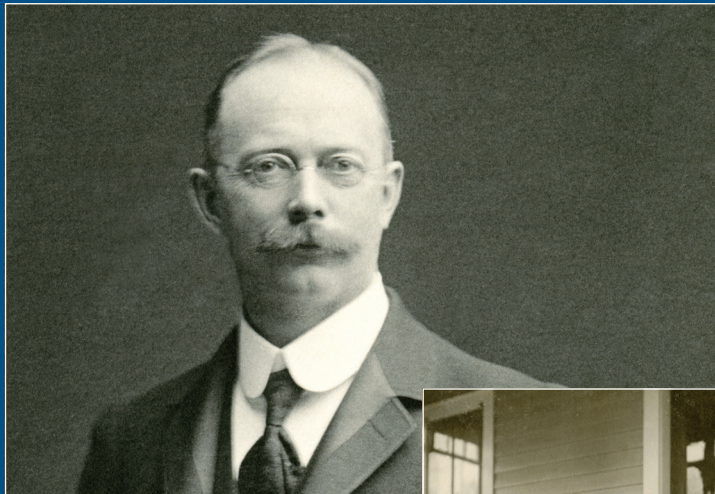




Olof Hanson  
*Conspicuous Leader*  
1862–1933



*The Weyerhaeuser Family Art Gallery  
and Exhibition Hall*

I. King Jordan Student Academic Center  
Gallaudet University

2009 2010

# *Exhibition Guide*



**The exhibition is made possible partially through the generosity of the Class of 1958 and  
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The Gallaudet University Museum and the *Olof Hanson, Conspicuous Leader, 1862-1933*  
exhibition are sponsored by the Division of Academic Affairs

Photographs and documents, provided by the Gallaudet University Archives

Photograph of Juneau, Alaska Courthouse, provided by Michael Olson Private Collection

*The Weyerhaeuser Family Art Gallery and Exhibition Hall  
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## Olof Hanson *Conspicuous Leader* 1862–1933



Born in 1862 in Fjälkinge, Sweden, Olof Hanson immigrated in 1875 with his family to Willmar, Minnesota. Hanson lost his hearing gradually and became profoundly deaf at age of 13. At the age of 16, he became a student at the Minnesota Institute for Deaf, Dumb, and Blind and graduated three years later.

In the fall of 1881, Hanson enrolled at the National Deaf-Mute College, now known as Gallaudet University. He was involved with the College's first football team, the debate team, and the bicycle squad. He graduated in 1886 as class valedictorian with a liberal arts degree. After graduation, his competitive spirit and passion led him to explore the field of architecture.

With the help of Senator William Drew Washburn (father of Cadwallader), Hanson began his architectural career with Hodgson and Son architecture firm. From his training, he received his Master of Arts degree from the National Deaf-Mute College in 1889. Shortly thereafter, Hanson traveled for ten months throughout Europe, studying at L'Ecole des Beaux Arts for five months and visiting schools for deaf children.

Hanson returned to Faribault after his travels and began teaching at the school for deaf children. Two years later, he set up his own architecture firm. It is not clear how Hanson and Agatha Tiegel met. It is possible that they met at the National Deaf-Mute College or in Faribault, Minnesota where Agatha taught at the residential school for deaf children. They were married in 1899 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. They had three hearing daughters, Alice, Marion, and Helen.



In 1901, Hanson entered into a partnership with Frank Thayer, a hearing architect in Mankato, Minnesota. During their two-year collaboration, Hanson, with his family, moved to Seattle, Washington. In his lifetime, Hanson designed over 100 buildings, including buildings for schools, stores, hotels, a courthouse, churches, private residences and a Deaf Club.

Including one of Hanson's architectural accomplishments is a dormitory for boys at Kendall School at the National Deaf-Mute College. Of Victorian character, the building is three stories tall, not including the basement. An elaborate, four-story circular turret with a pointed roof dominates the southwest side of the building. Two short but imposing chimneys crown the northeast side of the roof. In order to admit as much natural light as possible, the building has a total of 78 windows.





