

**Sarah Taylor Adams  
(1869-1894)**

Sarah Taylor Adams lived a short life, but one in which her art and her Deaf school community played a large part. Sarah was born on April 7, 1869 likely in Hannibal, NY. During her toddlerhood, her family lived for a while in New Berlin, NY, but later settled in Dunkirk where her father was a minister<sup>1</sup>. Sarah's family consisted of her father, Rev. Edward Payson Adams, her mother, Adalaide Stanley Adams, her younger brother (Charles) and younger sister (Emma). Sarah is recorded to have become Deaf at age three from spinal meningitis and entered the Western New York School (more recently, the Rochester School for the Deaf, RSD) in late 1877 at the age of six.<sup>2</sup>



Sarah Adams<sup>3</sup>

FAMILY AND SCHOOL

From a young age, Sarah was an artist. For many years, RSD's school paper was a *daily* newspaper and most entries about Sarah during her school years include reports of her family outings as well as her making drawings and sketches. She frequently is described as making cards and portrait sketches as well as teaching material charts. While her parents lived in Dunkirk, which is about 115 miles from Rochester, both her grandfather and uncle, Rev. Myron Adams lived in Rochester<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> In later years, the Adams Memorial Church in Dunkirk, NY was named in honor of Sarah's father. It became the Adams Art Gallery, but was closed in 2013/2014.

[[www.observertoday.com/news/page-one/2017/04/academic-revival/](http://www.observertoday.com/news/page-one/2017/04/academic-revival/)]

<sup>2</sup> Most of this information is from the Rochester School for the Deaf State/County records. Because she entered late in the year, her name was not recorded in the enrollment book. Thanks to the staff at the Rochester School for the Deaf Archives for helping find this information.

<sup>3</sup> Photograph appears in Story-Sermons of Les Miserables (1895)

<sup>4</sup> The first excerpt is from April 5, 1881 in the *Rochester Daily Paper for Our Little People* (later the *Rochester Advocate* and hereafter noted in this document as the *Rochester Advocate*). The second is from June 14, 1881.

Sarah Adams invited Annie Au to go with her to visit her grandfather. He lives in the city. He took Sarah and Annie home with him in his buggy.

Saturday afternoon Sarah Adams' grandfather came to take Sarah home with him, and he also invited Hettie Van Wey. The girls staid over Sunday and had a pleasant visit. They returned yesterday.

While RSD was clearly Sarah's institutional 'home,' she attended a school in her hometown of Dunkirk for about 3 years. This brief sojourn from RSD was summarized in the [History of the Rochester School for the Deaf \(1876-1936\)](#) highlights Sarah as an alumnus of special achievement. The author, Rosa Halpen, had been a classmate of Sarah's and described her as..

"... bright and attractive child, she made rapid progress in every way, so much so that at the age of thirteen her parents felt that she would be able to take her place in a hearing school. Accordingly she was withdrawn from this school and for three years continued her studies in a seminary for hearing girls. She, was able to carry on her studies by means of speech and speech-reading to the entire satisfaction of herself and her teachers, during the first year. The second year work, being more advanced and requiring a larger vocabulary, was more difficult for Miss Adams. In the third year the class of which she was a member, took up Latin, French and the sciences. These studies required the use of so many unfamiliar words and expressions that Miss Adams found her speech and- speech-reading inadequate to meet the demand, so at the end of the third year, she returned to this school."

Sarah, and her family, maintained a close relationship with RSD, and letters Sarah wrote while she attended school in Dunkirk were published in the school paper.

Vol. II. THURSDAY, MARCH 16, 1882. No. 147.

Sarah Adams' father came to see us yesterday. He brought us some good news. Sarah will come back to school some time in April. We shall all be glad to welcome her back.

While she didn't return in 1882, she was still hoping to return in 1884. At this time, Sarah had an unusual pet which was mentioned a number of times in the school paper.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The second entry that follows is from *Rochester Advocate*, December 2, 1884 and the third from December 8, 1884.

