

# THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF MARIA MONTESSORI

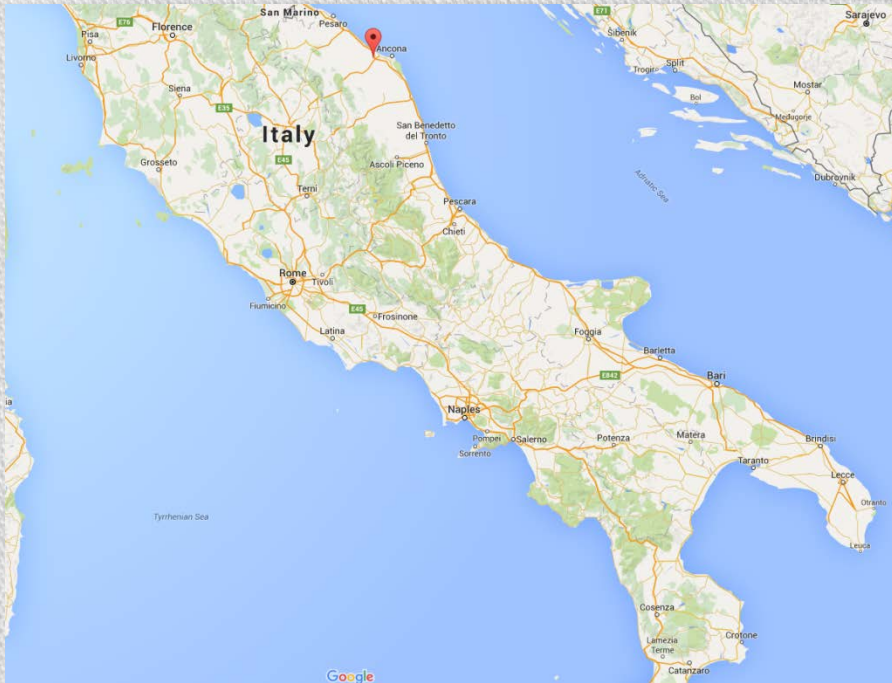
October 1, 2015

Daniel Clifford





# The Beginning



- Maria Montessori was born in August 31, 1870 in Chiaravalle, Italy
- Her father, Alessandro Montessori, was 33 years old and worked as an accountant for the Ministry of Finance.
- Her mother, Renilde Stoppani, was 25 years old and was well educated for a woman
- In 1873, Montessori and her family moved to Florence and then to Rome in 1875 due to Alessandro's work.
- In 1876, Maria Montessori entered into a public elementary school on the Via di San Nicolo da Tolentino

Between 1876 and 1882 nothing “remarkable” happened in Maria’s life



# Maria's Education

- In 1882, Montessori attends a boy's secondary school called the Regia Scuola Tecnica Michelangelo Buonarroti. She studies: Italian, arithmetic, algebra, geometry, accounting, history, geography, and sciences.
- In 1886, Maria Montessori enrolls in a technical school, Regio Istituto Tecnico Leonardo da Vinci, with the intention of studying engineering. She does extremely well, excelling in the math and sciences. Note: This was extremely rare for a woman in secondary education to study or even intend to study engineering. Most women who did go to secondary education studied the classics with the intention of becoming teachers themselves
- Upon her graduation, Montessori decides to pursue Medicine. This did not go over well with her father nor the head of school who denied her entrance.
- Rumor has it that Pope Leo XIII interceded on Montessori's behalf and so in 1890, Maria starts her undergraduate work at The University of Rome.
- In 1892, her studies for a medical degree commence.






# University of Rome

- Montessori was met with extreme prejudices from both her colleagues and her professors on the simple account of her feminine sexuality.
  - Do the social implications at the time of men and women seeing a naked body together, Maria was forced to do her dissections of cadavers alone and after hours.
  - Fun fact: Maria smoked tobacco to help mask the smell of formaldehyde.
  - On July 10, 1896 Maria Montessori is awarded a Doctorate of Medicine. This makes her the first women to graduate from the University of Rome's School of Medicine.
- At the end of Maria's first year she was recognized by the University for her academic achievements
  - From 1894-1896, Maria studied pediatrics and psychology. She worked in the pediatric consulting room and emergency service, becoming an expert in pediatric medicine.
  - In 1895, she secured a hospital position as an assistant gaining critical clinical experience.





