Limited Edition

New York State School for the Deaf

An insight into the history of our school.

1875 - Present

Historical Archive created by Harry Baran and Brendan Clary

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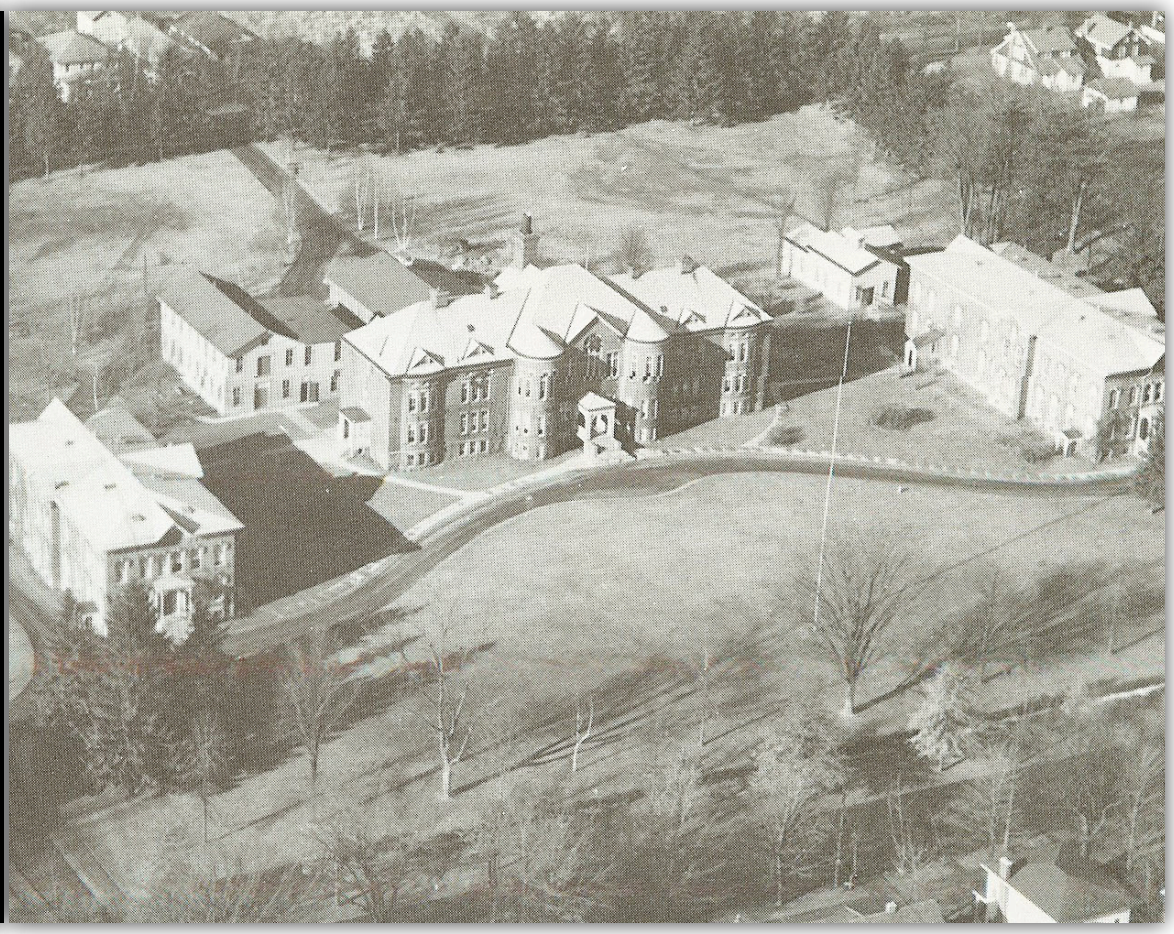
Historical Archive



In the shown picture is the main building over a century ago.

In the summer of 1874, the deaf of Central New York (CNYSD) first saw the dawn of education for the deaf when Alphonso Johnson and Thomas Gallaudet came to Rome, proposed to establish a school for the deaf and succeeded in getting prominent Romans interested in their undertaking. It was the signal for a series of great deeds, which materialized into one of the nation's model schools for the deaf. Over one 100 years old. Long enough to watch the school grow away from you even if you stood in the middle of it. Yet the incredible new buildings and facilities continued to pop up on the Madison and Turin streets campus for all to see. NYSSD of today is not CNYSD that was, even though the Vocational Building and tall pine trees still stand as symbols of the not forgotten past, which after all, precluded the living present.