Mrs. Westervelt received a letter from Sarah Adams a few days ago, in which she says, "I was disappointed when I found I could not go back to school with the other pupils. I hope I shall return next January. I would like to know what I should study to be with the pupils of my classes. I am very desirous to see my friends and teachers in Rochester." Sarah has a queer little animal for a pet. She says :

"We have a little alligator. A friend gave it to mamma last year. I love it as though it were a dear little kitten. It is a foot in length, and its skin is rough. It has very bright eyes. It has a large mouth with sharp teeth, though I often kiss it without being hurt. When I take it in my hands it always keeps its big mouth with sharp teeth open so as to bite anything that would harm it. Sometimes I have put one of my fingers in, but no sooner had I taken my finger out than it bit my finger and hurt me. Oh, how cunning it looks when it opens its mouth ! I wish I could take it to school to show to the pupils. I feel sure that they would make a great pet of it. It lives in a baby's bath tub where it enjoys water. It can swim better than to walk on its four short legs. It only eats meat and angle-worms, but it sleeps much more than it eats. It sleeps all winter without any food. I hope to see our little pet published in the daily paper at the Institution."

The young alligator which Sarah Adams brought has visited most of the school-rooms. He is very interesting to all the pupils. Many of them can tell the type, class, and order to which alligators belong. One day when Sarah was playing with him he became angry and bit her. His teeth are very small, but sharp.

Sarah Adams went to her grandfather's Saturday, to spend the day. She was very much surprised and pleased to find Miss Stiles there. Sarah visited Miss Stiles at her home in East Bloomfield last spring. Miss Stiles was much interested in Sarah's pet alligator. Sarah takes her pet everywhere with her. Sometimes she takes him into the girls' reading room and puts him in a bowl partly filled with water. At such times the poor little fellow has to undergo a great deal of handling.

## DAILY PAPER FOR OUR LITTLE PEOPLE

Printed at the Western New York Institution for Deaf Mutes, at Rochester.

Vol. V.

TUESDAY, APRIL 14, 1885.

No. 170.

The following communication was received yesterday by Miss Halpen. The pupils are sorry that Sarah Adams has lost her pet. We were all interested in him, and his visits to the school-rooms while Sarah had him here will long be remembered.

DUNKIRK, N. Y., April 9, 1885.

MY DEAR FRIEND:—You may wonder why I write to you so soon, but all the news I can tell you is sad, because my favorite pet is dead, I miss him very much! Sunday before last he died quite suddenly. Fortunately I kissed him to the last. I don't let him go out of my sight forever, as he is preserved in a bottle of alcohol. I mourn for my dear pet alligator!

Your loving SARAH.

By 1886, back at RSD, her artwork was already receiving notice at RSD and in her home community.

Vol. VII.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 21, 1886.

No. 40.

One of Sarah Adams's friends here received an interesting letter from her a few days ago. She wrote that Mrs. Julia Ward Howe had delivered a lecture in Dunkirk lately. Her lecture was about Ralph Waldo Emerson. Sarah made a charcoal sketch of Emerson a few days before the lecture. This was placed on an easel in the hall where Mrs. Howe lectured. Sarah attended the lecture. When it was over, she was introduced to Mrs. Howe; to her surprise the lady began to spell to her on her fingers; she said that she was an intimate friend of Laura Bridgeman, the blind deaf mute. Mrs. Howe's husband was the one who educated Laura Bridgeman. Sarah was very much pleased to meet Mrs. Howe, and to be able to talk with her by spelling. She was not able to read Mrs. Howe's lips easily.

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In addition, she was involved with performance throughout her school years and later received praise in the community at large.