In the fall of 1911, College President Edward Miner Gallaudet and the Board of Trustees announced that the Kendall School dormitory for the boys would be named Dawes House in recognition of Senator Henry L. Dawes. Senator Dawes, a Republican from Massachusetts, was a member of the College's Board of Trustees from 1869 to 1903 and was an influential member of Congress who secured funds for new buildings for the College.

Shortly after college, Hanson was confirmed as an Episcopalian. His commitment to the church continued throughout his life. In 1909, he set up a bible class for the deaf. Hanson was consecrated as a deacon in 1924 and five years later, he was ordained a priest. During Hanson's time as a priest, he continued to work as a consulting landscape architect and draftsman at the University of Washington until his death.

In 1914, Gallaudet College, in recognition of his accomplishments, honored Olof Hanson with an honorary degree. The National Register of Historic Places registered four of Hanson's buildings after his death.

On September 7, 1933, Hanson was admitted to a hospital for abdominal pains and died the next day. Hanson is buried at Evergreen Memorial Park in Seattle, Washington.



Olof Hanson was a talented architect, gifted wordsmith, leader, and a tireless advocate for deaf people. He worked within the context of his times, both influenced by and influencing society's perceptions on what it meant to be a deaf person.



## **Chronology of the Life and Times of Olof Hanson**

**1862:** Olof Hanson is born in Fjälkinge, Sweden

**1864:** Abraham Lincoln, president of the United States, signs the charter for The National College for the Deaf and Dumb (now Gallaudet University).

**1865:** The American Civil War ends; the name of National College for the Deaf and Dumb changes to National Deaf-Mute College.

**1875:** Hanson immigrates to Minnesota with his family.

**1878:** Hanson enrolls at the Minnesota Institute for the Deaf, Dumb, and Blind in Faribault, Minnesota.

**1881:** Hanson enrolls at the National Deaf-Mute College in Washington D.C.

**1886:** Hanson graduates as class valedictorian from the National Deaf-Mute College.

**1888:** Agatha Tiegel enrolls at the National Deaf-Mute College.

**1889:** Hanson receives his master's degree in architectural studies from the National Deaf-Mute College.

**1889-1890:** Hanson spends ten months in Europe studying architectural styles and visiting schools for deaf children.

**1893:** Agatha Tiegel is the first woman to graduate from the National Deaf-Mute College.

**1894:** The National Deaf-Mute College is renamed Gallaudet College in honor of the Reverend Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet.

**1895:** Construction of the Kendall Boys' Dormitory (Dawes House) designed by Hanson, is completed.

**1899:** Olof Hanson and Agatha Tiegel marry in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. A few weeks later, they attend the National association of the Deaf convention in St. Paul, Minnesota.

**1900:** Olof and Agatha welcome their first daughter, Marion Fay.



**1901:** Hanson enters into a partnership with fellow architect, Frank Thayer.

**1902:** The Hanson family moves to Seattle, Washington.

**1904:** Alice, the Hanson family's second daughter is born.

**1906:** Agatha gives birth to Helen, the last daughter of the Hanson family.

**1908:** Hanson writes a letter to President Theodore Roosevelt, which helps the support of the rescinding of the Civil Service exam order.

**1910:** Hanson is elected president of the National Association of the Deaf.

**1912:** Hanson writes a letter to Mr. Carroll G. Pearse, President of the National Education Association, about using the combined method with deaf children. Hanson also wrote many letters to government and organization leaders.

**1913:** Hanson's term as National Association of the Deaf president ends.

**1914:** Hanson receives an honorary degree from Gallaudet College.

**1922:** Hanson begins studying for ministry.

**1924:** Hanson is consecrated as an Episcopalian deacon.

**1929:** Hanson is ordained as an Episcopalian priest.

**1933:** Hanson dies in Seattle, Washington.





## History of Dawes House

By Willis Mann, '67

Dawes House, which sits between Kendall Hall and Fowler Hall, is the only building on the Gallaudet University campus designed by a deaf person. In his book on the "History of the College for the Deaf," Edward Miner Gallaudet gives credit for the design of the Kendall Boys' Dormitory (later named Dawes House) to Olof Hanson of Faribault, Minnesota, a graduate of the National Deaf-Mute College, class of 1886 (1) Dawes House sits within the National Historic District formed by Gallaudet's early buildings.

