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This newsletter is dedicated to uniting the Deaf and Hard of Hearing of East Texas and all supporters by providing information and reporting events that enhance our lives and our community.

To receive a newsletter, mail your name and address to:

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“The History of Sign Language” Series - Part 1 of 5

by Sara Seamons (April 2017) <https://aslblog.goreact.com/>

Sign languages have been around much longer than most people think. Did you know that they existed in ancient Greece? And even before recorded history? To give you some perspective on just how amazing and prolific sign language really is, let's take a deep dive into the long and colorful history of how signs—and ASL in particular—came to be.

The Earliest Sign Languages

No one knows exactly when sign language first appeared, but many sources agree that using hands to communicate has been around just as long as spoken language. And these early signing systems were the direct result of humans needing a new way to interact. Researchers believe that hunters on the open plains used signs to communicate to each other from great distances. Because of the lack of visual obstruction in a plains environment, sign was the most obvious way to communicate without scaring off the animals they were hunting.

The ancient Great Plains Native Americans also developed a complex signing system. It's unclear what exactly the system was for, but many different theories exist. A popular one is that sign made intertribal trade possible.

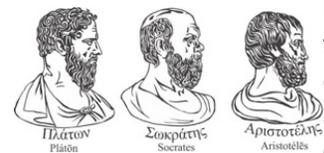
To overcome language barriers, the natives developed a standardized system of hand gestures to negotiate with tribes that didn't speak their language—including European expeditioners. Multiple accounts of Columbus landing in the Americas claim that the natives communicated with his crew through sign.

The Greek Philosophers

It's impossible to know exactly when and where the first deaf person tried out sign, but we do know that the first written record of sign language came from Ancient Greece. In fifth century B.C., the philosopher Plato wrote the dialogue *Cratylus*. In it he recorded Socrates saying, “If we had neither voice nor tongue, and yet wished to manifest things to one another, should we not, like those which are at present mute, endeavor to signify our meaning by our hands, head, and other parts of the body?” Apparently ancient Greeks who couldn't speak did indeed have a rudimentary sign language to go about their daily lives.

The Greek philosophers Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle were the first people in history to write about sign language and deaf members of their society.

Later Plato's student Aristotle



became the first person ever to record a claim about deaf people—

and unfortunately it wasn't a good one. He believed that being able to hear speech was the only way people could learn. So according to Aristotle it was completely impossible to educate deaf people. Even though there wasn't a shred of factual evidence to support his claim, Aristotle's theory caught hold and was widely believed for the next 2000 years throughout the world. And the results weren't pretty. During this era of history, deaf people were viewed as lesser humans who couldn't legally hold property.

continues

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East Texas Deaf Ladies
at Josephine's

They couldn't get married because society was afraid that deafness was a hereditary trait that would be passed on to future generations. Deaf people were often denied citizenship and even religious rights. And though deafness was regarded as a shameful disability, any form of sign was ostracized and discouraged, making it nearly impossible for these people to communicate freely.

Scholars of this period genuinely believed that deaf people couldn't learn, but some teachers still tried. In 685 A.D. the Archbishop of York, John Beverly, famously taught a deaf boy to speak. But instead of seeing this accomplishment as proof that Aristotle was wrong, thinkers of the era deemed this act as divine. The archbishop was later canonized for performing the miracle, but people still believed that the only way deafness could be “overcome” was to speak the same language as the general population.

Teachers in Italy and Spain

In the sixteenth century, philosophers and teachers finally started questioning Aristotle's claim that people who couldn't hear couldn't be educated. An Italian physician and mathematician named Girolamo Cardano (also known as Gerolamo or Geronimo) was the first voice to challenge Aristotle's long-standing assumption.

The first fingerspelling systems in history emerged in sixteenth century Spain and Italy. Cardano claimed that hearing wasn't necessary for a person to understand ideas and even started developing his own code of hand gestures. He believed that one could use written words matched with symbols of what they represented to communicate with deaf students. Although his code was never widely adopted, he did use his methods to teach his own deaf son. And Cardano's theories greatly influenced other leaders and thinkers of the time.