1875-1876

Alphonso Johnson, a deaf man, educated at the New York Institution for the Deaf, and later a teacher there, was the person to whom the New York State School for the Deaf owes its inception. Dr. Thomas Gallaudet, the oldest son of Thomas H. Gallaudet, Edward Huntington, John Jervis, John Bissell, and Bloomfield Beach aided him in establishing the school. He was made the first principal, but after a year he resigned as principal and became an instructor. It was felt that public relations problems were too difficult for a deaf man to solve. He remained on the staff until his retirement in 1883.

Beginning of NYSSD
The Plans...

515 N. Madison Street

The first steps toward the organization of this school were taken in the summer of 1874, when Alphonso Johnson, a deaf man, a graduate of the New York Institution of the Deaf and a teacher there for some time, came to Rome and proposed to establish a school. Dr. Thomas Gallaudet who later became a trustee of the school, helped Mr. Johnson in getting a group of Rome businessmen interested in establishing a school for the deaf. Among them were Edward Huntington, John B. Jervis, John G. Bissell and Bloomfield J. Beach. After eight months of planning, on March 22, 1875, the initial building, a rented house, No. 107 Madison Street (now 515 N. Madison Street) was formally opened, with attendance of four pupils. Mr. Johnson was both principal and teacher. The four students were Mather Shepherd from Lewis County, NY, Virginia Minnoe and Napoleon Emio, both of Clayton, NY and Minnie Wolfe of Rome, NY. September 1, 1875 commenced what maybe be called the first academic year of school, then called the Central New York Institution for Deaf- Mutes with Mr. Johnson as principal, Fort Lewis Seliney as instructor and a board of 15 trustees.

Within a few years all the buildings surrounding 107 Madison Street were leased for the purpose of accommodation. Owing to the constant increase of pupils, little relief was obtained by this additional room. (The enrollment had reached 100 pupils by 1880). A plot of land, about 6 1/2 acres, further up on Madison Street was then given to the Institution by Edward Huntington, John B. Jervis, and Benjamin N. Huntington and in 1878 ground was broken for the first of a cluster of permanent buildings especially adapted to the needs of the Institution. The Boy's Building was completed in 1879 and Girl's Building in 1881.

On September 1, 1876, Edward Beverly Nelson. B.A, a graduate of Harvard, and for several years a teacher in the New York Institution, assumed the principalship.

He came to Rome to become the school's second principal upon the resignation of Alphonso Johnson. His service to the school ended in 1906 when he retired. His 30 years of principalship at the school is still the longest ever. The school's football teams in the 1880s and 1890s were named after him, or were known as "Nelson Eleven,"

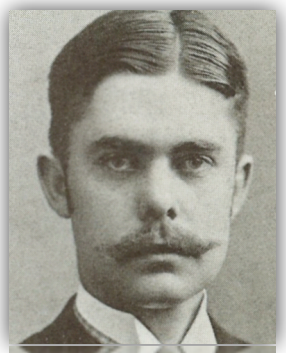
Two-Story Shop Building Circa 1881

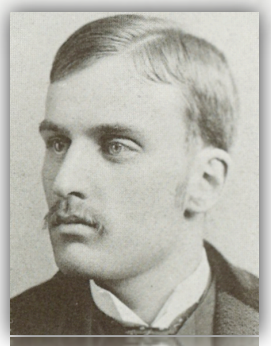
First Eight Students To Attend NYSSD

Minnie Wolfe

Maria Cramer

May Williams


William Norton


George Stewart

Grace Rogers

Cora Shutts

W. Wright

First Faculty To Teach At NYSSD

Left to Right, First Row: W.M. Chamberlain (deaf), Miss Cornelia Russ (hearing), Principal E.B. Nelson (hearing), Miss Van Tassill (hearing), Fort Lewis Seliney (deaf). Back Row: Jonathan Eddy (deaf), Lewis Benedict (hearing), Prudence Burchard (hearing), Thomas Jewell (deaf), Albert Knight (deaf) and Edwin Store(deaf).

Gallaudet Hall

In 1887, through the beneficence of the legislature of New York State, a appropriation was granted to the Institution of $40,000 for the construction of the main building, later named Gallaudet Hall, a hospital, a boiler-house, and a principal's residence. On the 7th of January, 1890, the main building was occupied for the first time.

