

# Hartford Area Sites

*Important to the*

## History of Deaf Education

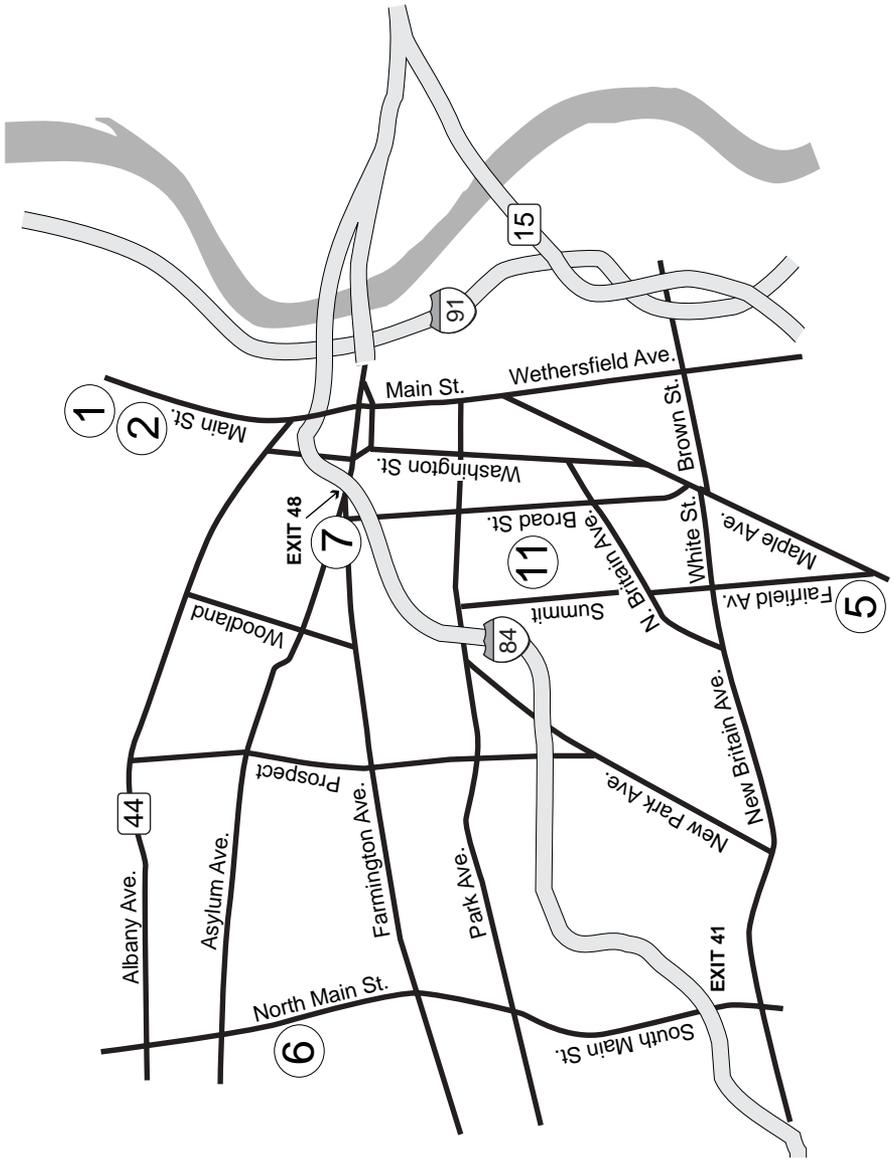


Photo by Spencer Sloan

# Greater Hartford

A detailed map of Downtown Hartford appears on the Inside Back Cover

- 1. Spring Grove Cemetery
  - 2. Old North Cemetery
  - 5. Cedar Hill Cemetery
  - 6. American School for the Deaf
  - 11. Trinity College
- (Other locations listed on close-up map of central Hartford, second to last page)



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# American School for the Deaf

## A Brief History

In 1807, a prominent Hartford physician, Mason Fitch Cogswell, wanted to do something for his two-year-old daughter, Alice, after she became deaf from illness. Dr. Cogswell was a man of noble character and compassionate nature and in seeking some way to alleviate his daughter's condition, he became interested in the cause of the deaf in general. He secured the aid of a number of friends, men who were prominent in Hartford. In 1812, a survey was made which showed there were 84 deaf persons in the state of Connecticut, none of whom had received any education. On this basis, it was estimated there were at least 400 deaf persons in New England, and 2000 in the United States. It was therefore decided to establish a school to teach the deaf of this country.

