The Structure and Place of the ASL Signing Community in the Mid-nineteenth Century: The Hartford Gatherings of 1850 and 1854

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Article

The Structure and Place of the ASL Signing Community in the Mid-Nineteenth Century: The Hartford Gatherings of 1850 and 1854

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Abstract: In the early decades of the 19th century, the deaf population in the eastern US and Canada was distributed across a vast area. After the 1817 founding of the American School for the Deaf (ASD) in Hartford, CT and the subsequent establishment of schools for the deaf in New York City (NYSD), Philadelphia, and many other US states, hundreds of deaf students called these schools home for several years. After leaving school, the early American Deaf community faced a challenge: How would the community maintain its social and linguistic ties across a vast geographical area once community members had dispersed to their hometowns? In this paper we analyze the attendance registries of two large gatherings of deaf individuals in Hartford in the years 1850 and 1854. These were among the largest and earliest known gatherings of deaf adults. The demographic data included in these registries open a window onto the evolving American Deaf community of the mid-19th century. Our analyses of the attendees' school affiliations, ages, and marital status show that the signing community that had taken root among students at schools in Hartford and New York persisted among the adult graduates of those schools in towns across the northeastern US. We compare the places of residence of ASD and NYSD alumni in 1850 and 1854 to their hometowns when they first enrolled at school. Our comparisons suggest the mid-19th-century signing community had become more urban; it was centered to a greater extent in populous cities such as New York, Boston, and Hartford than had been true when the attendees had enrolled in school. We consider how the geography of deafness in the 19th century might inform our understanding of the sources of regional variation in ASL. We also consider how early cross-regional interactions may have inhibited such regional variation.

Keywords: deaf history; american deaf community; American Sign Language

1. Introduction

Quantifiable information about the 19th-century American Deaf community is rich and detailed, whereas linguistic data about American Sign Language (ASL) in the 19th century are sparse. Signed languages are unwritten languages, though notation systems have been proposed since the early 1960s (Stokoe 1960, Stokoe et al. 1965). This means that for sign languages such as ASL, *Língua Brasileira de Sinais* (Libras), *langue des signes française* (LSF), or British Sign Language (BSL) there are limited linguistic records that preceded the invention of film (see, e.g., Okrouhlíková 2021 for a review of sources depicting Czech Sign Language from the first half of the 19th century). Pictorial evidence of early manual alphabets is relatively rich, at minimum stretching back to the late 15th century, and has allowed for computational phylogenetic work on those systems (Power et al. 2020). Photographic evidence of ASL signs from the early 20th century, when paired with 19th-century dictionaries of LSF signs, supports etymological research on the origins of ASL signs (Supalla & Clark 2015). The same is true for Libras, which like ASL is historically linked to LSF (Berenz 2003, Campello 2020). Like most other deaf institutions in the 19th century, the *Instituto Imperial de Surdo-Mudos* (est. 1857 in Rio de Janeiro), Brazil's first school for the deaf, produced records describing its faculty, students, curriculum, and pedagogical approach, among many other details (e.g., Leite 1877 and da Gama 1875, which reproduced Pelissier's 1856 dictionary of LSF).

Even without linguistic evidence of earlier sign forms, linguists have used the tools of historical linguistics to make inferences about the histories and relationships of sign languages. The

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comparative method, when applied to the vocabularies of modern sign languages from, for example, the BSL- or LSF-influenced sign languages, may allow the reconstruction of earlier forms from which the modern signs of these languages developed. However, it is not clear that modern sign languages such as ASL or Libras should be considered, in the strictest sense, daughter languages of 19th-century LSF (Power 2022). Rather, the issue of how to conceptualize the development of such languages and their relationships to one another remains open to debate (Guerra Currie et al. 2002, Power & Meier 2023, Law et al., in press, Reagan 2021).

In contrast to the limited linguistic data available from the 19th century, we have rich demographic data on the communities of deaf people who used many of these sign languages. Schools for the deaf in the United States, and in many other countries, kept careful enrollment records and published annual reports in which they named the students in attendance and provided a variety of other identifying information that would now be considered privileged in the US (e.g., American School for the Deaf 1887, Peet 1854, Manchester School for the Deaf 1838). Throughout much of the 19th century, decennial US federal censuses enumerated all deaf persons and reported their name, sex, age, and place of residence. Genealogical records and vital records of births, marriages, and deaths are now readily accessible online. By cross-referencing these data sources, a picture can be drawn of the communities in which ASL arose, a picture of much greater granularity than is true of the emergence of any spoken language of which we are aware (cf., e.g., Trudgill et al. 2000 on New Zealand English). Scholars of creole languages have found extensive demographic data on the communities in which those languages developed (e.g., Arends 2008). But those data are not as detailed as the demographic data available on 19th-century deaf populations in the US and elsewhere.