Gallaudet Hall contained:

- **Classrooms on the first and second floors,**
- **A Chapel Hall with stage at the top middle floor,**
- **The huge Student Dining Room, middle ground floor,**
- **A fully-equipped Dental Office, second floor,**
- **A Staff Library, second floor,**
- **Faculty Dining Room, second floor,**
- **The School Kitchen, ground floor at rear,**
- **The Dishwashing Room, ground floor.**

Boiler-House
Circa 1891

Hospital
Circa 1890

Superintendent's Residence
Circa 1892

Gallaudet Hall

Vocational Building (Circa 1939)

The Vocational Building, completed in 1939, includes quarters for trades training, offices and classrooms. It is the only old building to survive J. Jay Farman's building program between 1968 and 1971. The new administration high school wing of the new central complex adjoins the front of this building.

General Purpose Building

This building was completed in 1960 and provided dining rooms, basketball courts, dressing quarters for boys and girls, a boiler room, and service facilities. It was encompassed in the gym elementary classroom wing of the new complex.

Classes from the Past

Schoolhouse Class (1890)

Printing Class (1890)

Cooking Class (1910)

Manual Construction (1912)

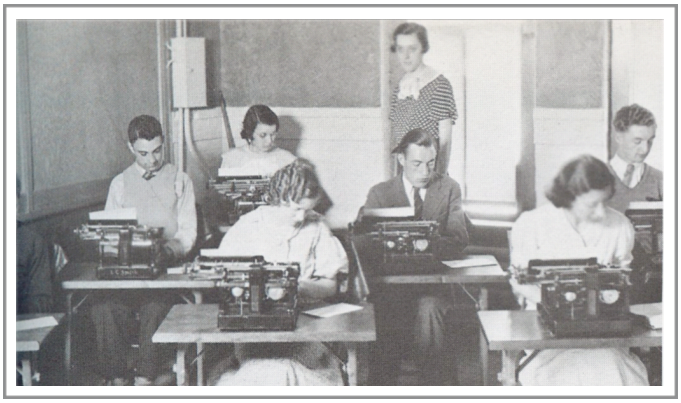
Primary Class (1927)

Language Class (1930)

P.E. Class (1922)

Social Studies (1932)

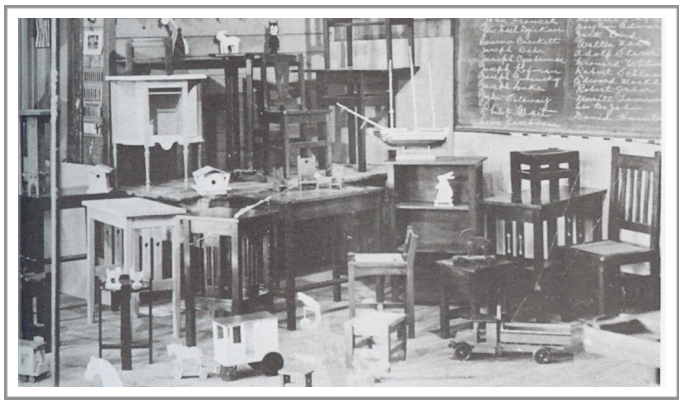
Classes from the Past



Business Education (1932)

Speech Class (1936)

Nursery Class (1938)



Carpenter Class

Science Class (1947)

Student Body Throughout the Years

1896

1899

1907

Student Body Throughout the Years

1919

1935

1964

Administrators of NYSSD
1900's

The names of the Trustees for the first year of the school's existence were: Willey J.P. Kingsley, B.W. Williams, B. Huntington Wright, Donald P. McHarg, Bloomfield G. Beach, Thomas Gallaudet, Edward Huntington, Thomas H. Stryker, Edward Comstock, James H. Searles, John G. Bissell, Augustus C. Kessinger, A. Sanford, E.B. Armstrong and Alfred Ethridge.

On the first of September, 1906, Edward Beverly Nelson retired as principal and was succeeded by Edward Perkins Clarke, M.S., a graduate of Tufts College, and the Normal Department of Gallaudet College, Washington, D.C.

Edward P. Clarke (1906-1909).

