

Deaf Culture Question of the Week - September 29 - October 3

What was the original name for Gallaudet University (College)?

- a) Deaf and Dumb College
- b) National College for Deaf-Mutes
- c) National College for the Deaf and Dumb
- d) Silent Students Asylum

Scroll down for the answer

Answer: "c" **National College for the Deaf and Dumb** - In 1856 philanthropist and United States Postmaster General Amos Kendall became aware of several deaf and blind children in Washington DC who were not receiving proper care. Kendall had the courts declare the children to be his wards, and donated two acres of his land to establish housing and a school for them. This became known as **The Columbia Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb and the Blind** and was incorporated in 1857. In 1864 a college at this site was named "**the National College for the Deaf and Dumb**" in the original legislation signed by Abraham Lincoln. In 1865 the College name changed to **the National Deaf-Mute College**. In 1894 the College is renamed **Gallaudet College** in honor of the Rev. Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet. In 1986 Gallaudet College became **Gallaudet University** when President Ronald Reagan signed the Education of the Deaf Act (Public Law 99-371).

(Source: Check out <http://www.gallaudet.edu/x234.xml> for this and other interesting information about the history of Gallaudet University)

Note: In the 1800's the word "dumb" meant "non-speaking" similar to the meaning of the word "mute". The word "dumb" did not mean as it does today in common usage "unintelligent or stupid". It wouldn't make much sense to create a college for "stupid people". This example shows how word meanings change over time. Of course today use of the words "dumb" or "mute" are not appropriate when referring to people who are deaf. For an explanation of the meaning of the word "dumb" go to:

<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/dumb>