

Schools in the Atlantic Provinces



Newfoundland School for the Deaf students fly home by helicopter

Courtesy of Newfoundland School for the Deaf (St. John's, Nfld.)

Among the Atlantic provinces, Nova Scotia was a pioneer in the education of deaf Canadians — thanks in part to its legislature, which supported the concept of schools for deaf children. It was the first province to legislate grants to set up such schools (beginning in 1857), and the first province to pass legislation removing the schools from dependency on charity by guaranteeing a free education for all deaf Nova Scotians (April 19, 1884) — including deaf children.¹ Much of this legislative support was the result of public exhibitions conducted by the principal and some of the students from the Institution for the Deaf and Dumb in Halifax. It was common in those days for such demonstrations to be held in towns and cities as a means of eliciting public sympathy and support for fledgling institutions. Nova Scotia's efforts were recognized by the

American Annals of the Deaf and Dumb, which reported that to Nova Scotia

... belongs the honor, the noble distinction of having been the foremost among the Provinces of British North America practically to recognize, THROUGH ITS LEGISLATURE, the claims of the deaf and dumb. In this respect she has taken precedence of all the British North American Colonies, if not of all the dependencies of the Empire. Indeed, so far as state provision for the deaf and dumb is concerned, Nova Scotia has set an example which might or ought to be imitated by the mother country itself.²

Eventually, the other Maritime provinces (with the exception of Prince Edward Island) followed Nova Scotia's example

and established provincially supported residential schools for their deaf children.³

Nova Scotia

Institution for the Deaf and Dumb / School for the Deaf, Halifax

The 1856 founding of the Institution for the Deaf and Dumb in Halifax, N.S. (renamed the School for the Deaf in 1913) is generally credited to William Gray (b. 1806; d. June 30, 1881), a deaf immigrant from Scotland. However, as early as 1877, controversy arose regarding the school's real founder when George Tait (b. 1828; d. July 25, 1904), another deaf Scottish immigrant, claimed to be the individual responsible for its inception. Historians still do not agree on which man deserves greater credit. The institution had its beginnings in the back of a house on Argyle Street. The first class opened on August 4, 1856 with Gray as teacher. Tait, a self-employed carpenter who had previously been tutoring a deaf child in Halifax, solicited donations from local people to help finance the school. Newspaper advertisements about the school attracted the attention of the Rev. James Cuppaidge Cochran (b. Sept. 17, 1798; d. June 20, 1880), a hearing Anglican clergyman at Trinity Church on Jacob Street. Some years before, Cochran's interest in deaf people had been kindled by a chance shipboard encounter with the famous Laurent Clerc (b. Dec. 26, 1785; d. July 18, 1869), a deaf Frenchman who had taught deaf children in Hartford, Conn. (1817-1858.⁴

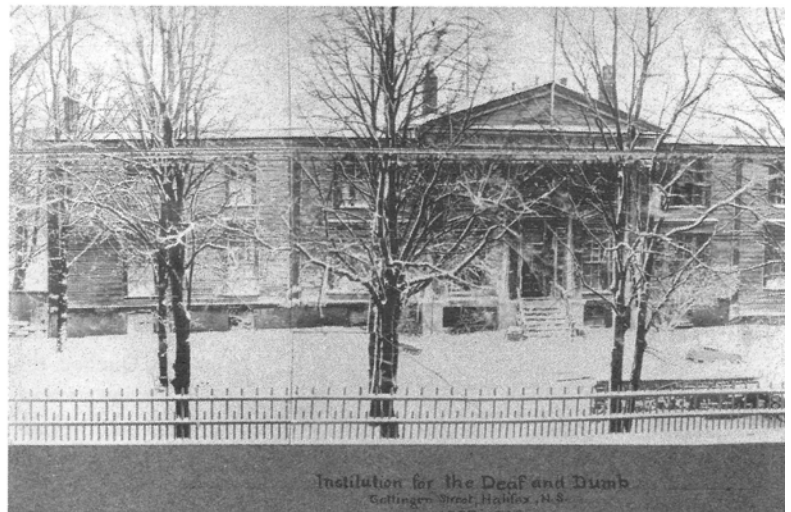
When Cochran visited Gray, he found him "in a mean lodging in a poor street, engaged in teaching one or two mutes, the place being destitute of the common comforts and even necessities of life."⁵ Those two deaf pupils were later identified as 11-year-old Mary Jane [Ann] Fletcher of Londonderry (b. 1845; d. Jan. 11, 1859) and seven-year-old John McCarthy of Halifax.⁶ From that small room emerged the nucleus for a school for Nova Scotia's deaf children. Tait used his carpentry skills to build much of the furniture for the tiny school. Cochran (who continued to be associated with the school for the next 23 years, serving on the board of directors until his death in 1880) raised funds for its support by enlisting the aid of benevolent citizens. On October 13, 1856, the school moved into a house located at the north end of Argyle Street, a part of which was occupied by James Whelan and his wife. The school rented half of the dwelling for 1 shilling and sixpence per week. The number of deaf pupils increased to 12 during the winter months of 1856-1857.⁷

A petition for financial assistance dated February 17, 1857 was sent by Cochran to the House of Assembly in the Nova Scotia Legislature. When an annual grant of \$1,200 was approved for the Institution, Nova Scotia became the first among the British Canadian provinces (then colonies of the British Empire) to recognize through governmental support the need for an appropriate education for its deaf children. (The school was receiving \$2,000 from the government by 1860 and continued to receive that amount for approximately another 20

years.)⁸ On May 1, 1857, the Halifax Institution moved to larger quarters in a rented building on the south corner of Gottingen (No. 125) and Prince William Streets.⁹ At that time, it was a day school only — three or four out-of-town pupils were boarded at Gray's residence, and the rest stayed with friends or relatives in town. The first *Register of Pupils*, written by Gray and Cochran, indicates that between August 4, 1856 and July 2, 1857, the Halifax Institution had a total enrolment of 19 pupils. They were all residents of Nova Scotia, ranging in age from five-year-old Franklin Tupper of Stewiacke to 28-year-old Charles McDaniels of Sherbrooke. Following are a few excerpts taken from this book: "School regularly kept from ten o'clock A.M. to 1 o'clock P.M. and from 2 to 4 o'clock"; "Rev. Mr. Cochran visited the school daily"; and "Geo. Tait has been very useful in collecting subscriptions."¹⁰

Following an exchange of letters between Cochran and the Institution for the Education of Deaf and Dumb Children in Edinburgh, Scotland, James Scott Hutton (b. May 10, 1833; d. Feb. 25, 1891), a hearing teacher there for 10 years (1847-1857), was appointed principal of the Halifax Institution. He assumed his duties on August 1, 1857 and served until 1878 (and again from 1882-1891). In 1869, the National Deaf-Mute College (now Gallaudet University) in Washington, D.C. conferred on Principal Hutton an honorary master of arts degree in recognition of his valuable contributions to the literature on deafness — in addition to being principal, he had written several textbooks and many articles in the *American Annals of the Deaf and Dumb*.

When Hutton became principal, Gray was retained as assistant teacher, a position he held for 13 years (1857-1870) before he lost his job as a result of his intemperance and treatment of the students.¹¹ In September 1858, the school began to board out-of-town pupils for the first time, while local pupils continued their daily commute to classes. Also in 1858, Principal Hutton and a group of deaf pupils began what became annual tours to major towns and villages in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island. Their purpose was to publicize the exis-



Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Halifax, N.S., on Gottingen Street (1859-1895)

Public Archives of Nova Scotia (Halifax, N.S.)

tence of the Halifax Institution, and to raise funds for the school's support. Other public relations activities, such as articles in local newspapers and the school's annual "examination of students" (which gave the local townspeople an opportunity to see the deaf children's progress), helped inform the public that the institution for deaf children was not an asylum or prison, but a *school*, engaged in educational activities.

With the help of funds raised at an 1858 Halifax Bazaar held under the patronage of the Countess of Mulgrave (the wife of His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia), the rented premises at 125 Gottingen Street were purchased by the institution for \$1,600. However, in August 1859, the school disposed of this property and paid \$6,400 for a larger building and one and one-half acres of property at the north end of Gottingen Street (Nos. 239 to 249). Known as Brunswick Villa, this mansion, formerly owned by a wealthy city merchant named Billing, stood on a high slope overlooking the Halifax Harbour from the Narrows to the Eastern Passage into the Atlantic Ocean.¹²

In the spring of 1860, the teaching staff increased to three, when Principal Hutton's father, George Hutton (b. Jan. 4, 1801; d. Feb. 24, 1870) arrived from Scotland. The elder Hutton, also a hearing man, had been a teacher of deaf students for nearly 40 years, first at Caputh and later at Perth. He originally came to Halifax just to visit his son, but soon was induced to stay. The senior Hutton offered his services without remuneration, and worked at the school until his death in 1870.

In attendance at the Halifax Institution at that time were 30 deaf pupils (19 boys and 11 girls), six of whom were day students. Many of the school desks and benches were made by the older boys in the carpentry shop. The teachers lived in the school building, and "in this way come to have a more thorough knowledge of their pupils than if only there during the six teaching hours of the day."¹³ Courses included penmanship, written language instruction, religion, arithmetic, geography, and composition.

The Halifax Institution became incorporated in April 1862. This made the school eligible for annual legislative grants and special grants-in-aid. Bequests, donations, and other forms of charitable contributions helped to provide the school with greater stability. A new school room and dormitory were added to the building during the 1864-1865 school year. A printing press was donated, but could not be used until extensive alterations and additions were made in 1874 to double the size of the original school building. The renovated building also included a new heating system, an infirmary, and additional dormitory space to accommodate up to 80 pupils.