# Post University of Rome

- Maria Montessori immediately found a position upon graduation at the San Giovanni Hospital attached to the University of Rome
- In September of 1896, Montessori was selected as a delegate for Italy at the International Congress for Women's Rights in Berlin, Germany.
- In her speech to the Congress, Montessori developed a thesis for social reform, arguing that women should be entitled to equal wages as men.  
(<https://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/equal-pay>) Still an issue today!!
- In November of 1896 Maria is appointed as a surgical assistant at the Santo Spirito Hospital in Rome. It is here where her work with the poor, and particular with their children began.
- In 1897, Montessori joined a research program in the psychiatric clinic at the University of Rome.
- Montessori worked along the famed psychiatrist, Giuseppe Montesano. 



# Mario Montessori – The Love Child

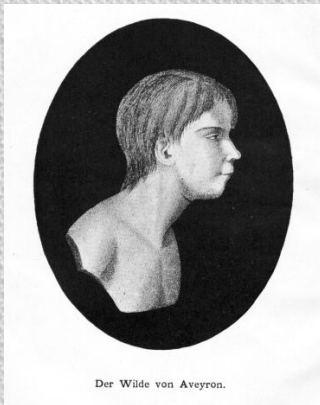
- A romantic relationship was started with Giuseppe Montesano, a married Catholic man, when Maria joined the research team.
- In 1898, Mario Montessori was born. His exact birthdate is unknown.
- Mario did not live with Maria or Giuseppe, rather with an Italian Farmer who Montesano paid.
- Both parents did visit Mario regularly, but Mario did not know that they were his parents
- Mario was eventually recognized by both parents, but didn't know Maria was his mother until 1914.
- Maria and Giuseppe never married.





# Psychiatric Clinic and beyond

- During the course of Maria's work with the clinic she would have to visit Rome's Asylums for the insane seeking patients. It was during this time she encountered sensorial deprivation for children in one asylum.



- Curiosity overtook Montessori and she began to research the subject studying Jean-Marc Itard, who is known for working with the “Wild Boy of Aveyron” (Victor) and Itard's student Edouard Seguin.

- Maria's work with the asylum children started to receive more prominence. Maria began speaking at conferences around the world about her work.
- By 1901, Montessori leaves her medical position and returns to the University of Rome to study psychology and philosophy
- In 1904, Montessori is appointed a lecturer at the Pedagogic School of The University of Rome and also chaired the Anthropology Department, which held until 1908.



# Casa dei Bambini or Children's House

- It was at this time that Rome started growing very rapidly. Some construction companies started doing “speculative development” but went bankrupt before the buildings were complete.
- In one such instance a group of bankers bought a series of apartment buildings and renovated them dividing larger apartments into smaller apartments for the impoverished working families.
- However, with the parents working all day the children were wrecking havoc on the newly restored apartments.
- The group of bankers then approached Montessori so see if she could provide ways of occupying the children to prevent further damage.
- Dr. Montessori jumped at the idea of working with “normal” children. She brought her educational materials she developed while working with the children in the asylums.
- On January 6, 1907 Maria Montessori opened the first Casa dei Bambini







# The Beginning Lessons

- Due to the fact that the children were from poor, impoverished families, Maria taught basic hygiene and the skills to care for themselves. This was the beginning stages of what we now know as Practical Life.
- Montessori's educational methods were far from a finished work at this point in time. In fact, Maria took a very scientific approach of keen observation combined with trial and error.
- Montessori put many activities into the environment but only kept those that truly engaged the child.
- Her end conclusion was that children who were placed in an environment where activities were designed to support their natural development had the power to educate themselves.

*“I did not invent a method of education, I simply gave some little children a chance to live” – Maria Montessori*





# The Montessori Boom

- By the fall of 1908 there were 5 Casa dei Bambinis operating. 4 were in Rome and 1 was in Milan.
- The children were making such extraordinary progress and soon the 5 year olds were reading and writing.
- News of this new approach spread rapidly and educational leaders from around the world came to see for themselves how she was achieving such results.
- Within a year, the Italian speaking part of Switzerland began transforming its kindergartens into Casa dei Bambinis. With that move, the new educational approach began world wide.
- By 1911, all Swiss and Italian Public schools decide to use the Montessori Method as their standard system.
- In the summer of 1909, Dr. Montessori offered the first training course in her approach to 100 students.
- Her notes from this training course became the backbone of her first book titled *The Montessori Method* which was published in 1910.
- By 1912, her book was translated into 20 different languages and rose to #2 in the U.S. Bestseller List.