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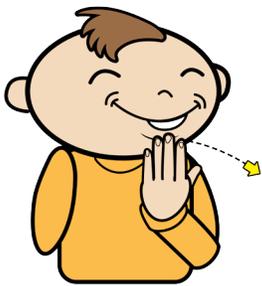
Around the same time as Cardano (about 1570), a Spanish monk named Pedro Ponce de Leon started educating his own deaf students—the sons of Spanish nobles. Because they were deaf, these young men were ineligible to inherit property. Leon taught them to read, write, and speak so they could claim the family fortunes that rightly belonged to them. And his efforts were successful.

Both Cardano and Leon inspired another Spanish monk named Juan Pablo de Bonet to take the biggest step in early sign language history. After developing his own methods of educating deaf pupils, Bonet published the first book on sign language in 1620. In it he included his own manual alphabet of handshapes representing sounds. This was the first published system of fingerspelling in history.

Even though these early systems were designed to teach deaf people how to speak other languages, Bonet's book was still a revolutionary landmark in the development of sign language as an officially recognized form of communication. His book sparked interest across Europe in educating deaf students, but it wasn't until the mid-1700s that the next groundbreaking achievement in sign language development took place.



Senior citizens lunch
at the Farmhouse



Sign of the Month
“THANK YOU”



Our sympathy goes out to the family and friends of John Davis, who passed away Friday, July 14, 2017. Services were held Saturday, July 22 in Jacksonville, Texas. John was an active, long-time member of the Tyler Metro Association of the Deaf and Vice President of the club in 2017. He was always excited to meet sign language students at events and help them to learn. Like other members of the Deaf community in East Texas, John invested his hope in a one-stop shop building for all to call home. He was loved by many, and his jokes and sense of humor will be dearly missed.

AUGUST

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5 Luby's  
6	7	8	9	10 Yamato Japanese steak house	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18  WHATABURGER	19 FD's grill house 
20	21 First Day of School! 	22	23	24	25	26
27	28 First Day of School! 	29	30	31		

August 5: TMAD Meeting
11:00 AM - 2:00 PM
at Luby's: 1815 Roseland Blvd
Tyler, TX.

August 5: Annual bowling competition
3:00 PM - 5:00 PM
\$2 for shoes; \$2 for one game
Medals will be awarded.
at Green Acres Bowl
2311 E SE Loop 323
Tyler, TX 75703

August 5: Coffee Chat,
7:00 – 9:00 PM, at Starbucks,
1817 E SE Loop 323
Tyler, TX 75701

August 10: TDHHC Fund Raising
5:00 – 9:00 PM
at Yamato Japanese Steak House
2210 W SW Loop 323
Tyler, TX

August 18: Coffee Chat
7:00 – 9:00 PM, at Whataburger
311 S Main St
Lindale, TX 75771

August 19: East Texas Deaf Ladies
11:00 AM - 1:00 PM
at FD's Grill House
The Village at Cumberland Park
8934 S Broadway Ave #494
Tyler, TX 75703

August 19: Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Night, 7:00 PM
door open at 6:00 PM

August 21: First day of school
for Tyler Junior College

August 28: First day of school
for Tyler ISD campuses
& University of Texas at Tyler

Coming Up!

September 4:
Labor Day

September 23:
Deaf Celebration at Tarrant County
College in Fort Worth, TX



DALLAS WINGS VS ATLANTA DREAM
SATURDAY AUGUST 19
7:00 PM
DOORS OPEN AT 6:00 PM
Come see the Dallas Wings take on the Atlanta Dream!
DISCOUNTED TICKET PRICE STARTS AT \$10!
WWW.DALLASWINGS.COM/PROMO
SPECIAL OFFER CODE: DEAFEMPOWER17
If you have any questions or need assistance please
contact Corderius Seay at 817-900-2827
or email cseay@dallaswings.com
WATCH ME WORK

Did You Know?

Scuba divers often use sign language under water.





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Thank you!



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- 2) Click on the above image, which will take you to the Amazon Smile website.
- 3) Sign into your account or create one.
- 4) Add items to cart and check out normally.
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