The school term began on the first Wednesday in September and ended on the second Wednesday in July.¹⁴ Similar to the Protestant Institution for Deaf-Mutes in Montréal, Québec, the Halifax Institution employed the manual system for instruction, which included both the British two-hand alphabet and the one-hand alphabet that had been used in France and later modified for use in the United States.¹⁵ The development of writing skills ("penmanship") was also emphasized. Until 1872, when the first speech class of eight pupils was organized, the teaching of articulation and lipreading was considered a waste of time. Students

received courses in religion and also attended local churches on Sunday. "The Roman Catholic children go to St. Patrick's Church [and] the Protestant children of all denominations to St. George's Episcopal Church."¹⁶

At the close of the school year of 1878, Principal Hutton resigned his position and accepted the vice-principalship at the Ulster Institution for the Deaf and Dumb in Belfast, Ireland (1878-1882). His successor was Albert (also known as Alfred) Frederick Woodbridge (b. circa 1843; d. Oct. 15, 1921), a hearing man from Glasgow, Scotland and a graduate of the Science and Art Department of the Institution in South Kensington, Scotland. Woodbridge's opinion on the value of articulation training differed from Hutton's, and speech and lipreading were emphasized more during Woodbridge's tenure. He also introduced art into the curriculum.¹⁷ When Hutton was re-appointed principal (1882-1891), Woodbridge moved on to Fredericton, N.B., to become the founding principal of the Fredericton Institution for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb (1882-1902).



Fingerspelling class in 1893

The New Scotian/Public Archives of Nova Scotia (Halifax, N.S.)



Speech class in 1893

The New Scotian/Public Archives of Nova Scotia (Halifax, N.S.)



School for the Deaf, Halifax, N.S. (1896-1961)

From the postcard collection of Michael J. Olson (Washington, D.C.)

By the time Hutton returned, his opinion of lipreading and articulation had changed. His stay in Ireland had led him to make the following comment: "Apart from moral and spiritual training, (essential to all education worthy of the name) the prime, I might almost say the exclusive object of a deafmute's education is to put him in possession of verbal language as the means of social intercourse and the key to every department of knowledge."¹⁸

Prior to 1884, the Halifax Institution relied on philanthropic support in addition to legislative funds from the Maritime provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and what was then the British Colony of Newfoundland. On April 19, 1884, Nova Scotia became the first Canadian province "to decree unconditional free board and education for her deaf children" when an "Act in Relation to the Education of Deaf or Deaf-Mute Persons" was adopted by the Nova Scotia Legislature.¹⁹ Each municipality in which a deaf pupil's family resided was required to match the provincial funds given to the institution. Children between the ages of eight and 18 could enrol in the school.

Seven months following Principal Hutton's death in February 1891, James Fearon (b. Apr. 16, 1865; d. June 29, 1918) of Birmingham, England, became the institution's second principal (1891-1918).²⁰ A native of Portadown, Ireland, he was an experienced hearing teacher at the Institutions for the Deaf and Dumb in Belfast, Ireland, and in Margate and Birmingham, England. Like his predecessor, Fearon advocated the construction of a

... new Institution in another location with all approved modern accommodations, arrangements and facilities for the complete intel-

*lectual, physical and industrial education of the deaf of the Province, surrounded by grounds affording space for athletic games and exercises and sufficient for gardening and farming purposes to supply the wants of the establishment.*²¹

However, instead of moving, the school stayed where it was and simply expanded its property. William Cunard donated an adjacent piece of property equal in size to that already owned by the school, and the Institution purchased another adjacent lot. These three lots resulted in sufficient property on which to erect a sizeable building with spacious grounds at the original site. Construction on a \$50,000 school building began in the spring of 1894.²² The old school building was demolished. The 77 deaf students were sent home from March to December 1895, and the teachers used this time to visit other schools for the deaf in the United States and Canada. On January 27, 1896, the new Halifax Institution was formally opened, with speeches given by Mr. Daly, then lieutenant-governor of Nova Scotia, and Dr. Alexander Graham Bell (b. Mar. 3, 1847; d. Aug. 2, 1922), inventor of the telephone and frequent visitor to the school.²³ Ninety deaf pupils (54 boys and 36 girls) registered for admission — 78 were from Nova Scotia, seven from Newfoundland, and five from Prince Edward Island. (None came from New Brunswick because there were already schools for its pupils, one in Fredericton [1882-1902] and another in Lancaster, a suburb of Saint John [1903-1918]). For the next 65 years (1896-1961), this new school building served the deaf children from the Atlantic provinces.

Sufficient funds had been raised for the school building, but there was not enough money to construct a swimming pool.

Thanks to the generous donation by Daniel Rogers of Springhill, the father of a little deaf girl named Maggie (who died a year later), ample funds were raised to complete and equip a modern, indoor pool. A physical education program was introduced in 1896. A small cottage hospital was constructed on the property in 1897 to isolate children who were ill from those in the dormitories. Printing, tailoring, and shoe-making classes were added to the curriculum shortly after the new Halifax Institution opened. On December 5, 1898, the first edition of the monthly school paper, *The Institution News*, appeared, printed by the older male students. In 1915, the name of this Little Paper Family publication was changed to *The School News*.

For three months in 1901, Helen Adams Keller (b. June 27, 1880; d. June 1, 1968), the world-famous deaf and blind writer, lecturer, and social activist, was a guest of the Halifax Institution. She was accompanied by her teacher-companion,

Annie Sullivan (b. Apr. 14, 1866; d. Oct. 20, 1936). Along with A.G. Bell, Keller and Sullivan participated in the institution's closing exercises that year. The Halifax school educated several deaf-blind students over the years. One of the first listed in the student records was William Walter Heulin of St. George's, Nfld. (b. Oct. 20, 1872; d. Unknown), who was admitted on October 23, 1882 (he transferred to the school for the blind in 1892 so he could learn a trade).²⁴ In his *Short History of the School for the Deaf, Halifax, 1856-1961*, K.C. Van Allen named some of the other deaf-blind children who were admitted as students: Mary Jane Veinot (1906-1918), Charlie Crane (1916-1921), Annie Huckins (1933), Jean Watts (1943-1954), Roberta Wadman (1944-1954), Marion Day (1948-1955), Kerry Wadman (1955-1961), and Marjorie Golinsky (1952-1961).²⁵ Keller continued her interest in the deaf-blind students at the school, sending letters and words of encouragement.²⁶

After several visits to other schools for the deaf, Fearon was



A class in 1904

The New Scotian/Photo reproduction credit: Chun Louie and Joan K. Schlub, Gallaudet University Photo Services

drawn to the oral method. His previous belief that “the great object of Deaf-mute instruction is to make the pupil acquainted with written language, as the principal source of knowledge, and the grand instrument of communication with society” was replaced with a belief in spoken language skills.²⁷ By the 1906 school year, the Halifax Institution had seven oral classes and two manual classes, with 75 percent of the children being taught orally. By 1908, the school consisted of 10 academic classes (eight oral and two manual). The manual classes were taught through writing and fingerspelling, rather than with signs.²⁸ Years later, two former students of the school recalled those early days of oralism:

If a student were caught signing in class, punishments followed — sometimes grounding, or being denied privileges like going to see a movie, or being sent to bed early. More serious offences, in the case of one teacher, would result in a deaf student being made to write “I must not sign in class” 100 times They tried to teach us to speak, and I suppose that some students who had recently lost their hearing could speak. The teachers who worked with us over many years understood our speech, but when we went to the local candy store, we were surprised to find that they didn’t understand us at all. We didn’t speak like hearing people.²⁹



Students use “modern” technology (a multiple hearing-aid system) to listen to Principal Van Allen in the 1940s

Courtesy of the Atlantic Provinces Resource Centre for the Hearing Handicapped (Amherst, N.S.)

In the years prior to World War I, many North American institutions for deaf students were eliminating the words “dumb” and “institution” from their school names. The Maritime Association of the Deaf (renamed the Eastern Canada Association of the Deaf in 1949) urged the Halifax Institution to do likewise. Principal Fearon supported this in his annual report of 1912. It was not until May 13, 1913, however, that an amendment was passed in the Nova Scotia Legislature to

change the name of the school to “The School for the Deaf” at Halifax.³⁰

In the fall of 1913, the first three students from the province of Alberta were admitted to the Halifax School, with their expenses paid by their provincial government. When the New Brunswick School for the Deaf in Lancaster closed in 1918, 30 of its pupils transferred to the Halifax School, stretching the resources there almost to the limit. By 1923, the situation had become so acute that some Maritime students were refused admission, and eight Alberta students were asked to return to their home province. However, when Newfoundland’s students were removed from the Halifax facility in 1932 because of the Depression, the overcrowding at the Halifax School was alleviated somewhat.