On April 13, 1815 nine prominent men met with Doctor Cogswell to take steps toward establishing a school. This would take money. They decided to canvass Hartford, then a bustling town of 6000 people. Imagine how delighted the men were when they were able to collect \$2133 from the townspeople in one day.

At the meeting, it was decided to send a representative to England for the purpose of learning the methods of teaching the deaf. No one in the United States knew enough to direct a school. This mission was offered to Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, who accepted the task.

No better choice could have been made. Mr. Gallaudet was a graduate of Yale College and of Andover Theological Seminary. He had become deeply interested in the deaf through observing Alice Cogswell as she played with her young relatives. Mr. Gallaudet had made some progress in teaching her written words. By nature he was ideally suited for the task which lay ahead, being possessed of those qualities of patience, gentleness and understanding, as well as a brilliant intellect and a zeal to serve those in need of assistance.

In England, Gallaudet met with little success, as the Braidwood School was operated for profit and those in charge were reluctant to divulge their methods. Fortunately, he was invited to Paris by the Abbé

Sicard, head of the French school for the deaf, and spent about seven months studying the teaching methods in use there.

When Gallaudet returned to the United States, he brought with him a brilliant young Frenchman, Laurent Clerc, who had been deafened in infancy. Educated by the Abbé Sicard, he had become an instructor at the Paris school. Clerc would prove to be invaluable in establishing the new school in America.

It took 52 days to reach America by ship. During the voyage, Clerc taught Gallaudet to sign and fingerspell; in turn, Gallaudet taught Clerc English. After their return, Gallaudet and Clerc spent some months visiting New England cities to build support and interest in the new school. Dr. Cogswell had continued his organizing efforts, obtaining incorporation in May, 1816, arranging for space and continuing fundraising efforts. When the Connecticut General Assembly appropriated \$5000 to help the school, it became the first instance of state aid to special education in the history of the United States.

The school originally was named the Connecticut Asylum at Hartford for the Instruction of Deaf and Dumb Persons. On April 15, 1817 it opened in the Old City Hotel on Main Street. Alice Cogswell was the first pupil. Gallaudet the first principal and Clerc the first teacher.

The school was successful from the start and grew rapidly. Pupils came from all over the country. In 1821, the school moved to what is now known as Asylum Hill and remained there for 100 years. At this time, Congress granted public lands to the school, the first instance of federal support for special education in the United States.

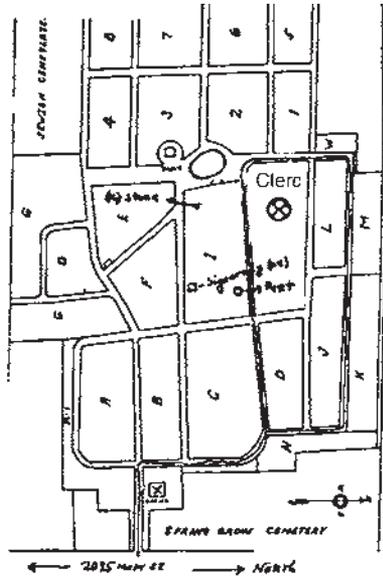
In 1921 the school moved to its present location at 139 North Main Street in West Hartford. A variety of education, outreach and support services are offered to students of all ages, both on campus and in other placements.

Each year, the American School for the Deaf observes Founders Day on the Friday preceding April 15 to honor Dr. Cogswell, Gallaudet and Clerc and their pioneering achievements.