# Montessori in the United States

- Anne George, an American woman from New York was one of the 100 students who was taught by Maria Montessori.
- In 1911, she opens the first Montessori school in Tarrytown, New York.
- Sam McClure, owner of the American magazine, McClure's Magazine, publishes a long article on Maria Montessori that helps to garner even more interest in the USA.
- In 1912, the Montessori American Committee is formed by Anne George, Sam McClure, and Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell.
- By 1913, there are over 100 Montessori Schools in operation and Maria Montessori herself visits the United States for the first time.







The Edward Harden Mansion, home to the first Montessori School in the United States.

Anne George's Montessori Classroom





# San Francisco's Panama-Pacific International Exposition

- In 1915, Dr. Montessori visited the United States for her second and final time.
- Montessori was invited to participate in the World's Fair Panama-Pacific International Exhibition in San Francisco.
- She set up a classroom where spectators watched twenty-one children, all new to the method behind a glass wall for four months in what has become known as “The Glass Classroom.”
- The only two gold medals awarded for education went to this class, and the education of young children was altered forever.
- After initial enthusiastic support for the Montessori Method of education, education specialists in the United States made a choice to advance a different method in the public schools in America. The Montessori Method thus did not spread in the USA at that time and instead developed more in Europe and other areas of the world.
- Some would argue that the downfall of the American Education System and where it currently stands can be attributed to this choice.





# Pre World War II

- The Montessori Education model continues to grow with schools opening in England, Germany, Spain, Argentina, Austria.
- In 1924, Montessori meets with Mussolini who agrees that the Italian government will support Montessori schools.
- In 1929 the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) is founded in Berlin and the first International Montessori Congress is held in Elsinore, Denmark.
- By 1931, due to the refusal of Montessori and her teachers to pledge loyalty to Fascism, all Montessori schools in Italy are closed.
- In 1931, Maria Montessori leaves Italy to live in Spain because of Mussolini. However, the Spanish civil war forces her to move to Holland in 1936.
- In September of 1939 World War II begins. Fearing safety, Maria and Mario embark on a 3 month tour of India that turned into 7 years.



# The End

- Maria and Mario return to Holland in 1946.
- Maria continues touring, giving speeches and lectures. Her message now is on World Peace.
- Maria Montessori was nominated three times of the Nobel Peace Prize but never wins (1949, 1950, 1951).
- Maria Montessori's last public speaking engagement was in London in 1951 at the 9<sup>th</sup> International Montessori Congress
- On May 6, 1952, Dr. Maria Montessori dies in her friend's, Ada Pierson, garden in Noordwijk aan Zee, Holland.
- She is buried in the local cemetery in Noordwijk.





# Facts and Figures

- Precise and accurate facts and figures are difficult to determine, as Montessori schools operate as independent entities or as members of a patchwork of organizations. The following numbers are estimates; sources and assumptions are given below.

- **Montessori education:**

|                        | U.S.               | worldwide |
|------------------------|--------------------|-----------|
| • schools              | 4,000-5000         | 22,000    |
| • children 6 and under | 120,000 to 150,000 | 700,000   |
| • children 6 and older | 35,000             | 100,000   |

- **Education in the United States (for comparison)**

- schools:

|           |                                 |
|-----------|---------------------------------|
| • public  | 99,000 (including high schools) |
| • private | 33,000                          |
| • total   | 132,000                         |

- children:

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| • pre-K (3-5 years old)                | 8,250,000  |
| • pre-K through 8 <sup>th</sup> grade: |            |
| public                                 | 37,440,000 |
| private                                | 4,220,000  |

- total pre-K through 8

|  |            |
|--|------------|
|  | 41,660,000 |
|--|------------|

- **Sources:** AMI, NAMTA, AMS, MontessoriScout, and the NCES. School size was estimated at 30 6-and-under students per school, and 50 6-and-older students per elementary program. Elementary enrollment is based on a very rough guess of 700 elementary programs. Several surveys which are currently underway should provide better numbers in the coming year or so.