Upon his graduation from Tufts College and the Normal Department of Gallaudet College, he taught for three years at the Utah School for the Deaf and seven years at the New York Institution for the Deaf in Washington Heights, New York. He came to Rome to assume the principalship from which he retired in 1909.

On the first of August, 1909, Mr. Clarke retired as principal and was succeeded by Elbert A. Gruver, M.A., a graduate of Pennsylvania College and for 11 years principal of the Institution for the Improved Instruction of Deaf-Mutes, in Lexington Avenue, New York City.

Elbert A. Gruver (1909-1919)

A graduate of Gettysburg College, Mr. Gruver was a teacher at the Mt. Airy School for the Deaf in Philadelphia for six years and then for 11 years principal of the Instruction of Deaf Mutes. He came to Rome to become the school's principal in 1909. In 1919 he resigned from the Rome position to accept the superintendency at the Iowa School for the Deaf. In 1925, he headed the Mt. Airy School where he retired in 1936.

On August 1, 1919 he was succeeded by Otis Allen Betts, a teacher of the advanced class of the Rome School for 13 years, with additional experience of 14 years as teacher at the North Carolina School for the Deaf (CSSD).

Otis A. Betts (1919-1936).

Through his deaf cousin, Dr. E. Mck. Mr. Goodwin, Betts became interested in education of the deaf and taught at North Carolina School for the deaf at Morganton for 14 years. He came to Rome as a teacher in 1903, and in 1919 was appointed to the principalship upon the resignation of Mr. Gruver. After his retirement in 1936, he returned to North Carolina to serve on the Board of Directors for the North Carolina School for the Deaf.

In 1931, the name of the school was changed to the Central New York School for the Deaf (CNYSD). On August 1, 1936, Mr. Betts retired as principal of the school and was succeeded by Mr. John Butler Hague, who at the time was Chief of the Special School's Bureau State Education Department in Albany, New York.

Administrators of NYSSD
1919-1978

John B. Hague (1936-1946)

A graduate of Cornell University, he taught in the elementary school system in New York City from 1914 to 1919. In 1924, he became chief of the Special School Bureau of the State Department. During these years, he supervised the education of the Indians, the New York State Merchant Maine Academy, and the education of the deaf and the blind throughout the state. He left the position to become the school's sixth principal. He retired in 1946 and remained in Rome..

After Mr. Hague retired on December 20, 1946 he was succeeded by Mr. Fred L. Sparks, who was appointed as acting principal. Then a month later the position of principal was changed to that of superintendent and Mr. Sparks was appointed to that position, which he held until his resignation in 1961.

Fred L. Sparks (1947-1961)

Mr. Sparks was a graduate of Clemson College, Gallaudet College and Penn State College. He also served as vocational principal of the West Virginia School for the Deaf. During World War II, he served as regimental executive officer for the United States Army in Italy. In 1946, at the time of his separation from service, he was appointed vice-principal of the school. In 1961 he resigned as superintendent to accept a similar position at the Georgia School for the Deaf. He later went to the American School for the Deaf as a teacher.

Mr. Charles G. Rawlings, a former principal at the school, was named superintendent in 1961. The school functioned continuously from 1875 to 1963 as a private school, managed and controlled by a corporate body whose powers were vested in a board of trustees. The school was additionally supported by the State of New York.

Charles G. Rawlings (1961-1965)

Rawlings, a graduate of Illinois College, University of Massachusetts, Clarke School's training Program, and Gallaudet College's Normal Department, he taught at New Jersey and Kendall Schools for the Deaf. He later became a faculty member of the Teacher Training Division at Gallaudet College. In 1939 he was made principal of Indiana School for the Deaf and in 1953 came to Rome, New York to hold a similar position at the school.

