

DEAF HERITAGE IN CANADA

A DISTINCTIVE, DIVERSE, AND ENDURING CULTURE

Clifton F. Carbin

Edited by Dorothy L. Smith

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Deaf Heritage in Canada

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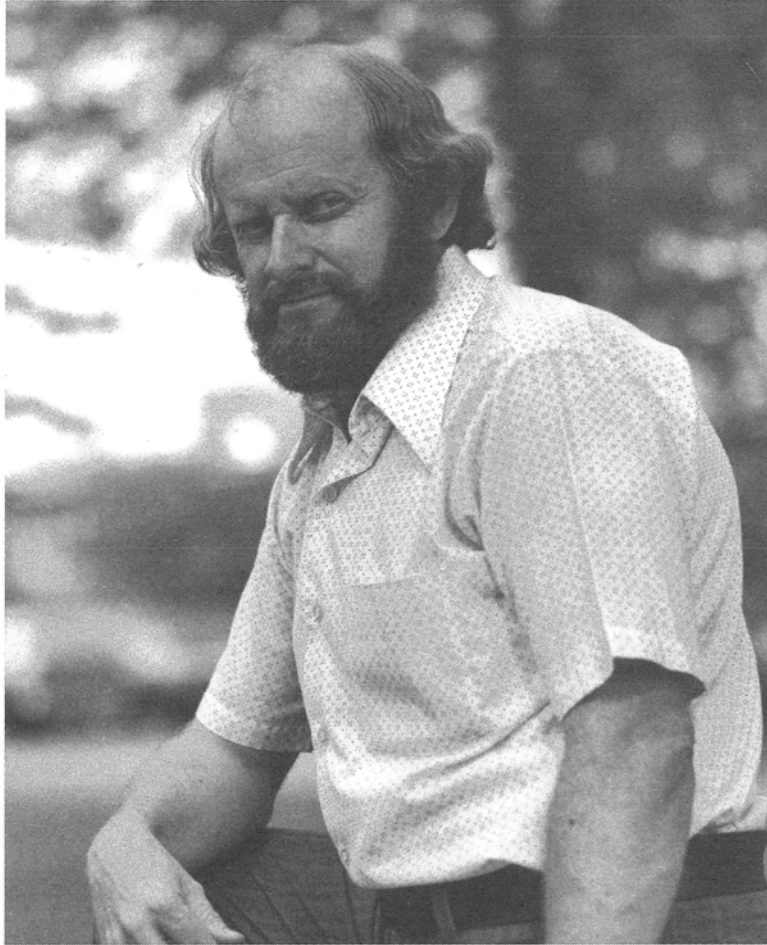
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This book is dedicated to

FORREST CURWIN NICKERSON

December 31, 1929 — June 16, 1988



(Courtesy of the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf, Edmonton, Alta.)

Founder of the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf

and

“Father of Deaf Culture in Canada”

“The dream has come true!”

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Foreword

The previously untold stories of the Deaf experience form an integral and most fascinating part of the Canadian tapestry. *Deaf Heritage in Canada* introduces us to some of the individuals whose lives weave together to form the warp and woof of this Canadian Deaf experience — a tapestry unique in its design, beautiful in its diversity, enduring in the strength of its fibres.

Within these pages, readers will find historical data, interpretations of events and trends, and human dramas that we hope will enlighten, entertain, inspire, and instill a sense of pride and understanding of our roots — our Deaf heritage.

The story of the Canadian Deaf experience is the story of individual men and women, both hearing and deaf. Some have achieved recognition for their feats of bravery, for their pioneering spirit, for their courage in the face of adversity, for their determination to succeed regardless of the situations in which they found themselves. Others have added colour and texture to the tapestry and have contributed to the pattern through accomplishments in the arts, religion, education, science, writing and publishing, business, and sports.

But for each person whose story appears in these pages, there are hundreds more whose lives may not have been as public but whose very existence has added yet another thread to the overall design. Their stories are yet to be told. The history of Deaf people in Canada is ever unfolding.

This book was the dream of Forrest Curwin Nickerson, the “Father of Deaf Culture in Canada,” a deaf man who founded the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf (CCSD) in 1970. He wanted to introduce readers to the distinctive ethnicity of Deaf people through a glimpse into their history, language, and culture, and present it in a narrative historical book written by a deaf person. It was his fondest wish that the world should be informed of Deaf Canadians’ impressive record of accomplishments.

In 1981, the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf began calling for material for this book, *Deaf Heritage in Canada*, with Forrest C. Nickerson as the intended author. Declining health prevented him from assuming this role, however. The actual task of collecting and analyzing data and writing this document was passed on to another deaf writer when CCSD recruited Dr. Clifton F. Carbin, an experienced researcher and co-author of *Can’t Your Child Hear?* (1981).

Nickerson passed away in June 1988, knowing in his heart that the book would be published. Now, after years of intensive, time-consuming, and sometimes frustrating research and writing, this monumental task is completed. The Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf wants to thank Dr. Carbin and all the other people who contributed to making our founder’s dream come true.



Charmaine Cecile Letourneau
President
Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf
Courtesy of the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf
(Edmonton, Alta.)

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Writing *Deaf Heritage in Canada* has been a monumental, frustrating, and rewarding task. I undertook this challenge on behalf of the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf, the book's primary sponsor. From the project's gestation in the mid-1980s to its completion in 1996, many individuals, organizations, and schools gave their untiring support to me, providing me with ideas, documents, photographs, and other sources of information. They knew it was imperative that *Deaf Heritage in Canada* be written, because our Deaf Canadian culture, language, and history have gone largely unrecorded and unappreciated for more than a hundred years. With a book of such a national scope and space limitations, it is impossible for me to record here the name of every individual and/or organization who helped me over the years. To all those people whose names are not listed but who know they contributed to this book's existence, I wish to extend my sincere thanks for their generous and invaluable assistance.

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The Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf and its president, Charmaine C. Letourneau of Edmonton, Alta., have been the backbone of the project, and I appreciate their continuing support and patience. I also wish to express my gratitude to my editor and senior research assistant, Dorothy ("Dotti") L. Smith of Gallaudet University (now Information Specialist in Deafness, Ontario Ministry of Education and Training), who has done a skillful job of helping me assemble an almost overwhelming amount of information into its present narrative form.

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Clifton F. Carbin
January 1996

All royalties from this book are being donated to the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf.

Introduction

This book was born out of frustration. All my life, I have wanted to know more about other deaf Canadians like myself, but I couldn't find any information in the Canadian history books. As an undergraduate at Gallaudet University, I dreamed of some day writing my own book about my deaf countrymen and women, but I had no clue as to where to start. Then, as a graduate student at Western Maryland College, I tried to bring some focus to the issue by writing a term paper entitled "The Deaf in Canada." I felt excitement wash over me every time I uncovered even the most seemingly trivial fact during my research, and I was filled with pride when, in the early 1970s, I read about such things as tombstones engraved with fingerspelling to honour the founder of the first school for deaf students in Ontario and the first deaf teacher there. It was at that time that my research really began. I collected more and more data, but again was not sure what to do with it.

I know from my own personal experience how it feels to be left in the dark about one's own cultural history. More than 10 years ago, I wrote the following statement: "When I was a deaf child, born to hearing parents and attending both public and residential schools for the deaf, I barely knew of the existence of deaf teachers, heroes, cultural societies, theatre, publications, athletic organizations, clubs and conventions, businesses, and beauty pageants."¹ This experience haunted me until I finally decided to write something on this blank slate that all Canadian deaf children seemed to face about their own history.

At the same time, in another part of Canada, another deaf man named Forrest C. Nickerson was also dreaming of conquering the great unknown of Canadian deaf history. Working independently (and for some time without awareness of each other), we both began gathering data and interviewing individuals, with the hopes of one day producing something substantive on the subject. Eventually, Nickerson had to abandon his efforts due to ill health. By that time, my work had become known to the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf, and I was asked to organize the materials that he had collected, incorporate my own research, and write the text for their project, which was to be titled *Deaf Heritage in Canada*. That was the beginning of a long and arduous road toward the book you now hold in your hands. There were times when I thought I would not live to see the project completed (sometimes I thought I would be crushed under tons of research materials), and it is with great relief that I now see the end of my labours.

It is a sign of cultural maturity that deaf people are now beginning to take their own history seriously enough to conduct research, present scholarly papers, and write books about their communities. The past 10 to 15 years have seen an increase in historical and sociological research among deaf individuals, producing such events as The Deaf Way International Conference and Festival on Language, Culture, History, and the Arts of Deaf People (1989, Washington, D.C.); the first and second international conferences on Deaf History (1991 in Washington, D.C. and 1994 in Hamburg, Germany); and the publication of such books by deaf authors as *Deaf Heritage: A Narrative History of Deaf America*, written by Jack R. Gannon (1981); *Deaf in America: Voices from A Culture* by Carol Padden and Tom Humphries (1988); and *Britain's Deaf Heritage* by Peter W. Jackson (1990). In addition, articles by both deaf and hearing authors have been included in such books as *Looking Back: A Reader on the History of Deaf Communities and Their Sign Languages* (Renate Fischer and Harlan Lane, editors — 1993) and *Deaf History Unveiled: Interpretations from the New Scholarship* (John Vickrey Van Cleve, editor — 1993). Now we proudly present the most recent in the deaf history publications — *Deaf Heritage in Canada*.