As early as 1884, students at RSD had been performing in a dramatization of the Longfellow poem, *The Courtship of Miles Standish*<sup>7</sup>. In the 1886 version, Sarah played a young maiden, and the play was reported in the *Rochester Post-Express* and *Union Advertiser* newspapers<sup>8</sup> and later in the *Deaf Mutes Journal*.<sup>9</sup> The school had photographs made of this performance, and Sarah stands third from the left. Much later, she seemed to have created a mimic rendition as a one-woman show. In the role of Priscilla, she

<sup>6</sup>Laura Bridgman (1829-1889) was one of the earliest Deaf Blind individuals educated in the United States. Mrs. Howe's husband, was Samuel Gridley Howe who help found the Perkins School for the Blind.

<sup>7</sup> See *The Rochester Advocate*, November 27, 1884.

<sup>8</sup> See *The Rochester Advocate*, supplement: February 27, 1886.

<sup>9</sup> See *The Rochester Advocate*, March 13, 1886.

performed in Pennsylvania as noted below and later was photographed in costume which she used for holiday cards.



**ROCHESTER**  
**DAILY PAPER FOR OUR LITTLE PEOPLE**  
Printed at the Western New York Institution for Deaf-Mutes at Rochester.

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Vol. XI.                      FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 1890.                      No. 5.

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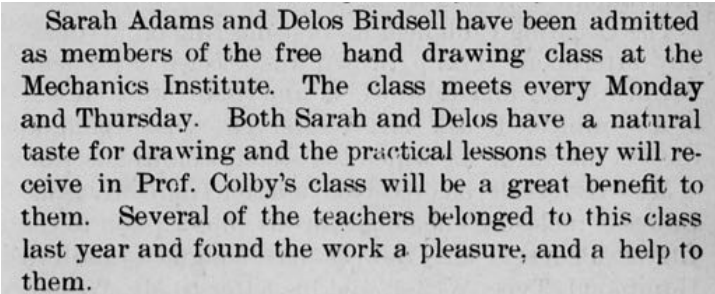
In the early part of the summer Sarah Adams, at the request of her cousins, went to Oil City, Pa., to give the "Courtship of Miles Standish" in pantomime. A gentleman who was present asked Sarah's cousin the next day if he could not have her picture taken as Priscilla, in costume. Accordingly Sarah and her cousin went to the photograph gallery. The photographer took four negatives in differing the pictures, asked her to paint a large canvas from different positions. When Sarah returned home a friend, seeing one of them. Sarah did so, but changed the costume a little to make the subject more Puritan in style. When the painting was done her friends took it to their Fair as a specimen of her work. It was sold, and Sarah received an order for another picture.



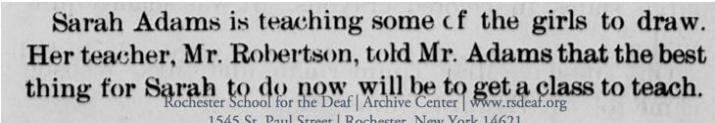
Two teachers at RSD also created a dramatization of Tennyson’s poem, *The Princess*, which was then performed by RSD students for the public at the end of the 1887 school year. The story is retold in several pages of the *Rochester Advocate* in 1887<sup>10</sup> and was reviewed mentioning Sarah: “Miss Adams’ rendering of the part brought out finely the contrasting phases of the Princess’ noble character—the pride and score of the angry Princess—the sweetness and grace of the woman and bride.”<sup>11</sup>

## ART EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCES AFTER RSD

In 1887, Sarah, along with another Deaf young man, Delos Birdsell, began taking drawing courses at the Mechanics Institute (which later became the Rochester Institute of Technology)<sup>12</sup>. She was also being encouraged to develop her skills as an art teacher.



Sarah Adams and Delos Birdsell have been admitted as members of the free hand drawing class at the Mechanics Institute. The class meets every Monday and Thursday. Both Sarah and Delos have a natural taste for drawing and the practical lessons they will receive in Prof. Colby's class will be a great benefit to them. Several of the teachers belonged to this class last year and found the work a pleasure, and a help to them.



Sarah Adams is teaching some of the girls to draw. Her teacher, Mr. Robertson, told Mr. Adams that the best thing for Sarah to do now will be to get a class to teach.

