

**ADDRESSES DELIVERED ON PRESENTATION DAY,
MAY 6, 1914.**

ADDRESS OF EMERITUS PRESIDENT E. M. GALLAUDET.

The Prenatal History of the College.

I have been asked to tell how it came about that the college for the deaf was authorized and sustained by the Congress of the United States. I have hesitated to do this, because the story necessarily required much allusion to myself, and I have not wished to seem to make my part prominent. And so I must ask those who hear to believe that I have no desire to magnify my office, but wish only to have the facts of history known, with sincere thanks to the helping Providence, which enabled me to bring about the establishment of an institution which has proved a benefaction to many worthy young people.

As I was about to graduate from the Hartford High School, at the age of 14, a prominent business man offered me a position which I was very eager to take. My father objected on account of my youth, and said he wished to give me a college education, and that he hoped I might be disposed to be a teacher of the deaf. His suggestion did not appeal to me, and I assured him my ambition was to be a business man and amass a fortune. He said that if I must go into business he hoped I would not be a banker, as he regarded that profession as narrowing to the mind.

A few weeks later my father died, and I was left to make my way in the world. Very shortly after my father's death the president of a bank in Hartford offered me a position, which I accepted in spite of what my father had said as to the narrowing influence of banking.

Continuing in the bank three years, I came to realize the justice of my father's judgment and resigned my position to enter college.

Before the completion of my college course I was offered a position as instructor in the school for the deaf, which my father had founded 40 years before, and took up with enthusiasm the work my father hoped I would engage in.

Among my colleagues in the school for the deaf there was a man a few years older than myself, with whom I became intimate and with whom I often talked of the possibility of establishing, somewhere, a college for the deaf. We agreed that as soon as some wealthy person could be found who would furnish the requisite endowment we would undertake the organization of the much to be desired college.

When I had been connected with the Hartford School for the Deaf but a little more than a year I received a letter from the Hon. Amos Kendall, of Washington, D. C., formerly Postmaster General, asking me if I would accept the superintendency of a school for the deaf and the blind of the District of Columbia, which had already been chartered by Congress.

I consulted with my friend and colleague, asking if he thought it reasonable to suppose that Congress might be disposed to allow the District school to be developed into a college. He was eager in his approval of this idea and advised me to go at once to Washington and confer with Mr. Kendall, securing, if possible, his approval and that of his co-trustees of the college plan. I went to Washington and found Mr. Kendall quite ready to second my plan. It was not long before I was in charge of the new school and I had little difficulty in securing for it the liberal support of Congress.

By a fortunate inadvertence on the part of Mr. Kendall, who drew up the charter of the Columbia Institution, no limit was set to the time during which the beneficiaries of the Government might remain under instruction. So long as they could be benefited, they might continue in the school. To start a college, therefore, it would only be necessary to add a college course of study to the curriculum of the school and carry forward such of its pupils as were capable and desirous of going further.

The Columbia Institution began its work as a primary school in 1857. In the annual report of the institution for 1862 the importance of a college for the deaf-mutes of the entire country was urged, and the propriety of asking the support of Congress for such a school was shown. Two years later several of its pupils had so far advanced in scholarship as to suggest the desirability of giving them a higher course of study.

I consulted Senator Grimes, of Iowa, who was then chairman of the Committee on the District of Columbia, and won his support to the idea of conferring collegiate powers on the Columbia Institution. I prepared a bill authorizing the institution to confer "such degrees as are usually granted and conferred in colleges," of which Senator Grimes secured the approval of his committee.

The bill was soon reported to the Senate and put upon its passage. Several Senators opposed it, claiming it was ridiculous to suppose that deaf mutes would be found capable of mastering collegiate courses of study. But Senator Grimes had the support of Senator Clark, of New Hampshire, who advocated the bill in a strong and eloquent speech, and it was passed without a negative vote.

The bill went through the House without opposition, and was signed by President Lincoln on the 8th of April, 1864.

During the session of that year Congress made an appropriation of \$26,000 to enlarge the accommodations of the institution, and the college was publicly inaugurated at a meeting in the First Presbyterian Church in June, 1864. At this meeting the institution for the first time exercised its collegiate powers by conferring the honorary degree of master of arts on John Carlin, of New York, a deaf-mute artist of unusual intellectual power. Mr. Carlin had published articles favoring a college for the deaf, and was a poet of no mean ability. He made an eloquent address at the inauguration of the college.

In the summer of 1864 a circular was issued by the institution informing the schools throughout the country that a collegiate department would be opened in the Columbia Institution in September and inviting the attendance of pupils from the State schools. Nine young people responded to this invitation, and four pupils of the Columbia Institution were added to this number, the collegiate department thus

opening with thirteen students. One professor and one instructor were employed to teach these students, and a building on the property purchased with the appropriation of \$26,000 already referred to was sufficient to accommodate the new department. The support of the students from outside the District of Columbia was provided for by scholarships given by private individuals.

President Garfield, who from the time of his advent to Congress took a lively interest in the college, alluded in an address at one of the public anniversaries to the interesting fact that Congress was willing, while the burdens of the Civil War were heavy, to authorize and support such a benevolent institution as a national college for the deaf. It is also an interesting fact that the appropriation of \$26,000 was paid out of the Treasury at a time when the Capital was cut off from all communication with the outside world.

-I trust it may not be presumptuous on my part to say that the events of 50 years on Kendall Green have justified the efforts put forth in the prenatal days in behalf of the college; and to express the hope that, so long as there are to be found in our country deaf young men and women capable and deserving of securing the higher education, Congress may be found willing to support the college for the deaf, which has had its favor so long.