Deaf Heritage in Canada is a window through which the reader can catch a glimpse of deaf Canadians as they go about their everyday lives, responding to events around them and making a difference in the future of their local Deaf communities. This book represents an appreciation of our cultural roots, an awareness that we deaf Canadians have a heritage of which we can be proud, a history upon which we can build our future.

A decade of research has gone into this book. The project took me into every Canadian province and territory and

below the border to several states. I sifted through pitifully small school archives; peered into dusty boxes piled in basements and abandoned files tucked away in corners of attics. I leafed through faded pictures in musty photo albums, and probed the cobwebbed memories of individuals who willingly led me “down memory lane.” This “oral” history often gave me clues to other stories and sources of information, and I was eager to follow these new leads.

Oral history is not without its pitfalls, however. Time erases certain details from our memories. For example, one time I was interviewing an elderly deaf man about an incident he vaguely recalled happening “around 1935” when a “deaf driver slightly injured a mother with a baby,” resulting in deaf drivers losing the right to drive in that province. This story intrigued me, but I did not want to base my text solely on a recollection, so I decided I would verify the incident. I spent almost every weekend reading newspaper microfilm starting with 1935, looking for a story on the accident. I went through every page of every daily newspaper published in that city from 1935 to 1939 and found nothing. (Can you imagine the number of pages times the number of issues per year times the number of hours required to read each entire issue — I did not wear glasses when I started this project; now I need bifocals!) Then I started reading backward from 1935 and finally found some articles regarding a deaf driver hitting a motorcycle policeman (not a mother and child) in the summer of 1927. If I had relied on oral history alone without investing an additional two years’ worth of research on this one entry, I might have misrepresented this aspect of Deaf history and perpetuated a misconception about the event and its aftermath. I learned from this experience that oral history can lead researchers into intriguing and potentially valuable mazes, but it is not infallible. I continued to verify all information; to double- and sometimes triple-check references; and to tap into the memories of other people while trusting nothing completely until I had seen it myself.

As I crisscrossed the country, my research took me to libraries, schools, homes, government offices, provincial archives, city halls, and even to cemeteries. Sometimes I enlisted the aid of other people — both deaf and hearing — in collecting information for this book (their names are listed in the acknowledgment section, but words cannot adequately express my appreciation for their efforts). Some assignments were fairly routine — looking up land titles, double-checking school admissions records, making endless phone calls all across the country, for example. Other tasks, however, might be considered a little “above and beyond the call of duty.” For example, after one of my requests for help in locating the birthdate of an individual, one Ontario family reported back: “We have walked every cemetery from Madoc, Belleville, and Trenton with no luck.... P.S. Next time you write a book perhaps we will get a little better job than walking through cemeteries. James [their six-year-old deaf son] could not understand why he couldn’t pick flowers and why people would leave the pots behind.”² Some of my own trips to cemeteries (which can provide a wealth of information about individuals if you know where to look) were accompanied by rain, mud, darkness, cold winds, and often enough snow to cover all of the inscriptions and half of the monuments I sought.

I enjoyed these brief forays into the fresh air, because most of my work involved very long hours almost every evening and weekend sitting in libraries or in front of my home computer. I tried (but did not always succeed) to schedule work on the book around my responsibilities as a husband and father and my full-time jobs (first as executive director of the Deaf Children’s Society of British Columbia and later as program director of Bilingual/Bicultural Education for Deaf Children for the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training and program director of Resource Services for the Ernest C. Drury School for the Deaf in Milton, Ont.). I bombarded the country with requests for information and eagerly checked my mail every day, hoping for that occasional “gem” of a fact or another clue on my search for answers. (I am also very grateful to the person or persons who invented “electronic mail.” I suspect that the electric and phone companies will be very sorry to learn that this book has been completed — my power consumption, which has been astronomical since I began this project, is about to go back to normal!) My family “holidays” became research trips; sick days found me at the computer instead of in bed; long weekends were spent writing text instead of enjoying some family time.

I doubt this book would have been completed without the year (1990-1991) I spent in Washington, D.C. at Gallaudet University as the Powrie V. Doctor Chair of Deaf Studies (hosted by the Gallaudet Research Institute). It was there that I finally had time to take stock of all the information I had been collecting over the years, and realize that this project had become much more enormous than I (and CCSD and the publisher) had ever imagined possible. The challenge to assemble all of these often disparate scraps of paper into a cohesive whole seemed overwhelming. Fortunately, while I was at Gallaudet, I had access to several invaluable resources: the Gallaudet University archives with its vast collection of information on deaf people and their institutions, including those in Canada; input (and sympathy) from other authors who had experience in historical research of this type; a year to work on the book full-time, without interruptions from my “normal” life; and my editor, Dotti Smith, whose fierce devotion to the project even after I left Gallaudet kept me going when I was unable to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

I have assumed many roles while working on this book. I have often felt like a miner (especially when digging through dusty boxes in dark basements); an explorer (it’s easy to get lost in graveyards or in the convoluted but charming writing styles of the 1800s); an archaeologist (especially when I unearthed a photographic treasure); and a “time detective,” to quote one of the archivists at the Archives of Ontario. One quickly learns when doing historical research of this type that — unlike our impression when in school — history is not a bunch of dry facts, dates, and events to be memorized for a test and then promptly forgotten. History is *people* — people who live and breathe and laugh and love and face difficulties and defeats and have triumphs and accomplishments. It is these people that I have tried to bring to life in this book.

At the same time, I have tried to compile as much information on deaf Canadians’ activities and institutions as possible, because I fear that it will be a long time before someone else attempts to take up this banner and continue my quest. Historical research is just plain hard work most of the time, and so much of the data is being lost on a daily basis! Without a permanent archives to protect the files, documents, photographs, and assorted memorabilia that deaf Canadians have managed to preserve thus far, more and more of our precious history will be lost forever. Therefore, this book — which may seem *too* extensive to some — is one man’s attempt to preserve some of this history *now*, while there is still time. It is my hope that some organization will take up this cause and establish a professionally run national Deaf Archives somewhere in Canada or an international Deaf Archives in the United States (perhaps at Gallaudet University), where future researchers can find assembled in one place the documents they need to continue writing the history of deaf people.

Creating this book was not without frustration! I was often in despair at the amount of information that had already been lost forever (and was constantly reminded of the saying, “To destroy its records is to destroy the thing itself”).³ I was also dismayed to find so little documentation on photographs, letters, and clippings from newspapers. Often I would receive something from an old scrapbook, open the envelope with great anticipation, only to find a valuable newspaper article but no indication of the publication, date, city, page number — in other words, no clue to guide future researchers to this source. I would then be faced with the dilemma of either discarding it or entering it in an endnote or the additional sources list in its incomplete (and possibly inaccurate) form. At a later date, while reading through miles and miles of microfilm, I was sometimes lucky enough to stumble across the very article I had seen years ago in a dusty scrapbook. (Historical research is aided greatly by a photographic memory!) For the sake of future historians, please sit down right now and write the names of people on the back of photographs, the date and place of the photograph, and any other information you think might be important a hundred years from now! Do the same with your scrapbooks, newspaper clippings, and correspondence. Then make sure your children and grandchildren do not throw them away. Future researchers will bless your name for this!

Another frustration encountered in working on this book came from the financial realm. Projects of this type are always woefully underfunded. The Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf (CCSD), the book's sponsor, is a non-profit organization with limited funds. Although we were able to obtain some small donations from a variety of organizations (see the Acknowledgements section for a listing), it was never enough to finance my travels, photocopying, telephone calls, etc. This was a volunteer project for me, as it was for most of the people who have assisted me. All profits from the sale of *Deaf Heritage in Canada* go to the CCSD. This organization has tried to help out with the costs I incurred in travelling to conduct research and in other similar activities, and graciously reimbursed me for two-thirds of my lost wages when I was on unpaid leave of absence from my job in Vancouver to accept the Powrie V. Doctor Chair. But a substantial amount of money on the project had to come from my own pocket. If funds had been made available from governmental agencies, grants from foundations, or other sources, perhaps even more data could have been collected and the project completed at an earlier date.

Deaf Heritage in Canada was originally planned as a 70,000-word book written in a simple, narrative style. Ultimately, it became a 500,000-plus word reference text. So little had been documented on the history of deaf people in Canada that it seemed imperative to assemble as much data as possible in one place. It is my hope that teachers of deaf students will use this book as a reference for their classroom lectures as they invite their students to explore the history of the Canadian Deaf experience.