Rochester School for the Deaf | Archive Center | www.rsdeal.org  
1545 St. Paul Street | Rochester, New York 14621

The entry below is notable for the mention of the offer of a job position and Sarah’s commitment to her ‘studies’ at the Mechanics Institute. It also names several portraits she was working on.

<sup>10</sup> May 18, 1887, *Rochester Advocate*.

<sup>11</sup> See *The Rochester Advocate*, supplement, June 20-25, 1887.

<sup>12</sup> *Rochester Advocate*, Friday September 30, 1887.

## DAILY PAPER FOR OUR LITTLE PEOPLE.

Printed at the Western New York Institution for Deaf Mutes at Rochester.

VOL. VIII.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 13, 1887.

No. 34.

Sarah Adams has just finished a portrait of Don Quixote in colors. She is now at work on portraits of Beethoven and Mozart. Their size is to be seven by nine inches. Sarah intends them for her cousin Miss Ingam, who is matron of a Young Ladies' Institute at Sing Sing, N. Y. Sarah recently received a letter from Miss Clara Clark. Miss Clark thought Sarah might like a position in a photograph gallery. So wrote to tell her that her uncle, Mr. Stone of Potsdam, could give her such a position. Sarah appreciates Miss Clark's kindness in wishing to help her but she is not yet ready to undertake any work that would interfere with her studies.

In the hallway of RSD's main building, Perkins Hall, hang two portraits done by Sarah Taylor Adams. One is of Mozart but is much larger than 7 by 9 inches and was likely painted later than 1887. The other painting by Sarah, hanging next to the Mozart portrait, is of Rev. Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, one of the founders of the first public Deaf school in America, the American School for the Deaf in Hartford, CT.

It is interesting to note that in December 1887 the school paper printed the statement that "We have no good picture of Dr. Gallaudet at our school. Mr. Westervelt would like a good picture of Dr. Gallaudet in the library hall in the school house..." It may be that Sarah set out to paint Gallaudet's portrait for the superintendent.

The portraits (photographed below) were gifted to the school around 1933 from Judge and Mrs. Arthur E. Sutherland. Judge Sutherland was a long-term "legal advisor," trustee and member of the Rochester School for the Deaf Board. His wife, the former Miss Nellie Read, was a teacher at RSD as well as his sister (Miss Leela Sutherland), his brother (Ward Sutherland) and his brother's wife (the former Miss Cornelia Ely)<sup>13</sup>. It is not clear how the Sutherlands obtained these works although Sarah Adams was a student of many of these individuals and presented an engraving of Juno to Mrs. Arthur Sutherland as a wedding gift.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *Rochester Advocate*, October 1921. Note: Their son, Andrew, later became a member of the Board of Directors.

<sup>14</sup> *Rochester Advocate*, October 1, 1888.



In 1889, Sarah announces she is going to the New York City Arts Student League /Academy of Design “for the winter.” This is an amazing opportunity for a Deaf student at that time and a real acknowledgment of her skill.



## DAILY PAPER FOR OUR LITTLE PEOPLE.

Printed at the Western New York Institution for Deaf Mutes at Rochester.

Vol. X.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 1889.

No 8.

One by one the pupils who have been with us so many years that their life seems a part of our own, are leaving us. We love them and must feel sorrow at parting with them, but we are glad when wider opportunities are open to them. So, while we miss Sarah Adams now, and shall miss her more as the days go on, we rejoice with her that she is about to take up her art studies under very favorable circumstances. She expects to spend the winter in New York, where she will join the Art League. She will also study at the Academy of Design. We are looking forward to a visit from Sarah when she is on her way to New York.

She described her experience living in NYC at Christmas time in a letter to folks at the Deaf school.

Printed at the Western New York Institution for Deaf-Mutes at Rochester.

Vol. X.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 2, 1889.

No. 79.

