

Deaf Settlers In Western Canada



Deaf Saskatchewan homesteaders at a picnic in 1909
 Courtesy of Marion (Belle) Van Luven (Cupar, Sask.)

In 1872, the Canadian parliament passed the first Dominion Lands Act (also known as The Homestead Act of 1872) to stimulate immigration to the Canadian West.¹ After paying a \$10 registration fee, settlers in Manitoba and the other prairie provinces (then known as Rupert's Land) were granted *free* homesteads of 64.75 hectares each (160 acres), which they could keep if they cultivated a specific area within three years. After that time, they could purchase another 160 acres for the price of one dollar per acre.² Hundreds of people took advantage of this offer, but many suffered hardships in the initial years, often because they had no farming experience and were unprepared for winter on the Canadian plains. This westward migration was complemented by hundreds of emigration schemes, devised by such countries as Great Britain, to send people from crowded European cities to the unpopulated areas of Canada. Some of these emigrants were deaf.

Deaf Colony Schemes

In the 1880s, Jane Elizabeth Groom, a deaf missionary from England, brought a group of deaf English settlers to Canada in an attempt to colonize Wolseley, Man. (now a part of Saskatchewan about 75 kilometres east of Regina and 480 kilometres west of Winnipeg). Groom hoped that the deaf settlers would obtain employment on farms in the neighbouring communities or disperse to set up their own farms and businesses — which many of them did.³ She did not intend to establish an exclusive deaf colony like that proposed in the United States by John Jacobus Flournoy (b. circa 1800; d. Jan. 18, 1879) of Athens, Ga. (Flournoy, who had been a “ward” of Laurent Clerc and had informally attended classes for a few months at the American Asylum for the Education and Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb at Hartford, Conn., advocated a completely separate deaf state.⁴ His scheme came about as the result of a law passed

in 1836 in the state of Georgia “to ‘make deaf and dumb people idiots in law and to provide them guardians.’”⁵ This act prompted Flournoy to spearhead a movement calling for a separate “deaf state” where deaf Americans could have complete political control over their own destiny.⁶ For the next two or three decades, his proposal was widely debated within the American Deaf community, but the “deaf state” never came into existence.)

In the early 1900s, dozens of deaf people established homesteads around the villages of Cupar, Dysart, and Lipton in southern Saskatchewan (then the provisional District of Assiniboia, North-West Territories).⁷ However, many of them were inexperienced farmers and struggled for a number of years before leaving the area. Those who stayed were assimilated into the hearing community.

Another colonization scheme was proposed in the early 1930s, when Edward Austin Leslie, one of the Saskatchewan deaf homesteaders (1906-1908), suggested that a deaf farm colony be established with land grants from both the Saskatchewan and Alberta departments of natural resources. Rupert J.D. Williams (then president of the Western Canada Association of the Deaf [WCAD] [1932-1935]) submitted this proposal to the two provincial governments. In their response, Saskatchewan government officials stated that there was no land available at that time for such a colony. The Alberta government never responded.⁸ A few years later, at the 5th Triennial Convention of the WCAD in Saskatoon, Sask. (June 21-26, 1935), Leslie publicly lamented the failure of the earlier Cupar-Dysart-Lipton deaf settlement, which he attributed to the settlers’ “lack of co-operative organization and knowledge of farm management.”⁹ He then called for the establishment of a deaf farm colony in British Columbia, which he felt had the best weather of any western province. There is no record of a response to Leslie’s statements at the WCAD meeting. This appears to be the last recorded attempt to form a separate deaf colony in Canada.

Jane Elizabeth Groom and the Manitoba Deaf Settlers

In the 1880s, the Canadian government, together with the Canadian Pacific Railway, actively supported an idea of Jane Elizabeth Groom (b. Dec. 18, 1839; d. Mar. 3, 1908), a deaf missionary from the borough of Hackney (near London, England).¹⁰ She proposed to colonize Western Canada with deaf British emigrants.¹¹

Groom was born deaf at Woodgate (county of Loppington) near Wem (county of Salop), where her father was a land surveyor and estate agent.¹² As a child, she attended the Institution for the Deaf and Dumb at Old Trafford, near Manchester, and ultimately became assistant teacher there. About 1875, Groom petitioned the London School Board to provide day classes for deaf children, and when the board agreed, she was appointed to teach such a class at Bethnal Green School.¹³ She lost her job to a hearing teacher when the oral method of instruction was widely introduced in Great Britain two years after the 1880 World Congress on the Education of



Jane Elizabeth Groom, British deaf missionary to Canada (1884)

An Evangelist Among the Deaf and Dumb/Photo reproduction credit: Chun Louie and Joan K. Schlub, Gallaudet University Photo Services

the Deaf at Milan, Italy. Groom then turned to missionary work among deaf people.¹⁴ In the course of her evangelistic work, she was distressed to see deaf people in the densely populated district of London near starvation and unable to find jobs. She felt that “the only way to accomplish their ultimate well-being is to carry out my [Groom’s] scheme of emigration to Canada,” a country she had previously visited for 12 months.¹⁵

Groom’s first attempt at colonizing in Canada occurred in the early summer of 1884, when she transported 10 men and two boys, all deaf, to Winnipeg. When they arrived there at the Canadian Pacific Railway station in July, they were greeted by and received courteous assistance from a few local dignitaries, and from John Parker, a deaf Scottish farmer, who owned a 320-acre homestead near Souris in southwestern Manitoba.¹⁶ Considered an example “of the success of deaf-mutes in making good settlers,” Parker gave Groom’s deaf protégés tips on farming and on the procedures for acquiring the free homesteads of 160 acres under the Dominion Lands Act of 1872.¹⁷ Some of the immigrants then found employment with local farmers, while the rest of the party became cabinet makers, shoemakers, bricklayers, and saddle and harness makers in nearby towns.

Groom’s efforts were not universally accepted by the Canadian populace. The *Manitoba Daily Free Press* in Winnipeg was very critical of her venture, bemoaning the fact that “a consignment of deaf mutes has been brought to that city from England, and dumped into the Immigrant Sheds.”¹⁸ The *Free*

Press also insisted that “the North-West wanted no more of her or of her pauper charges.”¹⁹ However, another local newspaper, the *Winnipeg Daily Times*, disagreed with the objections made by the *Free Press*. In an article dated July 26, 1884, the *Daily Times* supported Groom’s venture and expressed dismay at the criticism and abuse she was receiving. Pointing out that “those deaf mutes, against whose importation the *Free Press* has so loudly protested, are proving to be desired acquisitions to the country. They are nearly all possessed of trades, and what is better, a determination not to be drones in the hive of industry.”²⁰ The *Québec Chronicle* also questioned the attitude expressed in the *Free Press* story, stating that “we cannot believe that the story of the *Free Press* is true.”²¹ Despite the criticism printed in the newspapers, Groom returned to England and brought an additional 24 deaf settlers and their families to the area within the next 12 months. She also attempted to purchase 386 acres within two kilometres of Wolseley, Man., as a temporary home for future deaf immigrants and for deaf farmers who might be out of work.²²

In 1886, Francis George Jefferson (b. circa 1845; d. Mar. 14, 1912), one of the first 12 deaf settlers whom Groom brought to Manitoba in 1884, wrote to *The Courier*, a newspaper in Manchester, England. He stated that most of the deaf colonists had found steady employment, but cautioned those who planned to emigrate that they must be “... willing to labour hard and endure some privations,” and needed to “... have strong hearts, to bear the summer’s hot sun, and also the very cold times in winter.”²³ He also let the readers know that “many of the [hearing] farmers can converse well with their fingers, and they speak highly of the mutes’ intelligence, honesty and quickness in learning agricultural work.”²⁴ In 1888, Jefferson had a small part in the founding of the Manitoba Institution for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb. In September of that year, he became a printing teacher and supervisor of boys at the Mackay Institution for Protestant Deaf-Mutes in Montréal, Québec, a position he held for less than four months.

Groom continued to be concerned about her deaf settlers. In a letter dated October 26, 1891 written while she was staying at The Brunswick Hotel in Ottawa, Ont., she requested that the Manitoba Ministry of Agriculture ask the British government for money to purchase a large “home farm.” The property was to be used by the settlers near Winnipeg who were having trouble making ends meet, especially during the winter months. Groom offered to stay with the colonists for two years to ensure the smooth operation of such a home, but her petition for funding was turned down by the Provincial Privy Council and never forwarded to England. The Council felt that if deaf settlers were in need of “special arrangements for the reception and protection of these unfortunate people,” then perhaps they should not be encouraged to emigrate at all.²⁵ The February 15, 1892 and March 15, 1892 issues of *The Canadian Mute* (a publication of the Ontario Institution for the Education and Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb, Belleville) reported that Groom and her deaf sister were still in Canada that year. On their way back to England, they were guests of the superintendent of the Mackay Institution for Protestant Deaf-Mutes in Montréal for a few days. Next, they spent two

weeks at the Institution for the Deaf and Dumb in Halifax, N.S. before crossing the Atlantic. It is not clear whether Groom ever brought any more deaf settlers into the country. Her 1892 departure may have been the last time she had contact with the “deaf colony.”²⁶

Saskatchewan Deaf Homesteaders

In early 1903, a small group of deaf people living around Boissevain, Man. met to discuss ways of obtaining free homesteads being offered under the Dominion Lands Act. Those in attendance included English immigrant John Edward Brady Chapman of Rapid City; Irish immigrant Samuel Hawkins of Rounthwaite; and several former students of the Ontario Institution for the Education and Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb.²⁷ By the summer of 1903, they had begun their trek westward, led by John Alexander Braithwaite, a graduate of the Ontario Institution (1884-1893)²⁸ and Gallaudet College (1896-1901).²⁹ Because there were no railways or paved roads to their destination, these early settlers and their families travelled for several days “in covered wagons drawn by slow-moving oxen.”³⁰

Thus began an influx of deaf pioneers to the “promised land” near the famous Qu’Appelle Valley, which was then the provisional District of Assiniboia, North-West Territories (present-day southern Saskatchewan). This area is located approximately 70 kilometres northeast of Regina. For the first several months after their arrival, the families led by Braithwaite camped out at Fort Qu’Appelle, which had housed Canadian troops commanded by Major-General Frederick Middleton during the North-West Rebellion of 1885. Two hearing men — Donald Hogarth McDonald (b. Jan. 11, 1867; d. Apr. 30, 1928), and his brother, John Archibald McDonald (b. Aug. 6, 1865; d. July 9, 1929) — helped the deaf settlers locate their homesteads. Both McDonalds represented the Qu’Appelle Valley area as members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) — Donald from 1896-1905 when the area was called the North-West Territories,³¹ and John from 1908-1914 after it was renamed the province of Saskatchewan in 1905.³² They were also uncle and father respectively of Archibald Howard McDonald (b. July 30, 1888; d. Aug. 29, 1972), a deaf homesteader who later taught at the Saskatchewan School for the Deaf in Regina (1915-1916), the Manitoba School for the Deaf in Winnipeg (1916-1940), and the Mackay Institution for Protestant Deaf-Mutes in Montréal (1940-1961).

The deaf homesteaders settled on farms scattered around the towns of Lipton, Cupar, and Dysart. They were isolated from each other during the winter months but came together for a picnic every summer from 1905 to 1912. This annual event was usually held in the northwest area of Lipton at a home owned by Samuel and Mary McNeill, a hearing couple.³³ Those settlers living farther away in the Cupar and Dysart townships often arrived at the picnics in a wagon or buggy drawn by a team of horses. The annual picnics provided the deaf homesteaders with an opportunity to catch up on the events that had occurred during the long winter months. They

also helped maintain the identity of this rural Deaf community. After 1912, however, several of the families moved from the area, and the picnics were no longer held.

During the fall harvest each year, the number of deaf people in the area would increase when some 50 deaf harvesters arrived by train from Toronto to help the farmers of Lipton thresh their wheat. Each harvester was guaranteed a \$10 return fare under the Harvest Special Excursion Plan. The merchants, lawyers, doctors, farmers, and even the “red-coated” policemen in the area learned to converse with these labourers by using the manual alphabet and some signs.³⁴ The influx of these harvesters brought news of the Ontario area to the homesteaders, several of whom had attended school in that province. Likewise, when the harvesters returned home, they carried greetings from the Saskatchewan pioneers.

Some of the deaf homesteaders known to have settled in the Cupar, Dysart, and Lipton areas of Saskatchewan are identified below.

John Alexander Braithwaite (b. July 11, 1876; d. Feb. 7, 1933) was the leader of the first group of deaf settlers to come from Boissevain, Man. to the Qu’Appelle Valley area. He was born and raised in Carluke, near Hamilton, Ont., where he became profoundly deaf at the age of four from scarlet fever. He later attended the Ontario Institution for the Education and Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb (1884-1893) and Gallaudet College (B.A., 1896-1901). On April 29, 1904, he married Marion Campbell (b. Sept. 4, 1874; d. Mar. 14, 1957) of Toronto, also a graduate of the Ontario Institution (1882-1891). Braithwaite had always loved farming. He and his wife and their two hearing children lived in the Lipton area for eight years (1904-1912),³⁵ where he often preached the gospel during his leisure hours. In the fall of 1912, Braithwaite and his family moved to a farm near Windsor, Ont.



John A. Braithwaite as a Gallaudet College student

Courtesy of Anne E. McKercher (Milton, Ont.)/Gallaudet University Archives

John Edward Brady Chapman (b. circa 1864; d. July [day unknown], 1920) immigrated to Canada from London, England in 1902 and settled in Rapid City, Man. He married Christina (also known as Tena) Spanier (b. 1873; d. 1963) in 1904. The Chapmans lived on a homestead in the Cupar-Lipton area for 11 years (1904-1915).³⁶ Following the sale of their first homestead, they moved to a farm south of Dysart, where they lived for the next five years (1915-1920).³⁷ Chapman was a trained engineer and operator of steam-generated equipment, and could earn as much as five dollars a day at his trade (in 1906). He also worked on the threshing equipment owned by James Goodbrand, another deaf farmer (Chapman, Goodbrand, and their deaf neighbour Thomas Bradshaw could together earn “as much as \$6.30 per hour or \$63 per day” during the harvest.)³⁸ Chapman also knew how to run a train. The following excerpt describes an event that took place during World War I:

John Chapman drove to Dysart with horse and buggy. He noticed the train was stalled near the station. There were numerous box cars attached. John tied his horse, and went over to the locomotive to investigate the trouble; the engineer appeared and ordered John away. John was not to be daunted. When the engineer went back into the station, John went to the opposite side of the locomotive, and made some adjustments, started it and drove a mile down the track, then backed the train to the station. John hurriedly produced a pencil and paper, explaining to the startled engineer that he, too, was qualified to operate a locomotive. The dumbfounded engineer forgot to thank him.³⁹

In 1920, Chapman was killed “while at work moving a building” on his farm.⁴⁰ He is buried in the Dysart Cemetery.

James Goodbrand (b. June 24, 1869; d. May 31, 1941), who became deaf at three years of age from scarlet fever, attended the Ontario Institution (1883-1891). After graduation, he lived for a time in Boissevain, Man., where he was employed as a stonemason. On Valentine’s Day, 1900, he married the former Mary Matilda Lafferty (b. Aug. 7, 1876; d. Jan. 16, 1950) of Windsor, Ont., who had also attended the Ontario Institution (1881-1891). A few years later, Goodbrand, his wife, and their hearing daughter (Aileen Beatrice) left Windsor for Lipton. Their first home was made of dirt and grass (a “sodhouse”). While they homesteaded for nine years (1905-1914),⁴¹ four other hearing children (Clarence Howard, James Daniel, Dorothy Marion, and Hazel Matilda) were added to the family. Daughter Aileen died in 1911. From 1914 to 1922, the family lived on land near the village of Dysart.⁴²

During his stay in the Lipton and Dysart areas, Goodbrand often harvested deaf and hearing homesteaders’ crops with his steam threshing equipment. If winter came early and the ground was covered with snow, he used six oxen to move his separator from one settler’s farm to another. Some winters were very harsh, as shown in the following anecdote by Dorothy Williamson, one of Goodbrand’s daughters:

During one big snowstorm, we awoke one morning to find our barn had disappeared. In its place was one giant hill of snow. My

dad wasn't sure where the barn door would be. So my brothers Clarence and Daniel started digging a hole through the top of the huge snow drift and were able to get through the roof of the barn to feed the animals. After the animals were fed, they came back to the house and started clearing a path in a direction they hoped would lead them to the barn door, which thankfully it did. It took many hours of hard work to complete the walkway. They then tied a rope from the house to the barn. During the many blizzards that winter, my dad would follow the rope to make his way back and forth between the house and barn.

