[from The HeART of Deaf Culture: Literary and Artistic Expressions of Deafhood by Karen Christie and Patti Durr, 2012]

The Chain of Remembered Gratitude:

The Heritage and History of the DEAF-WORLD in the United States

PART ONE

Note: The names of ***Deaf individuals*** appear in bold italics throughout this chapter. In addition, names of ***Deaf*** and Hearing historical figures appearing in blue are briefly described in **"Who's Who" which can be accessed via the Overview Section of this Project (for English text) or the Timeline Section (for ASL)**.

"The history of the Deaf is no longer only that of their education or of their hearing teachers. It is the history of Deaf people in its long march, with its hopes, its sufferings, its joys, its angers, its defeats and its victories." ***Bernard Truffaut*** *(1993)*

Honor Thy Deaf History © ***Nancy Rourke*** 2011

Introduction

The history of the DEAF-WORLD is one that has constantly had to counter the falsehood that has been attributed to Aristotle that "Those who are born deaf all become senseless and incapable of reason."[1] Our long march to prove that being Deaf is all right and that natural signed languages are equal to spoken languages has been well documented in Deaf people's literary and artistic expressions.

The 1999 World Federation of the Deaf Conference in Sydney, Australia, opened with the "Blue Ribbon Ceremony" in which various people from the global Deaf community stated, in part:

"...We celebrate our proud history, our arts, and our cultures... we celebrate our survival...And today, let us remember that many of us and our ancestors have suffered at the hands of those who believe we should not be here. We are here to remember them...to pledge...to fight to end that oppression now for all the world's Deaf children and the others still to come." ***Paddy Ladd*** *(2003)*[2]

These words emphasize the importance of history to Deaf people: like other oppressed groups, members of the DEAF-WORLD have the need to remember our ancestors, recognize the challenges of past generations of Deaf people for cultural survival, and confirm our shared history. At the same time, it shows the need for Deaf people to come together in the present to celebrate our endurance as a people, and share a responsibility for future generations. The questions guiding this chapter are:

- Who are the ancestors of Deaf people?
- How did Deaf people develop a sense of solidarity?
- How has the survival of Deaf people and Deaf culture been threatened?
- How have Deaf people advocated for our rights?
- What obligations do Deaf people feel for Deaf children and their future?

Ultimately, this section serves as a historical framework for understanding the time and conditions in which the visual and literary arts of Deaf people have been created.

Native Americans

"The Whites have had the power given them by the Great Spirit to read and write, and convey information in this way. He gave us the power to talk with our hands and arms, and send information with the mirror, blanket and pony far away, and when we meet with Indians who have a different spoken language from ours, we can talk to them in signs." ***Chief Iron Hawk***

Prior to the arrival of Europeans in America in the 1600s, various tribes of Native Americans likely had Deaf members and families of Deaf people. Oral histories and more current research have noted that signs developed within and among tribes of Native Americans, particularly for communication between tribes that did not share a common spoken language. **Melanie McKay-Cody** (1996) as well as Jeff Davis (see http://sunsite.utk.edu/pisl/index.html) have noted that signs used by Native Americans, with particular reference to Plains Indian Sign, "was also used within native communities as an alternative to their spoken languages and as a primary language for deaf people."

Since much of the Native American history is one of oral traditions and likely because Native Americans did not focus on individual accomplishments, we have little information about early Deaf Native American ancestors.[3] One can imagine that being born Deaf into a Native American community where some form of signing is already used, would be a much more Deaf-friendly place.

"I have met Comanches, Kiowas, Apaches, Caddos, Snakes, Crows, Pawnees, Osages, Mescalero Apaches, Arickaress, Gros Ventres, Nez Perces, Cherokees, Choctaws, Chickasaws, Sacs and Foxes, Pattawattomies,

and other tribes whose vocal languages, like those of the named tribes we did not understand, and we communicated freely in sign language." ***Chief Little Raven***

Deaf Islanders Heritage © ***Nancy Rourke*** 2010

Martha's Vineyard

One early European settlement in America was in Martha's Vineyard, an island just off Cape Cod in Massachusetts. Because of a number of factors,[4] the community on Martha's Vineyard became a community in which a significant number of families consisted of both Deaf and Hearing members over several generations. This led to Martha's Vineyard eventually becoming known as the place where "everyone spoke sign language."

It was recorded in 1692 that the first Deaf person arrived on the island, ***Jonathan Lambert***.[5] His parents immigrated to the colonies from an area in England (the Weald, in Kent)which had a high population of Deaf people. ***Lambert*** had come from Barnstable, Massachusetts and bought 60 acres of land from Native Americans in an area that is still called Lambert's Cove. ***Lambert*** had served in a military expedition to Quebec, where he was the master of a sailing ship. Like many military men, he was awarded with some land (in Maine) after his service. However, he decided to settle in Martha's Vineyard, his wife's homeland, and worked as a carpenter and farmer. There, they raised seven children of which two where Deaf. Thus, it may be that ***Beulah Lambert*** was the first child born Deaf on Martha's Vineyard in 1704. While neither of his Deaf children married, his Hearing niece had 11 children, three who were Deaf.

Jonathan Lambert died a relatively wealthy man. Because he signed his will and had books listed in his possessions, it is likely that ***Lambert*** could read and write (Carroll, 1997). Did ***Jonathan Lambert*** use sign language? While there are no records confirming this, a number of factors point to the likelihood he did. His parents had immigrated from an area of England where there were Deaf people who were reported to have used sign language. Even if he did not learn to sign from his parents or others from that community, it is difficult to imagine that he would not have signed with his own two Deaf children and extended family members.

Jonathan Lambert, as well as his early Deaf and Hearing descendents on Martha's Vineyard, did not have formal schooling, but they did show evidence of being literate, independent, and contributing members of their community.

European Educational Roots

"Wherever the deaf have received an education the method by which it is imparted is the burning question of the day with them, for the deaf are what their schooling makes them more than any other class of humans. They are facing not a theory but a condition, for they are first, last, and all the time the people of the eye." ***George Veditz*** *(1910)*[6]

To trace the educational history of the DEAF-WORLD in the United States, we must journey back to roots in eighteenth century France. In Pre-Revolutionary America, there were sporadic reports in historical records about the lives of particular Deaf individuals and related to families of Deaf people (see Lang, 2006; and Lane, Pillard, & Hedberg, 2011). However, it was the founding of institutions of education, where significant numbers of Deaf people would come together, establish relationships, and discover the ways of being Deaf in the world.