The following letter from Sarah Adams was written to the members of the Master's Circle, of which Sarah is a member. We are sorry that we have not facilities for introducing Sarah's illustrations, as they add greatly to the spiciness of the letter :

324 SECOND AVENUE,

NEW YORK CITY, November 28, 1889.

MY DEAR FRIENDS : Here is the letter I promised to write to you long ago :

This is Thanksgiving eve, and I imagine you are having a nice time. The recollection of past times makes me wish to be back with you. I can imagine what a good dinner you have had. How much we have to be thankful for ! God has done abundantly for each and all !

Jessie (my room-mate) and I had the grandest dinner we have had in our humble room ! We had a real Thanksgiving dinner—a regular one. Now I will tell you how it came to us.

Last night we were sewing in our room when Miss T— came in, declaring that a large box had come for us. We ran down stairs, and found a good, big one. We lifted it and tried to carry it upstairs, but a young gentleman came and helped us. He carried it all the way upstairs himself. It was very heavy, and the poor gentleman got quite red in the face. At last he placed it on the floor in our room. I seized the hammer and another instrument. I pulled the cover off and broke the nail-puller.

During her breaks between studying in NYC, Sarah continued to be actively in contact with students and student events at RSD. In the photo below, Sarah is seated in the middle with other members of RSD's Ten's group (1890), a type of Christian sorority.



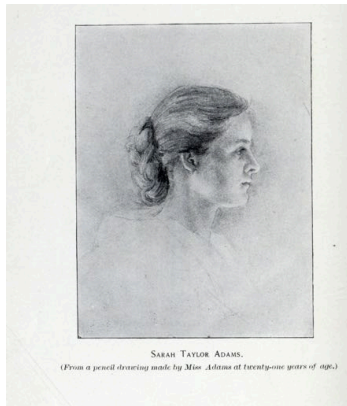
At the Arts Student League, she studied under, a Mr., Flag but more importantly Robert B. Brandegee and Augustus Saint-Gaudens. It is interesting to note that Augustus Saint-Gaudens was married to Augusta Fisher Homer (1848-1926), an artist of some note herself who had become deaf in early adulthood. Halpen describes how these teachers encouraged Sarah to become an instructor herself.

“There (at the Arts Student League in NYC) her work was of such high order that when the Principal of a seminary for young ladies in Waterbury, Conn., came to the Art League to find a teacher of art for her school, Mr. Saint-Gaudens unhesitatingly recommended Miss Adams. When the lady expressed astonishment at his suggesting a deaf teacher for her hearing pupils, Mr. Saint-Gaudens said in substance, "You will, of course, use your own judgment in the matter, but I assure you that you cannot do better than to take Miss Adams." Persuaded by the earnestness of Mr. Saint-Gaudens, the lady made Miss Adams an offer of the position in her school “(Halpen, 1936)

While Mr. Saint Gaudens' recommendation led to Sarah later becoming a teacher at St. Margaret's Academy in Waterford, CT, it was Mr. Brandegee who was head of the art department there. In addition, she took further painting lessons from him at Miss Porters School in Farmington CT in 1890 prior to being hired at St. Margaret's Academy. Miss Porters' School was, and still is, a private girls school of national prominence which “emphasized excellence in the arts as well as more traditional academic subjects.”<sup>15</sup>

Sarah Adams left us Friday evening for Farmington, Conn., where she will attend Miss Porter's school. Her studies will be in connection with her art work, and she will take lessons in painting of Mr. Brandegee. Sarah has been here since the opening of school and has completed two beautiful charts for the use of the Second grade in speech.

<sup>15</sup> See <https://www.porters.org/page/explore/school-history>)



Self-Portrait at 21 years of age

In 1892, Sarah was hired to teach art at St. Margaret's in Waterbury, Connecticut. This news Sarah shared with the school paper.