A word about data collection: I solicited information from schools, clubs, organizations, churches, individuals, and any other sources I could think of. I blanketed the country with more than 10,000 flyers in both English and French. Copies of my requests for information, photographs, artifacts, etc. were inserted in newsletters and reproduced in magazines and newspapers published in Deaf communities across Canada and the United States. Announcements of the research project were made at workshops, conventions, and other gatherings of deaf individuals. Despite this media blitz, information only trickled in, much of it incomplete and often unverifiable. Secondary sources, such as the memories of individuals, were sometimes used as clues to the location of primary sources, which I endeavoured to use whenever possible. Many times my investigations led to dead ends. It is possible that further intensive research may unearth the information, but for the sake of expediency (i.e., publishing this book within my lifetime!), I was sometimes forced to use the word "unknown," especially when referring to dates (birth and death dates, for example). At other times, it was impossible to collect enough verifiable information on an individual or organization to warrant inclusion in the book. I regret these omissions and hope that future researchers will have better luck than I did in filling in the missing data. Omissions from this book do not in any way disparage the significance of an event or the contributions of any particular organization or person. Publication deadlines (and my flagging energy levels) simply did not permit me to continue trying to trace information, track down people, and so on.

Several difficult decisions had to be made while producing this book. One involved who should be included. Obviously, it would be impossible to include information on *every* deaf Canadian who has ever lived (although some readers may at first glance believe that I did just that)! I am sure that each reader will be able to think of at least 10 other deaf people whom they feel should have been included, and will have strong opinions on some whom they think should have been left out of the book. The individuals in *Deaf Heritage in Canada* range from born-deaf children born to Deaf parents to those who were hearing until early adulthood. Readers will note that although most of the deaf people mentioned in this book attended residential schools and were later members of the Deaf community, a few were raised orally, attended public schools, and never became part of the Deaf community (by choice or circumstance). Purists may insist that the latter individuals should have been omitted. However, it is my feeling that they have contributed something of a positive nature to Canada's deaf history as well, and should be included in a book that documents these accomplishments. Likewise, hearing people from both Canada and the United States are included in this

book because they have had significant impact on developing and shaping what has become the Canadian Deaf community. Without the interest and political/social influence of these hearing individuals, many of the schools for deaf Canadians would not have been established. Hearing people — not deaf people — were the ones in positions of power and were the ones most able to enlist the financial and political support of other hearing people. I felt they had earned a place in this book. To exclude them would have been “rewriting” history. However, I did have to leave out any individuals about whom I could not gather enough verifiable information to make an entry meaningful (sadly, many people just do not return phone calls or respond to letters). Unfortunately, this also applied to organizations, many of which did not respond to my repeated entries for information.

Another difficult decision centred around the recent (American-based) convention of using capital “D” (“Deaf”) when referring to members of the specific sociolinguistic and cultural group, and lower case “d” (“deaf”) when referring to the audiological condition of deafness. I was uncomfortable assigning the modern designation “Deaf” to individuals who did not apply that terminology to themselves when they were alive. To do so felt too much like an intrusion into their own personal identity choices, as well as a case of “rewriting history” to suit modern perspectives and recently-created terminology (that is still not embraced by all deaf people). On the other hand, to use a lower-case “deaf” when referring to the cultural, linguistic, and social entity that is now called the “Deaf community,” was equally unsatisfactory. Therefore — after much soul-searching and consultation with deaf and hearing historians, authors, researchers, educators, and community leaders — I have chosen to employ modern terminology (the upper-case “D”) when referring to the “Deaf community” and “Deaf culture.” But I have decided not to try to determine — either through my own imagination or my interpretation of history — whether or not particular individuals would have chosen “D” or “d” to describe themselves. Henceforth, the lower-case “deaf” will be used when writing about “deaf people” (a category that includes a great deal of diversity), certain “deaf organizations” (such as clubs and churches, which might have attracted both culturally and non-culturally deaf individuals to their activities), and specific people in this book (except those who have clearly expressed their preference to me for the upper case “D”). The community that has been formed by certain individuals based on their shared experiences and linguistic, cultural, and social preferences will be referred to as “Deaf.”

In some chapters, I refer to products by names. Such references and any accompanying photographs are for historical and/or informational purposes only, and are not meant as endorsements of the specific products or their manufacturers.

Finally, I have chosen to use the names of schools, organizations, and so on that match the time in history to which I am referring. For example, the “National Deaf-Mute College” later became known as “Gallaudet College,” and in 1986 became known as “Gallaudet University.” In writing about an event on the campus in 1914, it would be historically inaccurate to refer to the school as Gallaudet *University*, even though that is the name that readers are most familiar with today.

Deaf Heritage in Canada contains 21 chapters that cover a wide range of topics. Chapter 1 introduces the reader to some of the earliest known references to deaf people and their education. Much of this information is documented in greater detail in other publications, so I have included only brief references to some of the influential individuals in deaf people’s lives from the 1400s to the mid and late 19th century. Chapter 2 touches on events in the United States, when concerned individuals began to explore ways to educate deaf students. Much of what later occurred in Canada was influenced by these early efforts in the United States, and some Canadians were involved in these early educational institutions as well, either as students or teachers. Special attention is focused on Gallaudet University, which has a long history of Canadian participation. Likewise, deaf Canadians have played roles in such American organizations as the National Association of the Deaf and the National Fraternal Society of the Deaf.

With Chapter 3, the book moves to Canadian soil, examining the earliest attempts to educate deaf children in this country. Early and short-lived schools were established in Québec, the Maritime provinces, Ontario, Newfoundland, British Columbia, and Saskatchewan. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 introduce the schools in Canada that continued to remain viable for an extended period of time (some are still in existence today). Chapter 4 examines schools in Québec and Ontario; Chapter 5 focuses on the Atlantic Provinces; and Chapter 6 carries the reader across the prairies and on to the West Coast.

With Chapter 7, attention moves from education to an extensive description of the social, cultural, and literary organizations and associations that were established by deaf Canadians after they had completed their schooling. The reader is introduced to the key players in provincial organizations and clubs through descriptions of cultural, athletic, and religious events. Regional and national organizations are also included in this chapter.

Chapter 8 is a departure from a larger picture of deaf Canadians to a glimpse into the lives of a few hardy souls whose pioneer spirit and sense of adventure led to them to homestead in the prairie provinces. Included in this chapter are the men and women who farmed and worked in the towns and countryside near Lipton, Dysart, and Cupar, Sask.

Occupations of deaf Canadians, touched on in Chapters 7 and 8, are detailed in Chapter 9, as a variety of trades and professions are examined. Through the entries in this chapter, the range of skills and abilities of deaf individuals are made evident to the reader.

While raising their families and pursuing their careers, the members of the Canadian Deaf community did not neglect the more spiritual side of life, however. Chapter 10 reveals a detailed look at the religious efforts of Protestant, Lutheran, Catholic, and Jewish people (both deaf and hearing) in establishing denominational and interdenominational religious activities and organizations for Canada's deaf citizens in the late 1800s and 1900s.

Chapters 11 and 12 focus on communication. Publications of, for, and by deaf Canadians have played a vital role in the Canadian Deaf community for many years. Some of these newspapers and magazines, as well as poetry and books written by deaf Canadians, are detailed in Chapter 11. One of the most — if not *the* most — important feature of any culture is its language. Chapter 12 discusses the sign languages found in Canada and examines some of the issues surrounding this vital element in deaf people's lives. Canada's progressive attitude toward the recognition of sign languages as the natural language of deaf people has led to legislation that can serve as an example to other countries.

Chapters 13 and 14 explore the creative side of the Deaf community. Chapter 13 looks at the visual arts and highlights a few of the many deaf artists found in Canada. Chapter 14 focuses on the performing arts, including the stage and screen, as well as the National Festival of the Arts sponsored by the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf.

Sports have always played an important role in the Deaf community, and Chapter 15 introduces the reader to some of the deaf Canadian athletes that have made this country proud. Included in this chapter are individuals who excelled in ice hockey, speedskating, skiing, swimming, track and field, football, boxing and wrestling, and coaching other athletes. Also discussed are the World Games for the Deaf and several of the athletic associations formed by deaf Canadians.

The Deaf community is not “all work and no play.” Chapter 16 takes the reader through several of the leisure time activities enjoyed by deaf Canadians, such as scouting, inventing, flying, skydiving, and sharpshooting. Collectors are also included in this chapter. Other interesting individuals are introduced in Chapter 17, when the reader goes “down memory lane” with deaf storytellers to examine some of the less publicized aspects of deaf life. The adventures of

some of Canada's more eccentric deaf citizens are included in this chapter, as well as insights into the lives of deaf-blind Canadians and reactions within the Deaf community to those deaf people who have chosen peddling as a way of life.