Summers, too, could be a challenge:

I remember one terrific summer storm with hail and high winds. The winds lifted the roof off our granary. There were mother hens with their baby chicks inside, and they were all sucked out of the building by the wind. After the storm was over, we found the granary roof scattered in pieces in the pasture. Miraculously, the mother hens soon started arriving back at the farm, followed by their babies. Their feathers were a little ruffled, but they were still alive after their unexpected flight.

In 1918, the Spanish flu struck the area. Goodbrand's wife worked with the local doctor as a nurse's aide, tending many sick and dying neighbours. The Goodbrand family escaped the "dreaded flu that killed so many. Mother used to keep the house disinfected, and she sprinkled sulfur on top of the stove to kill the germs. Dad carried on the same way while she was gone [nursing].... I can't recall how long she was away, but it seemed like several months."⁴³



Goodbrand's steam threshing equipment (circa 1910)
Courtesy of Dorothy Marion (née Goodbrand) Williamson (Brantford, Ont.)

In 1922, Goodbrand sold his farm and moved the family to Windsor, Ont. He commuted daily to Detroit, Mich., where he worked as a janitor and photo developer at the Photocrast Studio on Griswold Street. Around 1926, the family settled permanently on a three-acre lot in Brantford, Ont., where Goodbrand worked for the farmers in his neighbourhood for many years. He and his wife are both buried in Brantford's Farrington Cemetery.

Thomas Bradshaw (b. Mar. 8, 1873; d. circa 1936),⁴⁴ also a graduate of the Ontario Institution (1882-1891), became profoundly deaf at the age of 15 months. On May 25, 1896 he married Prudence Elizabeth McRitchie (b. July 20, 1870; d. Aug. 2, 1924) (who also attended the Ontario Institution [1880-1890]). From 1904 to 1912, the couple raised their three hearing children — Eva, Bert, and Nellie — on a homestead in Lipton.⁴⁵ An expert mechanic, Bradshaw often assisted in operating the thresher and separator belonging to James Goodbrand. He was also skilled at carpentry, and erected houses and barns on surrounding farms. In 1908, his stable, "together with seven tons of hay and two pigs" burned down by a fire "started by some children playing near the stable. The boys all got together and put up a new sod stable for Mr. Bradshaw."⁴⁶

Bradshaw was the only deaf person (on a committee of three) to sign a petition dated December 28, 1905 calling for the formation of a public school district in the area.⁴⁷ This campaign to establish the Balrobie School District was unsuccessful, however. In 1912, the family moved to Fort Qu'Appelle, Sask., where Bradshaw opened a carpentry shop.⁴⁸ In late 1913, he and his family returned to Ontario and settled in Dundas. Bradshaw secured a job first at a refrigerator factory where he worked "ten hours a day except Saturdays."⁴⁹ By 1920, the Bradshaws were living in Santa Barbara, Calif., where they purchased a home at 526 Castille Street,⁵⁰ "a few blocks from the beach."⁵¹ Bradshaw joined the carpenter's union and worked as a trimmer on new buildings.⁵² He passed away around 1936.

Samuel Hawkins (b. Sept. 5, 1868; d. Dec. 9, 1934) was born and raised in Dublin, Ireland. Until 1884, he attended the Claremont Institution for the Deaf and Dumb in Dublin. Following his apprenticeship as a harness maker, Hawkins immigrated to Winnipeg in either 1888 or 1889, where he found work at the Great West Saddlery. In 1890, he opened his own harness-making shop in the unincorporated village of Rounthwaite, Man., about 40 kilometres southeast of Brandon.⁵³ Eleven years later, in 1901, he married a deaf Austrian-born woman, Anna Mary Lennius⁵⁴ (later spelled Lennon) (b. Feb. 25, 1881; d. June 15, 1954), who had been a pupil at the Manitoba Institution for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb (1893-1898) in Winnipeg.⁵⁵ They had seven deaf children. Five survived and later attended the Manitoba Institution as well (Robert [b. Mar. 3, 1903; d. Nov. 18, 1948], Violet Rose [b. Sept. 29, 1905; d. Aug. 29, 1992]; Christopher [b. Jan. 31, 1909; d. June 30, 1992]; Martha Annie [b. Sept. 21, 1917], and Samuel [b. June 25, 1923]).

On July 2, 1904, Hawkins obtained a homestead located on a quarter-section near McDonald Hills on Jumping Deer Creek (about 16 kilometres northwest of Lipton).⁵⁶ However, it was not until April 1905 that he finished building his house and could move his pregnant wife and baby son, Robert, into their new home. Life as a pioneer on the prairie was sometimes dangerous, as illustrated in this news item that appeared in *The Silent Echo*, a publication of the Manitoba Institution for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb:

What was a serious affair and might have been a great deal worse

happened sometime ago at the house of Mr. and Mrs. Hawkins of Lipton. It appears Mrs. Hawkins when lighting a large lamp somehow upset it and the oil overflowing upon her clothes, became ignited. She ran to her husband in flames ... Mr. Hawkins succeeded in putting out the burning clothes but not before his wife was very badly burned. Then he turned to save the house which had caught fire. Help having arrived, Mrs. Hawkins was removed ... to the General hospital. She has fully recovered and returned home. Very little damage was done to the house though a large quantity of wearing apparel was destroyed.⁵⁷

Between early November and late March every year, Hawkins operated a harness-making shop on Railway Street (now Main Street) in Lipton. The other months of the year were devoted to cultivating his homestead, which he sold to Lumber Manufacturers Yards Limited in 1919. Hawkins's harness-making business flourished until the advent of self-propelled tractors in the 1920s and the coming of the Great Depression of the 1930s. He died in 1934 at the age of 66. His wife, Anna, died 20 years later, when she was struck and killed by an automobile while crossing a street in Winnipeg.



An all-Deaf family - the Hawkins in 1924

Courtesy of Samuel Hawkins, Jr. (Winnipeg, Man.)

Back row (left to right): Christopher, Violet Rose, Robert.

Front row (left to right): Anna Mary (with baby Sam, nine months old), Martha Annie, Samuel.

Anson Parker Van Luven (b. Mar. 16, 1865; d. July 11, 1931) was an experienced farmer from Napanee, Ont., his birthplace.⁵⁸ In his youth, he had attended the Ontario Institution (1872-1881).⁵⁹ In 1891, he married the former Mary



Homestead of the Van Luven family (prior to 1920)

Courtesy of Marion (Belle) Van Luven (Cupar, Sask.)

Jane Miller (b. Dec. 9, 1864; d. June 22, 1928), a graduate of the Ontario Institution (1881-1889), and between 1893 and 1903, they had five hearing children — Louise, Howard, Claude, Roy, and Maurice.⁶⁰ In 1906, Van Luven and his family came west and settled on their homestead some 14 kilometres northwest of Lipton (1906-1920).⁶¹ Their livestock, machinery, and furnishings were sent by rail from the east.⁶²

Van Luven arrived too late to be involved in the 1906 efforts to establish a school in the area. But three years later, he and two hearing homesteaders won approval from the Saskatchewan Department of Education to form the new school district, called Balrobie School District No. 2353. He went on to serve a three-year term as a school board trustee (1915-1918).⁶³ In 1920, the Van Luvens bought a larger farm about 13 kilometres northwest of their first homestead.⁶⁴ They remained there for the rest of their lives.

Arthur John Edward Clark (b. Oct. 24, 1871; d. Feb. 7, 1911), a bachelor who homesteaded near Lipton for seven years (1904-1911),⁶⁵ was educated at the Ontario Institution (1880-1891).⁶⁶ In the spring of 1909, a group of deaf and hearing settlers, including Anson Parker Van Luven, met at Clark's cabin to continue the efforts begun by Thomas Bradshaw in establishing a school in the area.⁶⁷ Clark also worked as a salesman for the Art Metropole of Hamilton, Ont., selling silk cushion covers. On February 7, 1911, he was in the small village of Red Jacket, located about 13 kilometres from Moosomin, Sask. While waiting at the railroad stop there, he stepped out onto the tracks to look for his eastbound train, which was late. Tragically, Clark did not notice the oncoming westbound train, which struck and hurled him 20 feet in the air and 100 feet down the tracks. He died instantly.⁶⁸

George William Grant (b. Sept. 17, 1852; d. 1939), a confirmed bachelor, had a homestead in Lipton for 11 years (1904-1915).⁶⁹ Left profoundly deaf from scarlet fever at the age of 18 months, he was another of the settlers who had attended the Ontario Institution (1872-1875). In late 1915, he sold his land, horses, and machinery to one of Anson Parker Van Luven's hearing sons, and lived with the new owners for many years before finally moving to Regina in his senior years. When he was 75, Grant became the first person in the province to draw a Saskatchewan Old Age Pension cheque.⁷⁰

John Walter Gee (b. Sept. 10, 1851; d. Feb. 18, 1938) was born in Mossley, Ont. His hearing loss was attributed to “being scalded on his head” at the age of 20 months, when his mother accidentally spilled hot grease on him while making doughnuts at home.⁷¹ Gee claimed that he had also been kidnapped by



The John Walter Gee family (circa 1895)

Courtesy of Evelyn M. Reed (Sarrento, B.C.)

Indians as a young boy and held captive for several days before being rescued.⁷² He was educated at the Ontario Institution (1871-1875), where he courted and later married (in 1876) Louisa Noyes (b. Aug. 13, 1848; d. Apr. 12, 1925), who had also been a pupil there for four years (1871-1875). While living in Denfield, Ont., they raised a family of five hearing sons — Sidney, William, Thomas, Frank, and Albert — and a hearing daughter, Elsie.

In 1900, Gee’s son William moved west, first to Indian Head and then, in 1901, to a homestead eight kilometres north of Cupar. Two years later, the rest of the family followed. They stayed only a short time and then returned to Ontario. However, they moved back several months later to settle for the next 22 years on a homestead nine kilometres northwest of Cupar (1904-1926).⁷³ Gee’s wife died there in 1925 “having not been well since she was run over by a motor car in London, Ont., in September, 1923.”⁷⁴

Gee always carried something to write on so he could communicate with hearing storekeepers and homesteaders in the area. Local children knew what he meant when he signed “Have you been good?” with his thumb up or “Have you been bad?” with his little finger. He could speak only one word clearly — “Whoa!” — which he used when driving his horses.⁷⁵

John (Johannis) Hjartarson (b. Sept. 22, 1880; d. Unknown) was born in Iceland and moved with his family to Gimli, Man., where his father was a farmer. He attended the Manitoba Institution for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb (1889-1905)⁷⁶ and was one of the youngest deaf homesteaders in the Lipton area. He owned land there for only two years (1905-1907)⁷⁷ before selling, but stayed in the area to work on

James Goodbrand’s threshing crew for the next five years. On November 29, 1921, Hjartarson married a woman named Freda Linda and had three hearing children — two daughters and a son. He worked for a while at Birt’s Printing Company in Winnipeg and later moved to British Columbia.⁷⁸ Apparently, he moved back to the prairie provinces once again, because by 1939 he was reportedly living in St. James, Man.⁷⁹

Edward Austin Leslie (b. Apr. 30, 1882; d. Mar. 22, 1967) had a natural instinct for farming as well as a knowledge of agriculture that he picked up from other farmers.⁸⁰ He lost his hearing from scarlet fever at two years of age and later attended the Ontario Institution (1889-1897). After his graduation, Leslie turned his attention to tilling the soil. He first worked on his father’s farm near Listowell, Ont., but dreamed of owning one of his own. His father later purchased 200 acres near Wallace, Ont. for Leslie, who quickly earned a reputation as an excellent farmer. His hearing brother, Howard, was co-owner of the property.⁸¹ In 1906, Leslie “shook off the dust of Ontario and struck [out] for the great wheat belt of the Canadian Northwest.”⁸² For the first two summers, he worked for other farmers, tilling several hundred acres of unbroken land in the Cupar area with a steam plough. In the winter, he displayed his talents as an adroit ice hockey player on the Cupar team in the Kirkella District Hockey League. Leslie was declared by the Cupar press and public “to be the best player of that neighborhood and a coming wonder.”⁸³ As far as can be determined, he was their only deaf player.

On December 31, 1907, Leslie married Rose (Rosa) Ann Moore of Ontario (b. Mar. 3, 1881; d. Sept. 6, 1971), a native of Glasgow, Scotland who had attended the Ontario Institution (1894-1900).⁸⁴ Less than a year later, on September 8, 1908, his father helped him acquire his own homestead on the eastern side of Cupar.⁸⁵ However, two months later, on November 13, 1908, Leslie and his wife abandoned the property for unknown reasons. The family moved around quite a bit after that. In 1913, they were living in St. Walburg, Sask., where Leslie farmed and raised poultry (during the previous summer, he had harvested 1,300 bushels of oats). By this time, he and his wife had “two little boys [who] are the pride and joy of our home.”⁸⁶ Leslie also worked on construction in outlying towns along the Alberta-Saskatchewan border.⁸⁷ At different times during this period, the family lived in Aylsham and Hallgarth, Sask. In 1918, there is mention of the family living in Toronto, where he was working “at the Good-Year Rubber works at New Toronto.”⁸⁸ In 1929, he was in Manitoba working in the coal industry. Eventually, the family moved to Vernon, B.C., where Leslie died at Dellview Hospital at the age of 86.⁸⁹

Francis Edmund Speer (b. Jan. 11, 1873; d. Dec. 12, 1956) and his wife, the former Mary Jane Bailey (b. June 11, 1874; d. Feb. 3, 1943), chose to live some 150 kilometres south-east of Lipton.⁹⁰ Thus, they were fairly isolated from the other deaf farmers who lived in the townships of Cupar, Lipton, and Dysart. Born in Ontario, Speer was nine years old when he lost his hearing from scarlet fever. He was educated at the Ontario Institution (1885-1892). His family moved to a farm near Boissevain, Man. around 1895. On July 27, 1904, he married Mary Jane Bailey in the chapel at the Manitoba Institution.⁹¹



A 1903 wedding photo of Francis Edmund Speer and Mary Jane Bailey in the chapel of the Manitoba Institution for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb, Winnipeg

Courtesy of Marion Winnifred (née Speer) Emberton (Punnichy, Sask.)

His new wife had come to Boissevain with her parents from Devonshire, England in 1875.⁹² She completed her education at the Manitoba Institution (1897-1901) after becoming deaf from a sinus infection at the age of 22. While she lived in Winnipeg, she instructed the older girls at the school in fancy-work stitches and other forms of hand sewing one evening a week.⁹³

Shortly after their wedding, the Speers set out for the District of Assiniboia, accompanied by John Speer, Ed's father. They travelled by rail as far as Arcola. Then, with a horse and ox hitched to a wagon and a cow tied behind, they headed north on an old Indian trail into the Moose Mountains and then west to the area of Kisby. Until their sod house was constructed, they lived in their overturned wagon. Although the Speers probably bought a farm from another homesteader in 1904, no land title records have been found to confirm this. Their first child, Winnie, was born in 1906, and in 1909, Speer purchased 320 acres "more or less, situated within Pleasant Rump and Ocean Man Indian Reserve."⁹⁴ The site was located about 21.7 kilometres north of Kisby, a short distance from the town of Warmley. This site was closer to a school district than where they had been living previously. Later, John Speer bought a portion of this property from his son.⁹⁵

In 1918, the Speers sold their Warmley farm and moved the family (which now consisted of two additional hearing children, Tom and Bill) to Punnichy, Sask. to be near relatives. During the period 1918 to 1926, there are no records to indicate that the family owned property in the Punnichy area.⁹⁶ In 1926, they moved back to the Kisbey/Warmley area and began farming again. They grew vegetables and fruit, and raised horses, pure-bred Holstein cattle, chickens, and turkeys. In the evenings, Speer and his wife engaged in creative endeavours; he painted in oil or drew in charcoal, while Mary embroidered, crocheted, or tatted. In addition, they were active members of the community, attending church in the Warmley School. Several of the school teachers boarded with the family, and the ladies' club ("The Willing Workers") regularly met in their home.⁹⁷ Speer sold his farm in 1945 a couple of years after the death of his wife, and lived in the area with his children for the rest of his life.

