

Laurent Clerc

1785 - 1869

“First Deaf Teacher in America”

Laurent Clerc deserves much more recognition than what had been given to him. He was pivotal as a deaf teacher and instrumental to the success of deaf education in America during the 19th Century. He left Paris, giving up his home and a teaching position at a deaf school to come to America with Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet.

Clerc presented the importance of deaf education to the American public and helped raised funds to establish the American school for the Deaf. Throughout most of his life, Clerc promoted the American Sign Language model of education while being a deaf educator and mentor to many teachers of the deaf. It is estimated that approximately 21 schools for the deaf have been established in North America reflecting Clerc's teaching model.

Clerc's marriage to a former deaf student, Elizabeth Boardman, is said to be the first recorded deaf-deaf marriage in the United States.