The tragic Halifax Explosion of December 6, 1917 closed the Halifax School for 14 months of extensive repairs.³¹ Temporary quarters at Acadia College (now University) in Wolfville, N.S., were obtained to carry on the work of educating the school’s 50 to 60 deaf students.³² The school’s new printing press (which had been donated only three months before) was not damaged by the explosion, but rain and snow blowing in from the broken windows caused it to rust. Publication of the school’s newspaper, *The School News*, was suspended for two years (1918-1920). On February 1, 1919, the Halifax School re-

opened with an enrolment of 127 pupils. The repaired facility had renovated plumbing, new electrical wiring, a new slate roof, and replastered walls, at a cost of about \$70,000. The Massachusetts Relief Fund provided financial assistance and supplies for the bulk of this renovation; the Nova Scotia government contributed about \$20,000.³³

Principal Fearon died in 1918. His death was “directly due to the strain and exposure which he suffered in seeing that the children reached their homes safely during the week following the explosion, and the work and worry of preparing for the continuance of the school in Wolfville.”³⁴ Fearon’s replacement was George Bateman (b. Apr. 19, 1875; d. Jan. 14, 1955), one of the hearing teachers at the school (1903-1918). A native of England (born in

Thornton, Leicestershire), and Member of the Order of the British Empire (M.B.E.), Bateman taught at schools for deaf children in Margate, England (2 1/2 years), and Dublin, Ireland (4 1/2 years), before coming to Canada in 1903. While in Halifax, he was instrumental in the founding of the Forrest Club (now known as the Halifax Association for the Deaf), an organization composed primarily of former students of the Halifax School. When Bateman retired in 1939, his successor was Karl Cornelius Van Allen (b. May 11, 1898; d. Apr. 28, 1973). Van Allen, who was on the Ontario School for the Deaf faculty at Belleville (1921-1926), received his training at the Belleville school, the Clarke School for the Deaf in Northampton, Mass., and the College of Education in Toronto. He received a B.A. in



Rugby team, 1926

The School News/Atlantic Provinces Resource Centre for the Hearing Handicapped (Amherst, N.S.)

Back Row (left to right): Paul McKay, Jack MacInnis, Harry French, Mr. Eisener (Supervisor), Matthew Doyle.

Centre (left to right): Clarence McMillan, Mr. Browne, Joseph Hines, Tom Robinson, Mason Bishop, Mr. Leonard Goucher, Clarence Dickson.

Front Row (left to right): Harrison Robblee, Joseph Thompson (captain), Edmund Duffy.



A domestic science class for deaf girls

Courtesy of the Atlantic Provinces Resource Centre for the Hearing Handicapped (Amherst, N.S.)

science from Queen's University (Kingston, Ont.) in 1927 and a B.Paed. from the University of Toronto in 1937; he taught science in the public schools before coming to the Halifax Institution.

In its efforts to be as self-sufficient as possible, the school maintained a vegetable garden on campus. In 1924, for example, "the school garden that year had one of its most successful crops, producing 88 bushels turnips, 81 bushels potatoes, 34 bushels beets, 16 bushels carrots, 200 dozen ears of corn, 400 heads of cabbage, 5 bushels parsnips, and 5 bushels tomatoes. The boys helped in planting and harvesting the crop."³⁵ In addition to agriculture, students learned other practical trades at the school, including domestic science

for the girls and shoemaking for the boys. Sports, too, played a role in the life of the school.

With the start of World War II in 1939, the city of Halifax suddenly became a wartime eastern Canada seaport. Medical supplies were stored in the Halifax School as a precaution in case it had to be converted to a Red Cross Emergency Hospital. Deaf children were subjected to frequent drills to prepare them for the possibility of German raids by air or sea. Blackout windows were installed in the school building, and rationing became

designed to accommodate a maximum of 80 to 100 children. By 1952, the school was so overcrowded that hallways were “used for offices and even for extra classrooms.”³⁷ A 1953 study of the existing facilities was conducted by Joseph George Demeza, a hearing educator who was assistant superintendent (1950-1953) and later superintendent (1953-1979) at the Ontario School for the Deaf in Belleville. One of his recommendations was that a new

site be found for the Halifax School, so that the facilities could be brought up to modern standards. Several options were sought. One suggestion was to demolish the Halifax School and rebuild it on the same Gottingen Street property. However, the architects were unable to design something that would meet the standard requirements as prescribed by the Demeza Report. The city of Halifax was also reluctant to allow the school to be built elsewhere on a larger piece of its land.

It was not until April 13, 1960 that the provincial government of Nova Scotia legislated an act to establish a new school, to be called the Interprovincial School for the Education of the Deaf. This new school was to be located on 25 acres of land in Amherst, N.S., some 320 kilometres away. Parents of deaf children, the Deaf

community, local Halifax organizations, and even some of the teaching staff at the Halifax School were opposed to such a move.³⁸ Despite the objections of its supporters, however, the Halifax School closed its doors at the end of June 1961, and the



Courtesy of Public Archives of Nova Scotia (Halifax, N.S.)

a way of life. At that time, the school's staff numbered 16 — 10 full-time teachers and six part-time vocational instructors.³⁶

The Halifax School had to deal with overcrowding several times in its existence. In 1926, it served 131 students in a building

Students from Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia admitted in 1931 made up this class

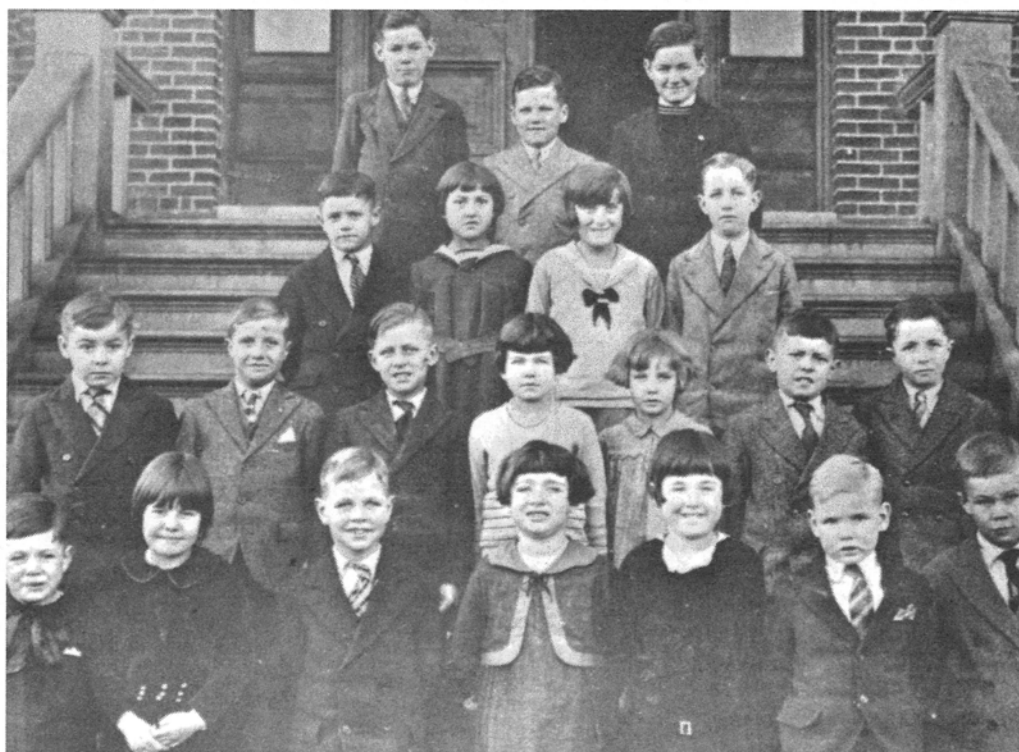
Courtesy of Malcolm Nickerson (Toronto, Ont.)

Top Row (left to right): Edward Joseph Chaisson (Nfld.), John Fitzpatrick (Nfld.), Verdun Joseph Guy Lively (N.S.).

Third Row (left to right): Richard John Saulnier (N.S.), Mildred Marquerite Surette (N.S.), Alice Livingstone Langille (N.S.), William Alexander Riley (N.S.).

Second Row (left to right): Joseph Thomas Luedee (Nfld.), Arthur Smith (Nfld.), William Charles George (Nfld.), Mary Fitzpatrick (Nfld.), Beatrice May Payne (N.B.), Malcolm Eugene Nickerson (N.S.), Gerald Ryan (Nfld.).

Bottom Row (left to right): Wilbur Avery Sears (N.S.), Kathleen Saunders (Nfld.), William Snow (N.S.), Christina Robertson (PEI), Evelyn Doris Jones (Nfld.), William Arthur Atkinson (N.S.), Edison King (N.S.).





1956 Centennial Celebration at the School for the Deaf, Halifax

Courtesy of Allison and Jessie Pye (Halifax, N.S.)

School Medallions

The School for the Deaf at Halifax, N.S. had an annual tradition of presenting one male and one female student with a gold-plated school medallion for general excellence (a category that included conduct, academic progress, punctuality, cleanliness, neatness, helpfulness, and popularity among fellow students). The medal was created to honour the memory of Dr. Daniel McNeil Parker (b. Apr. 28, 1822; d. Nov. 4, 1907), a hearing physician and board member of the school for 33 years (1868-1901), 25 of which were served as board president. Presentation of the awards occurred during the school's closing exercises in June.