The little-known story of deaf Canadians' involvement in the world wars is revealed in Chapter 18, as the reader is introduced to deaf soldiers, deaf cadets, and the efforts of deaf civilians during times of war.

Chapter 19 explores some of the technology that has excluded deaf people from full participation in daily life — such as the telephone — and devices that deaf people have developed or fought for to overcome these obstacles and create opportunities for greater participation — such as couplers for TTYs, telephone relay services, and closed captions. This chapter concludes with a look at one of the more controversial types of technology — cochlear implants — and the Deaf community's reaction to these devices.

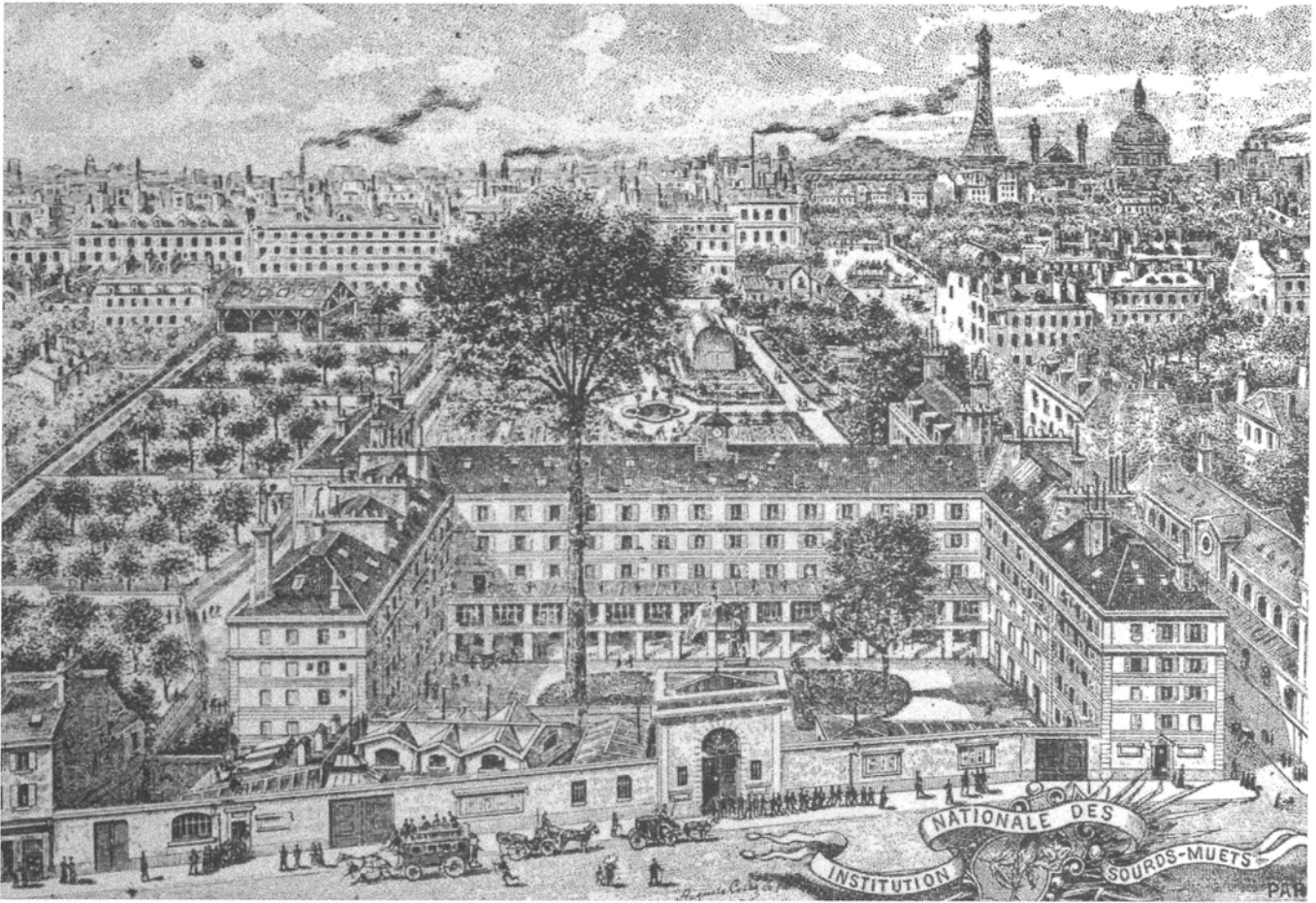
The struggles and achievements of deaf Canadians in obtaining and keeping such rights and privileges as driving, serving on juries, working in certain professions, and being educated in their preferred languages are detailed in Chapter 20.

And finally, Chapter 21 includes a few tidbits about the variety of ways in which deaf Canadians have been honoured, remembered, and make their culture visible.

My hope is that this book will lead to greater pride and interest in the history of deaf Canadians, will dispel some of the misconceptions that people from all walks of life have about the Deaf community, and will encourage future researchers — both deaf and hearing — to pursue the challenge of documenting the continuing saga of the Canadian deaf experience. This book contains the stories of yesterday. But remember — Today is tomorrow's history. Preserve it. Cherish it. Learn from it. Share it. And enjoy it.

Clifton F. Carbin
January 1996

The Early Days – Attitudes Toward Deaf People and Their Education



The grounds of the Institution Nationale des Sourds-Muets, Paris, France (1894)

The Silent Worker/Gallaudet University Archives

That deafness is as old as the race there is little room for doubt, for the deaf are mentioned in the earliest writings, both sacred and profane, but it was believed in early times impossible to instruct them, and practically no attempt was made toward their education until the middle of the eighteenth century.

Hattie Conwell Spear (1902)¹

Before discussing efforts to educate deaf people in Canada during the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries, it is necessary to briefly describe how deaf people had been educated elsewhere prior to that time. Detailed discussions of some of the following people and events can be found in such books as *A Place of Their Own* (Van Cleve and Crouch, 1989), *Turning Points in the Education of Deaf People* (Scouten, 1984), *The Conquest of Deafness* (Bender, 1960), *Educating the Deaf* (Moore, 1987, 3rd edition), and *The Gallaudet Encyclopedia of Deaf People and Deafness* (Van Cleve, ed., 1987), to name only a few. The following is a brief glimpse into the opinions held about deaf people — their intellectual and spiritual capabilities,

and their education — and the impact these opinions and subsequent actions had on their lives.

The Earliest References to Deaf People

If, indeed, “deafness is as old as the race,” then it is reasonable to assume that at least a few prehistoric people were deaf. During those times, it was important for the survival of the family and the group that all its members have similar physical capabilities. Anything that deviated from the norm was considered a threat to the group’s existence. Thus, it is likely that infants

and young children who appeared physically unfit for survival — such as those who were sickly or deformed — were either rejected or destroyed. Because deafness is difficult to detect at an early age, however, deaf infants may have been able to live long enough to prove their worth in the clan’s survival, although there is no documentation that substantiates this theory.

Some of the earliest recorded references to deaf people can be found in the writings of Greek philosophers and in the Old and New Testaments. In addition, other Hebrew documents such as the *Mishnah* (interpretations of the Old Testament compiled in the first and second centuries A.D.) and the *Talmud* (interpretations of the *Mishnah*, written during the third to fifth centuries A.D.) contain references to the legal status of deaf people.²

The writings of St. Augustine (b. 354; d. 430) indicate he was aware that deaf people married, had children, and used signs to communicate. Consider this discussion between St. Augustine and his friend, Evodius:

[Augustine:] *If a man and woman of this kind [deaf] were united in marriage and for any reason were transferred to some solitary place where, however, they might be able to live, if they should have*

*a son who was not deaf, how would the latter speak with his parents? [Evodius:] How can you think he would do otherwise than reply by gestures to the signs which his parents made to him? ... For what does it matter, as he grows up, whether he speaks or makes gestures, since both of these pertain to the soul?*³

However, readers through the ages have often focused on Augustine’s apparent agreement with the apostle Paul that deafness is “a hindrance to faith.” Religious leaders have referred to the following statement of St. Augustine’s as proof that deaf people could not become Christians: “This defect [being deaf] moreover is a hindrance to faith itself, according to the Apostle, who says, ‘So then faith [cometh] by hearing.’”⁴ It has been said by some scholars that, like Paul’s statement, Augustine’s comments were mistranslated and/or misinterpreted. Whether or not this is the case, the fact remains that Augustine overlooked the possibility that the signs used by deaf people could be used in their education. For centuries, his writings were cited when people wanted to justify their attitudes toward and treatment of deaf people in religious and educational realms.