Many individuals played an instrumental role in the education and advancement of Deaf people. We focus on France because it had a history of Deaf teachers, it lead the way in public education for Deaf children in which signed languages were used for instruction, and its teaching methods and sign language were promoted through international demonstrations as well as published scholarly works. Furthermore, our American Sign Language and Deaf education system is built largely on its foundation. France's DEAF-WORLD, additionally, has a wealth of early examples of literary and artistic works about the Deaf experience.

Prior to the 1700s, a scattering of teachers tutored Deaf individuals from wealthy or royal families in Europe. These early educators focused on the mechanics of teaching speech so that their students would be able to claim their titles, inherit family property and/or participate in religious activities. The laws of the government and the laws of religion had long been influenced by earlier philosophers, such as Aristotle. Thus, the early emphasis on speech training was vital to proving "humanness," as the ability to reason was believed to be something that set people apart from animals. Several of these early educators claimed to have "secret methods" for teaching speech although it is believed that these methods included at least some signing and fingerspelling.

The Age of Enlightenment,[7] beginning in the late 1600s, played a major role in stimulating the interest in if and how Deaf people could be educated. Traditional beliefs and attitudes were being challenged, and support for the education of all citizens became a new goal. As a result, the stimulating new ideas of this time impacted the visual and literary arts.

The first person known to have educated a group of Deaf students using signs was ***Etienne de Fay***, a French Deaf monk, sculptor, and architect, in about 1730.[8] Not much is known about how ***de Fay*** was educated himself other than having received a strong education from the monks at his abbey from an early age, and later that he was "very skilled at explaining himself in signs" (Mirzoeff, 1995, 40). ***De Fay***'s students included the ***Meusnier*** brothers and ***M. Azy d'Etavigy*** who later appeared as a demonstration student[9] for Jacob Pereire. Pereire, sought praise for his method of teaching speech to Deaf individuals, and ***d'Etavigy*** was one of his students. It seems more likely that de Fay truly educated ***d'Etavigy*** whereas Pereire taught him to speak. There were reports that d'Etavigy's achievements in speaking were impressive; however, later in life it was noted that he did not use his speech skills in his daily interactions.

In ***Etienne de Fay***, we find our first Deaf role model and ancestor, an educated person who used sign and who felt an obligation to teach young Deaf students.

Roots of Controversy in the Education of Deaf People

Oralism vs Manualism © ***Nancy Rourke*** 2010

Even in this brief piece of history, we see the contrast between the philosophy of educating Deaf students collectively in subject areas using sign as opposed to the philosophy that Deaf people need to be taught individually and that education is primarily related to the ability to learn to speak. This contrast in attitudes shows how deep the roots are of the controversies in the education of Deaf people which have been called by many names, and persist even to the present day: the German vs the French method of education of Deaf students, of oralism vs manualism, and of English-only vs bilingual approaches. Yet until pressured by oral-only mandates, there existed spoken language approaches which utilized fingerspelling. In addition, the type of educational program a Deaf student participates in is strongly influenced by the attitudes and politics of the majority culture at a particular time. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that this controversy has also been an important theme in literary and visual creations of Deaf artists.

The First Public School for Deaf Students (1760)

"...once Épée had conceived the noble project of devoting himself to the education of the deaf, he wisely observed that they possessed a natural language for communication to each other. As this language was none other than sign language, he realized that if he managed to understand it, the triumph of his undertaking would be assured. This insight has been justified by success. So the abbé de l'Épée was not the inventor or creator of this language; quite the contrary, he learned it from the deaf." ***Pierre Desloges*** *(1779)*[10]

Abbé Charles Michel de l'Épee © ***Nancy Rourke*** 2011

The folktale of Abbé Charles-Michel de l'Épée has been retold with great reverence by generations of Deaf French people.[11] Épée is known, even today, by an abbreviated version of his name sign, which indicates a sword, the English translation of his last name. **Carol Padden** and **Tom Humphries**, contemporary American Deaf linguists and educators, translated and described this folktale which they saw enacted while they were traveling in France:

"The abbé de l'Épée had been walking for a long time through a dark night. He wanted to stop and rest overnight, but he could not find a place to stay, until at a distance he saw a house with a light. He stopped at the house, knocked at the door, but no one answered. He saw that the door was open, so he entered the house and found two young women seated by the fire sewing. He spoke to them, but they still did not respond. He walked closer and spoke to them again, but they failed again to respond. The Abbé was perplexed, but seated himself beside them. They looked up at him and did not speak. At that point, their mother entered the room. Did the Abbé not know that her daughters were deaf? He did not, but now he understood why they had not responded. As he contemplated the young women, the Abbé realized his vocation." ***Padden*** *and* ***Humphries*** *(1988)*

It has been shown that, while somewhat romanticized, many of the details of this story are true. Épée did meet Deaf sisters and their mother requested that Épée take on instructing them. She wished him to continue their religious instruction that had begun under another priest. Most importantly, the meeting did seem to have sparked in Épée an eventual recognition of the need to educate Deaf people in France, a

recognition which seemed to arise from both his religious beliefs and the political beliefs emerging in the age of enlightenment.

In 1760, Abbé Charles-Michel de l'Épée founded the Institution Nationale des Sourds-Muets á Paris.[12] Many in America today often refer to it as the "Paris Deaf School." Unlike those before him, Épée founded a school that was both free and public. Thus, he wished to educate ALL Deaf citizens (rather than just the royal or wealthy) and believed that all should have both religious education and education in trades which would make them productive citizens. His educational approach also was of no secret, and he invited foreign visitors to his school and encouraged them to establish Deaf schools in their own countries using methods like those they observed at the Paris Deaf School. Épée established the tradition of hosting student demonstrations to royalty and the public for the purpose of showing "his pupils were capable of understanding the principles of grammar and metaphysics, which both Enlightenment philosophy and public opinion put far beyond their reach" (Mirzoeff, 1995, pg. 35). While initially Épée supported the school himself, the government agreed to take over funding the school by the time of his death.