The distinctive medallion shown on the left was won in

1914 by Frederick Edward ("Alfred") Drysdale (b. Oct. 3, 1897; d. June 19, 1961), who was a native of Goodwood in Halifax County and was from a family with several deaf members.³⁹ The name of the school changed at the end of the 1912-1913 school term, and eventually the design of the medallion also changed, but it was still known as the Parker Medal. The second design, shown on the right, was won in 1937 by Geraldine Bessie Lawrence (b. May 28, 1920) of Falmouth, N.S. She was born deaf and attended the school for 11 years (1927-1938). Her husband, Malcolm Douglas Buchanan (b. Dec. 29, 1924), a native of Strasbourg, Sask. and former student at the Saskatchewan School for the Deaf in Saskatoon (1931-1938) and the Halifax School (1939-1942), co-founded the Moncton (N.B.) Association of the Deaf in 1951. ■



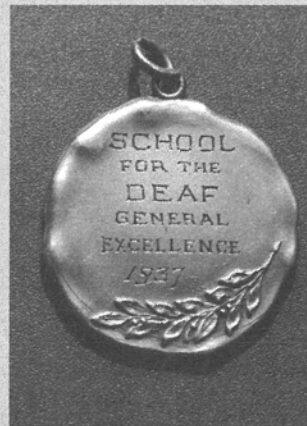
Front inscription: "1914 General Excellence" and "Institution for the Deaf & Dumb"

Courtesy of Frederick Edward Drysdale, Jr. (Armdale, N.S.)



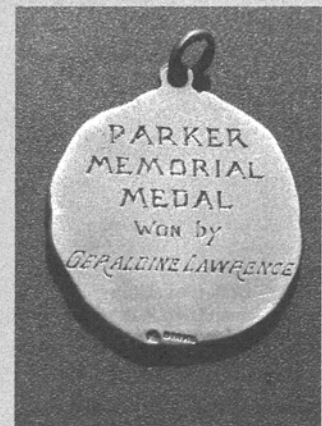
Back inscription: "The D. McN. Parker Medal Won by Alfred Drysdale"

Courtesy of Frederick Edward Drysdale, Jr. (Armdale, N.S.)



Front

Courtesy of Geraldine (née Lawrence) Buchanan (Moncton, N.B.)



Back

Courtesy of Geraldine (née Lawrence) Buchanan (Moncton, N.B.)

Heads of the Halifax School for the Deaf

Halifax, Nova Scotia, Founded 1857/Closed 1961

James Scott Hutton, M.A.**	Principal, 1857-1878
Alfred Frederick Woodbridge	Principal, 1878-1882
James Scott Hutton, M.A.**	Principal, 1882-1891
James Fearon	Principal, 1891-1918
George Bateman	Principal, 1918-1939
Karl Cornelius Van Allen, B.A., B.Paed.	Principal, 1939-1961

**Honourary degree

Deaf Educators/Teachers Known to Have Been Employed at the Halifax School for the Deaf

Halifax, Nova Scotia, Founded 1857/Closed 1961

William Gray*	1857-1870
John Carl Tupper	1870-1878
William Odber Barnaby	1872
John Logan	1876-1882
Amelia Minnie Mosher (later Mrs. John F. Dixon)	1885-1906
Robert Wilkie McDonald	1886-1891
Leonard Tilley Goucher	1907-1942
Christine ("Christy") MacKinnon (later Mrs. John Maxcy)	1920-1928
Alfred Harvey	1926-1931
Mary Ann MacLean	1931-1954
Donald John MacKillop	1942-1961
Forrest Curwin Nickerson	1951-1952
Marven LeRoy Spence, B.Sc.	1956-1961

*Founding teacher (1856-1857)

William Gray, Officially Recognized School Founder and Teacher

Born: 1806 at Scoon in the County of Perth, Scotland⁴⁰

Died: June 30, 1881 at Tewkesbury, Mass.⁴¹

William Gray, a deaf Scottish immigrant, is the man usually credited for establishing the Institution for the Deaf and Dumb in Halifax, N.S. in August 1856. In spite of his importance as a school founder, however, information on his life has long been unreliable, contradictory, and mystifying.

Neither the cause of Gray's deafness nor the age at which he became deaf is known. On March 26, 1819, at the age of 13, he began attending the Institution for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb Children at Edinburgh, Scotland, and completed his education there around 1824.⁴² Little is known about Gray's personal life and employment between 1824 and 1855. Some time within that period he married a deaf woman named Isabella (b.

Unknown; d. Feb. 9, 1893), a native of Aberdeen, Scotland. They had one hearing daughter, also named Isabella (b. Aug. 15, 1846; d. July 24, 1922). In August 1855, Gray emigrated to Canada with his wife and daughter to seek his fortune in the New World. They settled in Halifax, where he opened a small tailoring business that lasted only about a year. By 1856, Gray's tailoring shop had closed due to lack of business. One day that summer, he met George Tait, another deaf Scotsman, who happened to be residing in Halifax as well. Tait was tutoring a young deaf girl, Mary Ann Fletcher (b. 1845; d. Jan. 11, 1859), in his spare time, and suggested the idea of opening a school for deaf children. He pointed out that Gray might supplement his income by becoming a teacher. Gray embraced Tait's idea, and the pioneer school opened on August 4, 1856 in the back of a house on Argyle Street. Fletcher was one of the first two deaf pupils received by Gray.⁴³ When the provincial government took over the school in 1857,

(Continued)

William Gray ... cont'd**William Gray**

Public Archives of Nova Scotia (Halifax, N.S.)

Gray was officially appointed assistant teacher.

Very little information had been recorded about Gray's work at the Halifax Institution, but there is evidence that he did not have extraordinary teaching abilities. For example, in 1877 Tait wrote disparagingly of Gray that he was "not capable of supplying the place of a first-class teacher."⁴⁴ Later, Principal Hutton brought charges against Gray before the school's board of directors. The most serious complaints are documented in minutes of the board's meetings (for example, in the March 7, 1870 minutes, it is reported that "Mr. Hutton appeared before the Board, verbally stated Wm. Gray, sub teacher, had been guilty of intemperance and confessed it, and that besides there were other serious complaints against him)."⁴⁵ Minutes from a special meeting called on March 12, 1870 detailed these charges:

Mr. Hutton appeared before the Directors and stated that he had proof of Gray's intoxication on various occasions, that he has treated the pupils roughly — has con-

veyed improper ideas to them — has undermined the discipline of the school — and threatened them with personal violence if they would inform against him. Gray being called upon for his defence acknowledged the charges in part — but said he was seldom intoxicated — altho' he confessed he had been so while Mr. Hutton [senior] was lying a corpse. Upon full consideration it was resolved that W. Gray be dismissed from his present situation as sub teacher. But that in consideration of his family the directors agreed to pay his salary to the end of 1870, after which he is to get no more.⁴⁶

Gray's name disappeared from the list of staff beginning with the report on the 1869-1870 school year. During his post-teaching period, Gray again worked as a tailor for about two years (1870-1872). Then, around 1873, he and his wife, Isabella, left Halifax for the United States to live in the home of their daughter and her husband, John Thomas Lowe (b. Jan. 21, 1845; d. Feb. 14, 1924), at 157 Windsor Street in Cambridge, a suburb of Boston, Mass.⁴⁷ Sometime during the 1880-1881 period, Gray was admitted to an almshouse at the Middlesex County Hospital (now Tewkesbury State Hospital) in Tewkesbury, Mass. Affected with paraplegia, he died there in June 1881.⁴⁸ Gray's wife returned to Halifax with the Lowe family about 1884. She passed away in 1893 and was buried without a marker in a pauper's grave owned by the city.

At its Third Annual Convention in September 1907, the Maritime Deaf-Mute Association (now the Eastern Canada Association of the Deaf) decided by a committee vote that Gray was to be considered the founder of the Institution of the Deaf and Dumb in Halifax. They also voted to erect a monument on the school ground in his memory. However, such a memorial was never built.

George Tait, Possible Co-Founder of Halifax School

In a rare pamphlet which he published in 1877 under the title, *Autobiography of George Tait, A Deaf Mute, Who First Gave Instructions to the Deaf and Dumb in the City of Halifax*, George Tait (b. 1828; d. July

(Continued)

George Tait

Courtesy of Helen Amelia (née Bryson) Rogerson (Dartmouth, N.S.)



George Tait ... cont'd

25, 1904)⁴⁹ claimed to be the force behind the first school for the deaf in the province of Nova Scotia.

According to Tait's writings, he was born in Watten in the County of Caithness, Scotland and became deaf at an early age. He claims he entered the Institution for the Education of Deaf and Dumb Children in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1840 at the age of 12, and quit school four years later (with his father's consent) to go to sea. However, the Edinburgh Institution records indicate that he was a pupil there from 1842 to 1849.⁵⁰ Tait's plans were to go to the United States, which he did in 1851 when he was hired as assistant carpenter on an American ship docked at Liverpool, England. Although he was not supposed to leave port, the ship's captain dressed him in a suit of blue and blackened his face with soot so he would look like the rest of the grimy American sailors. The Customs Officers did not notice him, and the ship left port, taking Tait to the West Indies, Boston, and Maine. There, he worked in a shipyard for two or three years before joining his uncle, a carpenter, in Nova Scotia.

Shortly after Tait came to Halifax in 1856, a gentleman living at his boarding house asked him to teach his 11-year-old deaf daughter. Tait agreed to do so during his leisure hours. This girl, Mary Ann Fletcher (b. 1845; d. Jan. 11, 1859), became the first deaf child known to be educated within the province of Nova Scotia. She urged Tait to seek out other deaf children and to explore the possibility of establishing a school for them. Tait was touched by her request, but did not want to relinquish his employment as a carpenter to undertake such a project. He felt that it would be best to first obtain a full-time teacher, and then try to start the school.