“The foremost of all that is occupying my mind just now will, I am sure, both interest and please you and all my friends at the school. It is a bit of good fortune which has come to me in a most unexpected manner, and for which I am most grateful to Providence. There is a girls' school at Waterbury, Conn., which has just been started by Miss Hillard, a former teacher in Miss Porter's school at Farmington, near Hartford. The art department has been placed in Mr. Brandegee's charge, and as they need some one to take charge of the general drawing work of the art classes, they have asked me to fill the place. How little I dreamed of such a thing as this! It was indeed a complete surprise to me, and it was some time before I decided to accept it, but I am to begin in September. I am going to try it, at least for a year. The salary is \$400 a year, besides room and board, with washing. I think I can manage to pay all my expenses by work that I can do on orders and for sale, so that I can save all my salary to pay the expenses of a trip to Europe, for that ought to be my next aim. I want to go there for study as soon as I can be ready for it. A delightful feature of the position that is offered me is that at the same time that I am teaching I shall be at liberty to continue my studies under Mr. Brandegee and Mr. Flagg, who are to go to the school at Waterbury, alternately, every fortnight to direct the progress of the work. I am to correct the drawings of the young lady students three times a week, so I can, as Mr. Brandegee kindly suggested, spend the rest of the week in drawing, painting, and making compositions, which I can show either to him or to Mr. Flagg for criticism. It was very kind indeed of Miss Hillard and Mr. Brandegee to think thus of me, and I am very grateful.”

It seemed very natural and was a pleasure to us all to have Miss Sarah Adams with us for a few days at the beginning of school. Her visit was a fleeting one, for she was on her way to Waterbury, Conn., to assume her duties as teacher of drawing and modeling in St. Margaret's seminary there. This is the first instance that we know of where a deaf person, deaf from infancy, has been engaged as a teacher in a school for the hearing, and we shall watch Sarah's career with a great deal of interest and with confidence in her success. Mr. Brandege, Sarah's teacher at the Art League, was to meet her in Farmington, Monday morning, and go with her to Waterbury. Mr. Adams, Miss Hamilton, Miss True, and several of the older girls went to the station with Sarah to see her safely started. Several of her friends wrote little notes which were hidden away in her lunch box, and they no doubt added to her enjoyment of the breakfast which she took between Albany and Springfield.

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MAY 20.—The letter has been delayed partly for the rough sketches which are now ready to be sent.

This has been a glorious day. To-night there is to be a masquerade, and we anticipate a great time. What fun it would be if you were to have one at the Institute, and I should drop in suddenly with my mask! Indeed, my delight would know no bounds if I could be among you and yet be entirely unknown!

With best wishes to you all, I remain faithfully your friend,  
SARAH T. ADAMS.

All of our readers will be delighted to hear again from Miss Adams, who has not favored us with a letter to OUR LITTLE PEOPLE for some time. The letter in today's paper is of especial interest because of its illustrations which help us to understand how pleasant the social life of the young ladies at St. Margaret's School is made. Miss Adams writes that in three weeks she hopes to see us all, and we are anticipating her coming.

The above was printed in the spring of 1893. She often visited the school as a stop over between teaching in Connecticut and her home in Dunkirk. On September 11, 1894, Sarah stopped over at RSD on her way to St. Margaret's to begin her third year teaching.

The girls are delighted to see Miss Sarah Adams, who arrived last evening. She will be with us until next Monday when she leaves for Waterbury, Conn.

In November 1894, Sarah became ill and apparently was taken to Mr. Brandege's home. There she died on November 23. The nature of her illness was not disclosed. Shortly thereafter, the school printed an announcement of her death.

ROCHESTER  
DAILY PAPER FOR OUR LITTLE PEOPLE.

PRINTED AT THE WESTERN NEW YORK INSTITUTION FOR DEAF-MUTES AT ROCHESTER.

VOL. XV.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 1894.

No. 70.

