

As a young student at the then-called Ontario School for the Deaf at Belleville, Dr. Clifton F. Carbin studied Canadian history, just like any other student.

But where were all the deaf people, he wondered.

"I couldn't find any references to them and I wondered what happened to them after they went to college. I felt something had to be said," he said in a recent telephone interview, conducted through a special interpreter.

"I did a term paper on the deaf in Canada at Western Maryland College," where he obtained his M.Ed. in Deaf Education, "but I found it difficult to do research for lack of information."

That triggered an effort of almost 12 years to produce what is now being heralded as the first major, definitive history relating to the deaf in Canada.

Published by McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, the 620-page book just off the press should be of special interest to many Belleville and area residents. Much of it relates to Carbin's own years at the school here, renamed in recent years to the Sir James Whitney School for the Deaf, and the many historical "firsts" associated with the school and deaf education and training.

Even the Belleville cemetery contains tombstones with names engraved in finger spelling of some of the deaf teaching pioneers in Canada.

North America's first deaf lawyers were two brothers who came from Scotland, showed remarkable skills at passing their final exams and established a prominent practice based in Trenton in the middle 1800s.

Also traced here are other professions — politicians, famous people, but most importantly, famous Canadians.

The book also deals with those not so famous. They learned basic skills in the original school in departments which taught cooking and sewing skills to girls; farming, carpentry, shoemaking and similar skills to boys.

But Dr. Carbin doesn't confine his research to his alma mater. Every deaf school and development by or for deaf people in Canada is traced in this scholarly but highly readable effort, as well as an overview of how deaf culture has fared and developed back to ancient times.

And despite his efforts to document all major accomplishments by the deaf, "There are still many unsung heroes," he said.

"I just wanted to keep going on this book, but I had to stop somewhere. The original deadline for the publisher was 1988 and they were generous in giving me extensions and I am grateful for that.

"I intend to write some other books in the future — but they will be shorter ones," he says.

Even those not directly associated with the deaf can appreciate his relaying how new and changing technology can be both a blessing and a curse for deaf people. For instance, the deaf could enjoy silent motion pictures like anyone else until sound movies came along. It took decades to implement signing for the deaf on the screen and television after that.

But computers and Internet communications available now are perceived as a special blessing to the deaf, as well as those who hear normally, Carbin says.

But the reality remains — "There is no cure for deafness," he said.

Dr. Carbin was born at Espanola in 1946, the only child of hearing parents and was deafened by spinal meningitis at the age of four.

His career as an educator for the deaf has included top positions across Canada.

He returned to Ontario in 1991 and became the first deaf person to occupy a senior management position in the Ministry of Education, where he continues to be program director, information and resources services, and remains widely known and well regarded throughout Canada and the United States.

A previous book, *Can't Your Child Hear?*, published in 1981, has been translated into four languages and many major journals have published his articles.

Dr. Carbin, his hearing wife, Sandi, and deaf daughter, Carley, reside in Burlington.

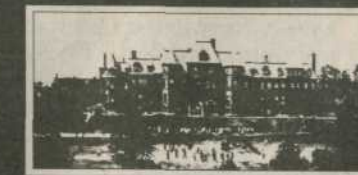
Copies of the book are available at Greenley Book Sellers and most other book stores across Ontario. Publisher's price is \$69.95 in hard cover. Copies will also be available at the Belleville Public Library.



DEAF HERITAGE IN CANADA

A DISTINCTIVE, DIVERSE, AND ENDURING CULTURE

Clifton F. Carbin



A Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf Project



Dr. Clifton F. Carbin