# American School for the Deaf DEAF HERITAGE TRAIL

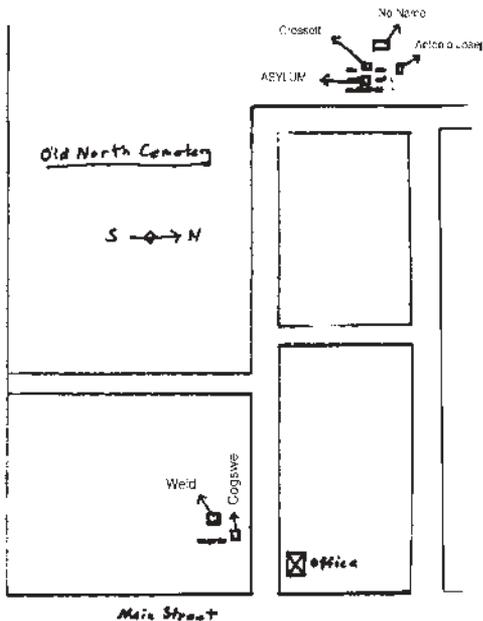
## Site 1: Spring Grove Cemetery (2035 Main Street, Hartford)

Here is the resting place of the Laurent Clerc family. Nearby are the plots of Collins and Edward Stone, the 4th and 5th principals of the school. Lydia Huntley Sigourney, the “sweet singer of Hartford,” and Alice Cosgwell’s first teacher (1814-1817) is also buried here.



## Site 2: Old North Cemetery (Main Street, Hartford)

Resting place of Dr. Mason Fitch Cogswell, father of Alice Cogswell, who also lies here. Also in this cemetery is a brownstone shaft with a pediment marked “Asylum.” Here is the resting place of 25 pupils of the school and one officer. The pupils’ names are inscribed on the four sides of the shaft, along with their dates of death and hometowns.





### **Site 3: First School at the Old City Hotel (Main & Gold St.)**

This is currently the location of the Bushnell Towers, and a bronze marker is at the corner of Main and Gold Streets denoting the school's location.

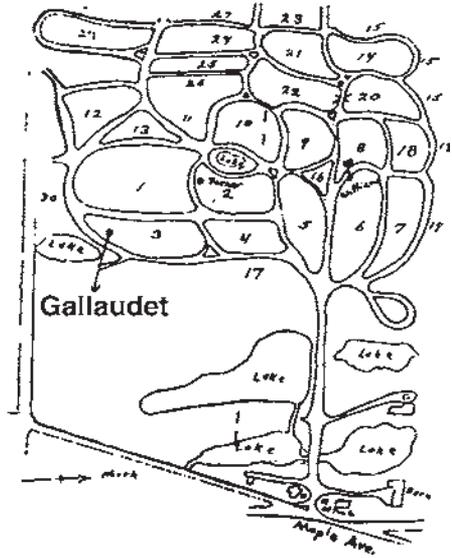
The school first opened in the Old City Hotel on Main Street on April 15, 1817 with three pupils and was called the "Connecticut Asylum at Hartford for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb Persons." Alice Cogswell was the first pupil. The oldest was John Brewster, age 51, who had never been to school, but who was a talented portrait artist. By the end of the week, seven students were in attendance. There were 33 students by the end of the year. Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet was the first Principal and Laurent Clerc the first teacher.

### **Site 4: Center Church (60 Gold Street)**

Here you will find a stained glass window honoring Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet. The window shows Christ healing a man who was so helpless as to be considered as dead. The church was founded by the first settlers of Connecticut, some of whom were related to Gallaudet. Thomas Hooker is buried here. Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet was a direct descendant on his mother's side from Hooker, the "founder of Connecticut" and pastor of Center Church. Gallaudet joined the church in 1812. To the north of the church is a historical marker describing the founding of Connecticut, and its early history.

**Site 5: Cedar Hill  
Cemetery - (453 Fairfield Av-  
enue, Hartford)**

The cemetery was designed by Jacob Weidenmann, who taught drawing at ASD (1861-1863), and who also designed Hartford's Bushnell Park. The Gallaudet family burial plot is here. Gallaudet, his sons, Edward Miner, first president of what is now Gallaudet University, and Thomas Gallaudet, first missionary for the Episcopal Church, also are here, as well as Gallaudet's wife Sophia, 16th pupil of the school and first matron at Kendall School, Washington, D.C.

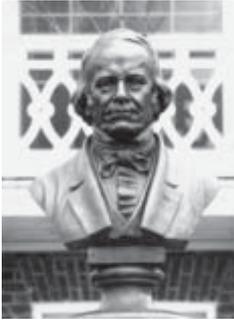


In this cemetery you will also find the graves of William W. Turner, third principal of ASD, and Job Williams, sixth principal.