In the sixth century A.D., a Byzantine emperor named

TABLE 1.1

DATE	COUNTRY	EVENT
circa 1500 B.C.	EGYPT	Egyptian EBERS PAPYRUS is the first known document that refers to deaf people.
between 1456-933 B.C.	ISRAEL	According to an interpretation of EXODUS 4:10-12, “Some people are deaf because the Lord made them that way.” (Quoted from Van Cleve and Crouch, “Prophets and Physicians,” in <i>A Place of Their Own</i> . Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press, 1989. See also “Ancient and Mediæval Worlds.” In Kenneth W. Hodgson, <i>The Deaf and Their Problems: A Study in Special Education</i> , pp. 66-67. New York: Philosophical Library Inc., 1954.)
between 933-722 B.C.	ISRAEL	A passage in LEVITICUS 19, verse 14, lists several laws, one of which is “Thou shalt not curse the deaf....” These and other Old Testament laws show a degree of acceptance of and tolerance toward deaf people, who were regarded in the same way legally as were children. The creation of laws to protect deaf people likely was necessitated by cruel treatment of this segment of the population.
circa 350 B.C.	GREECE	The opinions of SOCRATES (b. circa 470; d. 399 B.C.) can be found in the writing of PLATO (Greek philosopher, b. 427; d. 347 B.C.). Socrates said that if he were to become deaf, he would use sign language. This statement appears in a discussion with his friend, Hermogenes, in the work <i>Cratylus</i> .
circa 335 B.C.	GREECE	ARISTOTLE (Greek philosopher, b. 384; d. 322 B.C.) wrote that people who are “born deaf become senseless and incapable of reason,” and that “men that are born deaf are in all cases dumb; that is to say, they can make vocal noises, but they cannot speak.” For centuries, these statements have been used to justify withholding basic human rights from deaf people, and to regard teaching them to speak as a waste of time. Aristotle’s statements may have been taken out of context and misinterpreted. Nevertheless, the negative connotations left in people’s minds have adversely affected deaf individuals.
circa 60-80 A.D.	ISRAEL	Writers of the New Testament had different views about deaf people from those who recorded the Old Testament. Rather than enact laws to protect them, the writers of the New Testament focused on Divine intervention as the only hope for deaf people (who were always considered “tongue-tied” or speechless) to acquire speech. Five verses in MARK (7:32-37) seem to indicate that deafness was considered something undesirable that needed to be cured, and other passages in the New Testament show Jesus curing a deaf or mute person (e.g., MATTHEW 11:5). Other passages depict deaf and mute people as being possessed by demons (e.g., MARK 9:17-27; MATTHEW 12:22).
circa 57 A.D.	ISRAEL	In one of his letters to the church in Rome (Romans 10:17), the apostle PAUL wrote: “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” This line has been interpreted by many religious leaders to mean that faith (and therefore salvation) is denied to deaf people because they cannot hear the Word of God.

TABLE 1.2

DATE	COUNTRY	EVENT
circa 400 A.D.	NIMIDEA (Northern Africa)	In the 18th chapter of <i>De quantitate animae liber unus</i> , SAINT AUGUSTINE showed his awareness that deaf people can use sign language to discuss issues that involve beliefs and thoughts. He wrote, "... for what does it matter ... whether he speaks or makes gestures, since both these pertain to the soul?" Unfortunately, more people have focused on Augustine's comments about deafness being a hinderance to faith than on his more positive statements about deaf people.
534 A.D.	BYZANTINE EMPIRE	JUSTINIAN, Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire, listed five conditions of deafness and described how those conditions affected individuals under the law. People who were born deaf and could not communicate through writing were granted the fewest rights under the Justinian Code.
685 A.D.	ENGLAND	SAINT JOHN OF BEVERLEY healed a mute (and possibly deaf) youth and taught him to speak.

Justinian (b. 483; d. Nov. 14, 575) compiled a set of laws that became known as the Justinian Code. Five categories of deaf and mute people were included in these statutes. The first category, "the Deaf and Dumb with whom this double infirmity is from birth," were forbidden to make wills or free slaves. They could acquire or inherit property, but could not have control over it; a guardian handled all legal matters for born-deaf individuals. However, four categories of deaf people were accorded full legal rights under the Justinian Code: (1) deaf people who became deaf after birth (and who, therefore, may have received an education so they could communicate through writing); (2) born-deaf people who could speak; (3) individuals who were deafened in old age; and (4) people who could hear but could not speak. This code served as the foundation for the legal structures in other European countries, and thus had a significant impact on the lives of deaf citizens for centuries, especially during feudal times, when even the deaf children of aristocratic land-owners were unable to fully secure their legal rights because of their deafness.

Many scholars point to the writings of the Venerable Bede in *The Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation* for one of the earliest stories about teaching a mute (and possibly deaf) person. The story is about Saint John of Beverley (b. 640; d. May 7, 721), who miraculously "healed" a mute boy (presumed by many to be deaf as well) by making the sign of the cross on the boy's tongue.⁵ St. John, who was the Bishop of Hagulstad at that time, then taught the youth to speak, first by pronouncing letters, then syllables, then words, and finally sentences. Although there is some question about the lad's deafness, the story inspired others to attempt teaching articulation. Today, St. John of Beverley is considered by some to be the patron saint of teachers of deaf students.

The 15th through 17th Centuries

In the 1400s through 1600s, the possibility of the education (and/or salvation) of deaf people had begun to capture the attention of certain individuals in Spain, the Netherlands, Italy, England, and Switzerland. Among the better-known Renaissance educators of deaf students was Pedro Ponce de Leon (b. 1520; d.

1584), a Benedictine monk at the Monastery of San Salvador in Oña, Spain, who taught two young deaf noblemen to read, write, and speak. The following quote is credited to Ponce himself, in a legal document prepared in 1578:

I have had for my pupils, who were deaf and dumb from birth, sons of great lords and of notable people, whom I have taught to speak, read, write, and reckon; to pray, to assist at the Mass, to know the doctrines of Christianity, and to know how to confess themselves by speech, some of them also to learn Latin and some both Latin and Greek, and to understand the Italian language ...⁶



Pedro Ponce de Leon

Le pouvoir des signes/Collection particulière, Studio de la Comète



Juan Pablo Bonet

Le pouvoir des signes/Collection INJS de Paris, Studio de la Comète

If the deaf children of noblemen acquired speech, they might no longer be regarded as “infants” under the law, and thus could inherit and legally control their family estates. Acquiring speech was not only of benefit spiritually, but also economically.

Another Spaniard, Juan Pablo Bonet (b. 1579; d. 1620), wrote a book that chronicled the instructional procedures he had observed for four years while watching fellow countryman Ramirez de Carrión teach articulation to a deaf child. In his work, *Reduccion de las Letras, y Arte para Enseñar a Ablar los Mudos (Simplification of Letters, and the Art of Teaching the Mute to Speak)* published in 1620, Bonet observed:

The deaf are both most quick to comprehend the gestures made to them, because they attempt thus to supply the loss of hearing, and very clever at making use of them themselves ... to take the place of speech. And so the instrument to be chosen should be one to which they are habituated, and the sounds of the letters must be made known to them by signs.⁷

However, he continues:

It is necessary that in a house where there is a deaf mute, all who can read should know this [manual] alphabet, in order to converse with him by its means, and not by other signs, which will be less beneficial to him, whether it be writing or manual gestures; nor should they permit him to make use of them, but he should reply by word of mouth to the questions put to him.⁸

TABLE 1.3

DATE	COUNTRY	EVENT
1400s	SPAIN	FRAY MELCHOR DE YEBRA (b. 1526; d. Apr. 1, 1586), a Franciscan monk, published drawings of handshapes representing the letters of the Spanish alphabet used by Catholic monks who had taken a vow of silence. In 1620, JUAN PABLO BONET (see below) reproduced this alphabet in his book, <i>Reduccion de las Letras, y Arte para Enseñar a Ablar los Mudos (Simplification of Letters, and the Art of Teaching the Mute to Speak)</i> .
1400s	NETHERLANDS	RUDOLPHUS AGRICOLA (b. 1443; d. 1485) wrote <i>De Inventione Dialectica</i> , in which he told of a deaf person who was taught to read and write. This book was not published until 1528.
1500s	ITALY	GIROLAMO CARDANO (b. 1501; d. 1576), inspired by the writing of AGRICOLA, wrote in his autobiography (<i>De Vita Propria Liber</i>) that he believed deaf people could be taught to read and write and could learn through signs. Cardano did not emphasize that speech is necessary for a deaf person to learn language. This was a revolutionary concept — that deaf people could reason without the spoken word.
1500s	SPAIN	PEDRO PONCE DE LEON began teaching two deaf brothers, Francisco and Pedro de Velasco. He used writing to teach the names of things to the boys, followed by the correct Spanish pronunciation. It appears that Ponce de Leon did not use a manual alphabet, signs, or lipreading with his students. He has been called by some the first teacher of deaf students.
1500s	SWITZERLAND	ST. FRANCIS DE SALES (b. Aug. 21, 1567; d. Dec. 28, 1622), then Bishop of Geneva, assumed responsibility for a deaf member of his household staff. He instructed this person on religious matters through signs. Bishop Francis de Sales was eventually designated the patron saint of deaf people.
1568	SPAIN	EL MUÑO (the mute), a deaf man whose real name was JUAN FERNANDEZ NAVARETTA (b. 1526; d. 1579), became official court painter for King Philip II of Spain. He was apparently well educated and could read and write several languages.
1620	SPAIN	JUAN PABLO BONET published his book, <i>Reduccion de las Letras, y Arte para Enseñar a Ablar los Mudos (Simplification of Letters, and the Art of Teaching the Mute to Speak)</i> , which was based on his observations of fellow countryman, RAMIREZ DE CARRION, a speech teacher and tutor of a deaf acquaintance of Bonet's. In his book, Bonet reproduced the manual alphabet used by FRAY MELCHOR DE YEBRA in the 1400s.