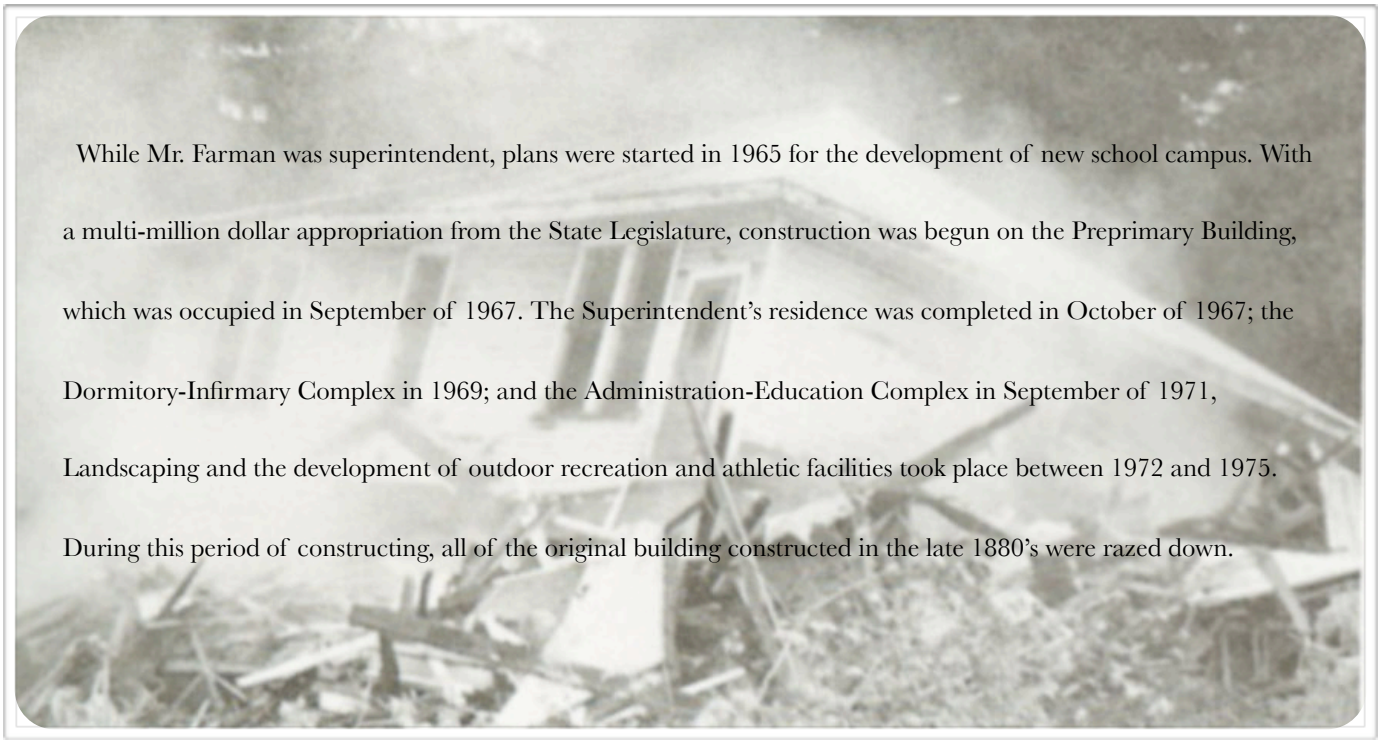
In 1957 he returned to his old position at the Indiana School for the Deaf. Upon his resignation from the Indiana School for the Deaf, he returned to Rome to head the school where he retired in 1965.

Development of New Campus
Construction Begins!

The school became a state facility on July 1, 1963, by act of the State Legislature with powers of control transferred from the corporation to the jurisdiction of the State Education Department and the Board of Regents. At the time the name of the school was changed from Central New York State School for Deaf-Mutes to the New York State School for the Deaf (NYSSD). In May of 1965, Mr. Rawlings resigned as Superintendent. In August of that year, J. Jay Farman, who had been serving as Headmaster of the Austine School, which was located in Brattleboro, Vermont was appointed Superintendent of NYSSD.

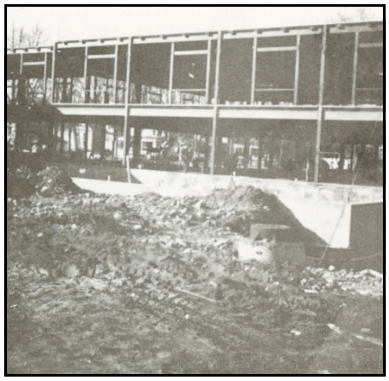
J. Jay Farman (1965-1978)

A native of Wisconsin, he succeeded Mr. Rawlings in 1965. He was trained to teach the deaf at the University of Texas after completing college work at Miami University. He went to Oregon as a teacher in 1952, and in 1954 he assumed a similar position in Michigan School for the Deaf. He was also an instructor in special education at Northern Michigan University. In 1958, he was elected Headmaster of the Austine School for the Deaf in Brattleboro, Vermont where he remained for seven years before coming to Rome in 1965. He resigned as Superintendent in 1978.