**Site 6: American School for the Deaf  
(American School for the Deaf, 139  
North Main Street, West Hartford)  
Gallaudet and Alice Statue**

This beautiful bronze statue rests on a granite base and was made by Daniel Chester French when he was an old man, using the same molds that he used for the original statue in 1888 for Gallaudet College (now University) in Washington, D.C. It was dedicated during the National Association of the Deaf convention and Second Biennial Reunion of the ASD Alumni Association during the weekend of September 5-7, 1925.



### **Clerc Bust**

The bust was erected at the “Old Hartford” about 1873, and was moved to West Hartford when the school moved in 1921.

### **Site 7: Founders Memorial Gallaudet Statue**

(Intersection of Cogswell Street, Asylum Avenue and Farmington Avenue)  
(See photo on front cover)

The giant hands make the sign for the “light” which Gallaudet brought to all deaf people through education. This monument, designed by Frances Wadsworth, was unveiled on April 18, 1953. It was sponsored by deaf people through the New England Gallaudet Association of the Deaf.

The figure of a girl, while based on Alice Cogswell, is intended to represent all deaf children in America, who have received an education thanks to the pioneering work done in Hartford.

### **Site 8: The Old Hartford School (690 Asylum Street)**

In the summer of 1818, this land (of about 7 acres) was purchased from Jared Scarborough for \$8600. The construction of the school was completed in the spring of 1821, at a cost of \$24,282. The site is now occupied by The Hartford Insurance Company, .

On this site from 1821 to 1921, the school became one of the landmarks of the city of Hartford. Many notable people were visitors here, among them Presidents Andrew Jackson and Martin Van Buren. Charles Dickens, General LaFayette, and Henry Clay were also visitors. Clay was instrumental in securing the grant from the federal government of 23,000 acres of land in Alabama. These lands were sold to provide funds for the development of the school. This marks the first use of federal funds in support of education.

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## Additional Sites

The following sites are also related to the school's history.

### Site 9: Mason Fitch Cogswell House and Office - Prospect Street

Doctor Mason Fitch Cogswell, whose daughter Alice was the inspiration for the founding of the school, resided at Number 8 Prospect (now Number 38 Prospect) and had his medical office at Number 9 Prospect Street. An earlier record, the 1799 Business Directory, lists Doctor Cogswell's house as "Main Street, East Side, South of the State House, with an office in a house north of John Chenevard." The sites where both Dr. Cogswell's house and office stood are now occupied by Traveler's Insurance.

It was here that young Thomas Gallaudet first took notice of Alice Cogswell, playing in her parents yard, apart from the other children.

### Site 10: Second School on Prospect Street

The house here was bought from Thomas Day (an attorney) at the cost of \$8200. Tuition, room and board cost \$200 from 1817 until 1821, \$150 from 1822 to 1825, \$115 from 1826 to 1834 and only \$100 from 1835 until 1856.

Originally, the Day House was number 15 Prospect Street. Since the renumbering of the street, this house would have been at number 54.