The building, which was completed in 1895, was named in honor of Henry L. Dawes, a U.S. Senator from the State of Massachusetts, who was a member of Gallaudet's Board of Trustees from 1869 to 1903. Senator Dawes was instrumental in securing funds for several buildings on the Gallaudet campus, including Dawes House. According to an updated paper written by alumnae Betty Williams, '53, Dawes may have also used his considerable influence with members of the House of Representatives to get them to agree to provide funds for construction of these buildings. The decision to give the building the name Dawes House was announced by E. M. Gallaudet in a September 20, 1911 memorandum sent to the campus community in which he stated, "The Kendall School boys' dormitory will be known as Dawes House." (2)

A building of decidedly Victorian character, Dawes House bespeaks the elegance of a bygone era when extravagant style elements sometimes over-shadowed function. The building is three stories tall, not including the basement, and was originally constructed to be a dormitory for the boys from Kendall School for the Deaf, which was in close proximity to Kendall School. It continued to serve this function until 1953 when the new facilities for the Kendall School, including dormitories, were built on the west side of the campus where the Kellogg Conference Center Hotel now stands. The dormitory for female students of Kendall School was House 4 on Faculty Row.

As was done with Kendall Hall, Dawes House is situated on a northeast to southwest axis. An elaborate, four-story circular turret with a pointed roof reminiscent of ancient castles dominates the southwest side of Dawes House. Two short but imposing chimneys crown the northeast side of the roof. In order to admit as much natural light as possible, the northeast side of the building has an array of 29 windows, 8 on the first floor, 7 on the second, and 4 on the third, with 4 more providing light for the central staircase. Even the basement was designed to admit natural light and has 6 windows at ground level on the northeast side. Continuing this theme of access to natural light, Hanson incorporated 16 windows on the southeast side, 27 on the southwest side facing College Hall, of which 6 are in the basement, and then 6 more on the northwest side, which receives no sunlight at all.

Dawes House has served many different purposes since its use as a dormitory was discontinued in 1953. The building has been subdivided into offices, and over the years various departments of the University have had office space in the building. The Department of Linguistics and Interpreting, the Office of Sponsored Programs, International Center on Deafness, the Tutorial Center, the College of Professional Studies, and several other departments have all had offices in Dawes House at one time or another. And although the building is

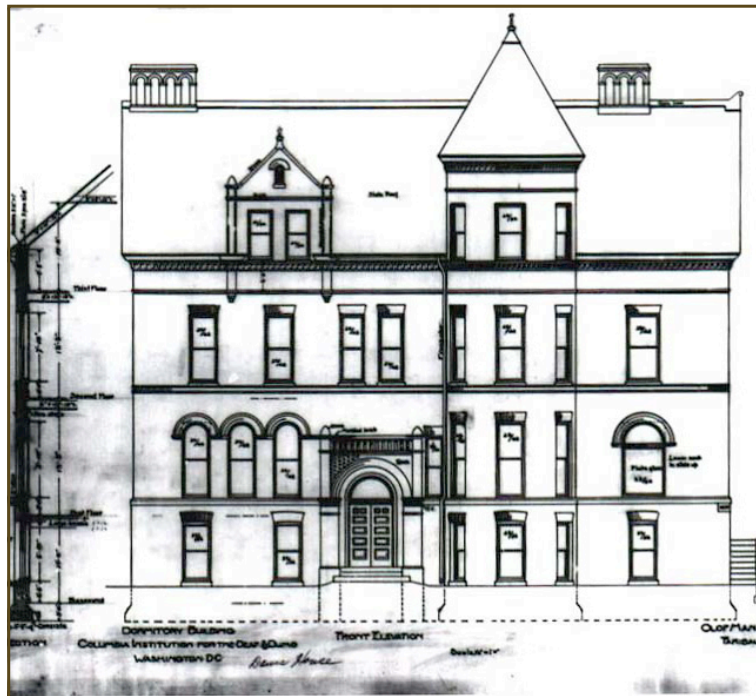




in need of renovations throughout all these comings and goings Dawes House has remained a vivid link to Gallaudet's Victorian past.