One day while walking along the street, Tait saw a man, his wife, and child "talking with their fingers" (presumably in the British two-handed alphabet).⁵¹ He learned that the deaf man was William Gray, who had also attended the Edinburgh Institution but some years before Tait. Gray, "friendless and almost penniless" was looking for work.⁵² The family was pleased to meet Tait, who could communicate with them, and invited him to their lodgings. There, Tait discussed with Gray his idea of establishing a school for deaf children in Halifax. After serious consideration, Gray agreed to become the instructor, while Tait sought deaf students and public support for the new school. In a short time, Tait had collected sufficient funds to rent a small furnished room in the back of a house on Argyle Street. That little room, which opened on August 4, 1856 with William Gray as instructor, was the nucleus of the first school for the deaf in the province of Nova Scotia.

Although the sea continued to beckon him, Tait wrote, "Instead of embarking on the deep blue Atlantic, I embarked on the sea of matrimony."⁵³ On June 3, 1859, he married a hearing woman, Cynthia Amelia Tupper (b. June

8, 1842; d. June 20, 1922), at the Halifax Presbyterian Church. Over the next 13 years "a swarm of children had gathered" about his knee.⁵⁴ According to the City of Halifax Census of 1881, Tait and his wife had nine hearing children (six boys, two of whom were twins, and three girls). The family moved to Dartmouth, N.S. in August 1873. In 1897, Tait built a house — which still stands today — at 22 MacKay Street (formerly Charles Street).

When Tait read the 1877 Annual Report of the Institution for the Deaf and Dumb at Halifax, he was dismayed to see that his contributions to the school's history had been completely omitted. After the provincial government had taken over the school in 1857, Gray, not Tait, had been credited as founder. Probably "such scant and nameless attention" prompted him to write his *Autobiography*, which he had privately printed.⁵⁵ The pamphlet's first 16 pages contain the story of his life, and the rest is comprised of excerpts from Dr. Isaac Lewis Peet's history of the education of the deaf, originally printed in the 1876 Annual Report of the New York Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb. By 1879, the book was in its fourth printing. When the Depression of the 1880s hit, Tait earned money peddling his book for 25 cents throughout the provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Québec. He claimed to have sold 3,000 copies in one summer. The 11th and 12th editions were printed in 1889 and 1892 respectively, and the 14th (and final) edition was printed in 1896.

According to his writings, Tait wanted these editions to convince "some [who] doubt the validity of my statement concerning my first starting the Deaf and Dumb School in Halifax."⁵⁶ He verified his claim by reprinting in the preface an item from *The Halifax Chronicle* dated September 18, 1856, which read: "Mr. Tait, the deaf mute young carpenter, who has been mainly instrumental in getting up the Deaf and Dumb School, Argyle Street, informs us that he collected from the benevolent in this City, during ten days, the handsome sum of £40, to aid him in the good cause."⁵⁷

Tait died in the summer of 1904, and was buried at Christ Church Anglican Cemetery in Dartmouth, N.S., but the argument over who founded the school in Halifax did not die with him. The controversy was "resolved" at the Third Annual Convention of the Maritime Deaf-Mute Association, held in Truro, N.S. on September 1-3, 1907. At that meeting, President George Sinclair Mackenzie of Moncton, N.B., who had attended the Halifax Institution (1882-1892), appointed a committee to decide the question of which man should be named school founder. After listening to supporters of both Tait and Gray, the committee cast their ballots. Tait received two votes, and Gray received six. Despite this decision, however, historians still argue over which of the two is the actual founder, or whether Tait and Gray should be considered co-founders of the institution. ■

buildings were vacated a month later. The school was later demolished, and its former site on Gottingen Street became the George Dixon Centre playground. (This area was dubbed “Dummy Field” by a few people in the neighbourhood and is still known by that unofficial name today.)

Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority – Resource Centre for the Hearing-Impaired, Amherst

The story of the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority – Resource Centre for the Hearing-Impaired (APSEA-RCHI) actually began long before it opened in Amherst, N.S. in September 1961. The roots of the APSEA-RCHI are tied to William Gray and George Tait, and the small school they opened in August 1856 in Halifax, N.S. After 105 years, the Halifax School for the Deaf closed its doors in 1961, and the deaf children of the Maritime provinces were moved to new facilities in Amherst, N.S. Located on a 25-acre plot of high ground overlooking the town of Amherst and the Bay of Fundy, the Interprovincial School for the Education of the Deaf (as it was originally known) was built for \$2.5 million on a cost-sharing formula by the provinces of New Brunswick (30 percent) and Nova Scotia (70 percent). When this 608-room, multi-wing school and dormitory building opened, deaf students arrived from all four Atlantic provinces (118 from Nova Scotia, 47 from New Brunswick, three from Prince Edward Island, and 66 from Newfoundland).

The new school facility continued the policy of its prede-

cessor and excluded sign language from the classroom. A 1961 article in *The Chronicle-Herald* of Halifax, N.S. stated that “sign language and finger-spelling have no place in the classroom, though this is the favourite form of communication of the deaf among themselves.”⁵⁸ The first issue of the school publication, *The New Scotian*, rolled off the press in October 1962. This publication continued until 1975, and was followed in the spring of 1977 by the first issue of *The Maritimer*, whose purpose was to publicize the school’s innovative educational programs.⁵⁹ Karl Cornelius Van Allen (b. May 11, 1898; d. Apr. 28, 1973), former principal of the Halifax School (1939-1961), was appointed the first superintendent of the Interprovincial School (1961-1964). Following his retirement in June 1964, Peter Oswald Freemantle (b. July 27, 1923; d. July 24, 1989), a hearing principal under Van Allen since 1961, took over the supervision of the school for one year (1964-1965).⁶⁰

Daniel John Jenkins (b. Mar. 1, 1924), a hearing educator from England, was the Interprovincial School’s third superintendent (1965-1976). He was born on Saint David’s Day in Penrhwceiber in the county of Glamorgan, Wales. Following his study at the Teacher Training College in Caerleon, Monmouthshire, South Wales (1948-1950), he was awarded a British Teacher of the Deaf Certification and taught at the Royal West of England School for the Deaf in Exeter for 15 years (1950-1965). He was granted a Teacher of the Deaf diploma in 1952 by England’s National College for Teachers of the Deaf, a professional organization. After an 11-year stay in Canada, Jenkins returned to England to become headmaster of the Larchmoor School for the Maladjusted Deaf Children in Stoke Poges, Burks (1976-1981). He is now retired and lives in

Exeter.

In June 1966, soon after Jenkins assumed the superintendency of the Interprovincial School, the vocational school was officially opened (it had unofficially begun operations the year before, with printing, auto body, and dressmaking shops open to students). New vocational classes, including industrial arts and upholstery, were gradually added to the curriculum. In 1967, the vocational students left the campus to reside in boarding houses in downtown Amherst. Deaf-blind students began attending the school in 1971, when a multi-



Aerial view of the Amherst Campus

Courtesy of the Atlantic Provinces Resource Centre for the Hearing Handicapped (Amherst, N.S.)

handicapped department was established. That same year, parent education and home training were introduced. During Jenkins' tenure, the teacher of the deaf training program, in cooperation with the University of Moncton (N.B.), was established.

The school's fourth superintendent (1976-1988) was Dr. Peter John Owsley (b. Sept. 15, 1924), a hearing American. At the time of his appointment, he was superintendent of the Mystic Oral School in Mystic, Conn. (1969-1976). He studied at the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee (B.Sc. in deaf education, 1949); Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill. (M.A. in audiology and speech correction, 1950); and Temple University in Philadelphia, Pa. (Ed.D. in educational administration, 1969). Owsley, who was quoted in 1969 as saying, "I'm a confirmed oralist," had previously been a teaching principal of special classes for deaf students at a public school in Oshkosh, Wisc. (1950-1961), assistant headmaster at the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf in Philadelphia (1961-1968), and director of the Davison School, a private school for speech- and language-handicapped children, in Atlanta, Ga. (1968-1969).⁶¹ Following his 1988 retirement, he and his wife moved to Breadalbane, P.E.I., his current place of residence.

An engraved plaque in the school's library commemorates the memories of two famous men associated with deaf education in Nova Scotia. One room of the library is named the Gray-Hutton Memorial Library, as a

*memorial to the first teacher of the deaf in Eastern Canada, William Gray, who began to teach in Halifax in 1856, and to James Scott Hutton, the first Principal of the School for the Deaf in Halifax. The books are provided in part by income from a trust fund, established jointly by the Eastern Canada Association of the Deaf and the Board of Directors of the School for the Deaf, Halifax, April 1, 1960.*⁶²

In the fall of 1965, deaf students from Newfoundland stopped attending the Interprovincial School when the province opened its own school in St. John's. (However, in 1972 some of the older students from Newfoundland returned for vocational training.) In 1966, the maximum age for students attending the Interprovincial School was raised from 18 to 21, and the minimum age requirement of six years was dropped. This allowed the school to admit students as young as two years of age in the nursery and junior kindergarten classes. Beginning in 1967, off-campus programs for deaf children were gradually introduced in the provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. There were dramatic changes afoot to decentralize educational programs and to modify the primary role of the Interprovincial School from a residential school into a resource centre. Alternative programs, such as the 175 Willow Program for multi-handicapped deaf students, were developed. In 1969, a home visiting program was established in an effort to reach deaf infants. Six years later, on March 1, 1975, the Interprovincial School for the Education of the Deaf Act of April 13, 1960 was repealed when the Governor-in-Council of Nova Scotia proclaimed a new Handicapped Persons Education Act.⁶³ Under the new act, the school was renamed the Atlantic Provinces Resource Centre for the Hearing

Handicapped (APRCHH). An incorporated body known as the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority (APSEA) was also formed to oversee both APRCHH's operation and the operations of the newly created Atlantic Provinces Resource Centre for the Visually Handicapped (APRCVH). (APRCHH's name changed again in 1989 to the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority – Resource Centre for the Hearing-Impaired [APSEA-RCHI].) The first deaf person to serve on the APSEA board was James Keir McLean (b. Apr. 27, 1933; d. Jan. 17, 1992) of Halifax. He was appointed to the board position in 1989 and was serving his second term at the time of his unexpected death.