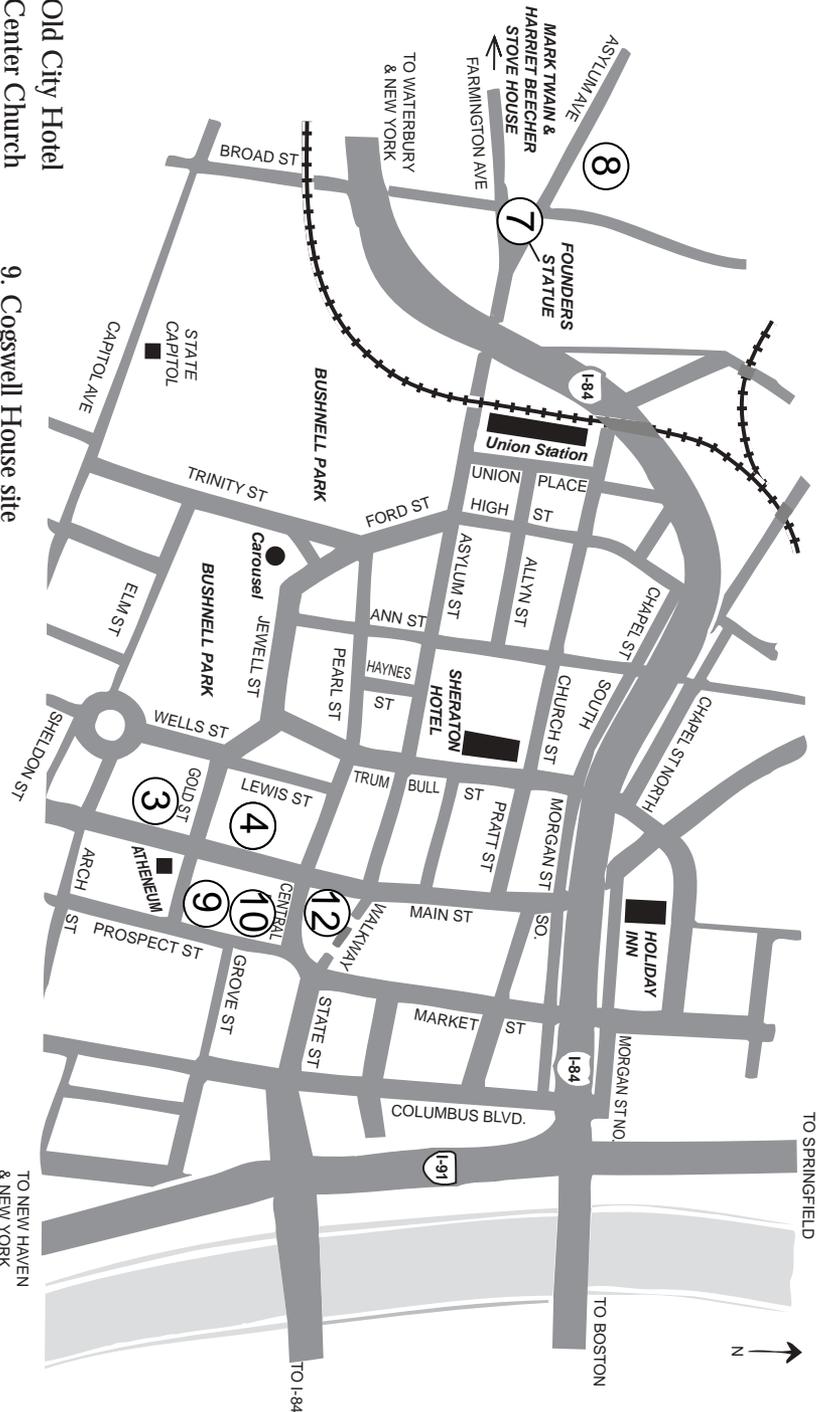
### Site 11: Trinity Chapel, Trinity College

The Trinity College Chapel has a pew end which incorporates a carved memorial to Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet. It is entitled the League for the Hard of Hearing pew, and was dedicated in 1939. It shows him teaching a deaf child about God. Sons of T.H. Gallaudet and of Laurent Clerc were graduates of Trinity College.

**Site 12: Old State House (Corner of Main and State Streets)**

It was in the Old State House that the incorporation papers establishing the American Asylum for the Deaf at Hartford were approved by the Connecticut Legislature. The Thomas Hooker statue is on the west side of the building.

In the Pocket Register for the City of Hartford (1825), the “Reception of General LaFayette in the City of Hartford” is recorded. After lunch General Lafayette went into the east yard of the State House where 800 children stood. “At the upper section of the yard, the Deaf... Pupils of the Asylum were stationed, wearing badges, with this inscription: ‘We feel what our country expresses.’”



# Downtown Hartford



## **American School for the Deaf**

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[www.asd-1817.org](http://www.asd-1817.org)

This booklet was prepared and printed by the students and staff of the American School for the Deaf. The text is based upon the 1938 Biennial Report of ASD. Special thanks to Wilson Faude of the Old State House, Rev. J. Alan McLean of Center Church, David Halberg of ASD, Gary Wait of ASD and the Connecticut Historical Society.