Sources:

1. Edward Miner Gallaudet, "History of the College for the Deaf," Gallaudet University Press, Washington, D.C., 1983; 189
2. Memorandum from Edward Miner Gallaudet, September 20, 1911, Gallaudet University Archives.







### **Backstory**

By Christine Katsapis, Ph.D.  
Director of Office of Sponsored Programs

The Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) of Gallaudet University primarily facilitates applications to the federal government for grant funding. When the OSP was moved to historic Dawes House, the staff was inspired. Dawes House is the only building standing on campus that was designed by a deaf individual, Olof Hanson. Alumni would visit the old dormitory rooms (with their original lockers) and share with the OSP staff stories of their family members who had lived in those rooms. The office even had a spiral staircase that was for bringing sick students up to the nurses' quarters. Those things combined with old fireplaces and original wood trim made it easy to envision how it might have been as the boy's dormitory.

Intending to honor Olof Hanson, the OSP then set about learning about his career and developing a special display of his story, art, and building designs. Scans of his original works were purchased from the GU Archives and mounted along with a picture depicting the day that Dawes House cornerstone was set. The OSP decided to donate the images to the Gallaudet University Museum to be expanded into an exhibit made available to the public.





## Bibliography

This bibliography provides resources on Olof Hanson's life and the historical and social context of his time. For a detailed list of bibliography and endnotes, please contact [museum@gallaudet.edu](mailto:museum@gallaudet.edu).

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[http://www.faribault.org/History1/Civic\\_people.htm](http://www.faribault.org/History1/Civic_people.htm).

For more information about the Charles Thompson Memorial Hall, please visit Doug Bahl’s article found at <http://www.minndeafnews.com> under the link, “Thompson Hall” or go directly to <http://minndeafnews.com/history%20of%20Thompson%20Hall.html>.

For specific interest in U.S. Special Census on Deaf Family Marriages and Hearing Relatives, 1888-1895, please visit <http://www.ancestry.com> and search for “U.S. Special Census on Deaf Family Marriages and Hearing Relatives, 1888-1895.” The database can be accessed for free at the Gallaudet University Archives.

## Collections

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# **Olof Hanson** *Conspicuous Leader* **1862–1933**

## ***Credits***

The exhibit is made possible partially through the generosity of  
the Class of 1958 and Friends  
of the Gallaudet University Museum

Photographs and Documents, provided by the Gallaudet University Archives  
Photograph of Juneau, Alaska Courthouse, provided by Michael Olson Private Collection

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*Drew Robarge*

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*Jane Norman*

## ***Acknowledgements:***

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**Mission Statement**

Gallaudet University Museum promotes and interprets the rich and complex deaf experience.

**Vision Statement**

As a premier research and informational resource center, the Gallaudet University Museum will:

- \* Provide national leadership on public presentation of deaf history and contemporary life.
- \* Collect and preserve material culture for scholarly research and for posterity in close collaboration with Gallaudet University Archives.
- \* Exhibit artifacts and ideas that inform, inspire, and challenge common understandings of deaf life from cultural, linguistic and sensory perspectives.
- \* Create public programming serving the campus, the neighborhood surrounding Gallaudet University, diverse Washington, D.C. constituencies, and local, national and international audiences.
- \* Advance the educational mission of Gallaudet University by providing opportunities for shared research and academic collaboration.

**[museum@gallaudet.edu](mailto:museum@gallaudet.edu)**

## **Gallaudet University**

Gallaudet University is the world leader in liberal education and career development for deaf and hard of hearing undergraduate students. The University enjoys an international reputation for the outstanding graduate programs it provides deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing students, as well as for the quality of the research it conducts on the history, language, culture, and other topics related to deaf people. In addition, the University's Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center serves deaf and hard of hearing children at its two demonstration schools and throughout the nation by developing, implementing, and disseminating innovative educational strategies.



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