James Bain (b. Jan. 2, 1891; d. Oct. 11, 1977), a born-deaf Scottish immigrant who had attended the Royal Institution for the Deaf and Dumb (1897-1904)⁹⁸ in Glasgow, Scotland and the Manitoba Institution (1904-1911), farmed about 16 kilometres northwest of Lipton in McDonald Hills for 16 years (1909-1925).⁹⁹ In the early spring of 1904, 13-year-old Bain came to Canada from Helensburgh in the county of Dumbartonshire, Scotland with his hearing parents and an older hearing brother. On May 30, 1904, his father, William Bain, and his mother, Isabella Brown, acquired 40 acres of farmland in McDonald Hills. One month later, on June 18, 1904, their son, Ernest William Murdoch Bain, obtained an adjacent 40-acre lot. On January 15, 1909, 13 days after turning 18, James Bain acquired property of his own, not far from his parents and brother. He later sold the land to his father (on May 11, 1925).¹⁰⁰ Within a year after selling his property, Bain left for Victoria, B.C. On December 27, 1926 in B.C., he married a deaf woman, Jane Campbell (b. July 23, 1894; d. Nov. 10, 1964), who was an alumna of the Manitoba Institution (1899-1909). They had two born-deaf children, William (b. Apr. 18, 1928; June 17, 1994) and Diana (b. June 23, 1932), both of whom later attended the British Columbia School for the Deaf in Vancouver (1935-1948 and 1939-1950 respectively).

Archibald ("Archie") Howard McDonald (b. July 30, 1888; d. Aug. 29, 1972) owned a homestead between Dysart and Cupar for 14 years (1909-1923).¹⁰¹ Previously owned by his hearing father (1906-1909), the land was transferred to McDonald as a gift on May 27, 1909. Much of the property was already cultivated and fenced, and included a house, stable, granary, and two wells. Deaf since birth, McDonald was an alumnus of the Manitoba Institution (1895-1906), Kendall School (1906-1907), and Gallaudet College (1907-1908/1909).¹⁰² On July 18, 1923, he married the former Muriel Jean McShane (b. Aug. 2, 1900; d. Mar. 27, 1976), who also had attended the Manitoba Institution (1910-1917), Kendall School (1917-1918), and Gallaudet College (1918-1920).¹⁰³ McDonald grew up in Fort Qu'Appelle, Sask. where his hearing family and relatives had been prominent figures since the beginning of the settlement. His grandfather, Archibald McDonald (b. Feb. 17, 1835; d. 1915), served as the Chief Factor of Hudson's Bay

Company, a fur-trading corporation, for half a century, retiring in May 1911. His uncle, Donald Hogarth McDonald (b. 1867; d. 1928), and father, John Archibald McDonald (b. Aug. 6, 1865; d. July 9, 1929), were members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs).¹⁰⁴

In January 1915, McDonald began teaching at the newly opened Saskatchewan School for the Deaf in Regina.¹⁰⁵ He later taught at the Manitoba School for the Deaf in Winnipeg (1916-1940) — where his wife occasionally worked as a substitute teacher — and at the Mackay Institution for Protestant Deaf-Mutes in Montréal (1940-1961).¹⁰⁶

Neil Calder (b. Mar. 5, 1863; d. Dec. 25, 1922) was an experienced farmer from Mount Forest, Ont. Known as “Old King Cetewayo” during his student days at the Ontario Institution (1873-1880), he left the province during the 1886-1887 period to start a farm of his own within 16 kilometres of Carman, Man.¹⁰⁷ On January 11, 1899 in Mount Forest, he married the former Jessie McEchern Brown (b. Nov. 6, 1879; d. June 6, 1946), also of the Ontario Institution (1884-1896).¹⁰⁸ The couple then spent the winter with their families, visiting friends and their alma mater. They left for Carman on the 11th of March that year, where they eventually raised four hearing children. A year after their marriage, they wrote to *The Canadian Mute* (their alma mater’s school paper) to state that “our crop turned out very good last year. We had 1,800 bushels of wheat off 18 acres and 523 bushels of oats off 10 acres.”¹⁰⁹ For 17 years (1908-1925),



Neil and Jessie Calder

Courtesy of Gordon Calder (Dawson Creek, B.C.)/Photo reproduction credit: Chun Louie and Joan K. Schlub, Gallaudet University Photo Services

the Calder family lived on a Saskatchewan homestead in the Cupar area.¹¹⁰ The husband is said to have once served there as a trustee on the Canterbury School Board No. 3345.¹¹¹ When he died following an operation in 1922, he was buried in Lipton. After his wife died and was buried in Regina, Sask., Calder’s body was moved to the cemetery in Regina as well.¹¹²

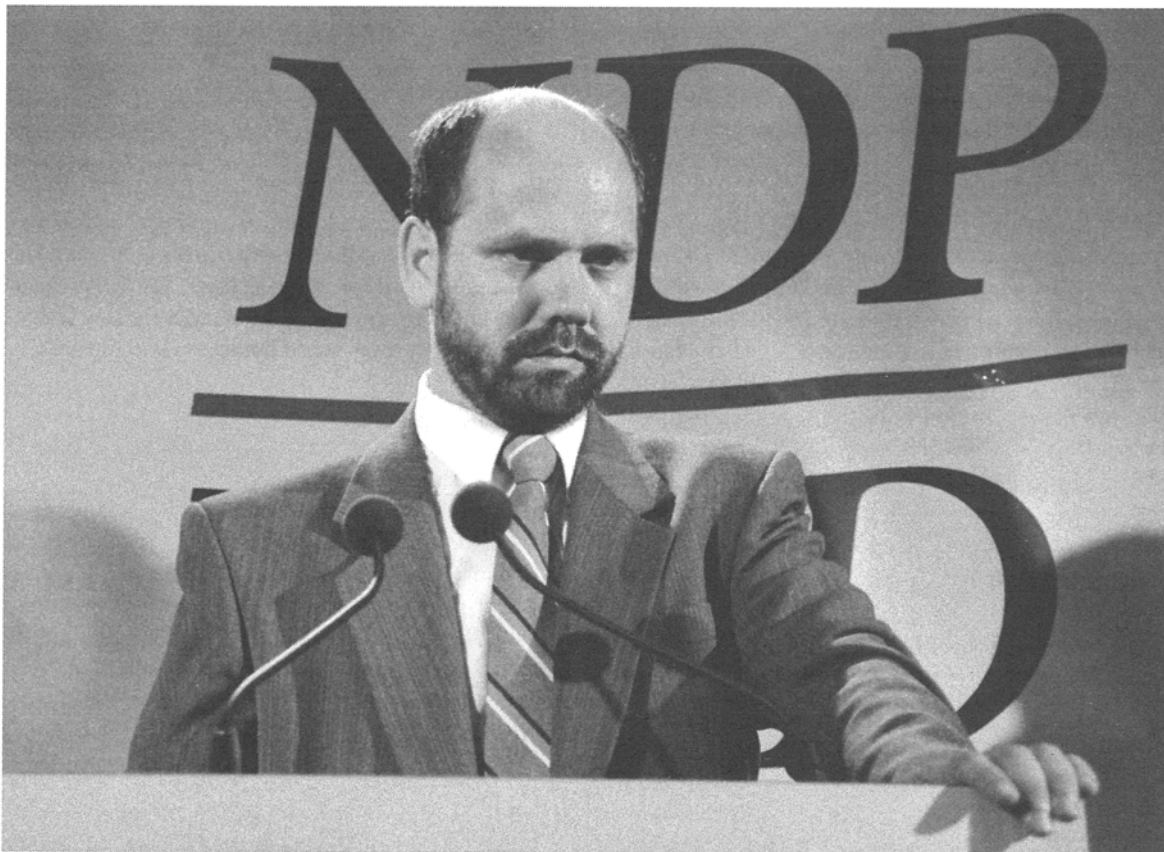
Other deaf people known to have lived in the Cupar-Dysart-Lipton area include the McLaren brothers — George David (b. May 29, 1893; d. Nov. 12, 1971) and John Charles (b. Mar. 1, 1895; d. Dec. 31, 1927). Born to deaf parents, they attended the Ontario Institution (1901-1910 and 1901-1911 respectively). In the early 1920s, they came to southern Saskatchewan from Osgoode, near Ottawa, Ont. with a hearing brother, Daniel Peter McLaren, to work for other farmers. All three excelled in ice hockey and played in the Lipton District Hockey League. It is not known whether they owned homesteads in the area, however.

Balrobie School District No. 2353

The village of Lipton, Sask. became incorporated in 1905. In December of that year, the 63 residents of the town and surrounding farms petitioned for a school for the district’s 20 hearing children between the ages of five and 16, some of whom had deaf parents. (The deaf children from the community were already attending the Manitoba Institution for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb in Winnipeg.) As a result of this petition, a committee was set up to study the educational needs of the hearing children. Thomas Bradshaw was the only deaf person on the committee.¹¹³ A graduate of the Ontario Institution for the Education and Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb in Belleville (1882-1891), he had homesteaded in the area with his deaf wife and three hearing children since 1904. On December 28, 1905, a local Justice of the Peace in Headlands executed the committee’s petition for the formation of a school district.¹¹⁴ The request was sent to the Commissioner of Education in Regina, but a few weeks later it was turned down by the Saskatchewan Department of Education.

On February 21, 1909, a second petition was drafted by a new three-member committee. Anson Parker Van Luven, who signed the declaration, was the committee’s only deaf member.¹¹⁵ He had attended the Ontario Institution (1872-1881) and moved to the Lipton area in 1906. This time the request to the Saskatchewan Department of Education was approved. On April 5, 1909, the first meeting of the new Balrobie School District No. 2353 was called to order in a cabin belonging to Arthur John Edward Clark, an alumnus of the Ontario Institution (1880-1891) who had moved to the area in 1904.¹¹⁶ Deaf and hearing attendees voted unanimously to build the school on a one-acre lot (Site #NW 34-23-14) purchased from a local resident.¹¹⁷ The new Balrobie School opened in the fall of 1909. By all accounts, Van Luven was the first deaf person to become a school trustee in Canada when he was elected to serve a three-year term on the Balrobie School District Board (1915-1918).

Occupations



Gary Malkowski, Canada's first Deaf member of a provincial parliament, at NDP campaign headquarters in August 1990

Photo Credit: M. Sharon Fineberg (Toronto, Ont.)

Contrary to the stereotype that considers deaf people incapable of working, limited to basic manual labour, or reduced to peddling manual alphabet cards, deaf Canadians have been successfully employed in many different professions for many years. Some of these careers are described in other sections of this book under such topics as education, visual arts, performing arts, sports, religion, organizations, and the printed page. Included in *this* chapter are brief glimpses into the lives of deaf people who have been (or still are) shop owners, engineers, farmers, lawyers, truck drivers, doctors, and politicians, to name only a few of the many ways in which deaf people have contributed to Canada's economy over the years.

Many of the late 19th- and early 20th-century Deaf community publications included brief mention of the employment of deaf Canadians. For example, the September 1, 1885 issue of *The Silent Nation* reported that William Rose of Brantford, Ont. was a "painter by trade," "John J. Jackson of Forwick, an old

pupil of the Belleville School, is a carpenter," and John Nicklin was a "mute carriage-maker."¹ Mention of women in these publications was unusual in the late 1800s and early- to mid-1900s, although deaf women have always played a significant role in the history of Canada's Deaf communities. Unfortunately, the contributions of deaf women have been almost invisible, partly because many were involved "behind the scenes," performing volunteer work or organizing religious, social, and cultural activities — efforts that did not seem to merit the same attention as their husbands' work. Historians also find it difficult to gather information on these women, because when publications mentioned them at all, they often identified women by their married names ("Mrs. [the husband's name]") rather than by their first and maiden names. This makes tracing their backgrounds and accomplishments difficult, if not impossible at times.

It was not until recent years that women have begun to be publicly recognized for their contributions to Canadian society

and hired in positions of prominence. The stories of a few of these women — often pioneers in education, religion, or the arts — can be found elsewhere in this book. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Canada, most married deaf women were wives, mothers, and homemakers — the occupations of almost all married women of that era. Single deaf women often worked as housekeepers. A few were employed as teachers in schools for deaf students; others worked as seamstresses and in millinery shops. *The Canadian Mute* of April 15, 1904, for example, contained a story on “Mrs. Duncan A. Morrison, née Miss Mary Ellen Graham ... [who] went to live with her uncle in Collingwood [Ont.], in order that she might pursue her favorite calling, millinery, at the departmental store of Bolden & Co., where she stayed for some time...”² Mary Ellen Morrison (b. May 12, 1880; d. Unknown) became deaf at the age of two years from scarlet fever and attended the Ontario Institution for the Education and Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb in Belleville (1888-1895). She was unusual in that she later went to work (possibly as a volunteer) in the Collingwood General Hospital. She served “... on the general staff busy nursing the sick and helpless and deeply absorbed in the thought of hospital work” for several months.³ Apparently after her wedding on October 19, 1898, she chose to give up both millinery and nursing to devote “all her time and talents to the duties of her new home, which her popular husband owns.”⁴

Some women held non-traditional jobs, including two women described in the February 1921 issue of *The Silent Worker*:

*Two young ladies who have made a name for themselves are Miss Muriel Kennedy and Miss Isabel Barker. They are both employed by the Great-Western Telegraph Company. An article in the Toronto Globe tells how these girls successfully operate the automatic sending and operating machines and are attaining a success beyond the expectations of the wire chief. These young women entered the operating department at a time when the work was unusually heavy and notwithstanding their handicap they fitted into the department with marked success. The wire chief, in speaking of them, remarked: “It is impossible to put anything over on them.”*⁵

Another woman in a non-traditional job had brief mention twice in *The Manitoba Echo* (in 1931 and again in 1939):

*Miss Ida MacGregor, the lady compositor who learned the printing trade at this school, has been employed at the Wawanesa Independent office the past twelve years. She holds a membership ticket in the Canadian Weekly Newspaper Association....*⁶

*Miss Ida MacGregor is still holding her own in the composing room of the Wawanesa Independent. She has been working there for nearly twenty years.*⁷

Owners of Harness and Shoe Shops

In towns and villages throughout Canada, enterprising deaf people set up their own businesses manufacturing and/or sell-

List of Trades & Professions for Deaf-Mutes (1874)

In 1874, Thomas Widd, a deaf Englishman who became the founding principal (1870-1883) of the Protestant Institution for Deaf-Mutes (now the Mackay Center for Deaf Children) in Montréal, wrote *A Companion and Guide for Deaf-Mutes*. In his book, he listed and commented on the following common trades and professions that were available to deaf men and women in the late 19th century:

SHOEMAKING: Easily learned; constant work in town or country; many deaf-mutes earn comfortable livings by it.

TAILORING: A good trade, and regular work, suitable for country or town. Open to men and women.

CARPENTRY AND CABINETMAKING: A good business for deaf-mutes.

FARMING: A good and healthy occupation and should be largely engaged in by deaf-mutes, especially in Canada and the United States.

COOPERING: This trade is soon learned by deaf-mutes, but it is not easy to obtain work at it in every town or village, as in some towns little or no coopering is done.

BOOKBINDING: A good business for deaf-mutes in towns where there are binderies.

PRINTING AND SETTING TYPE: Intelligent deaf-mutes and semi-mutes do well at this profession. It is confined to towns and cities where there are printing-offices.

PAINTING AND GLAZING: Plenty of work in this trade in summer. In winter, in Canada and the Northern States, painting is suspended. Few deaf-mutes engage in it.

WOOD-ENGRAVING: This is confined to large towns. It is a good profession for clever deaf-mutes.

HARNESS-MAKING: This trade is a capital one for most deaf-mutes. Work can be obtained at it in town and country all the year round.

WEAVING: A good trade for men and women where there are cotton or woollen factories.

BRUSH-MAKING: Regular work can be had at this trade in most large towns.

CUTLERY: This is confined to towns where knives and cutting instruments are made.

(Continued)

List of Trades & Professions ... cont'd

BAKING: This trade is good in town and country, but it is not very healthy.

CARVING: A good business for city deaf-mutes.

COPYING-CLERKS: These are poorly paid, and few find work. Confined to cities.

CIGAR-MAKERS: Work at this business can only be had in towns where cigars are made.

WINDOW-SASH MAKERS: Many deaf-mutes work at this trade. There are factories in town and country.

TANNING: This, though not very clean work, is considered healthy, and many deaf-mutes find regular employment at it. Town or country.

ENGINE-FITTING: A few deaf-mutes have learned this trade. Good workmen receive high wages.

JAPANNERS: Confined to large towns. A good trade if regular work can be obtained.

WATCH-MAKING: A good profession for clever deaf-mutes with good eyesight. Chiefly confined to large towns.

GARDENING: This is a good employment when work can be had all the year.

MACHINIST: A very useful trade for many deaf-mutes. Good wages are given to good workmen. Most towns in America have machine shops and employ many men.

MASONRY AND BRICKLAYING: In the north of the United States and Canada, these trades are at a standstill most of the winter, and work is scarce. There is plenty of work at good wages all the summer. Few deaf-mutes in these trades.