A teacher-training program for both francophone and anglophone teachers was established at the Interprovincial School in 1972. The bilingual nature of this training program was the result of increased pressure from deaf Acadians living in the Maritime provinces.⁶⁴ The teachers trained there later taught in day classes set up especially for deaf Acadians, which helped these young French-using Maritime residents retain their Acadian identity.

By the mid-1980s, the curriculum for deaf students had expanded to include such subjects as mathematics, sciences, language and reading, computer sciences, and home economics. The school's facilities continued to grow when a \$68,000, 24-foot x 36-foot pool opened in June 1989. Designed to accommodate swimmers with special needs, the pool was constructed with a stepped rather than sloped bottom (for blind swimmers), and a lift for paraplegic swimmers. The pool was named for a deaf person, the late Marven Spence, who had held the position of assistant superintendent of the school at the time of his death in 1968.⁶⁵ "Hollywood" came to the campus when about 100 students and 20 of the school's staff served as extras in the movie, *Children of a Lesser God*, which was filmed in the Saint John, N.B. area.⁶⁶

The next APSEA-RCHI director was Phyllis Anne Cameron (b. Feb. 16, 1940), a hearing person with experience in the public school system before coming to the school as a teacher in 1969. She was born in Amherst, where she completed her elementary and secondary education. Her other educational training was at Mount St. Vincent University in Halifax (B.Sc., 1960; B.Ed., 1965) and at Smith College in Northampton, Mass. (M.Ed. in deaf education, 1971) in a joint program with the Clarke School for the Deaf. Prior to her appointment, she was APSEA-RCHI's supervisor of on-campus programs (1971-1988). Cameron retired as director of APSEA-RCHI in December 1994 after six years in that position. Her position was filled by an acting director, Linda Anne MacDonald (b. Dec. 17, 1947), a hearing person. MacDonald received B.A. and B.Ed. degrees from Mount Allison University in Sackville, N.B. (1968 and 1969 respectively) and an M.Ed. from the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton (1983). She taught at the school from 1970 to 1973, then worked in off-campus programs in New Brunswick (1973-1988). When she returned to the APSEA-RCHI, she worked in the teacher training program (1988-1995).

By the late 1980s, discontent with the educational programs at the school was growing. In 1989, students, parents, and

members of the local Deaf community protested the school's suppression of sign language in the classroom. In 1990, American Sign Language and Deaf Culture courses were finally offered in the high school program for the first time. Despite these positive changes, however, the school continued to face uncertainty. By 1991, with enrolment dropping at both the Sir Frederick Fraser School for the Blind in Halifax and the APSEA-RCHI due to mainstreaming, officials began considering a merger of the two schools.⁶⁷ Parents, members of the Deaf community, and educational organizations submitted reports to a committee that had been convened to consider options for the school. Some expressed hope that the school would remain in Amherst; others wanted it moved to Halifax again. None, however, favoured merging deaf and hard-of-hearing students with blind students, doing away with the residential program, or closing either facility altogether. The positive aspects of residential schools for deaf students were stressed by these deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals and organizations — not as short-term “remedial” facilities for a few deaf children with multi-handicaps who were “mainstream failures,” but as viable educational centres for introducing deaf children to Deaf culture, providing them with a quality education through ASL, and giving them opportunities to develop positive self-images and increased self-esteem.

Despite the recommendations of these stakeholders, Nova Scotia's Education Minister John MacEachern indicated that moving the school to Halifax was still an option. He was also “seriously considering an Amherst proposal to integrate the

school with a local high school, as has been done in Burnaby, B.C.”⁶⁸ A group of stakeholders formed the “Coalition of Stakeholders on the Education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children” and held a press conference on June 27, 1994.⁶⁹ They criticized the consultation process used by the school, claiming both the process and the results were flawed; complained that the report did not represent the views of the stakeholders; and called upon the Minister of Education to make no decisions until “an independent, objective and comprehensive review of the issues and options for education for Deaf and hard of hearing children under the APSEA regional umbrella” take place.⁷⁰

In the fall of 1994, the fate of the APSEA-RCHI was sealed when a decision to consolidate the schools for deaf and blind students was reached. By April 1995, 56 of the clerical, maintenance, kitchen, and residence staff had received notices that they would be laid off at the end of the school year and not transferred to Halifax. Teachers, too, were waiting for word regarding their fate. The Amherst facility, which currently serves 70 students on-campus and another 640 in the Maritime provinces through its outreach programs, is slated to be closed at the end of the 1994-1995 school year. Deaf students are to join blind students attending the Sir Frederick Fraser School for the Blind in Halifax, N.S., although many parents probably will choose to send their children to local board programs rather than to Halifax.⁷¹ By September 1995, this Halifax facility is expected to accommodate programs for students who are blind, deaf, and deaf-blind. So for deaf children from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island (and possi-

Heads of the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority – Resource Centre for the Hearing-Impaired*

Amherst, Nova Scotia, Founded 1961

Karl Cornelius Van Allen, B.A. B.Paed.	Superintendent, 1961-1964
Peter Oswald Freemantle, B.Ed.	Supervising Principal, 1964-1965
Daniel John Jenkins	Superintendent, 1965-1976
Peter John Owsley, B.Sc. M.A. Ed.D.	Director, 1976-1988
Phyllis Anne Cameron, B.Sc. B.Ed., M.Ed.	Director, 1988-1994
Linda Anne MacDonald, B.A. B.Ed. M.Ed.	Acting Director, 1995-present

**As of January 1995*

Deaf Educators/Teachers Known to Have Been Employed at the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority – Resource Centre for the Hearing-Impaired*

Amherst, Nova Scotia, Founded 1961

Marven LeRoy Spence, B.Sc., B.Ed.	1961-1968
George William MacLean Fillmore	1964-1994
Irvin Stewart MacDonald, B.A., B.Ed.	1965-1994
Judy Davina Crocker (later Shea), B.Sc.	1973-1979
Neil Joseph Doucette, B.Sc.	1974-1994
Hector Anthony MacLean	1990-present

**As of December 1994*

Marven LeRoy Spence, Deaf Educator

A well-known and respected leader in the Deaf community of Canada's four Atlantic Provinces, Marven LeRoy Spence (b. June 22, 1933; d. June 19, 1968) was appointed assistant superintendent of the Interprovincial School for the Education of the Deaf at Amherst, N.S. in 1963.



Marven LeRoy Spence as he appeared in the 1950s

Courtesy of the Spence Family/Atlantic Provinces Resource Centre for the Hearing Handicapped (Amherst, N.S.)

Born in Springhill, N.S., Spence lost his hearing following an attack of spinal meningitis at the age of nine. On September 11, 1944, he was admitted to the School

for the Deaf in Halifax, N.S., where he remained for four years (1944-1948). He then attended Springhill High School in his hometown, and later earned a bachelor of science degree from Gallaudet College (1951-1956). In 1961 he began studying for a bachelor of education degree from Mount Allison University in New Brunswick, through its extension department. He completed his B.Ed. in October of 1967. Spence was married on October 12, 1957 to his childhood sweetheart, Carole Gillis (b. Dec. 11, 1934), a hearing woman from Pugwash, N.S. The couple had two hearing children, Pamela Lynn and Carleton Mark.

For five years (1956-1961), Spence taught social studies, mathematics, and science in the senior department at the Halifax School. He became recreational director when the Interprovincial School in Amherst opened in September 1961, and was promoted to the assistant superintendent position two years later. Spence was described as "a man of towering intellect and one possessing an unusually [sic] degree of leadership ability..."⁷³ An active member of the Eastern Canada Association of the Deaf, he served three terms as secretary (1956-1958, 1958-1961, and 1963-1965), and frequently attended its biennial conventions throughout Atlantic Canada. In the mid-1960s, he was the first and only deaf representative on the Board for Rehabilitation of Handicapped Persons of Nova Scotia.