# Famous Montessori Graduates

- **JOSHUA BELL** – Grammy award-winning violinist and subject of a Pulitzer prize-winning media story
- **JEFF BEZOS** – Amazon founder
- **DAVID BLAINE** – Illusionist & magician
- **T BERRY BRAZELTON** – Pediatrician, child psychiatrist, author and Harvard medical school professor emeritus
- **JULIA CHILD** – Celebrity chef & author
- **GEORGE CLOONEY** – Academy award-winning actor, director, producer, humanitarian, United nations messenger of peace
- **SEAN “P Diddy” COMBS** – Grammy award-winning musician, rap recording artist and CEO of Bad Boy Records
- **JOHN and JOAN CUSACK** – Actor and screenwriter, and Academy award-nominated actress, respectively
- **ANTHONY DOERR** – Author
- **PETER DRUCKER** – Author, Management consultant, “social ecologist”, awarded the presidential medal of freedom
- **ERIK ERIKSON** – Psychologist & author
- **DAKOTA FANNING** – Actor
- **ANNE FRANK** – Memoirist & author
- **KATHARINE GRAHAM** – Pulitzer prize-winning author and Former owner & editor of the Washington Post
- **FRIEDENSREICH HUNDERTWASSER** – Viennese artist & architect
- **HELEN HUNT** – Academy award-winning actor
- **HELEN KELLER** – Political activist, author, lecturer, awarded the presidential medal of freedom, one of gallup’s most widely admired people of the 20th century
- **BEYONCÉ KNOWLES** – Singer, songwriter, actress and fashion designer, 16-time Grammy award-winner
- **YO YO MA** – United nations Peace Ambassador, winner of 15 Grammy Awards, Presidential Medal of Freedom & National Medal of the Arts
- **GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ** – Nobel prize-winning author
- **HM QUEEN NOOR of JORDAN** – U.N. Advisor, humanitarian activist, memoirist and wife of the late King Hussein of Jordan
- **JACQUELINE KENNEDY ONASSIS** – Former first lady and double day editor
- **SERGEY BRIN & LARRY PAGE** – Google founders
- **DEVI SRIDHAR** – Youngest-ever American Rhodes scholar, author, oxford research fellow, oxford lecturer on global health politics
- **TAYLOR SWIFT** – Grammy Award-winning singer/songwriter
- **WILL WRIGHT** – Video game pioneer, creator of the Sims
- **PRINCE WILLIAM AND PRINCE HARRY** – English Royalty



# Google's Montessori Doodle





# Bibliography

- American Montessori Society. *Maria Montessori Biography*. n.d. <http://amshq.org/Montessori-Education/History-of-Montessori-Education/Biography-of-Maria-Montessori> (accessed September 28, 2015).
- Biography.com. *Maria Montessori Biography*. n.d. <http://www.biography.com/people/maria-montessori-9412528> (accessed September 28, 2015).
- DailyMontessori.com. *Dr. Maria Montessori Biography*. n.d. <http://www.dailymontessori.com/dr-maria-montessori/> (accessed September 28, 2015).
- Dasbach, Marlena. *Northern Virginia Community College*. May 2003. <http://novaonline.nvcc.edu/eli/evans/his135/Events/Montessori52/Montessori52.html> (accessed June 6, 2012).
- Google Images. *Google Images*. n.d. <https://www.google.com/imghp?hl=en&authuser=0&ei=tU8JVoODF8vy-QGXvLugBg&ved=oCAIQqi4oAQ> (accessed September 28, 2015).
- Louisiana Montessori Association. *History of Montessori Education*. n.d. <http://lma.solaramg.com/index.php/montessori/history> (accessed September 28, 2015).
- Montessori Australia. *A Biography of Dr Maria Montessori*. n.d. <https://montessori.org.au/montessori/biography.htm> (accessed September 23, 2015).
- Montessori Education (UK) LTD. *Who Was Maria Montessori?* n.d. <http://www.montessorieducationuk.org/?q=who-was-maria-montessori/maria-montessoris-time-line/maria-montessori-time-line> (accessed June 6, 2012).
- Montessori School of Lake Forest. *Famous Montessori Students*. n.d. <http://www.mslf.org/famous-montessori-students/> (accessed September 28, 2015).
- Wikipedia. *Maria Montessori*. n.d. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maria\\_Montessori](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maria_Montessori) (accessed September 28, 2015).