TURNING: This is a good business for deaf-mutes where constant work can be had. It is confined to large towns and machine shops.

LITHOGRAPHING: A city trade; good for some deaf-mutes.

FRENCH POLISHING: A good trade for deaf-mutes in towns, where this business gives regular work.

BRASS-WORKER AND IRON FOUNDER: Regular employment for good workmen in large towns.

JEWELLERS: These find work in large towns. Few deaf-mutes are jewellers.

MARBLE-POLISHING: A good business for deaf-mutes in cities.

HOUSE-WORK: This is the best kind of employment for deaf-mute women. It makes them good housekeepers when they marry. There need to be no deaf-mute woman out of work, if she is willing and able to take to house-work.

DRESSMAKING AND MILLINERY: These are good for [female] deaf-mutes in large towns, and in the country.

ARTIFICIAL FLOWERS: Many girls find employment in England as artificial florists.

PORTRAIT-PAINTING: There are a few deaf-mute women who earn their living by painting and coloring portraits in large towns.

SHIRT-MAKING: This gives work to many women, but it is hard for them to earn a living by sewing.

MACHINE-SEWING: There are many girls earning comfortable livings by working on sewing machines in large towns.

MACHINE-SEWING: There are many girls earning comfortable livings by working on sewing machines in large towns.

FACTORY WORK: In some towns, many women are engaged in factories, but this kind of work does not seem to suit deaf-mute women, and few engage in it.⁸

ing needed goods to their deaf and hearing neighbours. Harness shops were profitable as long as horses were the main motive power. Shoe shops were always good enterprises. Samuel Hawkins, Sr. (b. Sept. 5, 1868; d. Dec. 9, 1934), a deaf Irish immigrant, owned a harness shop in Rounthwaite, Man. for 14 years (1890-1904), and later operated a similar business in Lipton, Sask. for 29 years (1905-1934). Deaf since birth, Hawkins received his education at the Claremont Institution for the Deaf and Dumb in Dublin, Ireland. In either 1888 or 1889, he left his native country for Winnipeg, Man., where he found employment at the Great West Saddlery Company, at that time the largest harness producer in Western Canada.

In 1890, Hawkins moved to the unincorporated village of Rounthwaite, approximately 40 kilometres southeast of Brandon, where he established his first harness shop. It was



Hawkins' harness shop in Rounthwaite, Man. (1904)
The Silent Echo/Gallaudet University Archives

later destroyed by fire “which broke out in an adjoining building. His [Hawkins’] loss amounted to \$900. It [the shop] was insured for \$433.”⁹ In 1901, he married an Austrian-born woman, Anna Mary Lennius (later spelled Lennon) (b. Feb. 25, 1881; d. June 15, 1953), who had become deaf at three months of age from spinal fever. She and her deaf brother, Nicholas, had been students at the Manitoba Institution for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb in Winnipeg (1893-1898 and 1893-1900 respectively). Hawkins and his wife had seven deaf children; two died young, and five survived and later attended the Manitoba Institution.

One day in 1903, Hawkins and a small group of deaf people living around Boissevain, Man. got together to discuss ways of obtaining free land being offered under Canada’s Homestead Act of 1872. In early 1904, they and their families left for Qu’Appelle Valley in the provisional District of Assiniboia, North-West Territories (present-day southern Saskatchewan), where they obtained homesteads in the neighbourhoods of Cupar, Dysart, and Lipton. Hawkins settled near McDonald Hills on Jumping Deer Creek, about 15 kilometres northwest of Lipton. Between early November and late March each year (1905-1925), he worked in Lipton, where he owned a harness shop on Railway Street (now Main Street). The other months were devoted to cultivating his fields. With the advent of self-propelled tractors around 1925, Hawkins’ harness business began to wane. One of the children moved to Calgary, and the rest of the Hawkins family scattered to such cities as Vancouver, Regina, Winnipeg, and Toronto during the economic hardships of the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Another deaf harness maker in the early 20th century was Noah LaBelle (b. Jan. 25, 1877; d. Aug. 20, 1976), a graduate of the Ontario Institution for the Education and Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb in Belleville (1884-1893). Between 1912 and 1952, LaBelle owned a harness and shoe repair shop in the village of Fort Qu’Appelle, Sask. LaBelle was born deaf at Clarence Creek in St. Albert, Ont. (near Ottawa) to hearing French-Canadian parents, Joseph and Scholastigine (née Beauchamp) LaBelle. Following his graduation from the Ontario Institution, he operated his own shoe shop in St. Albert for about two years before moving to Toronto, where he landed a job with the Boeckh Brothers Brush Factory, and later at

Adam’s Harness Shop. For a couple of months in 1902, he travelled through the eastern part of the United States in pursuit of better employment, but soon returned to Canada.

On December 29, 1903, LaBelle married Flora McGregor (b. Dec. 23, 1877; d. July 28, 1963), a deaf woman from Toronto. His wife lost her hearing at the age of two and half from an attack of spinal fever, and received her education at the Ontario Institution (1886-1895), where she met her future husband. The couple moved to Winnipeg, and LaBelle worked for eight years (1904-1912) at the Great West Saddlery Company.

Wanting his own harness and shoe repair shop, LaBelle left Winnipeg in 1912 for Fort Qu’Appelle. There he set up an enterprising business that lasted for 40 years (1912-1952). He was four months short of his 100th birthday when he passed away in 1976. Some time after his death, a poem about LaBelle’s harness shop was composed by Jim White, a close friend who farmed north of the Fort Qu’Appelle Valley in Saskatchewan.

The Harness Shop

by Jim White

*The harness shop at Fort Qu’Appelle
Was owned by Mr. N. LaBelle.
And memory still fondly recalls
The things that hung within its walls.*

*Bridles plain and bridles fancy
Fit for steppers keen and prancy.
Breeching fine with brasses gleaming,
Martingales and lines for teaming,
Sweat pads were of yellow hue
While harness felt was mostly blue.
The buggy whips from ceiling hung
Were much admired by the young —
Oh boy, I wish that in my hands
Was that one with the shining bands.*

*And rivets, chains and harness rings,
And all the many little things
We needed when the motive force
Was still provided by the horse.*

*Familiar odours there were too.
The smell of leather that was new,
Of harness oil and cobbler’s wax
All comes to memory without tax.*

*And Noah there — his clever hands
With needles, awl and waxen strands.
Could sew a strap or mend a shoe,
And could convey his thoughts to you
Or pluck from out a youngster’s ear,
A coin, and then amazement sheer
Would show in his expressive face,
For it had vanished without trace.*



Flora and Noah LaBelle’s 1903 wedding announcement photographs. The “1902” written on the photo (presumably by a family member) is incorrect

The Silent Echo/Courtesy of Florence (née LaBelle) McKenzie (Granby, Colo.)

*The things there were for him to mend
Came in a stream without an end.
A broken tug, a shoe well worn,
A binder canvas that was torn,
Dull skates to sharpen, straps to splice.
He was himself no slough on ice.
A catcher's mitt, a busted ball,
His speedy fingers fixed them all.*

*So here's to our Noah LaBelle!
He served this district long and well.*

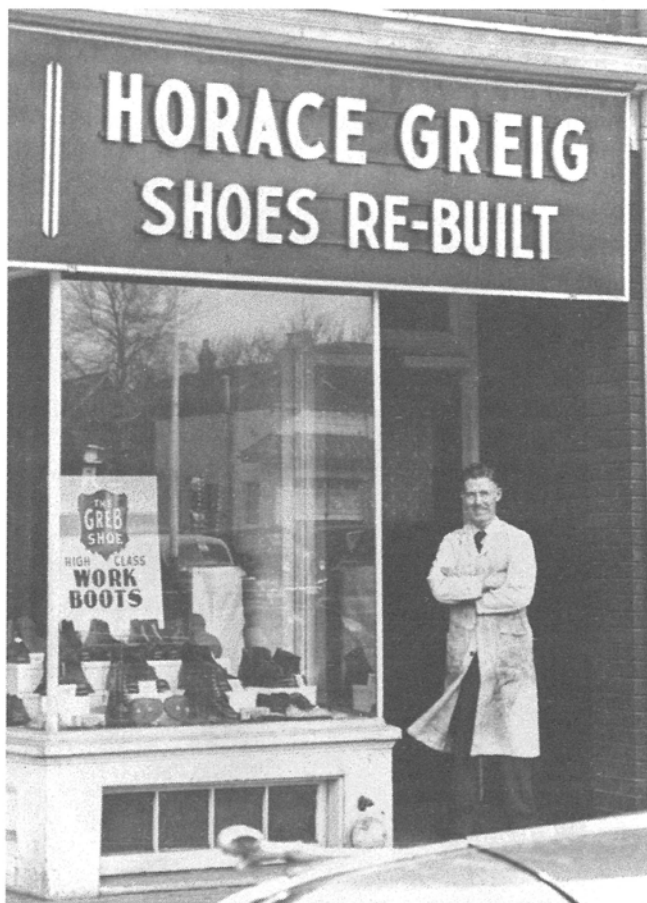


M.O. Smith's shoe shop in Winnipeg, Man. (1904)
The Silent Echo/Gallaudet University Archives

M.O. Smith (b. circa 1866; d. Unknown), an Icelandic gentleman whose real name was Magnus Olafur Sigwedarson (or Sigordson), owned and operated a shoe shop on River Avenue in Winnipeg from the mid-1880s to the early 1900s.¹⁰ Smith, one of the first deaf residents of that city, hung a large, boot-shaped sign over the door to his shop to advertise his business. He sold the shoe shop in the early fall of 1906, and left Winnipeg on November 21st of that year for California to join his wife and children, who had been visiting relatives in the states. The family made their new home on Mastick Street in San Jose, Calif., where Smith worked at Therold's Shoe Store.

Another deaf shoe-shop owner, William Henry Longheed (b. Sept. 18, 1878; d. June 15, 1905), established his business in New Westminster, B.C.¹¹ Longheed had been educated at the Ontario Institution for the Education and Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb (1889-1897) in Belleville, but left the area a year after graduation to seek his fortune "beyond the Canadian Rockies."¹² Known as "Willie" to his deaf friends and hearing customers, he prospered at his trade and also participated in football, baseball, and hockey until his health began to deteriorate in January 1905. He died five months later at the Vancouver home of his sister.

Horace Richard Henry Greig (b. Apr. 28, 1893; d. July 7, 1971) was a Toronto shoe repairman. For many years, he owned a store on Danforth Avenue in the city's business district. Born in England, Greig was educated at the West of England Institution for the Deaf and Dumb in Exeter, in the county of Devonshire (1906-1909). It was there that he first received training in shoe repair. After graduating, he was apprenticed to an Exeter bootmaker until his family moved to Toronto in 1914. Soon after arriving, Greig got a job in a shoe repair shop on Broadview Avenue, where "he worked seventy-five hours a week for \$10.00."¹³ By 1916, at the age of 22, he had saved enough money to start his own business in a store on Danforth Avenue, which he rented for \$32.50 per month. He invested the rest of his money in shoe repair equipment, leather, and other necessities required to operate his shoe shop. He worked hard and was soon rewarded with a thriving business. "Naturally I had to work like blazes to keep going and soon I was repairing men's shoes, putting on soles and heels at the rate of three pairs an hour. My bench was near the window and the cop on the beat used to bring children to watch me at work. I can see them yet, noses pressed hard against the window."¹⁴ In 1934, Greig moved his shop further up the street to 235 Danforth, a rental in the heart of the business district. Ten years later, he bought the premise and continued working there until his retirement in 1954.



Greig's shoe repair shop in Toronto, Ont. (1949)
Courtesy of the Ontario Mission of the Deaf (Toronto, Ont.)



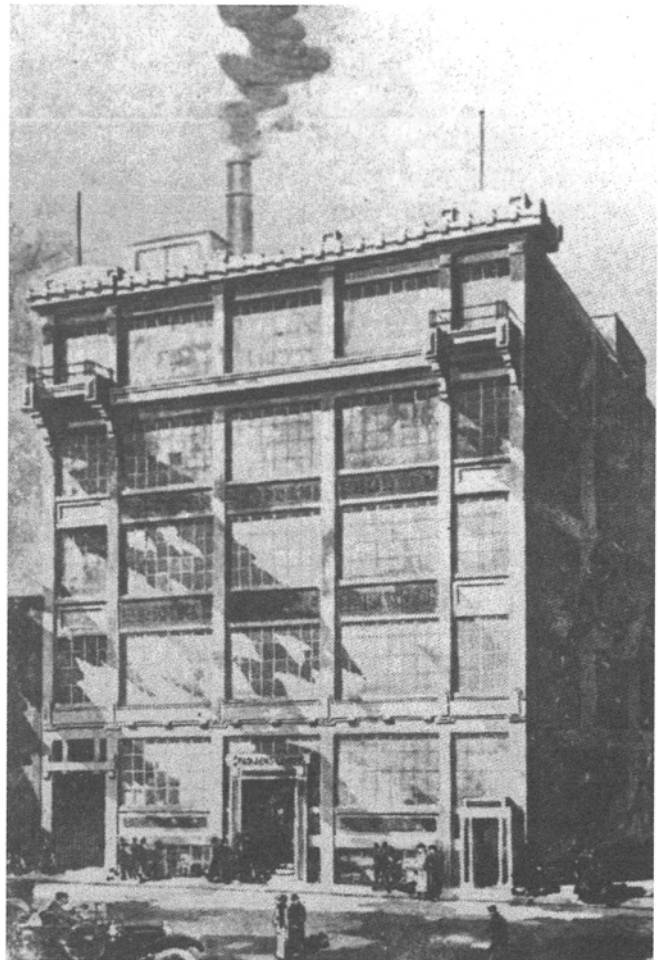
Frederick Brigden, president of Brigdens Limited
The Silent Worker/Gallaudet University Archives

Wood Engraver

The first artistic wood engraving business in Ontario, if not in all of Canada, was established in Toronto in the early 1870s by two deaf British immigrants, Frederick Brigden (b. Apr. 20, 1841; d. Apr. 16, 1917) and Henry B. Beale (b. circa 1846; d. Jan. 1, 1921).

Brigden was born at Worthing, in the county of Sussex, England. He became severely deaf at the age of 11 following an attack of scarlet fever. For eight years (1852-1860), he was a pupil at the Institution for the Deaf and Dumb in Brighton, England, and later taught there for several years. The proprietor of the *Illustrated London News* was visiting the institution one day and was impressed with Brigden's amateur art work. Encouraged by this attention, Brigden moved to London, England, where he was given free training in the engraving house of William J. Linton, a 19th-century Englishman renowned for art and literature. While studying the trade of engraving, Brigden performed missionary work among deaf people during his leisure hours and undertook a new mission in the eastern part of the city under the auspices of the London Association in Aid of the Deaf and Dumb.

Very little information has been found on Brigden's partner, Henry B. Beale. However, it is known that he was deafened at a very early age and that he and Brigden were schoolmates. In 1872, Brigden and Beale moved to Canada and established the Toronto Engraving Company, a wood engraving business. While there, Brigden also started the "Deaf-Mute Bible Class of Toronto." When Beale returned to England in 1886, Brigden acquired full ownership of the wood engraving business. In



Home of Brigdens Limited (1912)
The Deaf Canadian/Gallaudet University Archives

1888, he moved from the corner of King and Jordan streets to a larger building on King and Bay streets. In due course, he brought his hearing sons, George and Frederick, into partnership with him, and appointed himself president of the firm — which he called Brigdens Limited. In 1912, he completed a new six-storey building for his business at 162 West Richmond Street in Toronto. At that time, seven deaf people were employed in the departments of photography, engraving, printing, and machinery. He also established a branch of Brigdens Limited in Winnipeg, supervised by one of his sons.

In addition to being a successful entrepreneur, Brigden was a student of art and literature, and a religious man. He founded a literary organization called the Saturday Club and was also an active member of All Saints Church. He organized the Toronto Mission to the Deaf, which ministered to deaf people in the city of Toronto and surrounding area. In February 1917, Brigden caught a chill while attending a graveside service for an indigent deaf woman in Toronto. Following a two-month illness, he died on April 16, three days short of his 76th birthday. He was buried at St. James Cemetery beside his wife, the former Frances Hannah Higgins, who had died on December 16, 1894. They left two hearing sons and two hearing daughters.

