

Deaf Culture Question of the Week – September 8-12, 2008

Which notable person in the history of deaf education was opposed to the use of sign language but ironically his last words to his deaf wife were uttered using fingerspelling and signs?

- a. Horace Mann – Considered the founder of Statewide Public Education Systems
- b. Laurent Clerc – Co-founder of the first state sponsored School for the Deaf in the United States
- c. Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet – Co-founder with Laurent Clerc of the first state sponsored School for the Deaf in the United States
- d. Alexander Graham Bell – Credited with the invention of the telephone and proponent of oral education

Do you know? Scroll down to find the answer.

Answer: “d” Alexander Graham Bell. Although he was strongly opposed to the use of sign language and wanted sign language banned from education of deaf students, ironically his last words to his deaf wife, Mabel, were uttered using fingerspelling and signs when he no longer had the physical capacity to speak.

A.G. Bell died signing. [Bruce, R. V. (1990). Alexander Bell and the Conquest of Solitude, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press].
Read more about A. G. Bell's views on sign language and education of deaf students at the Through Deaf Eyes Website:

http://www.pbs.org/weta/throughdeafeyes/deaflife/bell_nad.html

Through Deaf Eyes is an excellent educational resource on the history and culture of Deaf people.