Analyses of these demographic data can enrich our understanding of signing communities, such as the American Deaf community, and of the linguistic history of ASL. In a previous paper (Power & Meier 2023), we analyzed 1700 attendance records from the first enduring school for the deaf in the US, the American School for the Deaf (ASD) in Hartford, CT. Our analyses demonstrate that young children at ASD could not have driven the emergence of ASL in the way that young children at the Managua School apparently drove the emergence of Nicaraguan Sign Language (Senghas & Coppola 2001). The reason is simple: Children below age 8 were almost entirely absent from ASD in the period we examined, the school's first 50 years, 1817 to 1867. However, we presented evidence that young children could have played an important role in elaborating ASL at home, given the likely input they received there from parents or older siblings who had attended ASD. We also mapped the community of deaf individuals who used the sign language that emerged at ASD. Maps of the hometowns of the students who attended ASD reveal evidence for why ASL spans both the US and much of Canada. ASD drew students not only from many states in the US—students traveled to Hartford from Texas, southern Georgia, and even California—but also from the eastern provinces of Canada. Moreover, former ASD students would in some cases staff provincial schools for the deaf (Edwards 2012).

Power & Meier (2024) is a detailed historical demography of the deaf population on the island of Martha's Vineyard, which lies off the coast of southern Massachusetts. Some scholars have argued that the sign language of that community, Martha's Vineyard Sign Language (MVSL), was a crucial contributor to the early history of ASL (Groce 1985; Lane et al. 2000). However, our analyses of the demography of the deaf population on Martha's Vineyard suggest that MVSL was much younger than previously thought, dating only to 1785 rather than to 1692 (or even earlier in the County of Kent in England), as had been previously argued (Groce 1985); and that the language may have developed independently for only 40 years. Beginning in 1825, MVSL came into extensive contact with the early form of ASL that was then emerging in Hartford; it was in 1825 that the first three students, all women, journeyed from Martha's Vineyard to enroll at ASD. Rather than MVSL exerting significant influence on the emergence of ASL, it seems more likely, based on our analyses, that contact with ASL significantly impacted MVSL. For example, marriages between alumni of ASD brought deaf women to the island who would only have known ASL. The conclusions we draw from our demographic analyses are consistent with a linguistic analysis of the MVSL vocabulary that was

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remembered in the late 20th century by its last signers, all of whom were hearing (Orfila, in press). Analyses of their videorecorded signs provides significant evidence of contact with ASL and no strong evidence of vocabulary that could have come from a sign language in use in England, as had been suggested (Groce 1985; Nash 2015; Bahan & Nash 1995).

In this paper we report another source of demographic data on the 19th-century American Deaf community. Specifically, we analyze the attendance registries of two large gatherings of deaf individuals in Hartford in the years 1850 and 1854. These were among the largest and earliest known gatherings of deaf adults. Beginning in 1834, part of the deaf community in Paris held annual banquets to celebrate the founder of deaf education in France, the Abbé de l'Epée (Mottez 1993). Based on contemporaneous accounts of the meetings (e.g., Anonymous 1849), Hedberg and colleagues (2020) reported that 54 deaf men attended the first banquet. Deaf women were excluded from attending the meetings for nearly 50 years until 1883 (Mottez 1993). Compared to the banquets in Paris, the Hartford gatherings analyzed here were larger (deaf attendees in 1850: 210; 1854: 369) and they included deaf women (1850: 84; 1854: 152). Therefore, the Hartford gatherings contribute not just to our understanding of the development of the American Deaf community but also to the broader history of the world's deaf communities.

When compared to the demographic data found in earlier student enrollment records, the Hartford gatherings in the mid-19th century provide a window onto the development of the American Deaf community. Most attendees were former ASD students, but the gatherings also attracted numerous alumni from the New York School for the Deaf (NYSD), which opened its doors in New York City just one year after the founding of ASD (Edwards 2012). Our analyses of the attendees' school affiliations, ages, and marital status show that the signing community that had initially taken root among students at schools in Hartford and New York persisted among adult graduates of those schools in towns across the northeastern US. We compare the places of residence of ASD and NYSD alumni in 1850 and 1854 to their hometowns when they first enrolled at school. Our comparisons suggest the mid-19th-century signing community had become more urban; it was centered to a greater extent in populous cities such as New York, Boston, and Hartford than had been true when these individuals had enrolled in school. In our conclusions, we consider how the geography of deafness in the 19th century might inform our understanding of the sources of regional variation in ASL. We also consider how early cross-regional interactions may have inhibited such regional variation.

2. Data and Methods

Here we describe the sources of our data set, the registries of deaf gatherings in 1850 and 1854, as well as the methods we used to analyze these data.

2.1. Data

The attendance registries for four large gatherings of deaf individuals (in 1850, 1854, 1860, and 1866) can be found in the Museum Archives of the American School for the Deaf in Hartford; these records were transcribed in a Word document by Jean Linderman, the museum's archivist. We have had access to both the original registries and the transcribed document.[1] The first two gatherings were, apparently, open to both deaf and hearing attendees from across the US and even Europe. The second two gatherings were conventions of a deaf organization, the New England Gallaudet Association, and were only open to its members.