Employment in Ontario in 1894

A report given at the fourth Biennial Convention of the Ontario Deaf-Mute Association (June 16-19, 1894) lists former students of the Ontario Institution for the Education and Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb in Belleville who were employed: three artists, five bookbinders, one brassfitter, five bakers, one bailiff, one butcher, two brushmakers, one barber, two cigar makers, one copyist, six carpenters, three clerks, two cabinet makers, three carriage makers, two coopers, five domestic servants, 85 in domestic occupations [homemakers or maids?], 18 dressmakers, one engraver, one fancy worker, 161 farmers, one stained glass worker, one gardener, one ice merchant, one lockmaker, one lithographer, one lumberman, one nun, two photographers, eight painters, one packer, 17 printers, four sawmill workers, 41 shoemakers, one seamstress, nine tailors, one teamster, three teachers, two woodcarvers, two wireworkers, four woolen mill workers, one woodturner, and one watchman. Forty-five women listed their occupation as “married,” and another 105 former students were unclassified.¹⁵

Farmers

Farming was an occupation that often attracted deaf people. Some of the schools for deaf students included agricultural studies as part of their vocational curriculum. The Ontario Institution for the Education and Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb in Belleville, for example, maintained an active farm on the school grounds for many years, where male students could learn about growing crops and tending animals. Some of these students had come from farming families, and their training was put to practical use if they returned home after graduation.



Alexander David Swanson's graduation photograph (Gallaudet College, 1901)

The Canadian Mute/ Gallaudet University Archives

Others were among the settlers who migrated westward during the early 1900s, homesteading in what is now Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta.¹⁶

One outstanding example of the agricultural abilities of deaf people was found on the homestead of Alexander David Swanson (b. Aug. 29, 1878; d. Apr. 3, 1943), a progressive farmer in Alberta during the first half of the 20th century. Swanson was born in Dumfries, Scotland, and lost his hearing at the age of nine months following a smallpox vaccination. In 1881, he immigrated to Canada with

his parents and settled first in Manitoba and later in Ontario. He then attended the Ontario Institution (1885-1895) in Belleville, Kendall School (1895-1896), and Gallaudet College (1896-1901) in Washington, D.C., graduating with a bachelor of arts degree. His instructors at Gallaudet encouraged Swanson to become a teacher of deaf students, but he felt he did not have enough patience for such a job. Instead, he returned to his family (who had moved to Alberta) and homesteaded a section of land northeast of Spruceville (near Lacombe), Alta.

In a letter to *The Canadian Mute* dated November 1, 1901, Swanson extolled the virtues of “Northern” Alberta, distinguishing it from the other parts of Alberta because of its differing soil, climate, and types of occupations available. “Here no one denies the rank fertility of the soil,” he wrote. “It is a sandy, black loam with a sub-soil of clay.... Under favorable circumstances, grain grows very well here.”¹⁷ The land at his first homestead site was so heavily timbered that Swanson sold it in 1902 and took up a site in Spruceville, south of his parents’ home. After hiring a man with a team of oxen to break up the ground, Swanson farmed in the summers and worked in lumber camps in the winters. In 1922, tired of living as a bachelor and struggling on his homestead alone, he rented his farm to a neighbour and started working as a Linotype operator in Indiana. When he returned home for a visit three years later, he met Blanche Henderson (b. Aug. 13, 1897; d. Dec. 31, 1979), who was living at that time in Okotoks, Alta. Henderson was born in Kingsville, Ont., and had moved with her family to Alberta in 1902. While travelling by train to her family’s new home, she contracted scarlet fever, followed by mastoiditis and hearing loss. She attended public schools in the Okotoks area, where she was the only deaf child enrolled. Swanson and Henderson were married on June 1, 1926 — he was nearing the age of 50, she was 28. They first lived on rented property in the Lakeside area of Alberta. Following the birth of their first child, Ron, they moved to the farm in Spruceville. There they had three more children, two boys (A. Gordon and William) and a daughter (Elizabeth [Betty]). All of the children were hearing.

To make sure that their first-born learned to speak properly, the Swansons hired a hearing man named Karl to work at the farm. Young Karl was from Norway and was more fluent in his native tongue than in English, so Ron learned to speak Norwegian, as well as broken English laced with a heavy Norwegian accent. Later, Swanson’s wife, whose speech was quite good, had to teach the children proper English pronunciation. Both Swanson and his wife were avid readers, and they instilled a love of the printed page in their children as well. The children remember that there was always an abundance of reading material on hand at their home.

Swanson was a very progressive farmer and took great pride in developing both his homestead and herds. Frequently other local farmers would ask his advice on farming techniques and ways to better develop their livestock. Even during the Depression, the family had adequate food and clothing, thanks to Swanson’s agricultural expertise. His first cattle herd was comprised of purebred shorthorns, but he slowly changed to Ayrshires, which he considered to be a better dairy animal. He was one of the first farmers in the Lacombe area to enter a pro-

Occupations of Former Manitoba School Students, 1914

The following statistics on former students were presented during a speech at the 1914 opening ceremonies of the Manitoba School for the Deaf: "Males — farmers, 56; civil servants, 9 (all in the post office); printers, 15; carpenters, 7; salaried positions, 9; plasterers, 2; painters, 2; decorators, 6; moved from the province, 4; unknown, 16; ... deceased, 6; ... Females — married, 28; at home, 55; salaried positions, 7; milliners, 2; domestics, 6; deceased, 7; moved from the province, 4; unknown, 13."¹⁸

gram of cross-breeding with purebred Yorkshire hogs to develop stronger litters. However, his favorite animals were his horses, mostly Clydesdales, which he used on the farm and bred for sale.

A religious man with a social conscience, Swanson empathized with the thousands of unemployed people during the 1930s. He employed a number of deaf men to help on the farm, including George Young, Harry Likiforuk, Fred Boudier, Mike Goulet, and Bill Ewasiuk. Ethel Slaughter, a deaf woman, worked for Mrs. Swanson during the early 1940s. Swanson passed away on April 3, 1943 of cancer. Because it was so hard to get good help during the war years, his wife was forced to sell the farm. With the assistance of Ewasiuk, who was still working for the family when Swanson died, she was able to move the family to a site at Bentley, Alta. that was closer to the high school. She died of heart failure on December 31, 1979 in Calgary.

Lawyers¹⁹

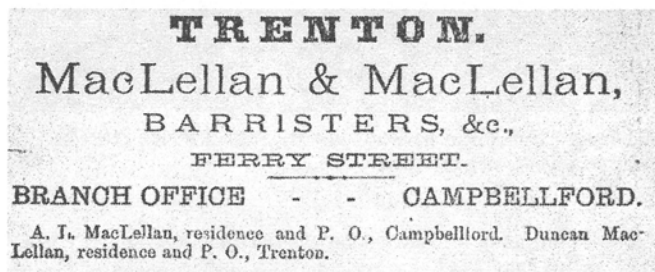
North America's first deaf lawyer on record is Archibald Leitch MacLellan (b. circa 1831; d. Aug. 3, 1902), who was admitted as a solicitor in 1860 following examination at Osgoode Hall Law School in Toronto, Ont. In 1865, his younger deaf brother, Duncan MacLellan (b. circa 1836; d. Feb. 8, 1920), was also admitted by the Law Society of Upper Canada (now the province of Ontario) as solicitor.²⁰ Neither were called to the bar, however. The MacLellan brothers were born at Finnart House, on the beautiful banks of the Clyde River, between Greenock and Gourrock in Scotland. Their father, John MacLellan, owned and operated a large fleet of ships trading to the East and West Indies under the company name, *John MacLellan & Co., East India Merchants and Ship Owners, Greenock and Glasgow*. Both Archibald and Duncan were congenitally deaf. They received their primary education at the Glasgow Institution for the Deaf and Dumb. Archibald entered the institution as Pupil No. 236 on September 4, 1839, and Duncan was admitted on August 13, 1844 as Pupil No. 293.²¹ Both were eight years old when they enrolled. Sometime after leaving school, they moved to Canada, where they began study-

ing law at Osgoode Hall Law School. Because there was no formal academic legal training at Osgoode Hall at that time, the MacLellan brothers learned their trade by clerking for three years with local solicitors before their names were entered on the court rolls.

Archibald, the elder brother, first became a clerk in the office of John Bell, K.C., solicitor for the Grand Trunk Railway. He later worked in the office of the Hon. Lewis Wallbridge, K.C., who became chief justice of Manitoba in December 1882. The following is an excerpt about Archibald that appeared in Canadian publications:

On the completion of his studies, he presented himself for examination in the regular way with thirty-one other law students at Osgoode Hall, Toronto. He passed with flying colours, coming out top of the list; but when he presented himself before the Court to sign the Roll, the judges stopped him and expressed their astonishment at a deaf and dumb gentleman applying for admission as a lawyer. After hearing the testimony of his masters and other experts as to his capability in conducting the work of a lawyer's office, etc., the judges finally decided to admit him to the Roll [in 1860].²²

His younger brother, Duncan, clerked in the office of John O. Hare, K.C. (a clerk of the peace and county crown attorney



The MacLellan brothers' business card as it appeared in the 1879-1880 Directory of the County of Hastings

Courtesy of the Corby Public Library (Belleville, Ont.)

in Belleville, Ont.), where he was responsible for the criminal business, chancery business, and special conveyancing for the county.²³ When his term ended, Duncan wrote his examinations with 63 other students from all parts of Ontario. He easily passed the exam and was then admitted to practice as a solicitor by the Law Society of Upper Canada in 1865. Reference to Duncan's successful examination appeared in *The Law Journal* of 1865: "The case of Mr. Duncan MacLellan, of Belleville, is deserving of special notice, for though both deaf and dumb he passed a most creditable examination."²⁴

The MacLellan brothers were considered "men of influence in social and financial circles."²⁵ Together they carried on a flourishing law practice for many years in the Ontario cities of Campbellford and Trenton, under the company name of MacLellan and MacLellan. (For a time, Archibald was also a partner with L.U.C. Titus in Trenton, "a gentleman who has a large law practice.")²⁶ The brothers excelled in common law and were frequently employed by other lawyers to draft special

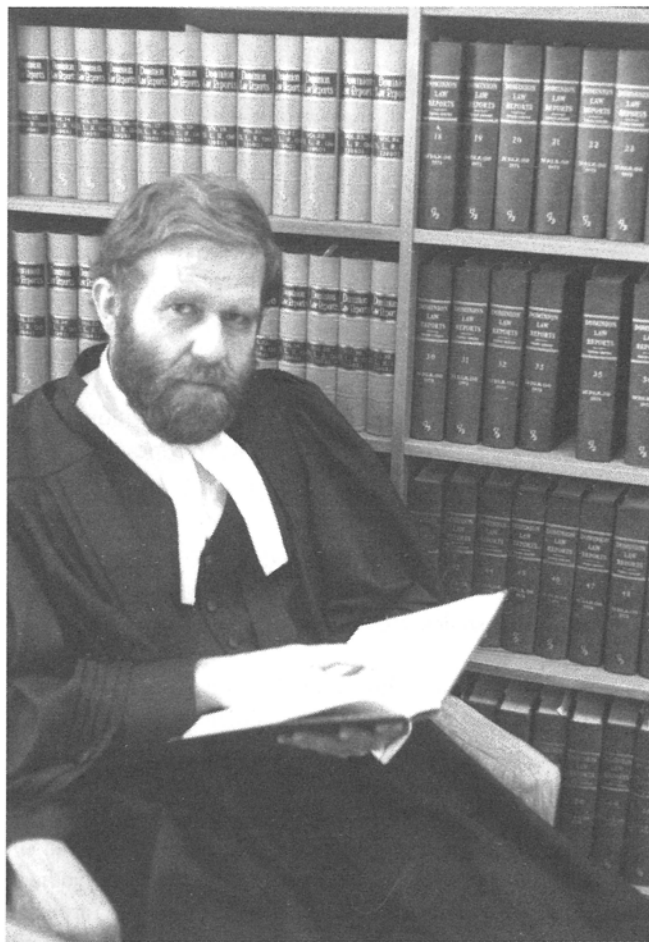


Duncan MacLellan in Scottish Highland attire (1907)

The Canadian/Gallaudet University Archives

bills of complaint and other papers peculiar to chancery practice. They did not use “visible speech” (lipreading) and, although the single-handed alphabet was used exclusively by deaf people in the area, the two lawyers communicated by the British double-handed alphabet with other lawyers who learned it. It is also reported that the MacLellan brothers had an unmarried sister working for them as an interpreter and office helper for many years.²⁷ She died shortly before the turn of the century.

The MacLellans were involved in settling numerous disputes regarding titles to mines and land during the gold rushes that occurred in 1866-1867 and again in 1880 in the Madoc regions (approximately 48 kilometres north of Belleville). When the mining industry declined some years later, they moved from Campbellford to Trenton, where they continued to enjoy a lucrative practice on Ferry Street until Archibald died in 1902. Unlike his older brother, Duncan never married. He remained in independent practice until 1907, when his name disappeared from the law lists. It is known that he lived a lonely life following the death of his brother. When Duncan’s health declined in late January or early February 1920, he was admitted to the House of Providence in Kingston, Ont., where he was cared for by the nuns until he passed away on February 8th of that year. Both MacLellan brothers are believed to be buried in



Henry Vlug (1989)

Photo Credit: Cheryl A. Winter (Vancouver, B.C.)

unmarked graves in Trenton’s Mount Evergreen Cemetery.

More than a century passed before Canada’s third deaf lawyer — Henry Vlug (b. Oct. 4, 1944) — appeared on the scene. Born in Holland in the town of Nieuwer Amstel, Vlug came with his parents to Powell River, B.C. as a child in 1952. Shortly after his arrival, he contracted TB meningitis, which destroyed his hearing. He was educated at the Jericho Hill Provincial School for the Deaf in Vancouver (1956-1962) and Gallaudet College (B.A., 1962-1966). On August 26, 1967, he married Leonor Henrietta Lindsay (b. Sept. 19, 1945) of Los Angeles, Calif., who received degrees from Gallaudet (B.A., 1963-1967) and the University of British Columbia (M.Ed. in Adult Education, 1994). The couple returned to Canada where Vlug continued his studies, receiving a masters in biology from Simon Fraser University (M.Sc., 1967-1972), and attending classes at the University of British Columbia Diploma Program for Teachers of the Deaf (1969-1970). He then entered the teaching profession, first at the Jericho Hill Provincial School (1970-1973) and later at the Model Secondary School for the Deaf in Washington, D.C. (1973-1980).

When he returned to Canada in 1980, Vlug decided to study law for a change. “Even before going to law school, I was fighting legal matters on behalf of deaf people,” he said. “Law seemed natural for me to step into and become a real profes-

sional in what I was doing anyway.”²⁸ He studied at the University of British Columbia (LL.B., 1982-1985).

Although Archibald and Duncan MacLellan were the first two deaf Canadian solicitors (and later barristers as well) in the 1860s, they were never called to the bar. Vlug is regarded as Canada’s first deaf person to achieve this standing (on June 13, 1986). A short time later, he began to receive deaf clients at his private office on West Georgia Street in downtown Vancouver. He later moved to his current address on Victoria Drive. Instead of focusing on cases involving conveyancing, buying or selling of houses, or corporate law, Vlug specializes in legal disputes that may result in greater equality on behalf of deaf people. His role as an advocate is also expressed through his active membership in many organizations of the deaf, such as the Canadian Association of the Deaf and the Greater Vancouver Association of the Deaf. Vlug urges deaf people “not to accept ‘no.’ Go demand your rights, you have the rights now — it’s up to you to demand them.”²⁹

Postal Workers

One of the earliest postal workers in Canada was Frederick James Titus Boal (b. May 6, 1872; d. Oct. 15, 1936). He was employed as assistant postmaster in the village of Sussex, N.B. for 12 years (1889-1901). Deafened from spinal meningitis at the age of nine months, Boal received his education at the Institution for the Deaf and Dumb (1878-1882) in Halifax, N.S. and at the Fredericton Institution for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb (1882-1889) in New Brunswick. His hearing father, Robert D. Boal (b. 1832; d. 1898), was an independent contractor who operated a small postal office in Sussex (1858-1876). When it was taken over by the Canadian Post Office (now Canada Post), the senior Boal was promoted to the postmastership of a larger office (1876-1898). The younger Boal began working as his father’s assistant soon after he completed his education at the Fredericton Institution; he became acting postmaster for a couple of weeks during his father’s illness in late 1898. Less than three weeks after his father’s death in December of that year, however, Boal was replaced by a hearing man, but retained his former position as assistant until he resigned in 1901. In 1904, he became the founding president of the New Brunswick Deaf-Mute Association, and spent the rest of his life as a missionary among deaf Maritimers.

