

Ballard, Melville (1839-1912)

First graduate of the National Deaf Mute College (Gallaudet University), teacher and editor

QUOTE: "... I felt as though I had become a new being." (1881)



[Above from Gallaudet University Archives]

Born: 31 July 1839
Fryeburg, Maine

Died: 15 December 1912
Washington, DC

Buried: Rock Creek Cemetery
Washington DC



[photo©Darlene Ewan]

Family of origin:

George and Susanna Ballard (colonial family)

One of seven children

Grew up in Fryeburg, Maine (city named for a maternal relative)

Autobiographical writings describe his family as having created a home sign system

Had Deaf cousins (Samuel and Sarah Greene)

Became Deaf at birth or during infancy

Schooling:

1850-1859: American School for the Deaf

1866: Graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree from the National Deaf Mute College (Later Gallaudet University)

1870: Master of Science degree from the National Deaf Mute College (Later Gallaudet University)

Professional Experiences/Honors/Recognition:

1859-1861: Taught at American School for the Deaf

Beginning in 1861: Teacher at Columbia Institution for the Deaf (later Kendall School for the Deaf) for over 50 years (with a couple of years break for College (1864-1866)

Translated articles in Deaf education periodicals (French to English)

Taught sign language to hearing graduate students in the National Deaf Mute College's Normal School, which started in 1891.

In 1871-6, Ballard (along with Hotchkiss, Denison and Parkison) edited the first literary magazine for deaf people, The Silent World

Ballard was the first president of the Gallaudet College Alumni Association.

2002: Ballard Residential Complex at Gallaudet University named in his honor

Personal information:

1874: Married Grace A. Freeman (Deaf)

Six children

Writings by Melville Ballard:

Ballard, M. (1881). Reflections of a Deaf-mute before education. *American Annals of the Deaf*, 26 (1), 31-39. (Reprinted in (1997) *American Annals of the Deaf* 142 (3), 24-26.

References and books/articles/links:

Braddock, G. C. (1975). Notable Deaf Persons. Washington, DC: Gallaudet Alumni Association.

Necrological notice: Melville Ballard. (1915) Proceedings of the twentieth meeting of the Convention of American Instructors of the Deaf. Staunton, VA, (June-July 1914). Washington DC: Government Printing Office.

Johnson, Gloria R. (1943). "Contributions of three early Kendall school teachers:

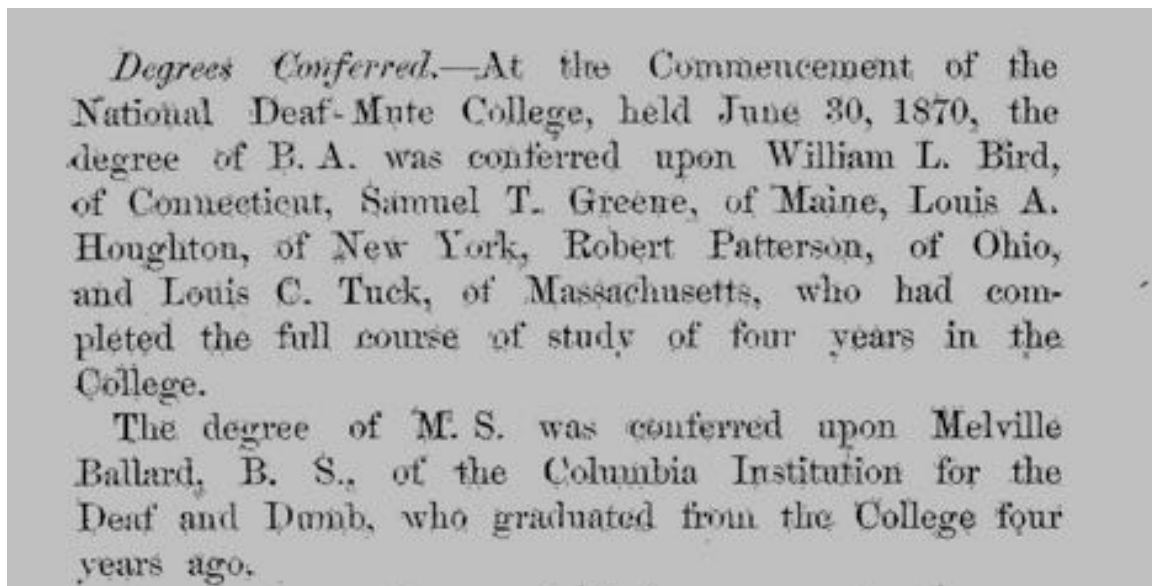
James Denison, Melville Ballard and Sarah Harvey Porter." Masters thesis. Gallaudet University. Washington, D.C.