Épée understood the importance of educating Deaf students "through the eye what other people acquire through the ear" (from http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05484b.htm accessed 8/13/11) and thus, used signing. Historians and others have mistakenly attributed Épée with creating Old French Sign Language. Yet, even Épée, himself, wrote that Deaf people in France were already using sign language before they arrived at the new school. That there existed a Deaf people who used sign language in Paris prior to the establishment of the Paris Deaf Institution was confirmed by ***Pierre Desloges***, one of the first published Deaf writers, a Frenchman and contemporary of Épée. For educational instruction, however, Épée did create a type of "signed French" (or methodical signs) which conformed more easily to oral/written French and included signs created to represent French grammar such as articles, verb forms and prepositions. Outside of the classroom, it appears that both teachers and students at the school used a natural Signed Language.

Abbé Charles-Michel de l'Épée continues to be revered by Deaf people in France, as well as America, for establishing not only a school, but also a special place for sign language to flourish and be used in the classroom. Épée has been called by Deaf people one who promoted the recognition of signed language (***Padden*** and ***Humphries***, 1988) and our 'spiritual father,' (***Berthier***, 1852 as cited in Hartig, 2006). Because Épée's established the first known public Deaf school in the world and because he encouraged opening its doors to others, many countries began to follow France's lead to establish schooling for Deaf children which used signed languages. As a result, the Deaf students would recognize their solidarity, and communities of Deaf people would be formed which endured past schooling. Within one generation, this would also include the United States.

*The folktale of Abbé de l'Épée "...has come to symbolize in its retelling through the centuries, the transition from a world in which deaf people live alone or in small isolated communities to a world in which they have a rich community and language. This is not merely a historical tale, but also a folktale about the origin of a people and their language..." **Padden** and **Humphries** (1988)*

The Next Generation in France

As Deaf students at the Paris School were educated, a number of them were recognized for their intelligence and achievements. This led to younger Deaf students benefiting and being able to look up to graduates of the school, as many became teachers themselves. The earliest and most recognized of these Deaf role models was our ancestor, ***Jean Massieu***.

Left to Right: ***Jean Massieu*** First (2010) and Abbe Sicard (2010) © ***Nancy Rourke***

Following the death of Abbé de l'Épée who secured government funds for further support of the school, the Abbé Roch-Ambroise Sicard took over as director. Sicard had established a school for the Deaf in Bordeaux following Épée's model, and this is where ***Jean Massieu*** along with his two Deaf sisters, **Jeanne** and **Blanche** were educated.

When asked if early in his life he knew "what it meant to hear and how he learned what it meant," ***Massieu*** responded:

"A relation (a relative) who could hear, and who lived in the house told me that she saw with her ears a person whom she did not see with her eyes, when he came to see my father. Persons who hear, see with their ears during the night those who are walking...(and this walking) tells their names to those who can hear." ***Jean Massieu*** *(from* ***Clerc****, 1849)*

Jean Massieu was born Deaf into a family of all Deaf siblings, educated at the Paris school, and became a master teacher of Deaf students--including ***Laurent Clerc*** who helped establish the first Deaf school in America. ***Massieu*** came to the Paris Deaf School with Abbé Sicard. ***Massieu*** later wrote of his Deaf siblings, his family "home signs"[13] and his great desire to be educated as a young boy:

"I expressed my ideas by manual signs, or gesture. The signs which served me then to express my ideas to my parents, my brothers and sisters, were very different from those of instructed deaf-mutes. Strangers never comprehended us when we expressed our ideas by signs to them, but the neighbors did...I had a desire to read and write. I often saw boys and girls going to school: I desired to follow them, and I was very jealous of them. With tears in my eyes, I asked permission of my father to go to school; I took a book and opened it here and there, to show my ignorance; I put it under my arm as if to go; but my father refused...saying to me, by signs, that I should never be able to learn anything, because I was a deaf-mute...(Later) I went to school without telling my parents: I presented myself to the master, and asked him by signs, to teach me to write and to read. He refused me roughly, and drove me from the school." ***Jean Massieu*** *(from* ***Clerc****, 1849)*

Fortunately, not long after this event, a stranger informed ***Massieu***'s family about the Deaf school established by Sicard. ***Massieu***, later in life, reports that it required him about four years to achieve literacy similar to those who could hear and speak. An outstanding pupil, Sicard chose ***Massieu*** as his demonstration student in order to secure his directorship at the Paris School, and had ***Massieu*** move with him to Paris. We are left to wonder about ***Massieu***'s Deaf sisters, what happened to them, and whether their gender and the conventions of the time may explain why Sicard did not also bring them.

After he graduated from the Paris school, ***Massieu*** was hired by Sicard--the first Deaf person to become an instructor in an educational institution. In addition, ***Massieu*** remained a demonstration student. Like Épée, Sicard had used the brightest students as demonstration students who participated in public lectures where the students answered questions by writing or signing responses to demonstrate the success of their education at the Paris School.[14]

Laurent Clerc v.2 © ***Nancy Rourke*** 2010

For Deaf people in the United States, the most famous and important person from the Paris Deaf School was ***Laurent Clerc***. At about age 11, ***Laurent Clerc*** arrived at the school and met ***Massieu*** who was by then 25 years old. In later years, ***Clerc*** described ***Massieu*** as "my first teacher" who had "not only intelligence, but genius" while also noting ***Massieu*** was somewhat eccentric and considered socially unsophisticated. Like ***Massieu***, after his schooling ended, ***Clerc*** was first hired to stay on as a tutor, and finally as a teacher in 1806.

Laurent Clerc had been born and raised near Lyons, France and was told he became Deaf after falling from a chair near the fireplace as a one-year-old. In addition to being Deaf and unable to smell, the experience left a scar on his cheek. Thus, this unique facial feature became the source of his name-sign. Before being brought to the Deaf school in Paris by his uncle, ***Clerc*** reports he "...did nothing but running about and playing with other children. I sometimes drove my mother's turkeys to the field or her cows to pasture, and occasionally my father's horse to the watering place." (***Clerc***, 1852)

In addition to ***Massieu***, ***Laurent Clerc*** came to know others who had attended the school before him. The oldest of these were pupils of the first generation at the Paris School, pupils of Épée. These Deaf men had worked in various capacities and included a grocer, a printer, a painter, and a sculptor.[15] Deaf girls were educated at the Paris School from the beginning, but like the Deaf sisters who inspired Épée's establishment of the school, most remained nameless and their accomplishments unrecorded for a number of generations.[16]

At this point in history, both writing and art were ways of recording events. Two paintings by Jerome-Martin Langlois recreated scenes of the Paris School under Sicard. Both these paintings included misrepresentations. The earliest of these, painted in 1806, shows Sicard in a classroom, at the center of the composition, teaching a young Deaf girl to speak. In the background is ***Jean Massieu*** gesturing to a phrase

written in French on a blackboard. Translated as, "Means of making sounds articulated by the feeling of pressure," this phrase is found in one of Sicard books. However, it has been discovered that underneath this writing in the painting was another, original sentence. This sentence read "*La reconnaissance est la mémoire du coeur*."[17] For those who attended the many demonstrations given by Sicard and his students, the original sentence would seem familiar--one that clearly came from ***Massieu***. Why did the painter replace ***Massieu***'s words with those of Sicard? There are many ways to interpret this action, but clearly ***Massieu*** is silenced into being someone used to call attention to Sicard, rather than the other way around. There is no known record of ***Massieu***'s reaction to the painting; however, Lanlois would know of the negative reaction of Deaf people to his second painting.

Created seven years later, Lanlois' second painting had a similar composition as his first, with Sicard instructing a young boy in writing. This time, the figure in the background is a young ***Laurent Clerc***. This painting was eventually purchased and donated to the Paris School, and so it is likely that ***Clerc*** and the students saw this painting on a daily basis. This lead to what is likely the first known act of protest against artistic representation by a group of Deaf people. In writing to the painter, ***Clerc*** stated that the Deaf students were upset because "The young Grivel [who appears as the student being taught in the picture] is hearing-and-talking....he is no longer part of the class of the deaf...The deaf demand therefore that his portrait be effaced and that a deaf student from the school take his place."[18] One can imagine the Deaf students' outrage at the painting, and their pleas to ***Clerc*** to protest on their behalf. ***Clerc*** must have felt indignant enough himself to write to a well-known Hearing painter with criticism which was very bold for that time in history. What was the painter's response? We do not know, but the painting was never altered.

In 1814, Abbé Sicard traveled with ***Jean Massieu*** and ***Laurent Clerc*** to England. There, Sicard gave a series of public lectures, and included demonstrations of ***Clerc*** and ***Massieu***'s abilities to intelligently answer questions put to them in sign and writing. At one of these demonstrations, they met a young American named Reverend Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet.

The European Oral schools

*"If in the education of the deaf we suppress the use of signs, it is impossible to make the pupils anything but machines that speak." **Pierre Desloges** (1779)*

Speech Therapist © ***Nancy Rourke*** 2010

After the Paris School was established and began to expand, the oral tradition of individual education through speech training of Deaf members of the upper classes continued. Samuel Heinicke of Germany

came from this tradition and trained a number of individual Deaf children using fingerspelling and gesture to support the development of speech. His belief was that only speech was truly connected with thought. Signing was considered "subhuman" and could not be a way that Deaf people could develop intelligence. (Rée, 1999) He was familiar with Épée and his school challenged Épée's methods and considered Épée's and Sicard's work misguided.

Late in his career, with the support of a member of the royal family, he established the first pure oral school--which banned signing--in Leipzig in 1778. Heinicke's school, "The Electoral Saxon Institute for Mutes and Other Persons Afflicted with Speech Defects," began with nine students. A number of teachers were trained there, learning his method of speech training for the Deaf by connecting various sounds with various tastes. After Heinicke's death, a great number of the oral schools in Germany were headed by Heinicke's relatives. Thus, on the European continent there were two very different types of schools for Deaf students: the French schools with signing and writing which followed Épée's model and the German oral schools which followed Heinicke's model (also known as the Prussian method). Until the latter part of the 1800's, most of the schools followed Épée's model.

In Scotland beginning in the 1760s, Thomas Braidwood became the first of many in his family to work with Deaf students. Braidwood was a math teacher who was asked to teach a student who had become Deaf. Braidwood began to study articulation and developed his own methods for teaching speech. He believed that sign was limiting and could not be used to discuss abstract concepts. Braidwood sought out more Deaf students as well as Hearing students with speech problems. Unlike Heinicke and Épée, however, Braidwood was paid by his students' parents. Within a number of years, he was able to set up a private school, Braidwood's Academy. While Braidwood apparently used the two handed British fingerspelling alphabet and gesture initially, his other "secret" methods for teaching Deaf students to speak were handed down through family members. In fact, one of his relatives, John Braidwood, made an ill-fated, short-lived attempt to establish a school in the United States .[19] By the time American Thomas Gallaudet visited Britain, the extended Braidwood family members of the next generation had a well-developed system of oral schools throughout England and Scotland, still earning a profit.

In most of the early oral schools, speech was the goal but often signing, gesture, or at least fingerspelling was initially used. This would eventually change, and the climate of the times would shift in favor to the oral-only method of education. As with most of the accounts of oral education, the focus was primarily on the teacher and his methods rather than the students. After the Deaf students left the schools, we do not often know what happened to them. Yet, they too are our ancestors, those who were nameless, those who were denied a full accessible language, a community of others like themselves, and a true home in the world.

Beginnings of Deaf Education in America

While schools following Épée model were being set up in Europe as well as schools which came from the tradition of educating individual Deaf students orally, the newly established United States had no such schools. In the early years, the only way for American Deaf children to receive an education was if they were sent to a school in Europe. Reverend Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet hoped to change this situation for American Deaf children.

Left to Right: Alice Vase and Gallaudet (2011) © ***Nancy Rourke***

Alice Cogswell, the daughter of a well-known doctor in Hartford, Connecticut, became deaf following an illness in 1807. This happened when she was a little over two years old and it is likely that as her playmates' games grew more complex, she was more and more isolated. Her neighbor, a young man who had studied law, business and was currently studying at a seminary, watched his brother playing with the deaf girl from next door. Thereafter, Lane takes up the story, which has also become a folktale-- echoing Abbé de l'Épée's meeting with the Deaf sisters.[20]

*"The Gallaudet Garden, 1813. Theodore Gallaudet, eight, comes running around the side of the house (he's the fox) with brother Edward and three Cogswells--Mason, **Alice**, and Elizabeth, six, eight and ten (the hounds)--in hot pursuit. Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, home from studies at Andover Theological Seminary, stands under an elm tree watching **Alice**....the young theology student decides to teach her to spell H-A-T...Thomas scratches the letters H-A-T on the ground while **Alice** looks on in puzzlement. To show that the two go together, he places the hat on the ground next to the words and points to them alternately over and over while imitating the action of donning his hat. **Alice** seems to understand. To test her, Thomas rubs out the letters with his shoe and scratches them again a few feet away. **Alice** picks up the hat and places it on its new label. Thomas runs, overjoyed, to the Cogswell home to announce his success." **Lane** (1984, p. 174, 177-178)*

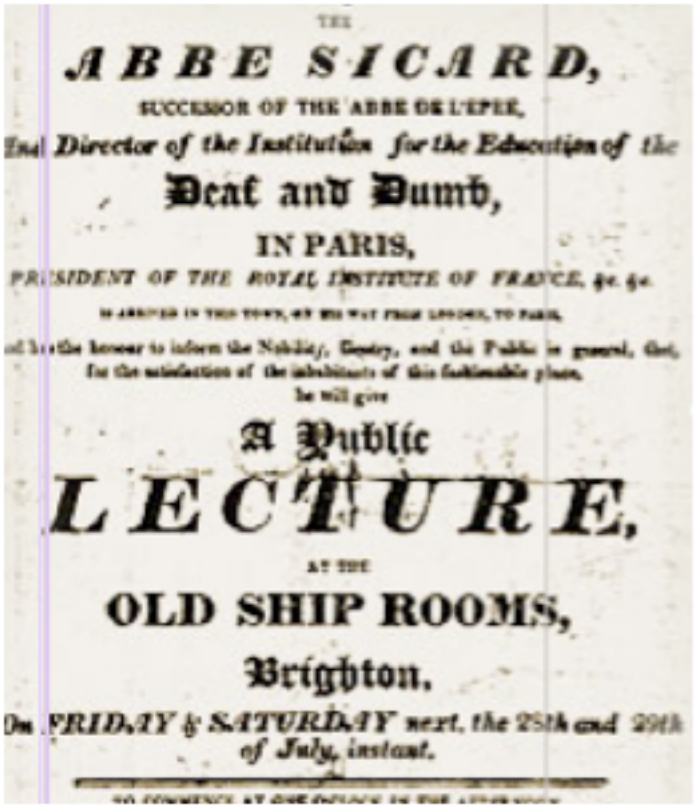
Alice's father, Mason Cogswell, had for many years struggled with the question of ***Alice***'s education. He had a library with Épée's writings among others, and worked to determine how many deaf students in America there were.

His meeting with Gallaudet after the "hat" incident was likely encouraging, and ***Cogswell*** began to seek sponsors for a school for deaf children in America. By 1814, Gallaudet had tutored ***Alice*** when home,

encouraged ***Alice***'s father to enroll her in Lydia Huntley Sigourney's school, graduated from seminary, and met with Cogswell's group of sponsors who wished to support the establishment of a school for Deaf children in the United States. With the support of ***Alice***'s father and other wealthy philanthropists, Thomas Gallaudet went to Europe to learn about how to educate Deaf students.

Thomas Gallaudet's Education

Thomas Gallaudet arrived in Liverpool, England and made his initial contact with the founder of a deaf school in London which was based on the Braidwood family's oral method of instruction. As he awaited response, he learned that the Abbé Sicard happened to be in London. Gallaudet was aware of Sicard's school in Paris and had bought with him on his journey Mason Cogswell's copy of Sicard's book on educating Deaf students.[21] On meeting Sicard's secretary, Gallaudet was assured that if he came to Paris he would receive "private instructions of the Abbé, who devotes a portion of his time to those who wish to acquire his art, for the sake of using it in their own country" (Barnard, 1850). The secretary, acting as an English-French interpreter, introduced Gallaudet to Sicard and gave him tickets to attend the London lectures.



THE

ABBE SICARD,

SUCCESSOR OF THE ABBE DE L'EPEE,

And Director of the Institution for the Education of the

Deaf and Dumb,

IN PARIS,

PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL INSTITUTE OF FRANCE, &c. &c.

IS ARRIVED IN THIS TOWN, ON HIS WAY FROM LONDON, TO PARIS,

and has the honour to inform the Nobility, Gentry, and the Public in general, that, for the satisfaction of the inhabitants of this fashionable place, he will give

A Public

LECTURE,

AT THE

OLD SHIP ROOMS,

Brighton,

On FRIDAY & SATURDAY next, the 28th and 29th of July, instant.

TO COMMENCE AT ONE O'CLOCK IN THE AFTERNOON

Note: This handbill refers to the lecture in Brighton. Thomas Gallaudet attended an earlier lecture given in London, but likely saw a handbill similar to this. Used by permission from the American School for the Deaf Archives.

In just a little over two weeks after arriving in England, Gallaudet reported attending Sicard's lecture and demonstration with two Deaf individuals on July 10th in his diary:

"At two o'clock, I went to the Abbé Sicard's lecture in the Argyle rooms. His lecture which was in French, lasted more than an hour. Afterward there was some exhibition of the talents and acquirements of his pupils ***Massieu*** *and* ***Clerc****. Many questions were put to them by the company, which they answered with great dispatch and propriety."* ***Barnard*** *(1850)*

After the lecture/demonstration, Gallaudet met ***Massieu*** and ***Clerc*** briefly. Gallaudet attended another of Sicard's demonstrations on July 20th and then spent almost four months trying to gain access to training in the Scottish and English schools for the Deaf overseen by the Braidwood family. (At that time. there were three: London, Edinburgh and Birmingham).

*Question put to **Massieu** and **Clerc** during the Exhibition in London:*
***Q**: Do the deaf and dumb think themselves unhappy?*
***Massieu**: No...but should the deaf and dumb become blind, they would think themselves very unhappy, because sight is the finest, the most useful, and most agreeable of all the senses. Besides we are amply indemnified for our misfortune, by the signed favour of expressing by gestures and by writing, our ideas, our thoughts, and our feelings, and likewise by being able to read books and manuscripts.*
***Clerc**: He who never had any thing, has never lost any thing; and he who never lost any thing has nothing to regret. Consequently, the deaf and dumb, who never heard or spoke, have never lost either hearing or speech, therefore cannot lament either the one or the other. And he who has nothing to lament cannot be unhappy...Besides it is a great consolation for them to be able to replace hearing by writing, and speech by signs.*

During this summer, ***Laurent Clerc*** also visited one of these oral schools in London. A Frenchman who accompanied ***Clerc*** later wrote to Sicard: "...one hundred and fifty deaf and dumb (assembled in the dining room) fixed all their looks on your pupil, and recognized him as one of themselves. He made signs and they answered him by signs. This unexpected communication caused a most delicious sensation..." (Rée, 1999, pg 198). Here, we see the stirrings of a natural familiarity that arises between Deaf people--a recognition that would later lead to group solidarity which would cross national boundaries---a recognition of Deaf people as a community of global citizens. This event is informative for another reason: it illustrates that even though the students attended an oral school, they clearly knew how to sign and that ***Clerc*** and the students were able to make themselves understood despite not sharing the same signed language and nationality.

Gallaudet's visits to the Braidwood schools were not as successful. He traveled to Edinburgh to the head of the Braidwood family. However, he was unable to agree to the demands finally made clear by the Braidwood family which included a lengthy training period and the promise to take one of their instructors back with him to the United States. With the open invitation to the Paris school, Gallaudet decided to travel to France. Yet, he was unable to leave for several months due to the "unsettled state" of politics in France and the winter weather.

On his arrival at the Deaf school in Paris in March 1816, Gallaudet was warmly welcomed. He stayed on for over four months, initially being instructed by Sicard and observing various classes. Eventually, Gallaudet spent most of his time being tutored in sign by ***Laurent Clerc***. While Gallaudet clearly had limited exposure to the oral methods of the education of Deaf students, he seemed to have concluded that "the methods of Épée as matured by the Abbé Sicard were of a higher nature, and capable of more extensive usefulness inasmuch as they could not only benefit the largest number of deaf and dumb but actually provided for the gradual and thorough evolution and discipline of all the intellectual powers." (Barnard, 1852, pg. 89)

From Paris, Gallaudet wrote to ***Alice Cogswell***:

*"I want very much to go back to Hartford, and to begin to instruct you and the other deaf and dumb children...I must learn all that Abbé Sicard can teach me. Then I shall be able to teach you in the best way. I have seen the Abbé Sicard and **Massieu** and **Clerc**, two of his scholars. In the little book which I send you, you will see their pictures. When you write me again, tell me what you think of them. Do you think you can learn the French alphabet on the fingers?[22] Try. Perhaps it will be the one that I shall use. The school for the Deaf and Dumb here is a very large building of stone. In front of it is a large yard, and behind it a fine garden. There are nearly ninety scholars, boys and girls...In the room are a number of large blackboards on which the scholars write with chalk. I wrote on these boards and talked with the boys. They understood*

*me very well....You must write me long letters. I put your last letter into French and showed it to **Clerc**. He loved to read it....I shall remember what you wished me in your last letter to give the deaf and dumb scholars--your love."* ***Lane*** *(1984)*

Gallaudet and ***Cogswell*** © ***Nancy Rourke*** 2010

At some point, a homesick Gallaudet, perhaps frustrated with his lack of progress in signing and educational knowledge, decided that he needed to have a Deaf teacher accompany him back to the United States, an idea he had rejected in England. In ***Clerc***, he saw one skilled in signing, teaching and a talented and accomplished individual with whom he got along. Gallaudet may have also chosen ***Clerc*** because he needed someone with experience as a "demonstration student" for convincing other Americans about the educability of Deaf people. Now thirty years old, ***Clerc***, who had previously been denied the opportunity to help set up a school in Russia, agreed to commit to a period of three years to help establish the first school for the Deaf in the United States. ***Clerc*** still left with mix feelings " I don't want to leave, but I think I have to" (Hartig, 2006, pg.72)

On June 18th Gallaudet left France returning to the United States "with my friend, ***Clerc***" (Barnard, 1850).[23] The historical journey was described by Jack Gannon (1981):

*"The wind billowed, filling the sails. The rigging snapped taut as the little wooden ship, the Mary Augusta, alternately floundering and plowing the seas of the Atlantic Ocean, made its way westward to the city of New York...Four of the passengers were Americas and the other two were Frenchmen, one whom, **Laurent Clerc**, was travelling with one of the Americans---the Reverend Thomas H. Gallaudet. In the beginning of the voyage, 30 year old **Laurent Clerc**...knew little English, and so he spent much of his time on the crossing learning the language from Gallaudet. In return, he taught Gallaudet the language of signs. He kept a diary of the trip, which lasted 52 days because of frequent calms and headwinds."*

(Left to right): Thomas Gallaudet 1816,
Laurent Clerc 1816 © ***Nancy Rourke*** 2011

On board the ship, ***Clerc***'s diary shows his practicing of English, his learning of American customs. He continued to tutor Gallaudet in signing and discussions of the French method of education of Deaf students.

Notes from ***Laurent Clerc***'s Diary on his voyage to America:[24]

Friday, June the 21st. I was up at eight o'clock...After breakfast, M. Gallaudet desiring to encourage me to learn good English, suggested to me the thought of writing this journal, and it is in consequence of his advice that I do it...I was obliged, every moment, to seek in my dictionary the words which I did not understand...When I had finished my first day, I presented it to M. Gallaudet, praying him to correct it. He did it with his ordinary kindness. Saturday, June the 22nd. The weather being fair, I passed all morning upon deck to write my diary of the preceding days, and all the evening to talk with M. Gallaudet, who, at my request, gave me the description of an American dinner, of a marriage, and the manners and customs of the inhabitants of that country...
*(Later,) M. Gallaudet made me acquainted with the different pieces of American money and with the value of each, and after supper he related to me the history, or rather he gave me by signs, the description of the manner in which the seamen make the passengers pay their tribute to Neptune...His account amused me much and excited my laughter a great deal... Thursday, June 27th...I talked with M. Gallaudet who spoke to me of the American deaf and dumb, and especially of Miss **Alice**..."*

The First American School: First American Generation

After arriving in America, Thomas Gallaudet and ***Laurent Clerc***'s continued their travels in New England to gather funds for the establishment of the school in Hartford. With the support of a number of philanthropists, the American School for the Deaf[25] opened on April 17, 1817.[26]

'Same' © ***Nancy Rourke*** 2011

Among the first class of seven students was ***Alice Cogswell*** and ***John Brewster Jr.***, a fifty one year old portrait painter. Others from this first class, ***Abigail Dillingham*** (from a Deaf family), ***George Henry Loring***, and ***Wilson Whiton*** eventually became instructors themselves. By the end of the first year, with Gallaudet as principal and both ***Clerc*** and Gallaudet teaching, the number of students rose to thirty-three. This number included ***Sophie Fowler***, the future Mrs. Gallaudet and ***Elizabeth Boardman***, the future Mrs. Clerc as well as ***Levi Backus***. ***Backus*** became a teacher as well as a well-respected newspaper editor.

At the school, ***Clerc*** and Gallaudet taught using modified French signing with the one handed alphabet. There were no formal signing classes for the students as they were expected to adapt their home-signs and become fluent through exposure and interaction. In 1818, just a year after the school opened, ***Laurent Clerc*** noted that a large number of students were coming from Martha's Vineyard, a small island off the coast of Massachusetts, with a fully developed sign language (Rées, 1999). Thus, certain students coming from Martha's Vineyard and others from Deaf families brought American signing traditions, which in turn, influenced the signing initially used by ***Clerc*** and Gallaudet in the classroom.

Within two years, the school became government supported with permanent funding available from the Connecticut Legislature. Thus, the American school became a model for other states in terms of both its operating structure and its method of teaching Deaf students.

While teaching at the Hartford school, ***Clerc*** and Gallaudet worked to help set up other state schools for the Deaf (including NY in 1818; Pennsylvania in 1820 and Kentucky in 1823).[27] A significant number of teachers were either trained at the Hartford school or had been students there themselves.

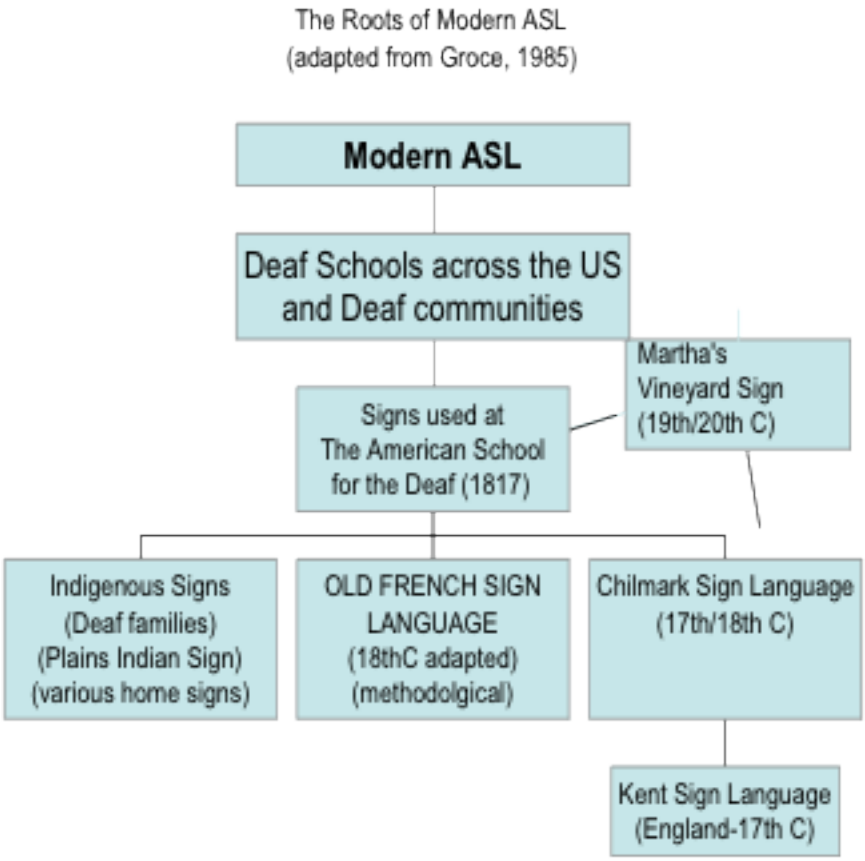
By 1820, ***Clerc***'s contract of three years in America had passed. He had married an American Deaf woman, and was offered an extended contract with a salary increase. While ***Clerc*** returned to France to visit, he had made the United States his new home. He settled in America and influenced the first generations of Deaf Americans, many of who went on to teach or establish other Deaf schools in the United States. Thus, ***Laurent Clerc*** became our immigrant ancestor, arriving from France and settling in the United States.

Meanwhile Back on Martha's Vineyard

The number of Deaf people being born on Martha's Vineyard steadily increased with each generation after ***Jonathan Lambert***'s arrival. The Deaf population peaked in 1854 with 1 in 25 in the area of Chilmark being born Deaf.[28] Primarily a fishing and farming area that remained cut off from the mainland until the

1900s, Deaf and Hearing islanders participated in community events with ease and married each other as communication was not a barrier. While only 20% of Deaf mainlanders had Hearing spouses, 65% of Deaf people on Martha's Vineyard had a Hearing spouse. In addition, Hearing people on the island had a distinctly different view of Deaf people. Deaf people were not thought of as a group, but as individuals. When pressed, one elderly islander who was interviewed reportedly said "oh, those people weren't handicapped. They were just deaf" (Groce, 1985, p. 5).