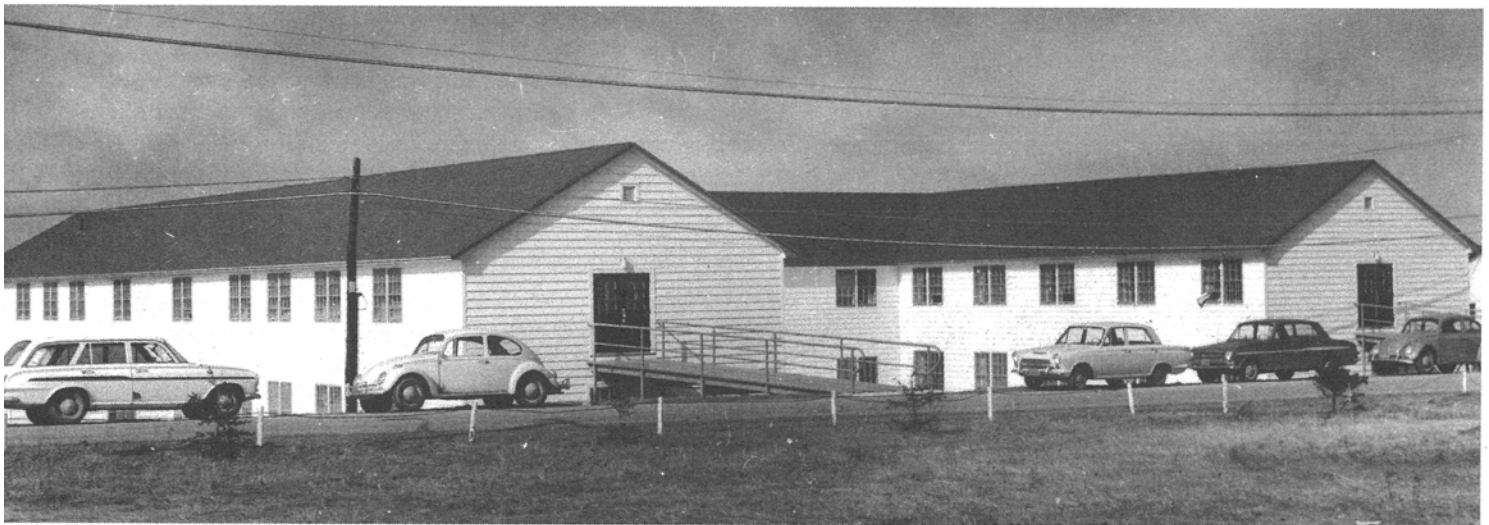
His life came to an early end when he drowned in June of 1968, while alone on a fishing trip in Murray Lake, near the village of Murray River, P.E.I. The Interprovincial School's 1968-1969 Yearbook, *The Glooscap*, was dedicated to his memory. In appreciation of his long and faithful service, the Eastern Canada Association of the Deaf posthumously awarded him Life Membership at its 25th Biennial Convention in Moncton, N.B. (July 24-26, 1969). Spence's educational philosophy can best be summed up by the expression, "Fit the method to the deaf child, and not the deaf child to the method." ■

bly a few from Newfoundland), history has come full circle. They will once again be educated in the city of Halifax, the site of the first permanent school for deaf students in the Atlantic provinces. But they may be educated without deaf teachers and houseparents. Three of the remaining deaf teachers opted for early retirement at the end of the 1993-1994 school year. The remaining teacher has little seniority and is thus vulnerable to being laid off. It may be that the move to Halifax in the fall will usher in a new period in the history of deaf education in the Atlantic provinces — a period when, for the first time almost a hundred years, there may be no deaf teachers or houseparents working in Nova Scotia's provincial school for Maritime deaf students.⁷²

Newfoundland

Newfoundland School for the Deaf, St. John's

The province of Newfoundland opened its first school for the deaf on September 22, 1964. Located in Pleasantville, a suburb of St. John's, the first classrooms were temporarily set up at Fort Pepperell in the Children's Home (Building No. 1054). Students used the former Merchant Navy Hospital as their dormitory. One of the strongest supporters for a school in the province was Flora Agnes Clark (b. Apr. 3, 1934), secretary of what was then called the Caribou Silent Club (now the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of the Deaf). Clark had attended the Ontario School for the Deaf in Belleville



The former R.C.A.F. station at Torbay, Nfld., site of the Newfoundland School for the Deaf (1965-1987)

Courtesy of the Newfoundland School for the Deaf (St. John's, Nfld.)

(1944-1949), and the Belleville Collegiate Institute (1949-1954). She later went to Gallaudet College (now Gallaudet University) in Washington, D.C. (B.Sc., 1954-1958). She recognized the pressing need for a school for Newfoundland's deaf children, who were being crowded out of institutions in other provinces. For nearly a century, most of the deaf children from Newfoundland and Labrador attended the School for the Deaf in Halifax, N.S. Not all were able to go there, however, because of overcrowding at the Halifax facility, so some Newfoundland students enrolled in the Mackay Institution for Protestant Deaf-Mutes in Montréal (the first group of seven Newfoundlanders arrived in 1947). In 1958, the Newfoundland government withdrew its remaining students from the School for the Deaf in Halifax and sent them to Montréal as well (there were 62 Newfoundlanders attending Mackay in 1961, at a cost of \$1,400 a year per student).⁷⁴ When the school in Halifax closed in 1961, its students were transferred to the new Interprovincial School for the Education of the Deaf in Amherst, N.S. A few deaf Newfoundlanders transferred to the Amherst facility from Mackay; the rest continued attending school in Montréal until Newfoundland opened its own school in 1964.

Rather than continue to send children to school on the mainland, Clark and the other members of the local Deaf community preferred that "Newfoundland have a real residential school of its own — complete with teachers and vocational shops."⁷⁵ Clark publicized the plight of these children in interviews with the local paper (*The Evening Telegram*), in meetings with local officials and religious leaders, and at the Caribou Silent Club. Many of the members of this club were former students at the schools in Halifax and Montréal themselves.⁷⁶ By June 1964, the schools in Nova Scotia and Québec being attended by Newfoundland deaf students were too crowded to board all the children from the province; that year, 100 Newfoundlanders were scheduled to attend, but only 50 could be accommodated.⁷⁷ Newfoundland's provincial government realized that it had to start its own school — and quickly!

The Newfoundland School for the Deaf at Fort Pepperell

began "with a hope and a prayer."⁷⁸ It was hastily opened with six teachers, 12 houseparents, an enrolment of 54 students, but no principal. Until the first principal arrived, the school was administered by Walter George Rockwood (b. Jan. 31, 1912; d. Jan. 9, 1988), the hearing father of a 23-year-old deaf son, who had "some experience as a teacher of deaf children."⁷⁹ He was also former director of Northern Labrador Affairs for the Newfoundland government. Students in the school were fitted with ear molds, connected auditorily through a loop system, and taught primarily through the oral method. A strictly oral approach was introduced in the school in 1966; this changed to total communication in the late 1970s. By 1969, the enrolment had reached 130 children with a teaching staff of 23. A preschool program, which stressed auditory and speech training, was added in January 1970.⁸⁰ During the 1971 re-organization of the government of Newfoundland, the responsibility for the school was transferred from the Department of Public Welfare to the Department of Education. A pre-vocational program, including courses in business education, home economics, and industrial arts, was added to the school curriculum in 1974.

When the school first began, most teachers were hired on their *potential* ability to teach deaf children rather than on their educational background. They were then sent to the mainland for training, either at the Interprovincial School for the Education for the Deaf in Amherst, N.S., or at other facilities in Canada and the United States. In 1965, some of the teachers from the Newfoundland School for the Deaf began attending a training program for teachers of the deaf at the University of Moncton in Moncton, N.B.

In September 1965, the Newfoundland School moved to a larger facility in what had been wartime barracks (Building Nos. 2, 38, and 43) at the former Royal Canadian Air Force station in Torbay, adjacent to St. John's airport. It was there that the school received its first principal, Karl Cornelius Van Allen (b. May 11, 1898; d. Apr. 28, 1973), a hearing man who had been trained at the Ontario School for the Deaf in Belleville and

the Clarke School for the Deaf in Northampton, Mass. He had also served as principal of the Halifax School (1939-1961), and as superintendent of the Interprovincial School in Amherst (1961-1964). Van Allen came out of retirement in England to assume the principalship at the Newfoundland School, a position he held for two years (1965-1967).

In June 1968, the Newfoundland School held its first graduation ceremony. Nine students — Ivan Batten, Rosemary Colbourne, Judy Crocker, Myles Murphy, Vincent Power, Donald Stuckey, Carol Tucker, Eugene Witcher, and Roland Witcher — received their diplomas. Crocker and Murphy had the honour of being the school's first graduates to attend Gallaudet College in Washington, D.C.⁸¹ Two years later, the first parents' organization was formed; it was known as the Newfoundland and Labrador Parents Association for Hearing Handicapped Children.

Thomas Edward David Carmichael (b. June 25, 1937) was the second principal of the Newfoundland School (1967-1974). Also hearing, he completed his secondary education in St. John's at Bishop Field College, and post-secondary studies at Memorial University (B.Sc., 1960; Graduate Diploma in educational administration, 1974). He then taught in the city at the Prince of Wales Collegiate (1960-1964) and at Bishop Field College (1964-1966). While he was principal-designate of the Newfoundland School (1966-1967), the provincial government sent him to Northampton, Mass. for training at the Clarke School and at Smith College (M.Ed. in deaf education, 1967). During his principalship, he and an architectural firm developed preliminary plans to construct a new school facility, but the project was later abandoned due to financial difficulties plaguing the province. Carmichael left the Newfoundland School to become principal (1974-1981) of Queen Elizabeth Regional High School in Foxtrap, a small community west of St. John's. His successor was Ellen Selina Parrott (b. Sept. 4, 1922), a hearing person who continued in the role of principal for four years (1974-1978). A native Newfoundlander (born in Coley's Point), she was the first classroom teacher hired at the Newfoundland School when it opened in 1964, and eventually became vice-principal (1970-1974) before assuming the principalship. Prior to that, she taught in the public school system for eight years. During the 1964-1965 academic year, Parrott received a two-month training course at the Newfoundland School from specialists in the department of education of the deaf at Manchester University in England. Her other studies included a 1966 summer course at the Clarke School, and at Memorial University (B.A., 1970).

Parrott was followed by Charles Thomas Harkins (b. Dec. 15, 1944), a hearing person who grew up in Pennsylvania. A former captain in the United States Air Defense Artillery, he had been associated with deaf students at the following schools: the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf in Philadelphia (houseparent, 1965-1967); West Pennsylvania School for the Deaf in Pittsburgh (houseparent, 1967-1968; teacher, 1968-1969; administrative assistant, 1969-1970; high school principal, 1970-1974); the Mystic Oral School in Mystic, Conn. (elementary school principal, 1974-1976); and the New York State School for the Deaf in Rome (high school principal, 1976-1978). Harkins went to LaSalle College in Philadelphia (B.A., 1967), and the University of Pittsburgh (M.Ed., 1968).