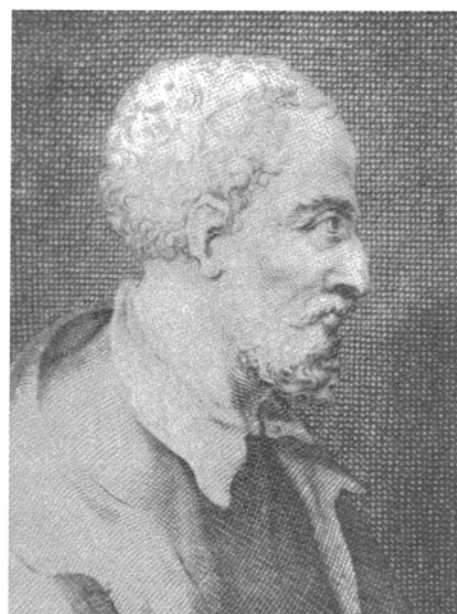
Re-creation of frontispiece to Bonet's 1620 book (engraved by a Toronto, Ont. firm owned by a deaf man)

The Deaf Mutes of Canada/Gallaudet University Archives



John Wallis

Le pouvoir des signes/Collection INJS de Paris, Studio de la Comète

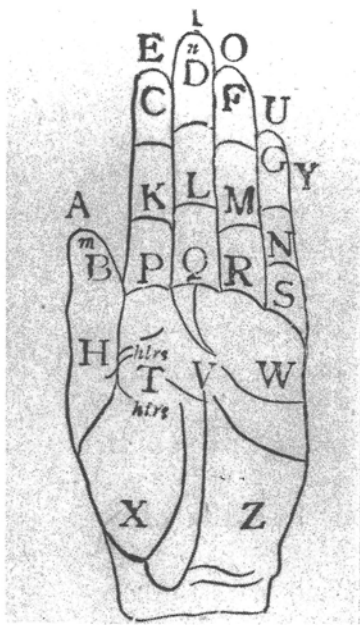


Girolamo Cardano

Le pouvoir des signes/Collection INJS de Paris, Studio de la Comète

TABLE 1.4

DATE	COUNTRY	EVENT
1623	ENGLAND	SIR KENELM DIGBY (b. 1603; d. 1665) visited Spain and met Don Luis de Velasco, an educated deaf nobleman whose spoken language skills so impressed the Englishman that he went home praising de Velasco's accomplishments in his book <i>Treatise on the Nature of Bodies</i> (published in 1644). Digby's story of de Velasco was reprinted in 1648 in a book by JOHN BULWER (see below) called <i>Philocophus: or, the Deafe and Dumbe Man's Friend</i> .
1644	ENGLAND	JOHN BULWER (b. 1614; d. 1684) published <i>Chirologia; or, The Natural Language of the Hand</i> , and in 1648 published <i>Philocophus: or, the Deafe and Dumbe Man's Friend</i> , in which he extolled the virtues of using the manual alphabet as a foundation for lipreading, followed finally by the introduction of speech training.
1656	HOLLAND	ANTHONY DEUSING published his work, <i>The Deaf and Dumb Man's Discourse</i> , which was translated into English in 1670. Deusing extolled the virtues of signs as a medium of expression for conveying thought. In his writing, he brought to light the presence of interpreters for deaf individuals. Deusing told of an event he had witnessed in which a deaf man's hearing wife and servant signed the conversations of those around him.
1659	ENGLAND	WILLIAM HOLDER, an Anglican clergyman, began teaching a congenitally deaf boy to speak, by using writing and a two-handed manual alphabet. In 1669, Holder published <i>Elements of Speech & With an Appendix Concerning Persons Deaf and Dumb</i> , which described his teaching techniques. He is considered by many to be one of the two first teachers of deaf students in England (with John Wallis, see below).
1662	ENGLAND	A year after teaching a 25-year-old deaf man to speak with remarkable success (the man had not become deaf until the age of five), JOHN WALLIS took over the instruction of the deaf boy previously taught by WILLIAM HOLDER. Wallis used a manual alphabet and writing. He is considered by many to be one of the first two teachers of deaf students in England (with William Holder).
1680	ENGLAND	GEORGE DALGARNO, a Scotsman, published <i>Didascopholus; or the Deaf and Dumb Man's Tutor</i> . His essay emphasized the use of fingerspelling with infants, so they could develop language skills in a natural way. Dalgarno believed that deaf people had the same capacity to learn as hearing people. His manual alphabet was different from that used in Spain and England up to that time. Dalgarno assigned the letters of the alphabet to different locations on the palm and fingers, to which one pointed to indicate the desired letters.
1692	HOLLAND	JOHANN KONRAD AMMAN, originally from Switzerland, published <i>Surdos Loquins (The Speaking Deaf)</i> , in which he outlined his techniques for teaching deaf people to talk and write. Amman felt that the ability to speak is the most important feature of being human and therefore should be the first thing taught to deaf people. His work was influential in the development of the oral movement.



The Dalgarno Hand
The Deaf Mutes of Canada/Gallaudet University Archives

Around this time in England, two men were quarrelling over which of them should be credited with being the first teacher of deaf students in that country. The contest was between William Holder (b. 1616; d. 1698), an Anglican clergyman, and John Wallis (b. 1616; d. 1705), a professor of mathematics at Oxford University. Holder began teaching a congenitally deaf boy (Alexander Popham) in 1659 at the request of the boy's mother. Four years later, impatient with her son's progress, she turned the boy over to Wallis, who was

known to have had astounding success teaching a deaf 25-year-old man (Daniel Whalley of Northampton) to read, write, and speak (the fact that the man had not lost his hearing until the age of five, and thus already had acquired speech skills prior to

becoming deaf, was not mentioned during public demonstrations of his "newly acquired" skills). Also in England, a Scottish educator named George Dalgarno (b. 1628; d. 1687) had devised a unique manual alphabet to try with deaf children. To use his system, one pointed to different places on the hand and fingers that corresponded to the letters of the alphabet.

In Holland, both signs and speech had ardent supporters. Anthony Deusing (b. 1612; d. 1666), professor of medicine at Groningen, extolled the virtues of sign language as a medium of communication, while Johann Konrad Amman (b. 1669; d. 1724), a physician, felt that the ability to speak was the most important feature of being human and should be taught to deaf people first. Amman, who came to Holland from his native Switzerland, believed that speech was a direct gift from God and therefore divine. His work had considerable influence on other oralists such as Samuel Heinicke of Germany (see "The 1700s" below).

The 1700s

During the 18th century, interest in education for "the common man" began to spread. While some hearing children of well-to-do families continued to receive instruction from private tutors, public education in European countries was becoming more accepted. In addition, wealthy citizens were beginning to establish institutions to provide for the poor and the sick, and for those with physical and mental disabilities. More written material about deaf education began to appear, primarily in cor-



Johann Konrad Amman
Le pouvoir des signes/Collection INJS de Paris, Studio de la Comète



Jacob Rodriguez Pereire
Le pouvoir des signes/Collection INJS de Paris, J.L. Charmet

