

# George Veditz

(1861-1937)



# Early Life



George Veditz was an extraordinary human being.

- He was an exceptional student, revered teacher, sign language advocate, employment activist, writer, filmmaker, and chess player.
- He spent the first years of his life just like any other hearing boy might.
- He was the son of German-speaking immigrants.
- George started out in Baltimore, Maryland.
- Although fluent in both English and German, it is sign language that would eventually become a lifelong passion for George.
- This likely would not have happened if George had not become Deaf following a bout with scarlet fever at age 8.



# Early Life (Continued)

- George's deafness did not delay or impede his education.
- Learning with a private tutor from age 8-12, he eventually ended up attending the Maryland School for the Deaf (MSD).
- This institution would play a significant role in George's life.
- In the late 1800s MSD was more of a training site for future shoemakers than an educational institution, but George gained additional experience as the principal's private secretary and bookkeeper.
- This did not completely quench George's thirst for education, and upon graduation he desired to attend Gallaudet University.
- Unfortunately, he could not afford college and temporarily ended up working in the MSD printing office.
- Thankfully, George was able to enroll at Gallaudet a few years later, and within four he graduated as valedictorian of his class.
- Still, George was not done there! He later went on to earn a master's degree at Gallaudet as well.



# George's Time as a

## Teacher

- Apparently George did not have enough of education as a student, because he spent several years of his life as a teacher.
- George taught at the Maryland School for the Deaf for four years, but spent most of his time as an educator in Colorado.
- After moving to Colorado Springs, George wore two hats at the Colorado School for the Deaf, teacher and accountant.
- He remained at CDE (now CSDB, Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind) for seventeen years.
- During that time, George founded the Colorado Association of the Deaf.





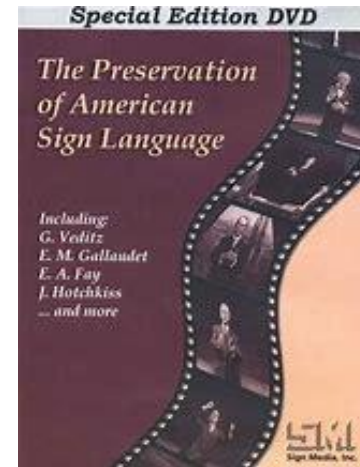
# George's love for Chess

- Meanwhile, George enjoyed the game of chess.
- In fact, one of his adversaries, a woman named Mary Bigler, became his wife!
- The two continued to challenge each other in chess throughout their lifetimes and even competed against top world players.



# George's Film

- One of the things George Veditz is most known for is a historically significant film he created called, “Preservation of Sign Language” in 1913.
- This film later became part of the National Film Registry of the Library of Congress.
- As the title suggests, George cared deeply about preserving sign language and worked with the National Association of the Deaf Motion Picture Fund Committee to capture it on film.
- There was a push for oralism at the time, which George opposed, and his subsequent quest to record sign language resulted in a vital contribution to Deaf History.



# George's change in the Deaf Community

- George also committed his energies to justice for Deaf workers after observing examples of job discrimination.
- In addition to the right to use sign language, George felt strongly about a Deaf individual having fair employment opportunities.
- George tackled this issue by lobbying to change the rule that Deaf people could not take the civil service exam.
- After a two-year push, including pleas to President Teddy Roosevelt, the ban was repealed.
- When Taft became president he followed suit by lifting restrictions on positions and requiring departments to provide a list of openings for Deaf applicants.
- This was a positive and unifying event for the Deaf Community.



# George's Other Accomplishments

- Anyone would be considered as having an illustrious life with all of the above, but George Veditz had many other accomplishments as well.
- He founded both the Maryland and Colorado School for the Deaf Alumni Associations, served as President of the National Association of the Deaf and was involved in the World Congress of the Deaf (in conjunction with the World's Fair).
- George was also a busy writer, contributing articles to *Deaf American*, *Deaf Mute's Journal* and other publications.
- George served on the other side of the writer's life as well, doing stints as editor-in-chief for one magazine in Atlanta, and another in Chicago.





# Conclusion

Above all, George Veditz's commitment to supporting sign language is the most deeply felt and speaks directly to the goals of ASLdeafined! We agree with George when he said,

“It is my hope that we all will love and guard our beautiful sign language.”



As long as we have deaf people on earth, we will have signs. And as long as we have our films, we can preserve signs in their old purity. It is my hope that we will all love and guard our beautiful sign language as the noblest gift God has given to deaf people.

— George Veditz —

AZ QUOTES

## GEORGE W. VEDITZ DIES AT AGE OF 75

International Leader Among  
Deaf, Chess Champion;  
Led Active, Useful Life

George W. Veditz, one of the city's most widely known residents and a frequent contributor to the "Open Parliament" columns of The Gazette, died yesterday at his residence. Funeral arrangements, which are being made at the Law Building, will be announced later.

Mr. Veditz was born August 13, 1851, in Middleburg, Md., with a wife of Mrs. M. Veditz, and six children. He was a member of the Episcopal Church and died from malaria fever at the age of 24 years. When 23 years old he returned to the Maryland school at Frederick, Md., with the intention of learning the shorthand system, and learned enough of that trade in his first year at school to provide his sister with blind-made slippers, so he was in later years.

From his education to his seventeenth year he served as bookkeeper and secretary of the Maryland school. At the age of 17 he was ready to enter Calhoun college.

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Continued from Page Two

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In 1912 he founded the Colorado Association of the Deaf and presided over its convocations until the time of his death. He was secretary of the National Association of the Deaf, having become interested in that body through the time he spent in Colorado Springs.

Mr. Veditz was a skilled chess player and served for many years as secretary-treasurer of the Omaha State Chess club and was the only member of the club to be named the only Colorado player to defeat Frank Marshall, United States chess champion, at that time as played in a group of 24 players.

Always a member of Calhoun college.

In 1876, at a convocation in St. Louis, Mo., Veditz was elected president of the National Association and World Congress of the Deaf.

In 1878 he resigned as teacher of the Colorado school for the Deaf and blind but continued for the next three years as the principal in the post-convocation.

In 1879 he was elected for a second term as president of the National Association and World Congress of the Deaf and immediately launched a campaign against closing the deaf with the criminal and insane in state service institutions. About that time he started a newspaper, now published in Omaha, Neb., to have the purpose of educating the deaf removed from the state service institutions and to the practical campaign of 1910 he applied to William Howard Taft and William Jennings Bryan for a statement and judge in the matter. He was named from that time on to work nationally and actively in the interests of the deaf.

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# Information for this biography comes from...

Deaf People Web site: <http://deafpeople.com>

Gallaudet University Web site: <https://www.gallaudet.edu>

National Association of the Deaf Web site: <https://www.nad.org/>