At the close of these exercises Mr. Westervelt will talk to the pupils about Miss Sarah Adams and her death, the first announcement of which now appears in OUR LITTLE PEOPLE. A telegram came to us Tuesday morning bringing the startling word which meant that we should never again see our dear Sarah here, but as no news of her illness had been received we seemed to be in a strange dream from which we might awake again to the dear glad truth, and so we have been silent for a while. Later we will tell more of our loved Sarah, whose death occurred at Farmington, Conn., on Monday evening. Shall we speak of her life as closed, which to her perchance seems just begun? Mr. Westervelt and Miss Hamilton will go to the depot this morning to meet Mrs. Adams as she passes through the city, and several of the family expect to attend the funeral at Dunkirk to-morrow. The pupils and the family have sent

floral offerings to-day. While we feel keenly this separation from our dear friend, Mr. Westervelt hopes that we will remember those of our family who do not realize this as a personal loss and will do all we can to make this a happy day,—a day of thanksgiving to God for all the blessings which he has vouchsafed to us.

#### SARAH'S MEMORIAL SERVICE AND BEYOND

Sarah's memorial service took place in the afternoon November, 30, 1894 at Sarah's family home in Dunkirk.<sup>16</sup> The *Dunkirk Evening Observer* on December 1<sup>st</sup> carried an article on this with the heading "Impressive Funeral of Miss Adams: Her short Life, while it lasted, was a blessing—Tribute paid by her father, Rev. E.P Adams and Prof. Westervelt of the Rochester Deaf Mute Institute. The eulogy was given by her father and is printed below:

<sup>16</sup> See the supplementary information on Sarah's memorial service printed in the *Rochester Advocate* on December 3, 1894.

We welcome our friends here to-day, for their sympathy is very precious. If it is not our Thanksgiving day, it is yet not very far from it. Though we weep it is not bitterly.

Sarah has been with us for several years, as a gift or rather a loan from above to brighten our lives and make us better. We have enjoyed her and she has somehow put up with us. If we have helped her, she has at least equally helped us by a joyous radiance of disposition and life which if not perennial was never long eclipsed. When three years old she lost her hearing and we naturally reckoned it a distressing calamity at the time. However, after awhile, we began to harbor a suspicion that we might be wrong in our judgment and then, as years went on, we ceased to regard her loss of hearing as a calamity, and did not know but perhaps we ought to change the label so as to have it read "blessing." After all, was it not the divine education of our girl, and a great deal better for her than *our* blundering attempts to educate her would have been?

I spoke of Sarah as a loan; well, does it not seem like ingratitude not to accept gracefully and pleasantly, the withdrawal of the loan?

We have with us Professor Westervelt, Superintendent of the Deaf-Mute Institute in Rochester, who has been one of God's chosen agents of her education. I think he knows her as well or better than any one else, and he will speak about her to us pretty soon. But, first, I would like to mention a few traits of her character. I speak of these more freely because praise never did seem to do her any harm; and as for flattery, it slipped off from her without being able to penetrate. I do not recall ever having seen her frightened. She had the self-reliance to venture anything, and would as fearlessly start for a trip alone to Paris as another would for a ride on the trolley. In fact, her fearlessness in going about was often a distress to her friends, but she insisted it would be wrong to be afraid. She had a sort of magical influence over animals and little children, and when a little girl she would fondle a pet foot-long alligator as if it were a kitten. She was never afraid of a toad or a mouse, and it greatly amused her to see others afraid. She had a magnificent independence, and in a matter of conscience was absolutely unbending to threat or persuasion; and yet she was so genial, and these stern qualities were so sheathed in lovingness as never to provoke any one. She never seemed to know there was caste in society, and she made just as free with a titled dignitary as with a servant girl. It would have been a sin, and not doing as Jesus did to have made the distinction between great and small, rich and poor. She was as playful with an old person as with a young, as regardful of the homely as of the beautiful. As for tenderness, the little girl would take the disabled fly, blow off the fly-powder and set it outside of the window out of harm's way.

Seemingly quite careless of dress when young, she has recently manifested a growingly exquisite taste for rich, graceful, artistic clothing; and there was always something of her own

designing in her dress. This love was all artistic, for there was not a shade of vanity in it. As for her art, it must be remembered that Art is a great thing, and that she was but a beginner. No doubt she had considerable genius and was making rapid progress. Her last work was by far her best.

