

The national institute for the Deaf

The national institute for the Deaf is established on a historic site, situated in the Latin quarter. The remnants of a Gallo-Roman oven were uncovered in the 80's during the construction of the vocational workshop building.

In 1286, a hostel welcomes the pilgrims who are going to St Jacques de Compostelle.

In 1572, Catherine de Médicis houses the Benedictines of saint Magloire's abbey in its buildings.

In 1618, the Oratorians organize a seminar which Jean de la Fontaine attends.

In 1760, Abbot de L'Épée (1712-1789) opens a free school for deaf children in his house, on 14 Moulins street (now called Thérèse street). His teaching is based on his methodical sign method.

In 1791, the French Revolution founds the Institution for the Deaf at birth and gives the Abbot's foundation the national dimension which it deserved. His school is transferred to the convent of Célestins, near the Arsenal and supervised by abbot Sicard.

In April, 1794, the institution is transferred to Saint Jacques street. It is the first public school in the world for deaf children. Abbot Sicard is the first director.

It is conceived from the beginning as a charity institution, a school, a vocational training center, a place to live in and a research laboratory.

Several XIXth century personalities live there and carry out research. Doctor Itard who took in Victor de l' Aveyron, the wild child, or Bébien, the first school principal, the author of a sign language dictionary and the inventor of bilingual education.

Remarkable deaf pupils, who became teachers, have left their mark on INJS and in the world history of the Deaf : Laurent Clerc, a brilliant pupil of Abbot Sicard, leaves for the USA in 1817, with Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet. They found the first school for the Deaf in the New World, in Hartford (Connecticut). Ferdinand Berthier, a famous activist for the cause of the Deaf, a teacher in the institute, author of the Napoleon code concerning the Deaf, the founder in 1838 of the Central Society for help and assistance of the Deaf-mutes, and a passionate advocate of sign language.

These deaf personalities illustrate the considerable outcomes of the work of Abbot de L'Épée : access for the Deaf to education, to citizenship, to clubs and intellectual or artistic societies, and development of sign language.