

Deaf Culture Question of the Week - April 13-17, 2009

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The year 1880 is important historically to Deaf people for two reasons. What are these reasons?

- a. Laurent Clerc came to the United States from France and Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet founded Gallaudet College later to become Gallaudet University
- b. The first rudimentary hearing aid was developed by A. G. Bell and the first deaf person graduated from Gallaudet University
- c. A deaf person is the first human to go over Niagara Falls in a barrel and survive and P.T. Barnum sells ear drops that guarantee to cure deafness
- d. The founding of the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) and the International Congress on Education of the Deaf was held in Milan, Italy

Scroll down for the answer

Answer: "d" - From September 6-11, 1880, the second International Congress on Education of the Deaf was held in Milan Italy. The delegates at this conference voted to ban sign language from deaf education. The only countries with delegations opposed to the resolution outlawing sign language were the United States and Great Britain. This conference marks the beginning of the movement worldwide to promote oral education rather than education through sign language for deaf children. The impact of this resolution was felt in the loss of teaching positions and positions of leadership of Deaf people themselves in the education of deaf children. The Milan Conference is a watershed event in the history of Deaf people. In October 1993, Gallaudet University held a conference, "Post Milan ASL and English literacy." Scholars at this conference presented papers demonstrating the connection between the Milan Conference, the subsequent emphasis on oral education and the decline in English literacy among Deaf people for over a century. The effects of the Milan Conference are still with us today. It remains a significant symbol among Deaf people of oppression and unfulfilled educational prospects.

It is not a coincidence that in this same year and only one month before the Milan Conference the National Association of the Deaf was founded in Cincinnati, Ohio. The first convention of the NAD was held in August 1880 and Robert MacGregor was elected President. The NAD fights for the rights of deaf and hard-of-hearing people and advocates for the preservation of American Sign Language (ASL) and use of ASL as a birthright of deaf children. The organization was founded during a time when prominent Americans, Alexander Graham Bell and others as well as prominent European educators of deaf children were advocating for the removal of all signing from schools for the deaf.

Read about the NAD and the Milan Conference at the websites below:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Association_of_the_Deaf_\(United_States\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Association_of_the_Deaf_(United_States))

<http://deafness.about.com/cs/featurearticles/a/milan1880.htm>

A famous artwork by Mary J. Thornley on display at Gallaudet University depicts how Deaf people view the Milan Conference

<http://pr.gallaudet.edu/dpn/activities/10thAnniversary/milanitaly1880.html>