I began to write this down so as to read from the fear that I might not have self command to finish my remarks which I have enlarged beyond my intention. It is not unconsoled grief that would interrupt my speech. I think I do not so much fear that. It is your dear sympathy that bothers and unmans me.

Professor Westervelt, the Superintendent, spoke of Sarah's loveliness and how tenderly her friends thought of her at her "Institution home." There she was an "earnest student," a "devoted friend," with a "record of good deeds." He recognized her as a "pioneer" for teaching at a school for hearing girls who came out of the "cloud of prejudice" Deaf people experienced.

One year after Sarah's death, in November 1895, the Rochester Advocate mentions that her father had written a book, Story Sermons from Les Miserables which included Sarah's illustrations.

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VOL. XVI.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 1895.

No. 58.

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This week brings the first anniversary of the "going home" of our dear friend Sarah Adams. Those who knew her and loved her, those who were helped by her loving, cheerful presence, her kindly sympathy and her ever ready words of wise judgment, will be glad to hear that within a few weeks we shall send to our readers a memorial number of OUR LITTLE PEOPLE containing reminiscences of Sarah's life, from the pen of her father, Rev. E. P. Adams, of Dunkirk. We would also call attention at this time to the book, "Story Sermons from Les Miserables" written by Mr. Adams and illustrated by Sarah, which is now in the hands of the printer and will be ready for circulation before Christmas. We feel sure that most of the parents of our children and the friends of our school will be glad to purchase a copy of this book, not only because of interest in the helpful sermons, but also because of

their love for the young artist whose life with us during the ten years she attended this school has left a deep and lasting impression. As the edition of "Story Sermons from Les Miserables" will number but one thousand it would be well for those who desire copies to send their names to Dr. Westervelt at their earliest convenience.



Above is the book's cover which names Sarah as illustrator<sup>17</sup>. Seven pen and ink drawings appear in the book illustrating various stories. In addition, there is a self-portrait drawing and a photo of a bas relief Sarah did of herself. Two of Sarah's story illustrations appear below<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> The cover of the book "was designed by Mr. Robert B. Brandagee, one of Miss Adams' instructors in Art in New York City, the artist to whom she felt she owed more for help and inspiration than to any other. The work was done as a tribute to her memory."

<sup>18</sup> See the supplementary document Sarah Adam's art for more of her works.





## CONCLUSION

Sarah Taylor Adams was one of the earliest students to attend the Rochester School for the Deaf and the school remained proud of Sarah and her accomplishments. Although her early schooling at RSD was a bit erratic, her family maintained a close relationship with the school and Sarah kept in contact with her teachers and schoolmates. After maturing, Sarah continued to be part of the RSD 'family.' She was a peer advisor of sorts and was noted to have frequented the classrooms of the younger children on her visits. Her skill as an artist was recognized early on and she was able to achieve a number of breakthroughs in her pursuit of developing her art. It is likely she was one of the first students from RSD who attended the Mechanics Institute and likely one of the first Deaf individuals to attend the NY Art Students' League. She was certainly the first student from RSD who became an art teacher in a school for hearing students. Of course, we are left to wonder what she could have achieved as an artist if she hadn't died young.

In our library is an enlargement of a photograph of Sarah taken by De La Mater of Hartford. It was ordered by the school early in the spring and was finished and placed on an easel in the library on the 6th of April, so that the family might see it for the first time on Sarah's birthday. The blending of womanliness and girlishness, of earnest thoughtfulness and sweet unconsciousness of self renders the face fascinating. Sarah seems to have stepped back to criticise with earnest thought a sketch that she has made. No likeness could be more lifelike, more characteristic than is this photograph of our dear Sarah. It is a delight to every eye and an inspiration to every heart.



*Sarah Adams.  
De La Mater of Son. Dec. 1894. Hartford.*