By 1975, the school was divided into three departments. The Junior Department followed an oral, four-to-five-year curriculum based on that of the Clarke School for the Deaf. The Intermediate Department encompassed additional elementary subjects and introduced manual communication in the classroom. The Senior Department brought the students up to a junior high school level. The entire program could take as many as 13 years to complete.

In September 1978, following a one-year research project (1977-1978) sponsored by the Faculty of Medicine at Memorial University in St. John's, the Newfoundland School began offering unique, videotaped home-training programs to parents of infant and preschool-age deaf children, particularly to those families in remote areas who could not get to the school to use its resources.⁸² Parents were provided with an "auditory trainer [which included microphone, amplifier and headset for the deaf child], a 15-inch television, a video playback unit, and 10 instructional tapes at a rate of one per month."⁸³ The Newfoundland Department of Education continued the pilot project in 1979. The videotapes included information on child management, hearing-aid maintenance, instruction on sign language, and tips to improve language and speech development in the deaf children.

Distance from the school created other challenges as well. Between 1964 and 1977, the deaf students, particularly those from the southwest coast and remote communities of Newfoundland and Labrador, had to rely on public transportation to and from school during the Christmas holidays. This sometimes required several days of travel, cutting their vacations short. The problem was solved in 1978 by the Newfoundland and Labrador Parents Association for Hearing Handicapped Children, when it obtained helicopter services from Sealand Helicopters, Fishery Products Limited, and the Air, Search, and Rescue Centre. Since then, deaf children have been transported home in a matter of hours every winter.

Students at the school participated in athletics and other extracurricular activities, and some developed their skills to a high level. For example, on May 24, 1980, Majorie Denise Winsor (b. May 15, 1965), a 15-year-old student at the Newfoundland School, was named "Athlete of the Week" by the St. John's *Evening Telegram* newspaper. The award was in recognition of her recent win (a bronze and three silver medals) at the 1980 Canadian National Swim Trials for the Deaf in Vancouver, B.C., and her selection to compete in the 1981 World Summer Games for the Deaf in Cologne, West Germany.⁸⁴ Winsor's specialty was the breaststroke. The only deaf competitive swimmer in Newfoundland at that time, she trained at the St. John's Aquarena at 6:00 a.m. every day before going to school. She was the first (and so far only) deaf Newfoundlander to participate in the World Games.

Theatre has also played a significant role in the story of the Newfoundland School. The Newfoundland Society of the Deaf, the Newfoundland and Labrador Council of Educators of the Deaf, and the Newfoundland and Labrador Parents Association of Hearing Handicapped Children sponsored a performance by members of a dramatic touring company from the National Technical Institute for the Deaf in Rochester, N.Y. Two shows

were held in the Little Theatre at Memorial University on June 18 and 19, 1980.⁸⁵ These proved to be an inspiration to the students. The next year, the school's drama club (joined by a few local deaf and hard-of-hearing students who attended other schools) participated in the Avalon East High School Drama Festival for the first time. This event took place in Bishop's Field Auditorium on March 27. The all-deaf cast, consisting of Vincent Canning, Rosalind Chaffey, Donna Coffin, Derek Curlew, Alfred Hardy, Judy Hynes, Barbara LeDrew, Cathy Lushman, Jodene Butler, and Dale Scanlon, presented a mime production entitled *A Night at the Nickel*. The production was directed by Patricia (Trish) Marie Beehan, a hearing teacher of performing arts at the Newfoundland School.⁸⁶ Following their success in this play, outstanding deaf performers from the school began to appear in other theatrical productions as well. For example, the Rising Tide Theatre's 1985 production of *Children of a Lesser God* had one student from the Newfoundland School in its seven-member touring cast through Newfoundland (April 19 to May 5) — Catherine Jane Lushman of Grey River played the leading role of Sarah Norman (Jodene Butler, then a hard-of-hearing student at Bishop's Field College High School in St. John's, played Lydia). In 1987, the school began a project designed to explore the role of drama in deaf students' education. The first performances were three plays from a series called *Rare Earth*, which told the story of the native Indians whose way of life was destroyed with the coming of settlers to North America. Other extra-curricular events besides drama were taking place on the campus as well. In 1979, the Newfoundland School formed the 2965 Royal Canadian Army Cadet Corps; 27 deaf students enrolled in the first year's training course. The corps was sponsored by the Stokers Group Rotary International. Brownie, Guide, and Scout troops and the annual Winter Carnival also provided deaf students with after-school activities.

In 1981, teachers from the Newfoundland School were involved in the first interpreted news program in Newfoundland. "News Digest" was broadcast on CBC Television Channel 8 and re-broadcast an hour later on Avalon Cablevision Ltd.'s Channel 9. Volunteer sign language interpreters from the Newfoundland Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (most of whom were also teachers at the school) appeared on the TV screen, in addition to the news commentator. The interpreters were teachers Patricia Beehan, Ellen Penney, John Reade, and Linda Clarke

(who was also vice-principal of academics at the Newfoundland School).⁸⁷

An evaluation of the Newfoundland School conducted in 1976 by Toronto's York University had positive things to say about the school's academic programs, but noted that the physical facility was the worst in North America.⁸⁸ This report prompted the Riggs-Crocker Task Force on Education (appointed in 1979 by the Newfoundland Ministry of Education) to recommend that a new school be built. On February 25, 1981, Gordon A. Winner, then lieutenant-governor of Newfoundland (1974-1981), announced in his throne speech that the province would begin plans to develop a new educational facility for deaf students. Following the speech, a number of committee meetings were held to outline the facility requirements and educational specifications. In April 1982, Principal Harkins joined representatives from the architectural firm of Beaton Sheppard and Associates, and the Newfoundland Department of Public Works and Services, in a tour of several American and Canadian schools for deaf students. Feedback for the building program was well received from the school staff, student body, and parents. The former site of the old sanatorium facilities on Topsail Road, adjacent to Columbus Drive and opposite the Village Shopping Mall in St. John's, was chosen for the construction of a new school.

Preparation began in the spring of 1985 with the demolition of the sanatorium buildings and the grading of the site. Fire destroyed about half of the \$150,000 worth of fibreglass roofing insulation in a blaze that broke out on May 1, 1986. Because this material had to be shipped from the mainland, there was some concern that the fire would delay the 1987 opening date. This did not prove to be the case, however, and the new 90,000 square foot, \$10 million academic-residential complex was ready for occupancy by late spring of 1987. The school was built to accommodate 120 students, with beds for 80 residential students. The new academic building housed 22 classrooms, a science lab, library facilities, a gym, theatre, home economics classrooms, and commercial and industrial arts areas.

The first classes met on May 19, 1987. A month later, the school held its first graduation exercises at the new site (on June 25). The first students to graduate from the Topsail Road facility were Cathy Lushman, Susan Skinner, and Fabian Jesso. Official opening ceremonies took place later that year on December 3rd. On June 9, 1988, Great Britain's Prince Edward,



The new school as it appeared two months prior to its May 1987 opening

Courtesy of Newfoundland School for the Deaf (St. John's, Nfld.)

the youngest child of Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip, was given a royal tour of the Newfoundland School. He attended a play, took a hearing test, and unveiled a plaque commemorating his visit. He also received a framed painting by 11-year-old deaf student Rona Colson of Irishtown (near Corner Brook) as a gift from the student council. The Prince enjoyed his visit so much, he stayed longer than originally planned.⁸⁹

To date, Judy Davina (née Crocker) Shea (b. Apr. 20, 1948) is the only deaf teacher to work at the Newfoundland School. She was hired in 1979. A native of Corner Brook, Nfld., Shea was deafened at the age of two from spinal meningitis. When she was 10 years old, her family moved to Georgetown in Conception Bay, Nfld. She received her education at the following schools: the Halifax School (1955-1958), the Mackay

Center (1958-1961), the Interprovincial School (1961-1965), the Newfoundland School (1965-1968), and Gallaudet College (B.Sc., 1968-1973). Shea taught at the Interprovincial School for six years (1973-1979) before coming back to Newfoundland.

The push toward integration (mainstreaming) of deaf and hard-of-hearing students continues to be a contentious and difficult issue for residential institutions such as the Newfoundland School. As of September 30, 1994, there were 86 students (38 girls and 48 boys) enrolled at the school in St. John's (this figure is down from 112 in 1993). As enrolment declines, the Newfoundland School is faced with increased challenges, as administrators, staff, and students try to maintain a viable educational institution in the face of relentless mainstreaming.

Heads of the Newfoundland School for the Deaf*

St. John's, Newfoundland, Founded 1964

Walter George Rockwood

Karl Cornelius Van Allen, B.A., B.Paed.

Thomas Edward David Carmichael, B.Sc., M.Ed.

Ellen Selina Parrott, B.A.

Charles Thomas Harkins, B.A., M.Ed.

Administrator, 1964-1965

Principal, 1965-1967

Principal, 1967-1974

Principal, 1974-1978

Principal, 1978-present

**As of December 1994*

Deaf Educators/Teachers Known to Have Been Employed at the Newfoundland School for the Deaf*

St. John's, Newfoundland, Founded 1964

Judy Davina (née Crocker) Shea, B.Sc.

1979-present

**As of December 1994*