While Mr. Farman was superintendent, plans were started in 1965 for the development of new school campus. With a multi-million dollar appropriation from the State Legislature, construction was begun on the Preprimary Building, which was occupied in September of 1967. The Superintendent's residence was completed in October of 1967; the Dormitory-Infirmary Complex in 1969; and the Administration-Education Complex in September of 1971, Landscaping and the development of outdoor recreation and athletic facilities took place between 1972 and 1975. During this period of constructing, all of the original building constructed in the late 1880's were razed down.

Development of New Campus
Construction Begins!



Except for the vocational building, the last of these old buildings shown on this page was torn in 1971, after the bulldozers and construction crews first came to the campus in 1969 New buildings were constructed as old ones were torn down, and not a day of school was lost. The pictures show both demolition and construction activities.

The buildings and structures shown on this page are the school track, front of the Administration/Classroom portion of the complex, Playground, back of Student's Dormitory, Campus Company Building, Terrace (located near library), and Superintendent's Residence.

Administrators of NYSSD
1978-December 2005

Mr. Andrew Rossetti

Dr. Andrew Rossetti served as acting superintendent until the appointment of Mr. Robert Seibold. After the resignation of Seibold, he again served as acting superintendent until 1981.

Mr. Seibold

Mr. Seibold was appointed as superintendent in 1978 and he served for two years. He resigned in 1980.

Mr. Cronlund

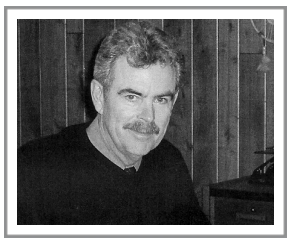
On June 15, 1981 Mr. Philip E. Cronlund was appointed as superintendent. He went on to serve for total of 18 years until his retirement in August of 1999.

Mr. Chapman

In August of 1999, after Mr. Cronlund's retirement, Head of the Secondary Educational Department, Mr. Dana Chapman, served in the position of acting superintendent.

Ms. Clark

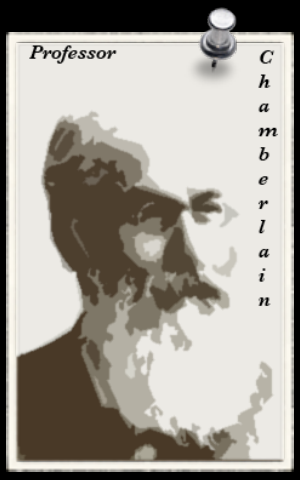
In August 2000, Ms. Nancy Clark was appointed to the position of superintendent and served until August 2004. Ms. Clark made NYSSD history being the first female Superintendent at New York State School for the Deaf.



Mr. Carey

Mr. Greg Carey was appointed a interim superintendent in August 2004. He went on to serve for one year.

New York State School for the Deaf
Pictures From The Past



We are a school to be modeled after for educating students with varied needs.

— *Superintendent Carriann Ray*

Superintendent Carriann Ray

Presently, The New York State School for the Deaf is located at 401 Turin Street in Rome, New York. It is located on a beautiful 17-acre campus that is a state operated school meeting all educational requirements of the Board of Regents. Ms. Carriann Ray was appointed to the position of superintendent on December 2005 and is currently the school's superintendent. NYSSD serves students with a severe to profound hearing loss. The service area includes approximately 31 counties and 110 school districts in central and northern New York State.

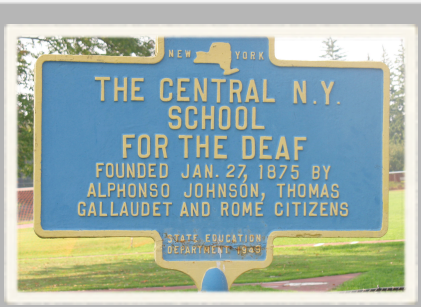
Because of the large geographic area, about 75 percent of the student body is residential, living on campus in modern dormitories four nights a week, Monday through Thursday, returning home each weekend. The school buildings are up-to-date and provide a pleasant and attractive campus for students and visitors to enjoy. The campus includes modern classrooms, residential facilities, spacious athletic fields, a library, gymnasium, and swimming pool.