TABLE 1.5

DATE	COUNTRY	EVENT
circa 1745	FRANCE	JACOB RODRIQUEZ PEREIRE (b. 1715; d. 1780) from Spain taught a deaf boy (d'Azy d'Etavigny) to read, speak, and understand spoken words through lipreading. D'Azy d'Etavigny had previously attended a school in Amiens taught by a deaf man (possibly Etienne de Fay) and had learned signs from him. Pereire also taught Saboureux de Fontenay. Pereire used a one-handed manual alphabet to teach speech and also developed sensory exercises that were later applied by other educators in their work with retarded individuals. Students practiced writing by keeping diaries and writing letters, practical uses of a written language.
1760	FRANCE	ABBÉ CHARLES MICHEL de l'ÉPÉE began his work with two deaf sisters. He founded the Institution Nationale des Sourd-Muets (the National Institute for Deaf-Mutes) in Paris in 1760. L'Épée developed what were called "methodical" signs to reflect the syntax of spoken French. Later, he became influenced by the sign language used by deaf residents of Paris and began to move slightly away from the exclusive use of methodical signs. L'Épée felt that sign language was the natural language of deaf people, and that teaching speech was a mechanical effort of less intellectual challenge. Speech instruction was an individual task, requiring much time spent with each student, whereas signs could be used to instruct groups of students.
1767	SCOTLAND	THOMAS BRAIDWOOD established a school in Edinburgh, Scotland. The product of a highly competitive age, Braidwood decided to keep his methods secret unless he were compensated for their disclosure.
1771	UNITED STATES	JOHN BOLLING (son of Major Thomas Bolling of Virginia) left the United States to attend Braidwood's school in Scotland. In 1775, his sister Mary and brother Thomas joined him. These three were the first North-American-born deaf children to receive a formal education.
1776	FRANCE	De l'ÉPÉE published his work, <i>Instruction of Deaf and Dumb by Means of Methodical Signs</i> .
1777	GERMANY	J.F.L. ARNOLDI, a German pastor, published <i>Practical Instructions for Teaching Deaf-Mute Persons to Speak and Write</i> . Arnoldi believed deaf children should begin receiving an education by the age of four or five.
1778	GERMANY	SAMUEL HEINICKE established the first oral school in Leipzig. Although Heinicke is known as the "Father of the German Method" (another term for the purely oral method), he indicated that he was not opposed to natural signs and fingerspelling, but was against methodical signs like those developed by de l'Épée. Heinicke believed that pure thought was not possible without speech.
1779	FRANCE	PIERRE DESLOGES (b. 1747; d. Unknown), a deaf Frenchman, wrote <i>Observations d'un sourd et muet sur "Un Course élémentair d'éducation des sourds et muets," publié en 1779 par M. l'abbé Deschamps</i> , in which he described a thriving Deaf community in Paris, a city with a large number of deaf residents. No evidence exists that other Deaf communities existed as early as the one in Paris.
1779	AUSTRIA	In Vienna, ABBÉ STORCK opened Austria's first school for deaf children. He had been trained by the Abbé de l'Épée in Paris, France.
1780	UNITED STATES	CHARLES GREEN (b. 1772; d. Aug. 29, 1787) of Boston left the United States to attend Braidwood's school in Edinburgh, Scotland. His father later revealed Braidwood's secret teaching methods in his book, <i>Vox Oculis Subjecta</i> (see FRANCIS GREEN, below).
1784	ITALY	ABBA TOMMASO SILVESTRI, who had been trained by de l'Épée and also used the techniques of Amman, opened the Istituto Statale dei Sordomuti, the first school for the deaf in Italy.
1790	FRANCE	ABBÉ ROCH AMBROISE SICARD became head of the Institution Nationale des Sourd-Muets in Paris. Sicard followed in de l'Épée's footsteps, using methodical signs, a one-handed manual alphabet, and writing as methods of instruction for the students. Sicard also continued moving more toward natural signs and away from methodical signs.
1793	UNITED STATES	FRANCIS GREEN, father of CHARLES GREEN, published <i>Vox Oculis Subjecta</i> , a description of his son's experiences at the Braidwood Academy in Scotland. Ten years later, following his son's accidental drowning in Halifax, N.S., he published articles recommending the founding of a school for deaf students in the United States.

respondence from the pens of the Abbé Charles Michel de l'Epée of France and Samuel Heinicke of Germany. These two men are probably the best-known individuals of that era, but they were not the only ones to teach deaf people during this time.

In France, where education of deaf students remained exclusively the domain of wealthy families until 1760 (when the Abbé de l'Epée opened his school in Paris), one of the earliest teachers of deaf children was Jacob Rodriguez Pereire (b. Apr. 11, 1715; d. 1780). He was born in Portugal and moved with his family to France at the age of 26. His interest in teaching deaf people began with his efforts to instruct his deaf sister. He later successfully taught other students, including d'Azy d'Etavigny and Saboureux de Fontenay, through whose writings the world learned of Pereire's techniques.

In 1760, after reading the works of Bulwer, Wallis, and Holder (see Table 1.4), Thomas Braidwood (b. 1715; d. Oct. 24, 1806) began successfully teaching a 15-year-old deaf boy (Charles Shirreff) who had lost his hearing at the age of three. The Scotsman's next pupil was a congenitally deaf boy, who also made great progress under Braidwood's instruction. His first school, the Braidwood Academy for the Deaf and Dumb, was in Edinburgh, Scotland; in 1783, he moved it to Hackney, London, England. His teaching methods were a family secret until a nephew, Joseph Watson (see Table 1.6), published information on the Braidwood technique in 1809. However, in the United States, a man named Francis Green (father of Charles Green, one of Braidwood's students) had already published a document called *Vox Oculis Subjecta*, in which he described his son's education under the Braidwood method.

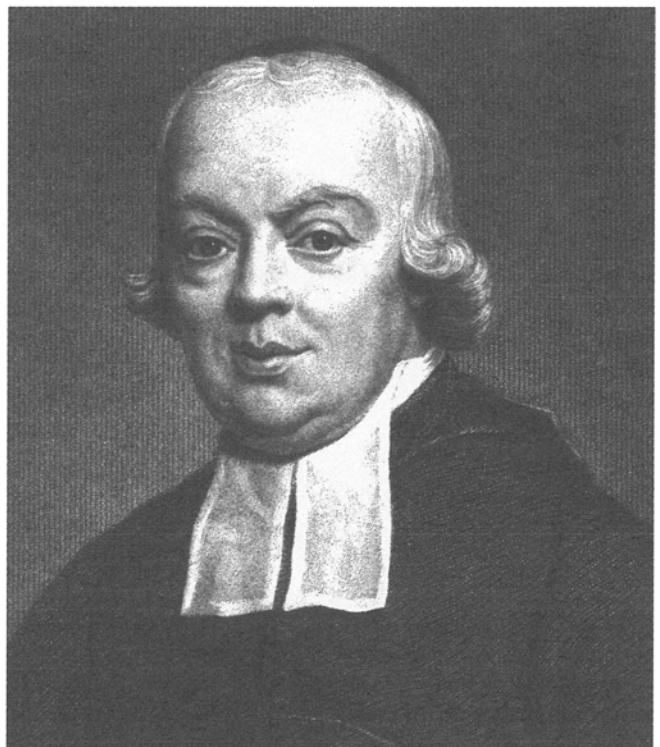
In 1778, Samuel Heinicke (b. Apr. 4, 1727; d. Apr. 30, 1790) opened a school for deaf children in Leipzig, Germany. Heinicke, whose interest in teaching deaf students began in 1754 with his first deaf pupil, studied the methods of Amman and taught the boy to speak. Service in the military prevented Heinicke from concentrating fully on deaf education until 1768, when he again had a deaf student in his class. Heinicke believed that "... clear thought is possible only through speech" and "... the deaf can understand the speech of another from the speech motions of the lips."⁹ His purpose was to provide deaf people with spoken language so they could fit into hearing society. Heinicke is known as the "Father of the German Method" and was a strong influence in the purely oral movement, despite the fact that his techniques were kept so secret that they died with him.

In contrast to Heinicke's methods, the approach taken by the Abbé Charles Michel de l'Epée (b. Nov. 24, 1712; d. Dec. 23, 1789) was the first major attempt to use sign language in the education of deaf children. When he opened the Institution Nationale des Sourds-Muets (the National Institution for Deaf-Mutes) in 1760, using his own funds, de l'Epée admitted only poor students, thus providing a free education for a segment of the population that had been ignored until this time.¹⁰ Unlike his predecessors, de l'Epée did not select only the "brightest and best" students to attend his school, nor limit the number of students in his classes to only a few. Rather, he opened his doors to any poor deaf child in need of an education. He believed that the signs used by the Deaf community of Paris constituted a national language for them, and set out to modify this language and add to it in an attempt to develop a manual code that conformed to the syntax of spoken French. The