We focus on the first two gatherings, which took place in Hartford on 26 September 1850 and 6 September 1854. The registry for the 1850 gathering is titled "Names of Persons present at the Presentation of the Silver Pitchers to Messrs Gallaudet & Clerc". It includes columns recording the name, age, residence, "business", and "family" of attendees. The registry for the 1854 gathering is titled "Names of persons present at the raising of the Monument to the memory of Rev T. H. Gallaudet". It is organized in a way similar to the 1850 registry, including columns for name, age,

[1] These data available at https://doi.org/10.18738/T8/4KPU9D.

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residence, "occupation", and "social relations". The family column in 1850 and the social relations column in 1854 typically include information about the attendees' marital status, number of children, and whether their spouses and children were deaf or hearing. In both registries, the handwriting differs from entry to entry; hence each attendee to the gathering likely recorded their own attendance and perhaps that of any others in their party. However, in some cases missing information may have been included by others: For example, the word "unknown" was entered in the family column for Dudley Peet in 1850.

Despite such gaps, the information in both registries is nearly complete. In the 1850 registry, there are 225 entries. Only one surname is illegible, and only seven attendees did not record their age. The information about places of residence in 1850 is complete, but the business and family columns are incomplete: 59 entries do not include information about business, and two do not include information about family. In 1854, all names are legible, but three attendees did not record their ages. There are 84 gaps in the occupation column, and 13 in the social relations column. The missing family or social relations information is readily inferable based on context in the registry, on information in databases that we have compiled about 19th-century deaf individuals (see Power & Meier 2023), or on historical records available online or in repositories of genealogical records, such as Ancestry, which includes scans of Fay's (1898) surveys of deaf individuals, their marriages, and their families.

2.2. Methods

We now explain how we created a database of attendees at the 1850 and 1854 gatherings. We also demonstrate our approach to making inferences about gaps in the data. As noted, all but one of the names in the registries were legible; we were therefore able to identify nearly all attendees based on existing records about 19th-century deaf individuals. In Power & Meier (2023), we created a database of the 1700 students who attended ASD during the school's first 50 years, 1817–1867.[2] That database allowed us to identify all attendees at the 1850 and 1854 gatherings who were ASD alumni. Because our ASD student database includes abundant information about these individuals, we were able to fill gaps in the attendance registries or to supplement them with more precise information. For example, the registries report ages as integers, but the database includes exact birthdates for most individuals. Similarly, the registries record only brief notes about attendees' families, but our database includes information about marriages and deaf family members.

Recently, we have begun to compile a similar database of NYSD students from 1818 to 1854 based on the school's annual reports. Like the ASD student database, this new database of NYSD students allowed us to identify all attendees at the 1850 and 1854 gatherings who were NYSD alumni. The NYSD student database does not include exact birthdates because the school's annual reports do not provide that information. Nevertheless, using information in the annual reports—namely, age at enrollment and year of enrollment—we were able to infer students' birth years. That information was used to verify the ages reported in the registries of the 1850 and 1854 gatherings. The NYSD annual reports provide information about each student's year of enrollment and length of study in years. However, the reports do not provide exact dates of graduation (or disenrollment). We inferred the graduation dates based on the students' year of enrollment and length of study.

We have less complete information about students who attended the Pennsylvania Institution or other early US schools for the deaf. For any individuals not included in the ASD or NYSD databases, we searched the annual reports of schools for the deaf and Fay's (1898) survey records on Ancestry. We were unable to identify 15 individuals who were likely deaf, one from the 1850 gathering and 14 from the 1854 gathering.

3. Analysis

In this section, we analyze the attendance registries of the 1850 and 1854 gatherings in Hartford. We consider a variety of the attendees' characteristics, such as age, gender, education, and place of

[2] The data are available at https://doi.org/10.18738/T8/QSKEW3.

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residence. We also consider whether the attendees were deaf or hearing, whether they were married or single, and, if deaf and married, whether their spouse was also deaf. Finally, we track the movements of former ASD and NYSD students from their hometowns as reported when they first enrolled at school to their later residences reported in the registries.

3.1. The 1850 Gathering in Honor of Clerc and Gallaudet

By 1850, ASD had been operating as a school for 33 years since its opening in April 1817. In those 33 years, 863 deaf students finished their courses of study, which averaged roughly four years (Power & Meier 2023). Students who attended the school in this period constituted a large share of the first members of the signing community in which ASL arose. The school's founders and first two teachers, Laurent Clerc and Thomas H. Gallaudet, were prominent figures in 19th-century America and were widely revered by deaf Americans. Clerc in particular, as a deaf Frenchman who had studied and taught at the Paris National Institute for the Deaf, was held up as "the Apostle to the Deaf-Mutes of the New World" (Fay 1874).