Thanks to the efforts of the Hon. William Mulock, Postmaster General of Canada during the Laurier government (1896-1911), doors began to open for more deaf people to work in the postal service. Under Laurier’s initial plan, six deaf postal clerks were to be hired, all based in Toronto. That number soon increased. Deaf publications praised the new employment opportunity and predicted that:

This is a kind of work for which the educated deaf are peculiarly well adapted, and at which they should be very successful. The chief requirements are manual dexterity, quick apprehension, scrupulous accuracy and a fair amount of education; and in the first three of these qualities, at least, the deaf excel. A large number of the pupils who have graduated from the Institution [pre-

*sumably the school in Belleville] are fully competent to successfully fill these positions, and we have no doubt that the Postmaster-General will have little difficulty in securing the six deaf clerks he at present desires. We should judge that his chief trouble will result from an embarrassment of riches rather than from the reverse. It is to be hoped that the new policy thus inaugurated will soon be greatly extended, and that it will not be long before many of the deaf will be employed not only in this but in various other public departments at both Ottawa and Toronto, and that they will soon be accorded a recognized position in the Civil Service lists of Canada and of the various provinces thereof.*³⁰

Little or no personal information could be found on many of these individuals, but it is clear that deaf people did take advantage of the new employment opportunity. The first to qualify for a permanent Civil Service position in the postal service under the new directive was Herbert Wesley Roberts (b. July 23, 1878; d. June 9, 1955), who had attended the Ontario Institution for the Education and Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb in Belleville (1891-1897).³¹ He entered in 1905 and served as a postal clerk in the Toronto office. Others soon followed. The October 1, 1908 issue of *The Canadian Mute* included the following information:

*Three years ago the Dominion Government decided to give a number of the deaf employment in the post office department of the Civil Service to test their ability, and the experiment has proved so successful beyond expectations that they have been put on the permanent staff. A short time ago, one of the Toronto evening papers had a long article in one of its issues about the deaf employed in the Toronto post office, in which the heads of the department spoke in flattering terms of their ability. All this speaks well for the deaf. It will not be out of place to mention that since then several have been taken on in the post-offices at Hamilton, London, Ottawa, Montreal, Winnipeg, and several other places.*³²

Some of the “other places” mentioned above included Saint John, N.B., where William MacDonald and Howard Breen became postal clerks after successfully passing their civil service examinations.³³

Credit for being the first deaf letter carrier for the Canadian Post Office (now Canada Post) goes to Robert Elder Sowerby (b. Nov. 11, 1894; d. June 22, 1971), who was dubbed as the “grand old man of the Maritimes.”³⁴ He was employed by a local post office in Moncton, N.B. for 41 years (1917-1958). Born in Dorchester, N.B., Sowerby’s deafness is believed to be a result of rheumatic fever he contracted at an early age. From 1903 to 1907, he attended the New Brunswick School for the Deaf in Lancaster (then a suburb of Saint John), but left school at the age of 13 to seek work. He became apprenticed to the largest tailoring establishment in Moncton (tailoring was then a popular trade for deaf men), and was called “our Moncton tailor” by his deaf Maritime friends. He continued his education through night school.

Sowerby became restless at his tailoring job in 1912. He wrote the civil service examinations and passed with a certifi-

cate issued on June 15, 1912. A government job was not available to him right away, however. Five years later, he received notification to report to the Moncton post office within 24 hours if he wanted a job there as a letter carrier. That night Sowerby could not sleep. He struggled with the decision all night, and by dawn had made up his mind to accept the offer. Sowerby had been on the job for three years before anyone at Canadian Post Office headquarters in Ottawa, Ont. discovered that he was deaf. An inspector was dispatched from Montréal “to sleuth him to see how a totally deaf letter carrier went about his tasks.”³⁵ Worries about his abilities were put to rest by his impressive performance. As a result of the constant shifting of civil service duties within the postal service, Sowerby was transferred to an inside job as a sorting clerk sometime between April 1922 and March 1923. Including bonuses and overtime, his annual clerical salary totalled \$1,585.56 in 1923 compared to \$1,387.12 per year as a letter carrier in 1922. His 41 years as a civil servant with the post office in Moncton officially came to a close with his retirement on October 14, 1958.

In 1923, he married Rita Brine (b. Aug. 6, 1899; d. May 11, 1988), his former schoolmate. They raised two hearing sons, Harold and Robert. In September 1911, Sowerby became the youngest member to represent New Brunswick on the Maritime Association of the Deaf board. (At that time, he was only 17 years old.) He went on to become a prominent figure in a variety of activities among the Deaf community of the Maritime provinces, and was actively involved in the struggle to get permits for deaf drivers. For 38 continuous years (1913-1951), he served a variety of elected offices in the Maritime Association of the Deaf. He was also active in the Canadian Association of the Deaf and holds honorary life membership in the Eastern Canada Association of the Deaf. Sowerby died in 1971 at the age of 76 years and seven months, and was buried at Greenwood Cemetery in Shediac, N.B.

One of the very few deaf letter carriers across Canada today made a name for himself in another way. A recreational park in Ottawa, Ont. was named after Paul J. Landry, who represented Canada at the World Summer Games for the Deaf five times (1973, 1977, 1981, 1985, and 1989). Information about this distinguished middle- and long-distance runner can be found in Chapter 15: SPORTS, “Track and Field” and in Chapter 21: A FEW THINGS MORE..., “Ottawa Park Named for Deaf Man.”

Carpenter and Building Contractor

Frank H. Radbone (b. June [day unknown], 1879; d. Sept. 21, 1949) was a first-class deaf carpenter and building contractor in Toronto in the early 1900s. Diphtheria left Radbone totally deaf at the age of two. He grew up in England where he attended a private oral school for deaf children in Northampton for eight years and the Brondesbury School in London for two years. Following graduation, he took a four-year course as a builder and learned his trade by apprenticing for about a year in an architect’s office in Oxford. Attracted by the opportunity for advancement, Radbone came to Canada in 1906. For two months, he lived in Montréal. Then, after working for a time in

FRANK H. RADBONE

Carpenter and Contractor

Special Attention to Architectural Plans.
Cabinet Work and Jobbing Neatly and Promptly Done.
Interior Wood Work Executed.

Hardwood Floors Laid. Estimates Given.

WORKSHOP, REAR OF SWANN & CO.'S HARDWARE STORE

836 YONGE STREET, TORONTO

A Few Doors North of Bloor Street Phone North 435

Radbone's advertisement appeared in local Deaf community publications (1914)

The Deaf Canadian

the Ontario towns of Trenton and Gravenhurst, he moved to Bridgewater, N.S. Radbone finally settled in Toronto where he started his own business in 1910 or 1911. His workshop was located in the rear of a building on Yonge Street near Bloor Street. According to some accounts, his first contract was to convert four houses into apartments.

In 1914, Radbone was awarded his largest contract when he was commissioned to build a massive residence on St. Clair Avenue for Dr. Charles O'Reilly, a well-known physician. *The Canadian Builder and Carpenter* (1914), a monthly trade journal published in Toronto, printed an article about the newly constructed home and quoted its owner as saying: “There are two big features about the house. First, there is not a dark spot in it; the windows are so arranged that no matter where you go there is always plenty of light. The second feature is that you cannot see a nail any place in the woodwork. Myself and family have hunted time and again to find one, but without success.”³⁶ This building became a monument to Radbone’s ability as a builder and contractor, and led him into a successful career.

Radbone stayed in the Toronto area for the rest of his life. He was admitted to Our Lady of Mercy Hospital in Toronto on March 10, 1949 and died there six months later at the age of 70 years and three months. He was buried in Toronto’s Mount Hope Cemetery. Radbone predeceased his deaf wife, the former Ann Mary Patton (b. Jan. 25, 1885; d. Mar. 10, 1980), who attended the Ontario Institution for the Education and Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb (1909-1911) in Belleville.

Metal Engraver

Robert Choate Batho (b. May 24, 1894; d. Aug. 12, 1977) was a talented deaf engraver who worked in several Canadian cities before opening his own business in Woodstock, Ont. in 1947. Born in England, he attended the Anerly School for the Deaf in London, and came to Canada in June 1914, landing first in Halifax, N.S. and then moving to Toronto. At the Evangelical Church of the Deaf in Toronto, Batho met Mona McFarlane (b. May 9, 1894; d. Jan. 11, 1978), his bride-to-be. She was a former student at the Ontario School for the Deaf in Belleville (1901-1915) and one of the first group of students from that school to take and pass the entrance examinations into the Ontario high school program. The couple was married at her parents home



Robert Batho in his 20s

Courtesy of the Batho family (Woodstock and Eastwood, Ont.)

in Eastwood, Ont. on April 12, 1922, and later had three hearing children: Herbert, Ken, and Pansy ("Pat").

Batho and his wife moved from Toronto to Montréal in late 1922, where he worked for the Henry Birks and Sons Jewellery Company. Thanks to his engraving skills, he was able to earn a living wherever he went. By the end of 1924, the couple had moved back to Toronto, and a few years later were living in Vancouver, B.C., where Batho became active in the Western Canada Association of the Deaf (serving as first vice-president from 1929 to 1932). Even during the beginning of the Depression years, wealthy people continued to have jewellery and other items engraved, and Batho's services were in demand. His skills as an engraver made it possible for him to support his family during a time of great economic hardship in the country. (In addition to working part-time for the Birks company in Vancouver, Batho did freelance work after hours. Sometimes he could earn as much as \$50 a week — a good income for that time.) His work on metal that would later be run through a printing press had to be painstakingly engraved backwards, so the letters and designs would show up correctly when printed. Whether working backwards or forwards, all of his engraving was done by hand with tiny chisels; he could produce delicate work in different styles for different purposes (business cards, letterhead, inscriptions on plaques and trophies, and fine artwork and lettering on jewellery such as watches and locket, to name just a few).

By 1931, unable to find full-time employment as an engraver



Samples of Batho's engraving (with a "Deafie engraver" designation in the bottom left corner)

Courtesy of the Batho family (Woodstock and Eastwood, Ont.)

in British Columbia, Batho decided to move back to Toronto. He packed his wife and two sons (Pat was not yet born) into his 1926 Chevrolet and drove (without a licence) from Vancouver to Toronto by way of Los Angeles, Calif., Chicago, Ill., and Detroit, Mich.³⁷ He then got a job working for the Henry Birks and Sons Toronto branch until he moved to Woodstock, Ont., in 1940, and later opened his own engraving business. Deaf people from the surrounding farming areas would often gather at the Batho home in Woodstock to socialize.

In addition to his engraving, Batho's artistic skills were displayed in other ways as well, including a self-portrait that he completed in 1950. On August 12, 1977, at the age of 83 years, 2 months, and 19 days, he died at the People Care Centre in Tavistock, Ont. His wife of 55 years died five months later. The couple is buried in the family plot at Woodstock's Anglican Cemetery.

Geochemist

Donald James Kidd (b. June 9, 1922; d. Sept. 10, 1966) was Canada's only deaf geochemist to date, and possibly the only one in the world. He also was the first deaf Canadian recipient of a doctor of philosophy degree (Ph.D.), which he received in 1951. Clearly, Kidd was a man who knew the meaning of the word "determination."

Born in the town of Nordegg, in the Rocky Mountain foothills of Alberta, Kidd became profoundly deaf at the age of



Dr. Donald James Kidd

The OAD News/Ontario Association of the Deaf

nine months following a bout of pneumonia. He attended the Wright Oral School in New York City (1927-1932), New York Public School No. 47 (1932-1933), and the Clinton Street Public School oral classes in Toronto (1933-1936). His family later moved to MacKenzie Island in the heart of the Red Lake gold-fields, 200 kilometres north of Kenora, Ont. Because there were no schools there, Kidd took a ninth-grade correspondence course under the sponsorship of the provincial Department of Education. The following year, he studied his 10th-grade subjects at the newly opened continuation school built by the citizens of MacKenzie Island in 1937.

Eager to finish the 11th and 12th grades, Kidd attended another continuation school at Red Lake, 15 kilometres away (1938-1940). Every day in late spring and early fall, he would cycle to school or sail in his own skiff with an outboard motor. In the winter he travelled by dog sled or trudged on snowshoes. Some days he would skate across the frozen lake if there was no snow. In 1939, Kidd won a contest sponsored by three aviation companies with his essay, *What Aviation Means to the Mining Country*. For his efforts, he was flown to Winnipeg, Man. on May 24, 1939 to meet England's King George VI and his wife, Queen Elizabeth (the former Lady Elizabeth Angela Bowes of Lyon), who were on a Canadian tour.

Kidd completed the 13th grade at Kenora High School

(1940-1941), where he boarded with the town sheriff. He proved his academic excellence in all subjects by winning two awards (the H.R. Bain Scholarship and the Bendickson Scholarship), one of which was presented for attaining the highest marks in five subjects, including English. He also loved sports of all kinds and was an outstanding athlete. He organized and captained an ice hockey team on MacKenzie Island known as the MacKenzie Bombers, and enjoyed rugby, soccer, curling, and ping pong. At Kenora High School he was also active in skiing and boating. An avid reader, Kidd's early interest in popular science magazines started him on the road to a career in chemistry. In 1941, he entered the University of Toronto, majoring in chemical engineering, and received his bachelor of science degree in 1945. Just before graduation, Kidd realized that a career in chemistry would mean employment in a city, rather than in the mining towns and trading posts of the north, which he preferred. Fortunately, one day he came across the word "geochemistry" in an encyclopedia and decided that a mixture of chemistry and geology would open a career for him in the land he loved best. As a result, Kidd pursued his graduate studies in chemistry and geology at the University of Toronto (M.Sc., 1945-1946).

It was not until December of 1943, after being introduced to David Peikoff, one of Canada's outstanding deaf leaders, that Kidd became seriously interested in the issues facing deaf people. That year had a profound impact on his life and marked his entrance into the Deaf community. He learned the manual alphabet and sign language, and eventually became active with the Ontario Association of the Deaf, Toronto Division No. 98 of the National Fraternal Society of the Deaf, and the Inter-Provincial Association of the Deaf. Kidd also spent a great deal of time with Joseph Rosnick, another deaf leader in the Toronto area, often visiting at the Rosnick family home until the wee hours of the morning. Formerly a strong believer in oral education, Kidd began to see flaws in the social education of oral deaf students. He soon became an advocate of the combined system (sign language and speech training) and submitted a brief on the education of deaf students in Ontario in 1945. At the invitation of the Ontario Association of the Deaf, he began writing articles on the subject in *The OAD News*, in a column entitled "No Kidding."

While pursuing his doctoral studies at the University of Toronto (1946-1951), Kidd supported himself by working on summer geological and prospecting surveys in the Northwest Territories, Northern Ontario, Eastern Manitoba, and Labrador. His explorations were conducted almost exclusively by canoe. At one time he was also employed as a substitute teacher at the Mackay Institution for Protestant Deaf-Mutes in Montréal. On June 8, 1951, he became the first known deaf Canadian ever to receive a doctor of philosophy degree. His rock-like determination during his 10-year struggle at the University of Toronto had finally paid off. Without the assistance of sign language interpreters, he had sat patiently through four to eight hours of daily lectures that he could barely lipread, and had relied on notes from fellow students as well as on extra reading in his spare time to achieve his goal. Receiving his Ph.D. was definitely a victory.

From May to September 1953, Kidd was one of 13 international scientists selected to participate in an Arctic expedition to Baffin Island in the far reaches of Canada's wealth-laden northland. The group was led by Colonel P.D. "Pat" Baird, Canada's premier Arctic explorer. Based at Pangnirtung in the Cumberland Peninsula on the Arctic Circle, the expedition's task was to collect valuable scientific data for the Arctic Institute of North America. Kidd was the only team geologist; the others were experts in botany, glaciology, geomorphology, geophysics, meteorology, and the like. Two years later, in the spring of 1955, Kidd returned to the area working for a New York consulting firm, and spent two and half months as geologist and soils engineer on the site of the Dew Line in the Arctic.