U.S. Special Census on Deaf Family Marriages and Hearing Relatives, 1888-1895.

Other information/documents/images:

“Being an acute and accurate observer, of tenacious memory, and possessed of considerable histrionic talent and a graceful sign delivery, Mr. Ballard was, when the spirit moved him, an entertaining and an instructive speaker. His powers of mimicry, in the higher sense, were such that his reproductions of incidents of which he had been a witness or of persons whom he had seen perform, were literally ‘as good as play.’” (1915 obit in CAID pg. 201)

Below from (1870, October). *American Annals of the Deaf* 15, (4).



Below from: Gallaudet, E.M. (1882, January). President Garfield's Connection with the Deaf-Mute College. *American Annals of the Deaf* 27, (1).

Maintaining his interest in the progress of the College, General Garfield, in the spring of 1868, showed his confidence in its scholarship by requesting its earliest graduate, Mr. Melville Ballard, to make a translation from the French of an important pamphlet, "*Le Bilan de l'Empire*," in which some very unfavorable criticisms of the financial management of the Second Empire were given to the world.

Some months after the completion of the translation, Mr. Ballard received the following:

"DEAR SIR: Just before I was leaving Washington last summer, I received your very successful translation of '*Le Bilan de l'Empire*.' I should have acknowledged it at once but from the fact that I had to leave the city. My long delay in acknowledging your great kindness can only be accounted for by the recital of a series of accidents and *contretemps*, which I have not now time to recount.

"I take pleasure in forwarding to you a copy of Napoleon's Caesar (in French) as a slight testimonial of my appreciation of your scholarship and kindness in making the translation.

"With kindest regards, I am, very truly yours,

"J. A. GARFIELD."

This volume was handsomely bound, and Mr. Ballard's name had been stamped on the outside.

Below from (1892, April). *American Annals of the Deaf* 37, (2).

Daily lessons in the sign-language have been given throughout the current term by Mr. Melville Ballard, of the Kendall School.

Below from (1902, October). *Buff and Blue*, 11 (1).

'66. Melville Ballard was knocked down in the streets of Boston, Mass., early in September, by a heavy team, the wheels of the wagon passing over his legs, bruising them and breaking the small bone of the right leg. It is not often that our friend is caught napping, and this mishap surprised every one even more than it did himself. It was particularly inopportune, for it obliged him to cancel an engagement to lecture before the Clerc Literary Association of Philadelphia.

Below from (1908, February). *Buff and Blue*, 16 (5).

'66. Melville Ballard lectured before the pupils of the Maryland School and the deaf residents of Frederick and vicinity on the evening of the 1st of February, upon "The Necessity of a Navy." The subject was chosen by the pupils of the School, who have been intensely interested in present cruise of the battle-ship fleet, and was one which Mr. Ballard was well qualified to handle, as he has been a close student of the development of our navy. He also delivered an interesting and instructive sermon before the same audience on the afternoon of the Sunday following. Altogether his visit to the Maryland School was productive of much pleasure to his hosts and himself, and much profit to the children and others. All desire a repetition.

Below from (1908, May). *Buff and Blue*, 16 (8).

'66. Melville Ballard, the first graduate of the College, the first president of the Alumni Association and now President of the District of Columbia Branch, had the misfortune to be run down and seriously mauled by a car on Indiana Avenue on the evening of Presentation Day. He and his wife were on their way to attend the meeting of the Washington Literary Society of the Deaf in Trinity Church Parish-Hall. The evening was rainy and foggy, and, as they started to cross Indiana Avenue along Third St., no car was in sight. As they were about to step on to the tracks, Mrs. Ballard glanced along the road again and saw the car rushing upon them at great speed. She only had time to clutch her husband by the shoulder in an effort to pull him back, and draw back herself, when the car swept Mr. Ballard from his feet. The proof of its speed lies in the fact that, with the brakes on when it struck Mr. Ballard, it dragged him fifty feet or more before it stopped. Under these circumstances, the wonder is that Mr. Ballard, although seriously bruised and strained, and having his

scalp badly cut and torn, yet had no bones broken. He is now fairly on the road to complete recovery, and all of his many friends rejoice.