Following its six-week summer vacation, ASD began the 1850–51 academic year on 19 September 1850. Just one week later, some 200 individuals—mostly former students at schools for the deaf—gathered at ASD in Hartford. According to ASD's (1851:12) annual report, they did so "to revisit the scenes of their early life, to meet each other and their former teachers and benefactors still connected with the Asylum [i.e., ASD], but primarily and chiefly, to shew their affectionate respect and gratitude to their first teachers, Messrs. Gallaudet and Clerc". Clerc was still a teacher at ASD in 1850; he would continue there until his retirement in 1858. Gallaudet had long since retired from the school. According to the attendance registry, he was then working in Hartford as a chaplain in the "Connecticut Retreat for the Insane". At the gathering, Clerc and Gallaudet were presented with engraved silver pitchers and salvers that were purchased by the "Deaf Mutes of New England", who had raised some $600 for these gifts (Rae 1850:43).

Deaf attendees' gender and alma mater. The names of 225 attendees are recorded in the 1850 registry. As suggested in ASD's annual report, most attendees were deaf (210, 93.3%; 84f, 126m). The disparity in female (40.6%) versus male (59.4%) attendees may, in part, have reflected disparities in deaf school attendance during this period (Power & Meier 2023). Considering only those students who had graduated from ASD by September 1850, 44.6% (385/863) were female. The lower observed proportion of female attendees at the 1850 gathering did not significantly differ from the expected proportion given the enrollment of female students at ASD: X^2 (1, 210) = 1.93, p = .17, NS.

Table 1 breaks down the deaf attendees by gender and by the deaf school(s) they attended. Most were former ASD students (170, 81.0%). Thirty-one attendees were graduates of NYSD. Four were alumni of both ASD and NYSD. One female attendee was an alumna of the Central Institute in Canajoharie, NY, and one male student had spent time at both NYSD and the Central Institute. Other attendees in 1850 were alumni of the Pennsylvania Institution (2m), of the Virginia Institution (1m, also attended ASD), and of a deaf school in Columbia, SC (1m).[3]

Table 1. Deaf attendees at the 1850 gathering by gender and alma mater. Some individuals attended more than one school.

School	Female	Male
ASD	69	101
NYSD	14	17
Other US schools	1	5
Outside the US	1	2
Did not attend a deaf school	1	5

[3] "William" was from Columbia, SC and, in 1850, was still a "student" at the "Columbia School". William's surname is illegible in the gathering's attendance registry.

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Three individuals were immigrants to the US, including Laurent Clerc who had attended the Paris Institute (Edwards 2012). Edward Doerr, a lithographer born in Hanover, Germany (Finlay 2010:111), resided in Hartford in 1850; it is unclear whether he had attended a school for the deaf in Germany. Margaret (Harrington) Swett of Ireland lived in Henniker, NH; she had married an ASD graduate, Thomas Swett. Six deaf attendees apparently had never attended a school for the deaf—though Samuel Porter, who became deaf in his twenties, had graduated from Yale and later taught at ASD and NYSD (Gallaudet 1901). Dyer Bailey of Norwich, CT, who attended the 1850 gathering despite never attending a school for the deaf, was likely introduced to the Deaf community through his two older sisters, who were both ASD alumni (Harriet 1817–1819 and Maria 1817–1824).

The 1850 gathering resembled an ASD school reunion. As noted above, 863 students had finished their studies at ASD by September 1850; at least 86 of these individuals had died.[4] Thus, the proportion of living former ASD students who attended the 1850 gathering was at the minimum 21.5% (167/777); three attendees had not yet finished their studies at ASD. On average, 14.3 years (*SD* = 8.2, median = 14.4) had elapsed between the date a former ASD student finished their studies at ASD and the 1850 gathering. Some attendees had finished their studies decades prior: 24.6% (41/167) had graduated more than 20 years before the event; and five had left ASD more than 30 years prior to the gathering. Evidently, many ASD graduates had remained in contact, over many years, with one another and with their alma mater.

As noted, 14.8% (31/210) of the deaf attendees had attended NYSD; 23 (11f, 12m) had finished their studies at the school and another eight (3f, 5m) were still enrolled as students. By September 1850, an estimated 716 (330f, 386m) students had graduated from NYSD; of these, at least 94 (48f, 46m) had died. Thus, the 23 attendees who were alumni of NYSD represented approximately 3.7% (23/622) of all living NYSD graduates. On average, the NYSD alumni had graduated 11.4 years (*SD* = 5.2, median = 13.0) before the 1850 gathering in Hartford. Among the alumni attendees from NYSD, four had become employees of the school: Three men were instructors, and one woman was an assistant matron. And, among the student attendees was Henry Rider, who would later be an important figure in the American Deaf world. In 1865, he became the first president of the Empire State (i.e., New York State) Deaf-Mute Association (Edwards 2012). In 1875, he started the weekly *Deaf Mutes Journal*.[5] But, in 1850, he was an 18-year-old student who would not graduate for another 5 years.