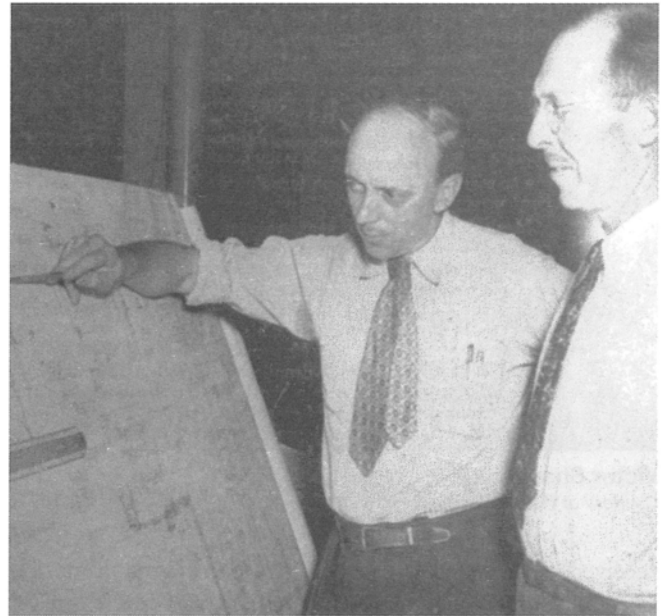
Based in Edmonton from 1956 to 1961, he was employed as a geochemist with the Research Council of Alberta at the University of Alberta; as a research geologist with the Geographical Engineering and Surveys Company of Ontario; and as an exploration and consulting geologist for the Arctic Institute of North America. In 1961, Kidd moved to the U.S. with his hearing wife, Mary (née Campbell), and their two children, Margaret and Ronald.³⁸ He first worked as a mathematics instructor in the preparatory department at Gallaudet College in Washington, D.C., and eventually became an assistant professor of physics at Gallaudet, a position he held until a sudden heart attack took his life at the age of 44 in September 1966. He was buried at Lincoln Memorial Cemetery in Suitland, Md. Kidd's achievements exemplified his personal philosophy of life: "You can always succeed in what you want to if you only try hard enough."³⁹

Engineers

Several early hydro-electric engineering projects in Canada and around the world were designed, in part, by Robert Elwood McBrien (b. Nov. 23, 1900; d. July 20, 1970) of Peterborough, Ont., a totally deaf engineer. These include the Sir Adam Beck No. 1 and No. 2 generating stations on the Niagara River at Queenston (near Niagara Falls, Ont.), the giant Shipshaw generating station at Isle Maligne, Québec, the British Columbia Aluminum-Kemano-Kitimat generators, the huge Ilha Dos Pombos, Santa Cecilea, and Sao Paulo Cubatao developments in Brazil, and one of the Moraetai power plants in New Zealand.

Born near Campbellford, Ont., McBrien was deafened by spinal meningitis at the age of seven. He was a student at the Ontario School for the Deaf in Belleville (1911-1917), the Belleville Collegiate Institute (1917-1918), and the Peterborough Collegiate Institute (1918-1921). After completing his secondary education, he entered the University of Toronto in 1921. In the history of the University of Toronto, McBrien was recorded as being the second deaf student admitted to its baccalaureate program. (The first was John Tyler Shilton in 1904.) He majored in mechanical engineering, with a speciality in machine design, hydraulics, and thermodynamics. In May 1925, McBrien was awarded a bachelor of applied science degree (B.A.Sc.). Hired by the Ontario Hydro-Electric Company, his first position was assistant plant manager at the

Sir Adam Beck No. 1 generating station, which was then under construction. His deafness was never an issue on the job. After a two-year stay (1925-1927), he went to Sarnia, Ont., where he became chief draftsman at Mueller Limited, a firm specializing in the manufacture of pipe fittings, high-speed screw machine products, valves, and brass forgings. On December 23, 1926,



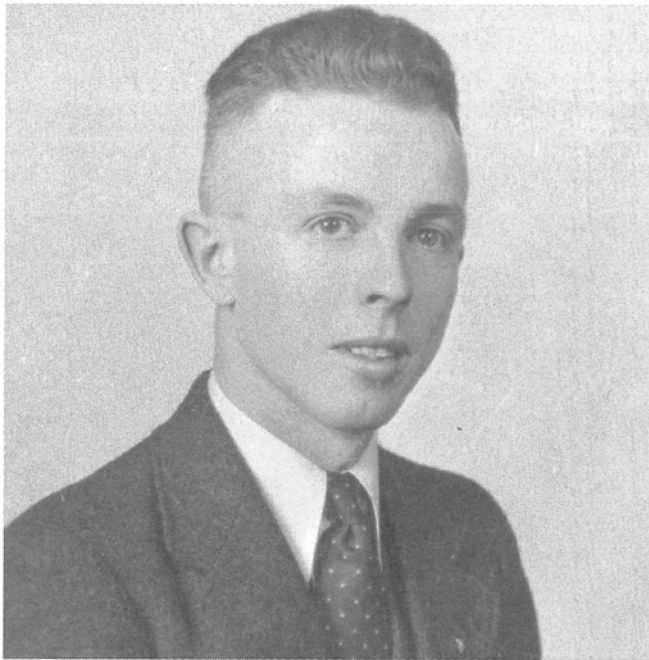
Robert E. McBrien points out a design element in a blueprint to unidentified co-worker

The Silent Worker/Gallaudet University Archives

McBrien married Margaret Loretta Whalen (b. July 28, 1901; d. Nov. 10, 1929), a product of the Ontario School (1909-1921). In 1928, he returned to his "old stomping grounds" of Peterborough, where he spent more than 40 years working for Canadian General Electric Company in the motor-generator division. In 1933, following the death of his first wife, he married Blanche Pauline Brewer (b. Aug. 31, 1900; d. Dec. 11, 1966) of Bothwell, Ont., another Ontario School graduate (1913-1922).

Dubbed "Canada's human dynamo" by his deaf friends, McBrien was a leader in the Canadian Deaf community for many years. He channelled his energy into such roles as secretary of the Ontario Association of the Deaf (1931-1936 and 1942-1950), and first editor of *The OAD News* (1941-1949). Prominent in the establishment of the Inter-Provincial Association of the Deaf (renamed the Canadian Association of the Deaf in 1948), he became its first president (1940-1967). McBrien also actively participated in hearings before the 1945 Royal Commission on Education in Ontario. He supported the hiring of deaf teachers and the inclusion of sign language in the educational system at Belleville. The May 1953 issue of the United States' publication, *The Silent Worker*, printed a full account of McBrien's life as a Canadian "deaf engineer."

Another deaf certified engineer was Victor Shanks (b. June 14, 1910; d. June 23, 1995), who worked for Sangamo Electric Company Limited of Leaside in Toronto for many years. Like McBrien, he attended the Ontario School (1924-1926) and



Victor Shanks

Courtesy of Victor Shanks (Toronto, Ont.)

received a bachelor of applied science degree from the University of Toronto (1931-1935). His major was electrical engineering, with a specialty in hydraulics. Following his graduation, Shanks tried in vain to get a job with the Hydro-Electric Company of Ontario. He then obtained a position with Gutta Percha Rubber Company in Toronto (1935-1937). It was in 1938 that he began a life-long career with Sangamo Electric Company Limited in Toronto. He specialized in researching, designing, and improving electric meters, and in 1956 rose to the level of engineer-in-chief, supervising a staff of 13. Before production, each meter blueprint required his official signature. In his last 10 years before retiring in 1975, he was in charge of the specifications and drafting room staff. At various times over a span of many years, Shanks was actively involved with the Ontario Association of the Deaf, the Toronto Association of the Deaf, and the Canadian Hearing Society. He also wrote articles for *The OAD News*. On December 19, 1947, he married the former Elsie Margaret Ibbitson (b. Aug. 4, 1914; d. July 12, 1995) of Eureka, N.S. Ibbitson had been deafened at the age of four after contracting polio and had attended the School for the Deaf in Halifax (1924-1930).

Furrier

In the 1940s, Julius Henry Wiggins (b. Sept. 19, 1928) was known as Canada's only deaf furrier. According to his 1970 autobiography, *No Sound*, Wiggins lost his hearing from an "appendix operation" (possibly following a high fever or a reaction to drugs) when he was six months old. He first attended the Ontario School for the Deaf (1933-1941) in Belleville. When the school was taken over by the Royal Canadian Air Force as a training base in 1941, he went home to Toronto to complete his education.

Ontario Deaf Employment Survey (1937-1938)

(Jointly conducted by the Ontario Association of the Deaf and the Ontario School for the Deaf, Belleville)

Deaf persons replying	838
Married men and women	400
Married men steadily employed	107
Single women replying	175
Single women working (not at home)	44
Single men replying	263
Single men steadily employed	101
Total number of men considered unemployable	27
Total number of men considered employable	436
Total number of men steadily employed	208
Men who followed the same trade they learned at school	122

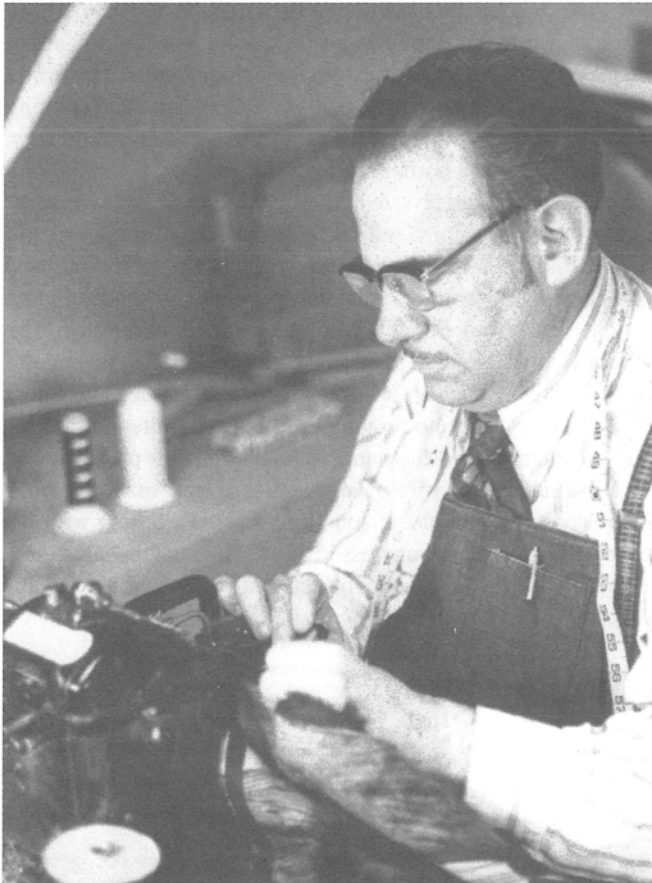
Learned at School/ Worked at this Trade

Trade	
Baking	10/4
Barbering	6/3
Business	7/8
Caretaking	2/7
Farming	24/57
Tailoring	4/1
Cleaning and Pressing	2/4
Printing	114/54
Shoemaking	114/41
Commercial Art	8/3
Carpentry	127/32

Number with two hearing parents	709
Number with two deaf parents	20
Number not reporting parents' hearing status	89
Number owning automobiles	94
Number having operator's license	106
Number involved in accidents	9

SOURCE: "The Twenty-Fourth Biennial Convention of the Ontario Association of the Deaf (Monday, June 20 [report by E.B. Lally]), *The Canadian* 46 (no. 3) (Dec. 1938): 2.

In 1943, at the age of 15, Wiggins started working as a floor boy at the Wiggins Fur Shop, his father's store on St. Clair Avenue West in Toronto. A year later, he practiced sewing rabbit fur; by the time he was 19 years old, he had been promoted to working with mink. People often stopped and watched through the window while Wiggins busily sewed mink pelts. Each coat, valued in those days from \$2,000 to \$8,000, would take him two weeks to a month to complete. In 1948, Wiggins moved to New York City, where he worked in a variety of fur factories for the next 35 years. On March 23, 1952, he married Harriet Berkowitz (b. Sept. 30, 1931), who had become deaf at



Wiggins creating elegant and stylish furs

Courtesy of Julius Wiggins (Rochester, N.Y.)

the age of one from scarlet fever and had attended PS #47 School for the Deaf in Manhattan on East 23rd Street (1936-1948) and a local New York City high school (1948-1951).

In January 1969, Wiggins began producing the monthly publication, *Silent News*, an independent periodical that continues to be North America's most popular newspaper for deaf people. His story continues in Chapter 11.

Watch Repairers

In the 1930s and 1940s, Farley Fountain (b. Aug. 23, 1896; d. Unknown), a congenitally deaf graduate of the Ontario Institution for the Education and Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb in Belleville (1902-1909), was "thought to be the only deaf, non-speaking watch repair man in Canada."⁴⁰ After dabbling in photography and machine shop work for some years, he "cast around for a permanent anchor in industry" and settled "upon watch repairing as the line of work which thrills him the best and which fattens his wallets more consistently than that obtained from any other source."⁴¹ (Fountain had a hearing wife and five children to support, so he needed a steady income.) One day in either 1930 or 1931, he walked into the Heintzman building and entered the Robert Simpson Company (later Simpsons-Sears Limited and now Sears Canada Inc.) in Toronto, Ont. There he landed a job "as a watch doctor,"

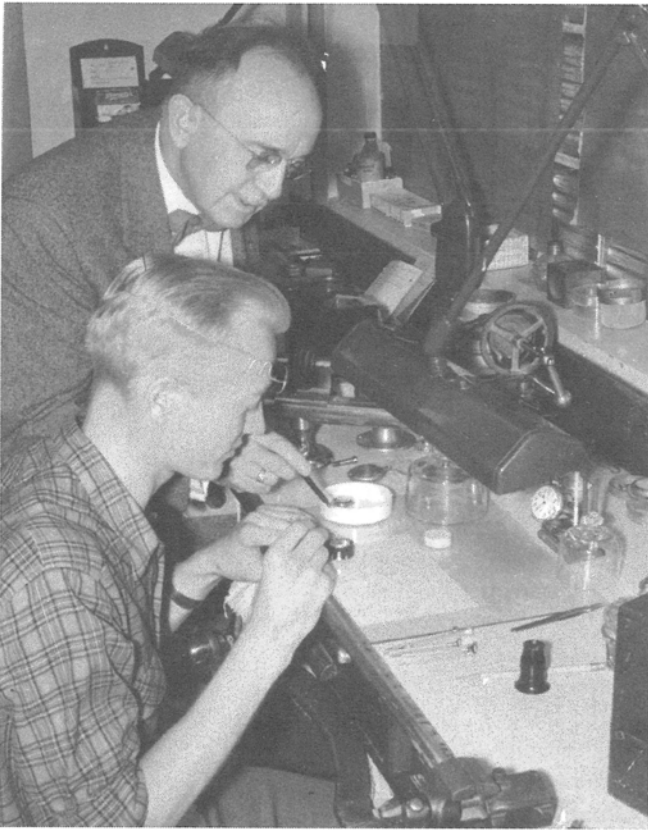
Unofficial Deaf Employment Record of the Maritimes and Newfoundland (1952)

Construction	24
Farm Hands	22
Freight Handlers	13
Printers & Operators	11
Bakery	10
Mill Workers	8
Factory	8
Fish Plant	6
Seamstresses	6
Staff of School for the Deaf	5
Shoe Repairers	5
Tailoring	5
Dry Cleaning	4
Laundry Workers	4
Dish Washers	4
Dairy	3
Brewery	3
Gas Service Workers	3
Barbers	2
Post Office Clerks	2
Truckers	2
Civil Workers (laundry)	2
Soft Drinks Beverages	2
Jewellery Engravers	1
Grocery Clerks	1
Meat Cutters	1
Coal Workers	1
Jobless	4
Unknown	76

SOURCE: "Unofficial Deaf Employment Record of the Maritimes and Newfoundland (1952)." *The Deaf Herald (ECAD)* 1 (no. 2) (Nov.-Dec. 1952): 4.

despite his lack of experience. Fountain quickly learned the trade on his own. "Hundreds of watches, pronounced by other watch repairers as permanently lost, were given to Farley who gave them all new leases on life."⁴² During his first 15 years on the job, he repaired about 5,000 watches and more than 600 clocks. A story about him appeared in one of the company's weekly staff news around 1945.

Another deaf watch repairer in Canada is John William Storey (b. Nov. 23, 1933), of Saskatoon, Sask. Storey became deaf at the age of 18 months from meningitis and a high fever. He was a student at the Saskatchewan School for the Deaf for 12 years (1940-1952). The same year he left school, he started working for Harry Stacey, owner of Stacey's Ltd. in Saskatoon, where he first worked as a stockman at the jewellery shop on 2nd Avenue and 22nd Street. Later, Stacey trained him to assist in gold jewellery repairs. Soon Storey learned watch and clock repair as well. He was able to communicate with hearing cus-



John Storey (seated) with his employer, Harry Stacey (Sept. 1956)

Courtesy of John W. Storey (Saskatoon, Sask.)

tomers through the use of pen and paper, and his presence drew deaf customers to the store because they knew they could communicate easily with him. To tell whether or not a watch was ticking, Storey would attach it to a device called a vibrograf, an instrument similar to an electrocardiogram. The ticking sound was recorded as lines on a paper tape, and the patterns of the lines indicated what kinds of adjustments the watch might need. Storey and Stacey were two of the first people to use this device.

