



# The Little Acorn



The Official Newsletter of the  
*USD Alumni Association*

Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind  
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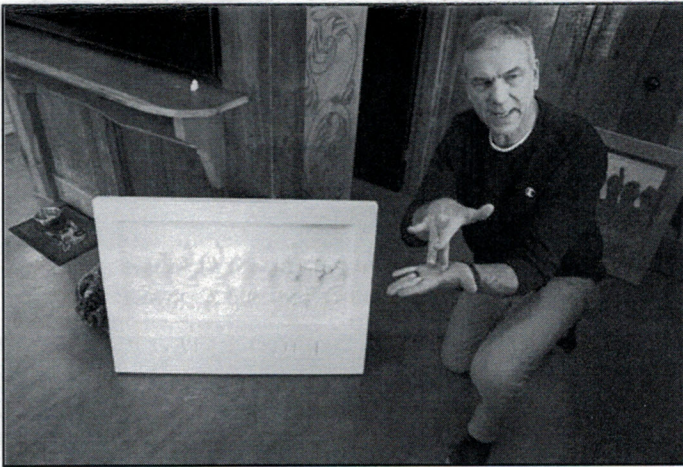
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**[Editor's note: Gary McLawhorn sent me the following article about Steven Peterson, a deaf artist of Duluth, Minnesota, who was instrumental in creating a plaque to honor Thomas Gallaudet. It was published May 1, 2022 in the Duluth News Tribune and permission to re-print this article is still pending by the newspaper: [www.duluthnewstribune.com](http://www.duluthnewstribune.com)]**

## Duluth artist creates plaque to honor Deaf school founder

Steven Peterson helped create a plaque to honor the founder of the American School for the Deaf in West Hartford, Connecticut.



Artist Steven Peterson signs his answer to a question as he explains part of the process he took while designing a bronze plaque to honor Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, the founder of the American School for the Deaf, during an interview at his home in Duluth Township on April 27.

Jed Carlson / Superior Telegram

DULUTH – Deaf artist Steven Peterson likes a challenge. The former art teacher has been working with his hands for almost all of his life to create everything from wood-carved gargoyles to carved wooden lamps that sit inside his Duluth Township home.

“When someone asks, can you make this thing? I’m usually like sure, especially if it

challenges me,” Peterson said. “I can usually kind of figure it out.”

Peterson recently traveled to West Hartford, Connecticut to see the results of his latest challenging project placed in front of the American School for the Deaf. Back in 2020, Peterson was tasked with recreating a fingerspelling sculpture which spells out Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, the co-founder of the school and father of Deaf education, on the side of a recently restored monument honoring Gallaudet.

“Gallaudet set up the American School for the Deaf and helped bring sign language to the U.S.” said Peterson. “We’re able to communicate here today thanks to his work. To be part of honoring that, of his work to spread sign language throughout the country, is really something.”

Gallaudet is known for his work to bring Deaf education to the U.S. He worked with a French teacher, Laurent Clerc, to establish the ASD in the early 1800s in Hartford. To honor his work, the school originally had a monument erected in front of the third ASD campus in 1854, three years after Gallaudet’s death. The monument also featured the fingerspelling of Gallaudet’s name. It stood there for 65 years, but broke into pieces when it was transported to the school’s fourth and current location in West Hartford.

“It fell into pieces during transport, so it was stored in various places around our current campus for just about 100 years,” said Jeff Bravin, superintendent and executive director of the ASD. “We’d talked a bit about restoration, but weren’t able to afford it until one of our alumnus made a very generous gift, along with a few other alumni’s gifts.”

Bravin connected with restoration artist Francis Miller to put the pieces of the monument together. The final piece left was the Gallaudet hand shape sculpture. All that was left of it was a corner piece that showed the final E and T letters. There was also a unclear photo. Bravin wanted to work with a deaf artist to recreate the piece for the newly restored monument.