Presently
The New York State School for the Deaf

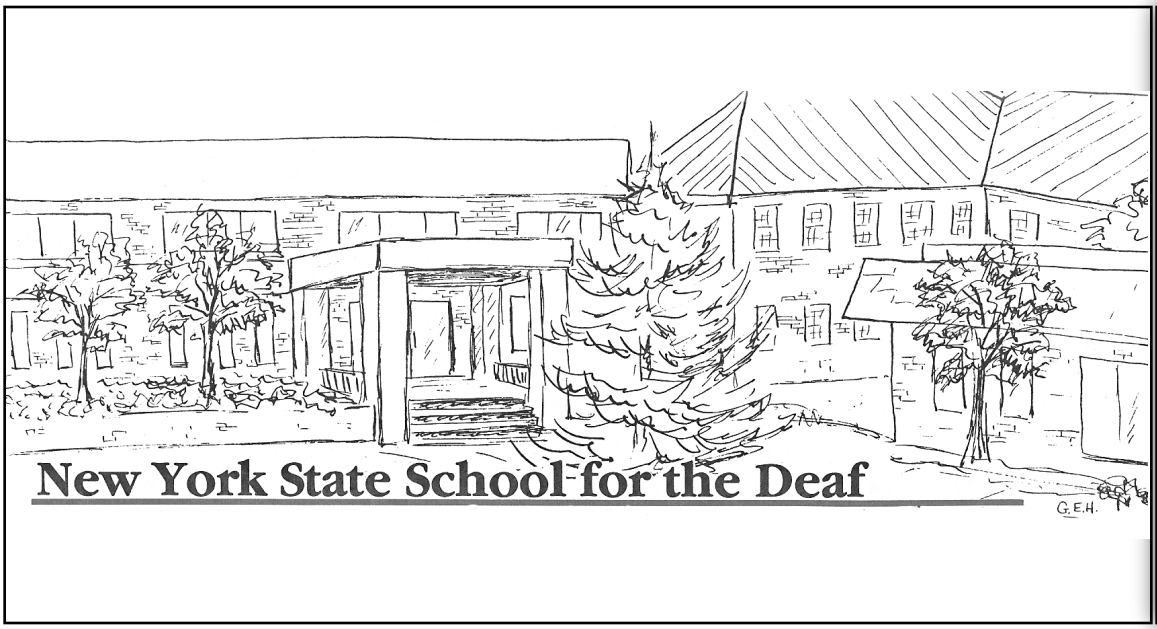
Today, students and staff at the New York State School for the Deaf in Rome share in a wealth of experiences and opportunities.

Today, students and staff at the New York State School for the Deaf in Rome, share in a wealth of experiences and opportunities. From our family focused home-based parent and deaf infant program, through graduation from our Career Prep, BOCES, and College Prep programs; NYSSD strives to meet the educational, social, emotional, and developmental needs of deaf children from birth through age 21. Support services including audiology, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, counseling, and special needs instruction complement our full preschool, elementary, middle, and high school programs.

Students participate in school and community events that bring together deaf and hearing children in sports, music, drama, and service projects. Our residential and after school programs, provide our deaf children with rich and varied opportunities to grow as individuals and be part of a loving, caring community. Opportunities such as the Optimist Club, the Academic Bowl, and the Youth Education Summit Program take our students' education far beyond the walls of our school. Our summer enrichment program offers challenging experiences well exceeding the scope of the traditional classroom. NYSSD is proud of its long heritage, looks forward to guiding our deaf children to the future, and watching our deaf graduates lead others forward. As our school motto states: "Today's' Learners; Tomorrow's Leaders." We shall work together to maintain an environment, that based on excellence and team work, strives to put achievement and independence within the reach of each deaf child.



Historical Archive



Limited Edition

This limited edition, historical archive is a collection of history photos and information found in the 1975 NYSSD yearbook. There was a shortage of these yearbooks, which recorded NYSSD's 100th anniversary. They are the only yearbook with historical information about our school. The only copies remaining have been kept protected and have not been made available to the public. For this reason, we have taken the liberty of creating a chronicle of the collection of photos and historical information take and written from past authors found from this yearbook.

This archive was first designed to be a student project for a technology course taught here at school under staff advisement. It was later made to inform readers about our school history and be used to document it and be shared publicly. Brendan and I hope that those of you who read it will be more informed about NYSSD's long legacy and its continuous dedication to continually grow and provide both leadership and education to our deaf students.

To: