



# TDHHC Connections

## Tyler Deaf and Hard of Hearing Center

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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.

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## “The History of Sign Language” Series - Part 3 of 5

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

### Sign Blossoming in the New World

In 1620, the exact same year that Bonnet was publishing the first book on sign language, the Mayflower landed at Cape Cod, Massachusetts. This was the first of many waves of colonists sailing to the New World in search of a better life. Among the many immigrants that hopped on ships bound for America was a group of settlers originally from Kent county England. They arrived in Massachusetts in the 1690s, bringing with them unique genetics that cause hereditary deafness. The result was Martha's Vineyard Sign Language.

Martha's Vineyard is an island off the southeastern coast of Massachusetts, and it is a historically significant location for the development of sign. Thanks to the unique genetic makeup of the island's progenitors, Martha's Vineyard was home to the largest deaf population on the continent. These deaf islanders created one of the most highly developed signing systems in history, perhaps based on a language used in Kent. Everyone on Martha's Vineyard knew the signs and used them regularly to communicate with friends, family, and neighbors. Because even hearing members of this community used sign language, Martha's Vineyard was one of the few societies in the world where deaf and hearing individuals were fully integrated together in all social, civic, and religious activities in the mid-1700s.

Aside from the famous Martha's Vineyard sign, other versions of sign language began popping up around America wherever deaf populations existed. By the nineteenth century, church census data reported that approximately 800 deaf children were living in the United States. But sign language was still far from standardized and not even close to being recognized as an official language. It wasn't until decades later that American deaf education would take a large and decisive step forward

### The Great Gallaudet

Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet was a Yale graduate and an ordained clergyman in Hartford, Connecticut. He dreamed of becoming a professional minister, but his path took a different turn in 1814 when he met nine-year-old Alice Cogswell.



Thomas H. Gallaudet, the founder of the American School for the Deaf and the namesake of Gallaudet University. She was the deaf daughter of Gallaudet's neighbor Dr. Mason Fitch Cogswell. Gallaudet befriended Alice when he saw that the other children weren't playing with her, and he began teaching her the names of objects by drawing pictures and words in the dirt. Right from the beginning of their friendship, Gallaudet was amazed by Alice's intelligence, personality, and enthusiasm to learn.

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He didn't realize it at the time, but this relationship with this little girl was going to change Gallaudet's life forever—and the lives of millions of future deaf Americans too.

Dr. Cogswell was delighted to see his daughter's progress and convinced Gallaudet that he should learn more about educating deaf children. Perhaps even start a school. As a prominent member of Connecticut society, Dr. Cogswell used his connections to raise enough money to send Gallaudet to Europe to study established methods of deaf education. The funds were raised in just one afternoon, and soon Gallaudet was on a ship bound for England.

He hoped to be trained at one of the Braidwood schools for the deaf in England and Scotland, but the Braidwoods turned out to be far from welcoming. They weren't in a hurry to give up their family sign and lip-reading methods without compensation. And Gallaudet wasn't convinced their teaching methods were the best option for educating deaf children anyway.

A discouraged Gallaudet parted ways with the Braidwoods, but shortly thereafter he met Abbe Roch-Ambroise Curcurren Sicard, l'Eppe's successor at the Paris school for the deaf. Sicard just happened to be visiting England during Gallaudet's trip and was giving lectures on deaf education along with two of his deaf assistants, Jean Massieu and Laurent Clerc. When Gallaudet introduced himself and explained his vision of establishing a school for the deaf in America, Sicard gladly invited him back to Paris to learn the French method of deaf education.

Gallaudet liked what he saw in Paris. He studied French sign with great enthusiasm, but he was quickly running out of money and needed to return home. Unsure if he could really start an American school all on his own, Gallaudet convinced the young Laurent Clerc to return with him to Hartford so they could start the school together. During the long sea voyage across the Atlantic, Gallaudet taught Clerc English and Clerc taught Gallaudet how to sign.



TMAD meets at the Tyler Area Senior Citizens Association (TASCA) building last month



# OCTOBER



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2	3	4	5	6	7 
8	9 	10	11	12 Senior Citizens Luncheon Mercado's	13	14 FISHING TOURNAMENT
15	16	17	18	19	20 	21 WORKSHOP
22	23	24	25	26	27	28 
29	30	31 Happy Halloween 				

**October 7:** Deaf Ladies' Day: Picnic at the Zoo at Caldwell Zoo (2203 West Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Tyler, TX) from 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM. Bring a potluck dish, your own drink, and \$10 for admission to the zoo. Mica and Susie will provide cold chicken, paper goods, and ice. RSVP: Mica (bakermj42@gmail.com) or Susie (suzygrona@gmail.com).

**October 7:** Coffee Chat 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM at Starbucks in Tyler (by Hobby Lobby and Dairy Queen)

**October 9:** Columbus Day

**October 12:** Senior Citizens Luncheon 11:00 AM at Mercado's (2214 W SW Loop 323, Tyler, TX)

**October 14:** TMAD Fishing Tournament at Hideaway Marina Clubhouse from 12:00 PM – 5:00 PM. Members \$5; non-members \$8; kids \$3.

**October 20:** Coffee Chat 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM at Whataburger (311 S Main St., Lindale, TX)

**October 21:** "SSA Workshop coming up on October 21st from 12PM to 4PM at Tyler Junior College – West Campus. Bring your own lunch. Flyers will be sent out soon. Mark your calendar and stay tuned!" –Teresa Dell, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Access Specialist

**October 28:** TJC Apache Signers Pre-game Performance of National Anthem and Alma Mater at Rose Stadium Homecoming Football Game at 2:30 PM

**October 31:** Halloween

## Did You Know?

Sue Thomas is an American deaf woman who became the first person to work as an undercover specialist doing lipreading of suspects for the FBI.

*Please email your FAVORITE RECIPES to us at: [coordinator@tdhnc.org](mailto:coordinator@tdhnc.org). We will be collecting those for a cookbook fundraiser to support the East Texas Deaf Festival in 2019. Thank you!*



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Thank you!