

Our First Graduate Passes: Rosa Hampden Halpen (1861-1939). (1939, May).
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ROSA HAMPDEN HALPEN

1861 — 1939

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OUR FIRST GRADUATE PASSES

It is our sad duty to announce the death of Rosa Hampden Halpen on April 30th. Failing vitality brought on by the ripe age of seventy-eight years hastened the end, and she died peacefully, befitting the admirable life she had lived in our midst. The funeral service was conducted at Timmerman's funeral parlor in Rochester, a reader from the Christian Science Church officiating with assistance from Miss Ruth Todd as interpreter. Many of her friends, both old and young, were in attendance to pay their last tribute to one whom they had loved and respected so deeply. Miss Halpen's sole survivors are a sister, Mrs. Jennie McPherson of Washington, D. C., and a brother William Halpen of Rochester.

Rosa Halpen was born in South Grove, Illinois, of parents who came direct from Scotland. She became deaf at the age of eleven years due to an attack of spinal meningitis, after which she was sent to the Fanwood School in New York. While there, she came under the teaching of Dr. Westervelt and Miss Harriet Hamilton. With the founding of a school for the deaf in Rochester by Dr. Westervelt in 1876, she was transferred here and remained until her graduation. Rosa Halpen was a pupil of unusual scholastic attainments, and graduated here with honors in 1884. In 1887 Galiudet College became a co-educational institution and the following year she enrolled there as a student, taking a special course which covered two years, after which she was called back to teach in our primary department. For thirty years she was a faithful and conscientious teacher with a sympathetic insight into the mental needs of the small deaf child. Many alumni today remember her gratefully not so much for the arithmetic and language they learned from her as for her understanding of them and her inspirational influence.

Loyal to the fine traditions of our school, Rosa Halpen personified to the very last its ideals of Christian refinement and culture. Her mind was clear and keen, and her powers as a conversationalist were unailing in range of knowledge. Her memory of classic allusions and fund of anecdotes were a source of wonder to us all who also were charmed by the fluency of her English, as well as her quiet dignity and delicious sense of humor.

Four years ago when the subject of writing a history of the school was discussed, Rosa Halpen was the choice of the alumni for the task. With infinite pains she carried out this labor of love. One cannot read the history without recognizing it as a writing of high merit. It will long live as an epitome of her scholarly mind.