Because of the large number of Deaf children on the island and the growing importance of education, a significant number of these Deaf children were sent to the American School for the Deaf in Hartford beginning in the 1800s. Since the sign language used by these children had developed over several generations and a large number attended the school, Martha's Vineyard Sign Language (MVSL) impacted the signing that was used at Hartford.



What Martha's Vineyard shows us is a different perspective toward Deaf people than the perspective and the place of Deaf people in a community as compared to most cultures. The early generation of Deaf students educated at ASD returned to the island often with greater literacy skills than their Hearing neighbors. It was reported that Deaf islanders had been asked by Hearing neighbors to explain newspaper articles and legal documents.

While Deaf people in Paris and in Hartford began to form signing Deaf communities as an extension of the Deaf schools, Deaf people in Martha's Vineyard apparently did not form a separate community. And, in fact, it has been noted that many Deaf islanders who did attend the American School were known to loose contact with their schoolmates once they returned to the island. Their home community, made up of Deaf and Hearing neighbors and family members who grew up signing and interacting, was similar to any other bilingual community.

Thus, Martha's Vineyard holds a special place in the history of Deaf people in America. It is a place where we are given an alterative view of how Deaf people can be members of a community. It is a unique place where Hearing people related to Deaf people as fully functioning individuals. It is a place where a signed language, indigenous to America was created and, along with the sign language brought by ***Clerc***, has influenced our American Sign Language used across the United States today.

"A knowledge of history is extremely useful; it lays before our eyes the great picture of the generations that have preceded us; and in relating the events which passed in their time...it lays before us the precepts of the wise...of all ages..." ***Laurent Clerc***

Clerc and ***Cogswell*** © ***Nancy Rourke*** 2011[29]

Endnotes

1. While some believe Aristotle has been mistranslated (see Bender, 1981), it has long been assumed that Aristotle's assertion was that hearing and speech were physically connected by the same nerve, and therefore, that one who could not speak could not reason.
2. See a filmed performance of the Blue Ribbon Ceremony under **Deaf Theatre: Sample Performance Works in this Project**.
3. ***Harry C. Lang*** (2007) notes some mention of Native American Deaf individuals in historical documents from the early seventeenth century.
4. These factors include the geographical isolation of those living in the community, tendencies to marry into a small gene pool with recessive deafness. Many who immigrated to the island had family who had ancestors from Kentish Weald, an isolated area in England where several families

apparently carried the recessive deaf gene and where there were reports of sign language use in that community (Groce, 1985).

5. See http://history.vineyard.net/b2wtres.htm#Lambert (accessed 8/13/11) and Groce (1985).
6. For a more complete version of this text, see **English Literature: Sample Works in this Project**.
7. The age of enlightenment, also known as the age of reason, occurred from the late 1600s until 1789 in France and the newly established United States. It promoted the belief in human progress through education, human rights, social reforms and provoked questions concerning religion, science, and government.
8. See an artistic rendering of ***de Fay***'s life under **Overview: Sample Works in this Project**).
9. A demonstration student was one who was presented to the public to show the success of the educational methods used by various programs/teachers.
10. See a more complete text of ***Desloges***' work under **English Literature: Sample Works in this Project**.
11. See a filmed version of this folktale under **Overview: Sample Works in this Project**.
12. Also known as Institut National des Jeune Sourds-Muets, the Royal Institute for the Deaf, and later called the "Institu St. Jacques".
13. Home signs are communicative gestures which develop between a Deaf person or persons for interaction often taking place in homes where there is not a fluent adult user of a standard signed language.
14. Lane (1984) mentions that during Épée's time demonstration students memorized answers to specific planned questions. In contrast, Sicard let his demonstration students spontaneously answer questions from an audience.
15. The sculptor, ***M. de Seine***, had 10 busts shown at the 1793 Salon in Paris, including one of the Abbé de l'Épée. The painter, ***Paul Grégoire***, exhibted his work at the Salon of 1814 (Mirzoeff, 1995).
16. One exception to this was the mention of a female student named ***Le Sueur*** who took the lead by being the first student to sign a petition to the government to free Sicard (who had been imprisoned).
17. Mirzoeff (1995) translates this as "Recognition is the memory of the heart," but the English phrase most associated with ***Massieu*** is "Gratitude is the memory of the heart."
18. Mirozoff (1995) reprints and describes the paintings and the resulting reactions in much detail. He includes a note that the student, Grivel, also had a record of bad behavior. ***Clerc*** seemed aware of the earlier portrait as he additionally suggested to the artist he be shown writing something on the backboard in honor of Épée and Sicard.
19. See an explanation of Braidwood's short-lived Cobbs School under **Overview: Sample Works in this Project**.
20. See **Overview: Sample Works in this Project** for an artistic rendering of this meeting as well as an ASL storytelling version of it.
21. Sicard's "Course of Instruction for a Person Born Deaf" published in 1800.
22. By this time ***Alice*** had learned the British two-handed alphabet from Lydia Huntley Sigourney.
23. See **Overview: Sample Works in this Project** for the folktale of the Voyage of ***Clerc*** and ***Gallaudet***.
24. From http://www.disabilitymuseum.org/dhm/lib/detail.html?id=687&&page=1 accessed 8/15/11.
25. The Connecticut Asylum for the Education of Deaf and Dumb persons was the name of the school for the first year. ***Lang*** (2004) notes that "the first group of deaf students had also taken issue with the word 'Aslyum,' but the board saw a benefit in keeping the term--they believed it would make it easier to request funds" (p. 4)
26. When working to get further government support, the name was changed to the American Asylum in order to show that students educated there were from a number of New England states. While today the school is known as ASD, it has also been referred to as "Old Hartford" or the Hartford school.
27. See **Overview: Timeline in this Project** for a map pinpointing the Deaf Schools which
28. Groce (1985) notes that almost all the island residents at this time, unknowingly, had at least two related ancestors. See Lane, Pillard, and ***Hedberg*** (2011) for more information on ancestry on Martha's Vineyard.

29. Artist ***Nancy Rourke*** replaces the iconic image of Thomas Gallaudet, teaching ***Alice Cogswell*** the first fingerspelled letter of her name, with ***Laurent Clerc*** teaching her the fingerspelled letter of their last names. In the background is the first building that housed the American School for the Deaf which symbolizes the origin American Sign Language and Deaf in the US.