In 1966, Storey set up his own business repairing watches. He first rented space in Stacey's store, and later moved to his present location at 312 Central Chambers. He has been a member of the Saskatoon Association of the Deaf since 1952. He and his wife, Lydia Susan (née Belisle), who also attended the Saskatchewan School for the Deaf (1947-1957), have three hearing children.

House Painter

Walter Markins (b. Nov. 13, 1928) of Pelly, Sask., is the son of hearing parents, Steve and Polly Markin. His two brothers and two sisters are hearing and all sign. Scarlet fever that he contracted at the age of two and a half left Markins deaf. He attended the Saskatchewan School for the Deaf (1935-1947) in Saskatoon and began painting houses soon after graduation. In 1960, he married Eunice Eugene Colin (b. Feb. 7, 1941), who

had also attended the Saskatchewan School (1946-1959). Three years later, Markins and his brother, John, started a painting business called the Markin Brothers Colour Centre. His brother worked in their store in Saskatoon, selling paint and painting supplies, while Markins took care of the on-site painting jobs. He specialized in both exterior and interior painting, and worked primarily on private homes, as well as a few restaurants and hotels. When John retired, Markins closed the store and started his own business, which he called "The Silent Painter." The name came from his school days. While he was attending the Saskatchewan School, Markins studied barbering. The school's superintendent liked his work so much that he encouraged Markins to set up a barber shop and call it "The Silent Barber." Years later, he remembered his superintendent's suggestion and modified the name to match his new profession.

Markins and his wife have seven sons, two of whom work as interpreters. The oldest son (Jim) started working with his father in the painting business in 1984. They now receive most of their work through subcontracts with construction companies, and specialize in painting restaurants and hotels.

Sign Painters

When the word "sign" is used in connection with deaf people, the meaning is usually associated with "sign language." However, the following deaf men are among those who create



Distinctive sign used in the national parks, designed and painted by deaf sign painter

Courtesy of Roderick Matthew Richardson (Calgary, Alta.)

signs of a different kind. William Howard (Bill) Hemphill (b. Mar. 1, 1936), who lives in Thunder Bay, Ont., made road signs for the province for more than 36 years. Hemphill became deaf at the age of 11 months from spinal meningitis, and later attended the Ontario School for the Deaf in Belleville (1941-1955). He started working with the Ontario Ministry of Transportation on July 4, 1955 in the sign shop. Drivers in the province have been seeing Hemphill's work for years without realizing that many of the directional and warning signs along the highways were the work of a deaf painter. On November 30, 1990, Hemphill retired from the Ministry of Transportation, but continues to be an active member of the Thunder Bay Centre of the Deaf. One of his hobbies is making clocks with ASL numbers.

Another deaf sign painter is Roderick Matthew Richardson (b. July 4, 1964) of Calgary, Alta. Born deaf, he has worked as a layout artist for a printing company and as a designer and media development assistant for the Canadian Park Service. He attended Queen Elizabeth High School in Calgary (1977-1982), where he excelled in art. From 1983 to 1985, he was a student at the Alberta College of Art in Calgary and then transferred to Red River Community College (RRCC) in Winnipeg (1985-1988), where he graduated with a diploma in advertising arts. In 1982, Richardson won a gold medal in art at the Alberta Winter Games for the Disabled. Among his other awards are the RRCC award for commitment, attitude, and overall marks in advertising art (1987) and the S.A.M. Award (Western Canada) for student competition in design and illustration (1987). Richardson's signs can be seen in Western Canada's national parks. During Wildlife Week, as part of a 1990 campaign to reduce the mortality rates of animals killed on highways within the park system, flags and signs were placed at sites where animals had died. These distinctive signs were designed and painted by Richardson.

Airplane Tooling Technician

Dennis Joseph Zimmer (b. Aug. 5, 1941) has been recognized for his work at Boeing of Canada, as well as his leadership role in the Deaf community of Manitoba. The first deaf employee at the company, Zimmer's example at Boeing influenced and encouraged his employers to hire more deaf workers. There are now more than 35 deaf Canadians working for the company. Born deaf in Strathclair, Man., Zimmer is a member of a large family of seven brothers and two sisters. Three of his brothers are also deaf, all from unknown causes. Because the Manitoba School for the Deaf had been closed after the Second World War, Zimmer attended the Saskatchewan School for the Deaf (1947-1959) in Saskatoon. Following graduation in June 1959, he moved to Winnipeg and attended the Manitoba Institute of Technology (now Red River Community College) to study carpentry. He worked for a few years as a cabinet maker, then changed jobs and worked as a binder in a stationery plant. On June 16, 1965, he married Edith Irene Ericson (b. Nov. 7, 1941), a native Manitoban and former schoolmate at the Saskatchewan School (1948-1961).

In November 1973, Zimmer was hired by Boeing Canada on a 16-week trial basis as a tooling technician. At that time he had

no experience in airplane manufacture. Boeing's training division provided a full-time interpreter for their new deaf employee, but Zimmer still faced the feelings of frustration and anxiety common to everyone who is in a new job. As the only deaf per-



Dennis Zimmer working on a section of an aircraft

Courtesy of Dennis Zimmer (Winnipeg, Man.)

son in a company of 1,500 workers, he was also (understandably) concerned about potential communication problems. Fortunately, one hearing man at the company knew some sign language. His chatting with Zimmer in sign attracted the attention of other employees, and soon several began to take sign classes. Two months after Zimmer began with Boeing, the second deaf person — his brother Larry — was hired.

Today, the deaf employees work in a variety of departments within the corporation. Boeing offers ASL classes to hearing employees to help them learn the language. Employees pay only one-quarter of the cost for these classes; the rest is paid by the company, with assistance from the federal government. Zimmer has helped his hearing co-workers and his employees change their stereotyped concepts of deaf people. After watching him on the job, the company quickly dropped its belief that deaf people could not perform regular work. Flashing lights on forklifts, lights to warn of fire alarms, TTYs, and sign classes for hearing co-workers made life easier and safer for the deaf employees. In addition, federal subsidies paid for 85 percent of the first 13 weeks of the deaf employees' salary.

On October 5, 1990, during the official dedication of the 340,750-square-foot Phase III of the Boeing plant in Winnipeg, Zimmer was selected to represent the employees and give a speech. His signed presentation, voiced by an interpreter, was well received by the audience. In addition to his more than 20 years at Boeing, Zimmer has also been a leading figure in the Winnipeg Deaf community and an advocate on behalf of his fellow deaf Canadians. He has been active on the board of directors of the Winnipeg Community Centre of the Deaf (WCCD) for many years, as well as on the board of the Independent Interpreter Referral Service (IIRS).

Correspondence Teacher

Peter Douglas Stewart (b. Nov. 8, 1904; d. Dec. 6, 1972) is believed to have been the first deaf instructor in a North



Peter D. Stewart while a student at Gallaudet College
Gallaudet University Archives

American correspondence school. Born deaf at Fairhill in the Qu'Appelle Valley of Saskatchewan (near Regina), Stewart told people that his deafness was "a result of his mother being thrown from a buggy while she was pregnant."⁴³ When he was a baby, his family moved to Regina where he attended the Saskatchewan School for the Deaf (1915-1916). He later transferred to the Manitoba School for the Deaf in Winnipeg (1916-1923) and attended Gallaudet College in Washington, D.C. (1923-1928), graduating with a bachelor of arts degree. Stewart was employed as boys' dormitory supervisor and physical education director for three years (1928-1931) at the Manitoba School. He then moved to Saskatoon, Sask., where he taught at the Saskatchewan School for the Deaf for 11 years (1931-1942).

It was on September 21, 1942 that Stewart took a position as instructor in the Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School in Regina. This school, which opened in 1925, was set up to instruct students (both children and adults) who were not able to attend a public school for one reason or another. At first he was the only male among 15 or more female instructors, and according to one of these women "he was very popular. He taught many of us the alphabet in sign language and was very patient with us as we were slow."⁴⁴ For the next 27 years (1942-1969), Stewart corrected high school papers in such subjects

as mathematics, Latin, and French. He usually had between 300 and 400 students at one time (a total of 500 to 600 lessons to be corrected by Stewart each month). When not at work, he was active in the Western Canada Association of the Deaf and served several terms as treasurer. He bowled in a deaf league, curled on the correspondence school team, and enjoyed beating his friends in a game of bridge. Stewart retired from the Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School on November 7, 1969. Three years later, in December 1972, he passed away while addressing his Christmas cards.

Nursing Assistant and Health Care Aide

Very few deaf Canadians are known to have trained as health-care workers in clinics, hospitals, or nursing homes. One of the earliest known Canadians to receive such training was Laurie Elizabeth (née Green) Carter (b. Aug. 14, 1956). She attended provincial schools for deaf students in Milton (1963-1973) and London, Ont. (1973-1975).⁴⁵ She began her nursing assistant training at the Ross High School Nursing Program and Fanshawe College Health Department while still a high school student, and received her nursing assistant diploma in 1975. Her wedding to British-born Trevor John Carter (b. Sept. 22, 1949) took place in August of that same year. Her husband had attended the Royal School for the Deaf in Margate, Kent, England (1952-1964), and Ontario provincial schools for the deaf in Belleville (1964-1966) and Milton (1966-1968). Following additional upgrading in math, he attended St. Clair College in Windsor, Ont. (1969-1971) and received training as a



1987 graduation photograph of Theresa M. Duffley
Courtesy of Theresa M. Duffley (Kingston, Ont.)

construction technician. Carter and her husband made their home in London, Ont., where she worked for six years as a nursing assistant at the city's home for senior citizens. As the couple's three hearing sons came along, the demands of being a wife and mother required some changes in Carter's work schedule, however. So she transferred to the senior home's housekeeping department, where she is still employed.

Another young woman who received health-care training is Theresa Marie Duffley (now Upton) (b. May 21, 1966). She was awarded a health-care aide certificate on June 13, 1987 by St. Lawrence College in Kingston, Ont. Her training was similar to a registered nurse's aide but did not include the administration of medicine. Born profoundly deaf from an unknown cause in Saint John, N.B., Duffley received her elementary education at Prince Anne School (1969-1974), Hillcrest School (1974-1976), and Forest Hill Elementary (1976-1980), all public city schools in Saint John. She then completed her education at the Sir James Whitney School for the Deaf in Belleville, Ont. (1980-1985) before attending St. Lawrence College. Before her marriage, she worked for a while in a Kingston retirement/nursing home. She now works for the Canadian Hearing Society in Kingston as regional co-ordinator of sign language services.

Doctor (D.C. and M.D.)

Hartley Brian Bressler (b. Jan. 2, 1957) is both a chiropractor and a medical doctor. Not only is he Canada's first and only deaf doctor; he is also one of the very few individuals in the country who possess both chiropractic and medical degrees (there are only four others in Canada). Thus, he provides a unique link between these two often opposing professions. Deaf since birth (his mother had rubella during pregnancy), Bressler received his primary education in Winnipeg, Man. at the Mulvey School (an oral elementary school) and then in mainstreamed classes in a public high school (graduating in 1975). Following high school, he took two years off to backpack around the world. After his journeys, he attended the University of Winnipeg (B.A. in psychology, 1980). He then enrolled in a four-year program at the Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College in Toronto (1980-1984) and graduated with a doctor of chiropractic (D.C.) degree.

Dr. Bressler opened his own office in Toronto at the corner of Bathurst and Lawrence streets. He specialized in sports medicine and soon had a large patient following, both deaf and hearing. In addition to his busy practice, he was involved in many other activities. He served on the faculty of the chiropractic college in Toronto in the Department of Chiropractic Sciences (1987-1989). He authored articles that appeared in various publications, including the *American Journal of Sports Medicine*, *Chiropractic Sports Medicine*, *Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics*, *Palaestra*, and the *Canadian Association of Radiologists Journal*. He has also been a guest lecturer on various topics to both professional and lay audiences at McMaster University, York University, George Brown College, and other groups and organizations.

Bressler was on Canada's Sports Medicine Team at the 1985 World Summer Games for the Deaf (WSGD) held in Los



Hartley Bressler at work in the neo-natal unit of Scarborough (Ont.) General Hospital

Courtesy of Hartley Bressler (Toronto, Ont.)

Angeles, Calif., and was one of the speakers at the first national deaf sports conference (held June 2, 1989 in Ottawa, Ont.), which was sponsored by the Canadian Deaf Sports Association (CDSA). Also in 1989, he served as the first chiropractor ever appointed to the CDSA, and provided treatment to the athletes competing in the WSGD held in Christchurch, New Zealand. In addition to working 16-hour days with the athletes, he also represented Canada at medical meetings held during the World Games. A past vice-president of the board of directors of the Canadian Hearing Society (Toronto Region), he is currently the chief medical director for the CDSA.

In 1990, Bressler was accepted into McMaster University's Medical School, where he completed his M.D. training in 1993. After watching his sign language interpreters at work, 25 of his 100 classmates became so enthusiastic about learning to sign that they enrolled in an evening sign language course at their own expense. Interpreters were used extensively within the program, from small group sessions to the operating room. Because he is unable to use a stethoscope (medicine's most basic tool), Bressler had to experiment and develop his own devices that would enable him to diagnose heart and lung sounds. After three years of trial and error, he developed and presently uses an oscilloscope with a special microphone that picks up cardiac and respiratory sounds and translates them visually onto the screen.

Although his education and clinical training primarily revolved around hearing individuals, Dr. Bressler occasionally has a deaf patient as well. In one instance, a hearing mother brought her 12-year-old deaf son into the hospital clinic. Bressler happened to be the doctor on duty at that time. The child was wide-eyed and surprised to see him signing and using the oscilloscope during the examination. As the boy was leaving, he signed to his mother, "Gee, Ma, I guess I can become a doctor, too!"

After completing medical school in 1993, Dr. Bressler began interning in a family medicine residency program in Toronto. He uses a vibrating pager on a daily basis; when he is on call, he sleeps on a bed that vibrates when the telephone rings. He hopes to combine his chiropractic and medical training in his future practice. It is significant that the Deaf commu-

nity now has an inside voice and perspective on medical issues (including the diagnosis of deafness and its appropriate management, and the controversial cochlear implant issue). The strategies used to approach these matters have previously been dominated by a hearing medical establishment.

Dr. Bressler and his hearing wife, Nadine (a concert pianist), have twin daughters Brina and Rachel.

Politician

In the September 6, 1990 Ontario provincial elections, Gary Louis Malkowski (b. July 26, 1958), a well-known activist for deaf rights, became the first-ever elected deaf official in North America and possibly the world. In his first political campaign, he won a seat in the Toronto riding (voting district) of York East for the New Democratic Party.

By 9,960 votes to 9,177, Malkowski defeated the Liberal incumbent, Christine Hart, a hearing lawyer who had held the York East riding since a high-profile by-election in 1986. Malkowski's party also racked up a landslide victory by forming its first majority government in the history of the province. Out of 130 legislative seats, the New Democratic Party captured 74 seats, while its predecessor, the Liberal Party (which had ruled Ontario for five years [1985-1990]) won only 36 seats. The Progressive Conservative Party came in third with 20 seats. Following a swearing-in ceremony as Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP), Malkowski was appointed parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship with responsibility for the Ontario Human Rights Commission, Seniors, Race

Relations, Disabled, and Employment Equity. He later became responsible for the provincial schools for deaf students as well.

Although England's parliament also claims two elected officials with a hearing loss, Malkowski's victory was unique — he is regarded as the world's first congenitally and culturally Deaf person who communicates by sign language to enter and win a political election. (Malkowski has been profoundly deaf since birth, and attended the Ontario School for the Deaf in Milton [now the Ernest C. Drury School] for 13 years [1963-1976], and Gallaudet College [B.A., 1976-1982; M.A., 1982-1984]). The first deaf British politician held office in the late 1700s. According to W.R. Roe's *Peeps into the Deaf World*, a former student of the Braidwood Academy for the Deaf and Dumb in Edinburgh, Scotland was elected twice as a Member of the British Parliament for "the County of Ross-shire," in 1784 and 1790.⁴⁶ This man was Francis Humberstone MacKenzie, the sixth Lord Seaforth, who was born deaf. He used sign language, finger-spelling, and speech to communicate. Lord Seaforth also served as governor of the Caribbean island of Barbados from 1800 to 1806. The other deaf British politician was Lord Jack Ashley (b. Dec. 6, 1922), who lost his hearing six months *after* he was elected to parliament in 1966. He relied on written notes and typed abstracts of speeches from his colleagues to function effectively in his Parliamentary role in the British House of Commons.⁴⁷ In contrast, Malkowski was accommodated by full-time American Sign Language interpreters on the floor of the House, another first in the world. More of his accomplishments are described in Chapter 7: ORGANIZATIONS.