the Chairman of the Day Group at the Annual Meeting of the St. Paul Society for the Hard of Hearing, May 3, 1938; in folder "Board of Directors Minutes 1935–1938." 152.F.14.2F (box 1). Report of the Secretary of the Day Group for the St. Paul Society for the Hard of Hearing—minutes of November 10, 1936; Folder: "Day Group, 1936–1942," 152.F.14.3B (box 2). Report of the Chairman of the Day Group at the Annual Meeting of the St. Paul Society for the Hard of Hearing, May 2, 1939; Report of the Day Group, May 7, 1940; Secretary's Report from May 1940–May 1941; in folder: "Board of Directors Minutes 1939–1941." Annual Report of the Day Group Chairman, May 5, 1942, folder "Board of Directors Minutes 1942–1945." 152.F.14.2F (box 1), MHS.

39. Report of the Secretary of the Day Group for the St. Paul Society for the Hard of Hearing—minutes of December 1, 1936 and March 1939; folder: "Day Group, 1936–1942." 152.F.14.3B, (box 2), MHS.

40. Report of the Secretary of the Day Group for the St. Paul Society for the Hard of Hearing, minutes of June 1938 and December 1938. Folder "Day Group, 1936–1942." 152.F.14.3B, (box 2), MHS.

41. *St. Paul Society for the Hard of Hearing News*, March 1937. HV 2561.M69 S3, MHS.

42. Report of the Evening Group for the Board of Directors Meeting on January 24, 1936, folder: "Board of Directors Minutes 1935–1938." 152.F.14.2F, (box 1). Report of the Secretary of the Evening Group for the St. Paul Society for the Hard of Hearing, February 5, 1937, Folder: "Evening Group, 1936–1943." 152.F.14.3B, (box 2). Annual Report of the Evening Group, May 2, 1939; Annual Report of the Evening Group, May 1939–May 1940; Annual Report of the Evening Group, May 6, 1941; folder: "Board of Directors Minutes 1939–1941." Annual Report of the Evening Group Chairman, May 1942, folder: "Board of Directors Minutes 1942–1945." 152.F.14.2F, (box 1), MHS.

43. See Report of the Executive Secretary to

the Board of Directors, February 25, 1938; also Secretary's Report from May 1937–May 1938; folder: "Board of Directors Minutes, 1935–1938." Also Annual Report of the Evening Group Chairman, May 1942, folder: "Board of Directors Minutes 1942–1945." 152.F.14.2F, (box 1), MHS.

44. *St. Paul Society for the Hard of Hearing News*, April 1937. HV 2561.M69 S3, MHS.

45. Annual Report of the Evening Group, May 1939–May 1940; Report of the Teen-Age Group, May 6, 1941. Folder: "Board of Directors Minutes 1939–1941." 152.F.14.2F, (box 1), MHS.

46. Articles of Incorporation of the St. Paul Society for the Hard of Hearing.

47. Secretary's Report from May 1936–May 1937; Report of the Education Committee [1938]; Report of the Executive Secretary to the Board of Directors for February 25, 1938; Folder: "Board of Directors Minutes 1935–1938"; also *St. Paul Society for the Hard of Hearing News*, January 1937. Secretary's Report from May 1940–May 1941; Education and Publicity Committee Report for October 10, 1941; folder: "Board of Directors Minutes 1939–1941." Secretary's Report from May 1941–May 1942, folder "Board of Directors Minutes 1942–1945." All 152.F.14.2F, (box 1), MHS.

48. Secretary's Report from May 1938–1939; Secretary's Report from May 1940–May 1941; older: "Board of Directors Minutes 1939–1941." 152.F.14.2F, (box 1), MHS.

49. *St. Paul Society for the Hard of Hearing News*, January 1937. HV 2561.M69 S3, MHS.

50. *St. Paul Society for the Hard of Hearing News*, March 1937. HV 2561.M69 S3, MHS.

51. *St. Paul Society for the Hard of Hearing News*, March 1937. HV 2561.M69 S3, MHS.

52. *St. Paul Society for the Hard of Hearing News*, July 1937. HV 2561.M69 S3, MHS.

53. Secretary's Report from May 1941 to May 1942, folder: "Board of Directors Minutes 1942–1945." 152.F.14.2F, (box 1), MHS.

54. H. Wakefield to Members, December 11, 1946, folder "Articles of Incorporation." 152.F.14.2F, (box 1), MHS.

55. "Doorways: An Inventory of Its Records at the Minnesota Historical Society," MHS.

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The Northern Pump Company produced this poster of naval guns in 1942 to promote the work that its Naval Ordnance Division did to support the war effort. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society. For more on the CCC and working at the Ford plant and Northern Pump, see Norman C. Horton's article on page 19.