By 1850, several deaf individuals had ties to both ASD and NYSD. We have seen that four attendees were alumni of both schools. In addition to these four, other attendees linked the two schools through their employment as instructors. Thomas Gallaudet, the hearing son of Thomas H. Gallaudet, grew up in Hartford. Because his mother was a former ASD student, he likely acquired early ASL from his birth in 1822. He became an instructor at NYSD in 1843; two years later, he married a former NYSD student, Elizabeth Budd (NYSD 1834–43). Fisher Spofford, who attended ASD from 1819 to 1826, later became an instructor at ASD (1828–1833) and then at NYSD (1844–1851; Patterson 1877). James Wheeler attended both NYSD (1835–1838) and ASD (1842–1844), as well as the Pennsylvania Institution and the Ohio School for the Deaf. By the 1850 gathering, Wheeler was an instructor at ASD. Thus, both deaf and hearing individuals served as bridges connecting the signing communities in Hartford, New York, and elsewhere.

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[4] We have not thoroughly investigated the death records of former ASD students during this period. Deaths are not systematically reported in ASD's records—likely because school administrators were unable to keep track of all former students. The deaths of these 86 individuals were noted in ASD's records or we found their death years while investigating other aspects of these individuals' lives.

[5] See Gallaudet University's archival collections: https://gallaudet.edu/archives/archives-collections/the-deaf-mutes-journal-collection/the-deaf-mutes-journal-1875-1879.

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Deaf attendees' ages. Figure 1 shows the distribution of the deaf attendees' ages. Their average age was 33.7 years (*SD* = 10.5, median = 33.4). Most deaf attendees at the gathering (69.4%, 145/209) were between ages 20 and 40. Only 16 were under age 20; the two youngest were 14. John Chandler of Mexico, NY was enrolled as a student at NYSD in 1850. Hart Chamberlayne of Richmond, VA had evidently arrived in Hartford before the start of his first, and only, year at ASD (September 1850 to August 1851). Later in 1851, Hart enrolled at NYSD. Only 18 attendees were over age 50, and just four were older than 60. The oldest deaf attendee was Lucy Backus (age 73), who was among the earliest students to enroll at ASD, having done so at age 40 only three weeks after the school's founding in 1817.

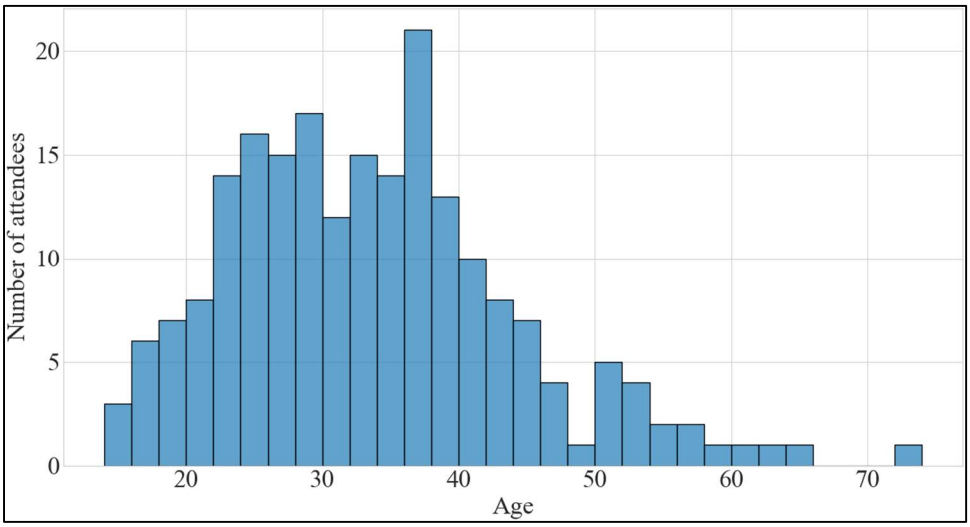

Figure 1. Ages of deaf attendees at the 1850 gathering.

On average, former ASD students (*M* = 34.2 years, *SD* = 9.9, median = 33.9) who attended the 1850 gathering were 7.9 years older than former NYSD students (*M* = 26.3 years, SD = 6.3, median = 25.7). The mean age of ASD attendees mirrored the average age of all living ASD students who had left that school by September 1850: 33.9 years (*n* = 777, *SD* = 10.9, median = 34.0). The age disparity between alumni of ASD and NYSD was partly due to the larger proportion of NYSD attendees who were still enrolled as students at the time of the gathering (NYSD: 8/31; ASD: 3/170). The eight NYSD students in attendance were 17.9 years old on average (*SD* = 2.9, median = 17), whereas the mean age of the 23 NYSD graduates was 28.5 (*SD* = 5.0, median = 29).