Samuel Heinicke

Le pouvoir des signes/Collection INJS de Paris, Studio de la Comète



The Abbé Charles Michel de l'Epée

Gallaudet University Archives

TABLE 1.6

DATE	COUNTRY	EVENT
1809	ENGLAND	JOSEPH WATSON, a nephew of Thomas Braidwood, opened the first public school that accepted indigent deaf children in London. He also published a two-volume work based on the Braidwood methods (which he claimed focused on reading, writing, and speech training, but did use some manual approaches as well [such as fingerspelling with the two-handed manual alphabet, and signs used by local deaf people]).
1812	ENGLAND	JOHN BRAIDWOOD, a grandson of THOMAS BRAIDWOOD, left England to travel to the United States, where he hoped to open a school for deaf children in either Philadelphia, Pa. or Baltimore, Md.
1815	ENGLAND and FRANCE	An American named THOMAS HOPKINS GALLAUDET left the United States for England to study the teaching methods used at the Braidwood Academy. Unable to persuade Braidwood to share his secrets, Gallaudet travelled to France, where he was warmly welcomed by Sicard at the Institution Nationale des Sourds-Muets in Paris. While there, he studied with Laurent Clerc and Jean Massieu.
1816	FRANCE	LAURENT CLERC left France with THOMAS HOPKINS GALLAUDET to establish the first permanent school for deaf students in the United States. Clerc became the first deaf teacher of the deaf in that country when the school opened the next year.
1821	GERMANY	JOHN BAPTIST GRASER (b. 1766; d. 1841) opened an experimental school in Bayreuth that put into practice his beliefs that manual communication and the isolation of deaf students in residential schools were the reasons for the lack of success in the education of these children. Because of Graser, deaf students in Germany began to be integrated into public schools, where they encountered academic difficulties. The practice was later abandoned.
1828	GERMANY	FREDERICK MARITZ HILL (b. Dec. 8, 1805; d. Sept. 30, 1874) began his career teaching at the Heinicke institute in Weissenfels, Germany. Hill believed that speech was the foundation of all education for deaf students. He refused to use sign language or fingerspelling in his classrooms. Because he was a trainer of other teachers of deaf students, his influence in promoting oral education of deaf children was felt throughout Europe and eventually spread to the North American continent as well.

result was a systematized and artificial system called “methodical signs” (later also called “The French Method”). He hoped that this method would result in deaf children who could comprehend ideas and who would be able to read “the Word of God,” thus achieving salvation. L’Epée’s belief in methodical signs was vigorously criticized by Heinicke in Germany.

The Abbé de l’Epée and his institution had an influence on other school founders as well. After training at the Paris school, the Abba Tommaso Silvestri (b. Apr. 2, 1767; d. Sept. 7, 1789) of Italy founded the Istituto Statale dei Sordomuti, the first school for that country’s deaf children. It opened in Rome in 1784. Silvestri used several different methods in his school, including those of de l’Epée and Amman. In Vienna, Austria, the Abbé Storck, who also trained with de l’Epée, opened the first school for Austrian deaf students in 1789.

In 1790, Abbé Roch Ambroise Sicard (b. Sept. 28, 1742; d. May 10, 1822) succeeded de l’Epée as head of the school in Paris. Sicard continued using methodical signs and writing, but also increased the use of the natural signs of the students. It was during Sicard’s tenure as head of the institution that an American visitor, Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, met and studied with Louis Laurent Marie Clerc (b. Dec. 26, 1785; d. July 18, 1869) and Jean Massieu (b. 1772; d. July 22, 1846), two deaf teachers at the school. Gallaudet and Clerc then returned to the United States in 1816, and the next year established the first permanent public school for deaf children in that country.

Interest in education for deaf students was beginning to stir in the United States as well. By the end of the 18th century, Francis Green (b. Aug. 21, 1742; d. Apr. 21, 1807), whose son had attended school at Braidwood’s academy, had published his work, *Vox Oculis Subjecta*. This book described his son’s education under Braidwood’s educational system. By the turn of the century, Green had begun publishing articles in local papers urging the states to set up deaf schools of their own. The results of Green’s campaign and the effect of American schools on deaf children in Canada are discussed in Chapters 2 and 3.

The Early 19th Century

England, France, and Germany continued to figure prominently in the education of deaf students in the 19th century. And, for the first time in history, people in the United States began to play a significant role as well. (Some of these prominent North American figures are described in detail in Chapter 2.) In England, the first public school for deaf children was opened in London in 1809 by Joseph Watson (b. 1765; d. 1829), a nephew of Thomas Braidwood. Watson accepted both “private” (paying) and “charity” students at his school. He had broken the family tradition of secrecy by writing a two-volume work (entitled *The Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb: Or a Theoretical and Practical View of the Means by Which They are Taught to Speak and to Understand a Language*) that was based on Braidwood’s teaching

methods. In 1812, John Braidwood (b. 1784; d. Oct. 24, 1820), grandson of Thomas Braidwood, left England and arrived in the United States with the intention of opening a school for deaf students in that country.¹¹ Braidwood ultimately ended up in Virginia, tutoring the deaf children of Col. William Bolling (whose deaf brothers and sister had attended the Braidwood Academy in Edinburgh in the 18th century).

In France, the Abbé Sicard, the Abbé de l'Épée's successor, welcomed Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet (b. Dec. 10, 1787; d. Sept. 10, 1851) to his Paris institution. In preparation for establishing a school for deaf children in the United States, Gallaudet had travelled to Europe in 1815 to observe the various methods used in teaching deaf students. Unable to gain access to Braidwood's secret techniques in England, Gallaudet crossed the Channel from England to France in 1816, where he studied at the Institution Nationale des Sourds-Muets in Paris with deaf teachers Clerc and Massieu.

The Mid- to Late-19th Century and the Milan Congress

By the middle of the 19th century, oralism held sway in nearly all the European schools for deaf children. The majority of the schools in Germany had supported oralism from the beginning of their existence, following the example set by Samuel Heinicke in 1778. In fact, the oral method was sometimes called "The German Method" during those times. France, which had been strongly in favour of the manual approach in the beginning of its deaf education movement, continued using this system, especially in the Institution Nationale des Sourds-Muets. However, in the late 1870s, a group of Frenchmen who supported the oral method convinced the French government that "sign language lacked grammar and that its use prevented deaf people from understanding French."¹² The government replaced sign language with oral French in all

government-supported schools. Italian educators, too, began to openly support oralism in their schools. The stage was now set for an international convention to foster the acceptance of oralism in all European institutions for deaf students.

Even in the United States, oralism was beginning to gain a foothold. Oral schools in that country began in the late 1860s. The first was the New York Institution for the Improved Instruction of Deaf Mutes, which opened in 1867 in New York City. (It was renamed the Lexington School for the Deaf in September 1934.) Also in 1867, the Clarke Institution for Deaf-Mutes (renamed Clarke School for the Deaf in 1896) opened in Northampton, Mass. Two years later, the Boston Day School for Deaf-Mutes (renamed the Horace Mann School for the Deaf on May 8, 1877) was established in Boston.¹³ As early as 1868, Edward Miner Gallaudet (who was then president of the National Deaf-Mute College in Washington, D.C.) urged administrators at other American schools for the deaf to begin introducing some articulation courses into their curriculum. And Alexander Graham Bell (b. Mar. 3, 1847; d. Aug. 2, 1922), who arrived on the North American continent in 1870 (moving to Brantford, Ont. with his parents), travelled to the United States in 1871. By the next year, Bell had begun teaching articulation in his own private school for deaf students in Boston. (Incidentally, Bell was *not* a delegate to the Congress of Milan in 1880.)¹⁴



Deaf girls receiving instruction from Sicard (on right) and Massieu (on left)

Le pouvoir des signes/Collection INJS de Paris

In 1878, a meeting known as the International Congress for the Improvement of the Condition of Deaf-Mutes was held in Paris. The 27 delegates endorsed speech and lipreading and rejected sign language and fingerspelling.¹⁵ This meeting started a public debate between the advocates of the two systems. To resolve the issue, a larger meeting was scheduled for 1880 in Milan, Italy. A total of 256 registered at this convention.¹⁶ The majority of the delegates (both voting and honorary members) at the 1880 conference came from Italy (158) and France (67), and were supporters of the oral method. Only two of the voting delegates — James Denison, principal of Kendall School in Washington, D.C., and Claudius Forestier, director/principal of a school for the deaf in Lyon, France — were deaf.¹⁷ The Americans supported the use of sign language and fingerspelling, but were outnumbered by the proponents of the oral method. The Rev. Alfred Bélanger (b. Apr. 27, 1835; d. June 5, 1910), director of the Institution Catholique des Sourds-Muets (Catholic Institution for Deaf and Dumb Males) in Montréal, Québec (1863-1884 and 1895-1900), was the only Canadian attending the Milan Congress. After leaving Italy, he returned to Montréal an even stronger supporter of the oral system. He firmly established this practice in his school, physically separating the oral students from those who were deemed “oral failures.”

One of the resolutions adopted at the Congress read:

*The Convention, considering the incontestable superiority of speech over signs, (1) for restoring deaf-mutes to social life, (2) for giving them greater facility of language, declares that the method of articulation should have the preference over that of signs in the instruction and education of the deaf and dumb.*¹⁸

The Milan Congress has been blamed for introducing oralism into the educational system for deaf students. However, as can be seen by the brief history in this chapter, oralism already had its supporters in Europe for many years prior to the conference. Even in the United States, the pure oral method could be found in some schools almost two decades before the Milan gathering. The delegates who met in Milan in 1880 simply gave official sanction to what had already become practice in many schools for years. The controversy between manualism and oralism has continued for more than 100 years and has dominated much of the history of schools in both the United States and Canada, as can be seen in the following chapters.