Marital status of deaf attendees. Marriage between deaf individuals was a persistent concern of many outsiders to the Deaf community in the 19th century, who saw such marriages as barriers to the integration of deaf people into hearing society (e.g., Bell 1884). From another perspective, however, early marriages among deaf Americans are indicators of the formation and growth of the American Deaf community, within which long-term connections were forged among deaf individuals whose hometowns were often separated by dozens or even hundreds of miles. We have already seen that Elizabeth Budd of NYSD married Thomas Gallaudet in 1845. In total, 91 deaf attendees had married by September 1850; four of these 91 had been widowed. Unlike Budd's marriage to Gallaudet, most married deaf attendees had a deaf spouse. Of the 88 deaf attendees whose spouse's hearing status is known to us, 78.4% (69/88: 29f, 40m) had married a deaf individual; the hearing status of three spouses is unknown. Most deaf attendees (56.7%, 119/210: 46f, 73m) had not married by September 1850. However, 11 unwed attendees (4f, 7m) married after 1850 and attended the 1854 gathering; see below.

Most marriages among deaf individuals united graduates of the same school. Of the 69 deaf-deaf marriages represented at the 1850 gathering, 82.6% (57/69) included two former ASD students; one additional marriage was between Clerc and Eliza Boardman, a former ASD student. Four marriages united deaf individuals from various combinations of schools: ASD and the Virginia Institute, ASD and the Central Institute in Canajoharie, NY; NYSD and the Central Institute; and NYSD and the Pennsylvania Institution. One former ASD student married a deaf individual who

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never attended a school for the deaf. Twenty-seven deaf-deaf couples attended the reunion together, while 15 partners in such marriages (2f, 13m, including 2 widowers) attended alone.

Nineteen deaf attendees married a hearing spouse. In addition to Budd's marriage to Gallaudet, two other marriages united deaf students and hearing faculty. Budd's mother-in-law was Sophia (Fowler) Gallaudet, a former ASD student who married Thomas H. Gallaudet in 1821. Sarah (Wilcox) Ayres attended ASD (1834–1839) and married Jared Ayres in 1840; Ayres was an instructor at ASD from 1835 to 1866.

Hearing attendees. Most hearing attendees (12/15) were current (11) or former (1) faculty at a US school for the deaf: Nine were connected with ASD and three with NYSD. Henry Hirzel, director of the Institution for the Blind in Lausanne, Switzerland, was evidently in the US on a tour of educational institutions (NYSD 1850). The other two hearing individuals in attendance were family members of faculty.

Summary. The 1850 gathering had the character of an ASD reunion. Hosted in Hartford and held in honor of two highly-regarded ASD faculty members, this gathering mainly attracted deaf individuals, particularly former ASD students: 75.6% of all attendees (170/225) had either finished their studies there or would soon do so. Current and former students of NYSD (31 individuals) were also well represented. For many former ASD students, the gathering likely meant a first return to ASD after many years; on average, 14.3 years had elapsed between the end of a student's studies and the 1850 gathering. During this post-graduation period, many former ASD students married; 78 had done so by September 1850. Most of these (62) had married another deaf individual. And, 22 ASD-ASD couples attended the gathering together.

3.2. The Gathering to Commemorate Gallaudet

The 1854 gathering was held on 6 September to celebrate "the completion of the monument erected...to the memory of the late Mr. Gallaudet" (ASD 1855:13). Thomas H. Gallaudet had passed away three years earlier in September 1851. The Gallaudet Monument Association, led by Laurent Clerc and consisting entirely of deaf members, raised funds for the design and completion of the monument, for which "not a cent" was accepted "from the pocket of any other than a deaf mute" (ASD 1855:40). The 1854 gathering was again hosted at ASD in Hartford, this time during the school's summer vacation (3 August 1854 to 20 September 1854). The event's timing was perhaps driven by the need for space; some 401 guests attended.

Deaf attendees' gender and alma mater. Like the earlier gathering, the 1854 event was largely a meeting of deaf individuals. Of the 401 attendees, 92.0% (369/401; 152f, 217m) are known to have been deaf; we do not know the hearing status of 14 individuals (5f, 9m), but, given the overall demographics of the group in attendance, it is likely that many, if not all, were deaf. Just 18 attendees were hearing. More than a third of deaf attendees at the 1854 gathering had also attended in 1850 (36.9%, 136/369; 52f, 84m). Most of these two-time attendees were former ASD students (84.6%, 115/136), but 16 were NYSD alumni. Just four hearing individuals attended both gatherings, all were either instructors at a deaf school or an instructor's spouse. The disparity between female and male attendees in 1854 (41.2% vs. 58.8%) was similar to the disparity in 1850 (40.6% vs. 59.4%).

Table 2 breaks down the deaf attendees in 1854 by gender and alma mater. Most attendees were former ASD students (75.6%, 279/369; 117f, 162m); one female student was an alumna of both ASD and NYSD. The proportion of deaf attendees who were ASD alumni was slightly down compared to the 1850 gathering, when 81.0% were ASD graduates. Like the earlier meeting in 1850, the 1854 gathering attracted a large proportion of living ASD graduates. By 6 September 1854, exactly 1,012 students had finished their studies at ASD, and at least 109 of these former students had died. Thus, at least 30.8% (279/903) of ASD graduates who were still alive in September 1854 attended the 1854 gathering. On average, these students had finished their studies at ASD 14.9 years (*SD* = 9.4, median = 14.4) before the 1854 gathering, and 15 had done so more than 30 years prior.

In addition to the ASD alumni, deaf schools in New York were well represented at the 1854 gathering: There were 61 NYSD alumni in attendance, 54 of whom had attended only NYSD. Five individuals (2f, 3m) had been enrolled at both NYSD and the Central Institute in Canajoharie, NY,

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and one male attendee was an alum of only the Central Institute. The proportion of deaf attendees who were alumni of NYSD was higher in 1854 than in 1850 (16.5% vs. 14.8%). Taken together, former students of ASD and NYSD represented 91.9% (339/369) of deaf attendees at the 1854 gathering.

Table 2. Deaf attendees at the 1854 gathering by gender and alma mater.[6].

School	Female	Male
ASD	117	162
NYSD	30	31
Central Institute	2	4
Pennsylvania Institution	0	10
Virginia Institution	0	1
Outside the US	1	5
Did not attend a deaf school	5	8

Graduates of the Pennsylvania Institution, although only a small proportion of the overall number of deaf attendees, were better represented in 1854 than in 1850 (2.7% vs. 1.0%, 10 attendees vs. 2). Only two alumni of the Pennsylvania Institution attended both gatherings, John Carlin and Thomas Jefferson Trist. Carlin was a student at the school from 1821 to 1825. He later became an artist and poet and was an important figure in the early Deaf community: He published articles in the *American Annals of the Deaf* beginning in the 1840s, helped raise funds for the first deaf church in the US, St. Ann's in New York, and created a bas-relief for the monument to Gallaudet which was raised at the 1854 gathering (Krentz 2000). Thomas Jefferson Trist, who attended both the Pennsylvania Institution and NYSD (1852–1855), later taught at the school in Philadelphia for 35 years (1855–1890; Fay 1893).

Not all deaf attendees were graduates of US schools for the deaf. In addition to Clerc, who was present at both gatherings, four attendees (1f, 3m) in 1854 were graduates of schools for the deaf outside the US. Adam Acheson was an alum of the school in Manchester, and his brother John Acheson, who was 16 years older, had been enrolled at the school in Dublin. The Acheson siblings lived in Randolph, MA. Adam would later marry a graduate of ASD, Catherine Marsh. Thomas Coulter of Philadelphia was a graduate of the school in Yorkshire, England. And, Jane Fleming, who in 1854 was resident in Waterbury, CT, had studied in Edinburgh. All four of these individuals were unmarried in 1854.

Thirteen deaf attendees apparently never attended a school for the deaf. Three had married ASD alumni. Thomas Daggett of Providence, RI married Frances Streeter (ASD 1825–1831) in 1839 and attended both the 1850 and 1854 gatherings together with Frances. Caroline Danforth of Bristol, NH married George Webster (ASD 1833–1837) in 1841; and Mary Flint of Boston married James Messer (ASD 1840–1846) in 1850. The Websters and Messers attended the 1854 gathering as couples. Other deaf attendees who themselves never enrolled at a school for the deaf had deaf relatives who had done so. For example, Ruby Mayhew of Chilmark on Martha's Vineyard attended the 1854 gathering together with her sister Lovey. Although Ruby never attended a school for the deaf, Lovey attended ASD from 1825 to 1831, and the women's brother Alfred did so from 1827 to 1830 (Power & Meier 2024). Josiah Smith and Nancy Pressey married in 1841. Although neither had ever attended a deaf school, Josiah and Nancy both attended the 1854 gathering. They were from Henniker, NH, where a small group of deaf individuals lived, including some who had attended ASD (Lane et al. 2000). Josiah and Nancy likely learned about the Deaf community in New England via their ASD alumni neighbors.

[6] Edwin Sanger was resident in Pennsylvania at the time of the 1854 gathering. We suspect, but have not yet been able to confirm, that he attended the Pennsylvania Institution.

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Deaf attendees' ages. On average, deaf attendees in 1854 were 33.7 years old (*SD* = 10.7, median = 32.8), approximately the same as in 1850. However, whereas in 1850 more than two-thirds of attendees (69.4%) were in the 20–40 age bracket, in 1854 deaf attendees were distributed more evenly across age ranges, with 59.5% in the 20–40 bracket; see Table 3. Nearly a third of deaf attendees (31.0%) were over age 40 in 1854, whereas that group represented just 23% of 1850 attendees. One reason for this change in age distribution from 1850 to 1854 was the group of 136 individuals who attended both gatherings. Obviously, they were four years older in 1854 (*M* = 37.1, *SD* = 9.9) than in 1850 (*M* = 33.1, *SD* = 9.9).

Table 3. The distribution of deaf attendees across age brackets at the 1850 and 1854 gatherings.

	1850	1854
under 20	7.7% (16)	9.5% (35)
20 to 30	33.5% (70)	32.6% (120)
30 to 40	35.9% (75)	26.9% (99)
40 to 50	14.4% (30)	23.9% (88)
50 to 60	6.7% (14)	6.0% (22)
over 60	1.9% (4)	1.1% (4)

As in 1850, ASD alumni (*M* = 34.6 years, SD = 10.7, median = 34.3) were older on average than NYSD alumni (*M* = 28.5 years, SD = 7.4, median = 28.7). However, while the mean ages of attendees from ASD were roughly similar in 1850 and 1854 (34.2 and 34.6, respectively), the mean age of the NYSD alumni was two years higher in 1854 (28.5) than in 1850 (26.3). This increase in average age is partly due to a lower proportion of NYSD students among the NYSD-affiliated attendees (i.e., enrolled students and graduates) in 1854; the percentage of NYSD attendees who were students was 19.7% (12/61) in 1854 as compared to 25.8% (8/31) in 1850. The higher number of NYSD graduates who attended the 1854 gathering may indicate increased integration of the Hartford- and New York-based signing communities. Presumably, after these graduates left NYSD, returned to their hometowns, and found regular employment, it would have required greater effort for them to remain connected to the wider Deaf community. Their attendance at the 1854 Hartford gathering suggests their tight connection to that wider Deaf world.

Marital status of deaf attendees. Most deaf attendees in 1854 were unmarried (56.7%, 208/369; 81f, 127m). Among the 161 deaf attendees (71f, 90m) who had married by 1854, 12 (8f, 4m) had lost a spouse, including one woman who had lost two spouses and another woman who had divorced. Most married deaf attendees had a deaf spouse (80.7%, 130/161; 57f, 73m); and, most deaf attendees with a deaf spouse (119/130) had attended a school for the deaf and later married another graduate of a deaf school.

Many deaf couples attended the gathering together: 48 couples were represented among the 130 deaf attendees with deaf spouses, just mentioned. There were thus 83 unique marriages represented at the gathering; this figure includes both marriages of Julia Ann Hoffman (NYSD 1828–1836), who had twice been widowed by 1854. Table 4 represents these 83 marriages as intersecting rows and columns. Inspection of the table reveals that two-thirds of these marriages (56/83) united graduates of ASD. In addition, seven marriages between graduates of NYSD were represented at the gathering, as were 10 other marriages which united graduates of American schools for the deaf.

Table 4. Marriages represented at the 1854 gathering, broken down by the school attended by each spouse. Married couples are represented by the combinations of deaf schools in the table's rows and columns.

Deaf school	ASD	NYSD	PA Inst.	Central Inst.	VA Inst.	Europe	No school
ASD	56	4	1	1	1	3	5

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NYSD	7	1	1	
PA Inst.		1		
No school				2

Note. Frances Hammond and Mary E. Rose each attended ASD and then NYSD. Frances's marriage to an ASD graduate is included in the ASD-ASD count, while Mary's marriage to an NYSD graduate is tallied in the NYSD-NYSD count. William M. Genet first attended NYSD and then ASD; his marriage to an NYSD graduate is counted in the NYSD-NYSD box. In addition to these three marriages, four other marriages united ASD and NYSD graduates.

3.3. Geographic Analysis

In this section, we track the places of residence of deaf individuals from their homes as reported in school enrollment records to their later residences in the attendance registries of the 1850 and 1854 gatherings. We first describe the deaf population's geographic distribution at enrollment, in 1850, and in 1854. Next, we compare the residences of 136 deaf individuals who attended both the 1850 and 1854 gatherings. These two analyses sketch an outline of the changing geographic configuration of the mid-19th-century American Deaf community in the northeastern US.

Distribution of the deaf population. In the first half of the 19th century, deaf individuals who would eventually enroll at ASD, NYSD, or the Central Institute in Canajoharie, New York mainly resided in the northeastern US. The left side of Figure 2 shows the hometowns at the time of enrollment of students who, by January 1854, had enrolled at ASD (1,168), NYSD (1,102), or the Central Institute (63).[7] Inspection of the figure reveals that many students came from hometowns scattered across the eastern US and Canada and that the catchment areas from which these schools drew their students overlapped to a great extent. For example, 22 students from New York attended ASD through 1854, and nine students from the New England states attended NYSD or the Central Institute in the same period; 4 attended both ASD and NYSD. Taken together, these 2,333 students were resident in 1,120 unique towns (2.1 students per town) during this roughly 37-year period. The right side of the figure focuses on New England and New York, which were the areas with the highest density of hometowns at enrollment. For example, 202 students resided in New York City when they enrolled at NYSD, and 49 ASD students were from Boston.

[7] For space, we have excluded one point each in the Canadian province of British Columbia, the US states of California and Texas, and the countries of Cuba and India.

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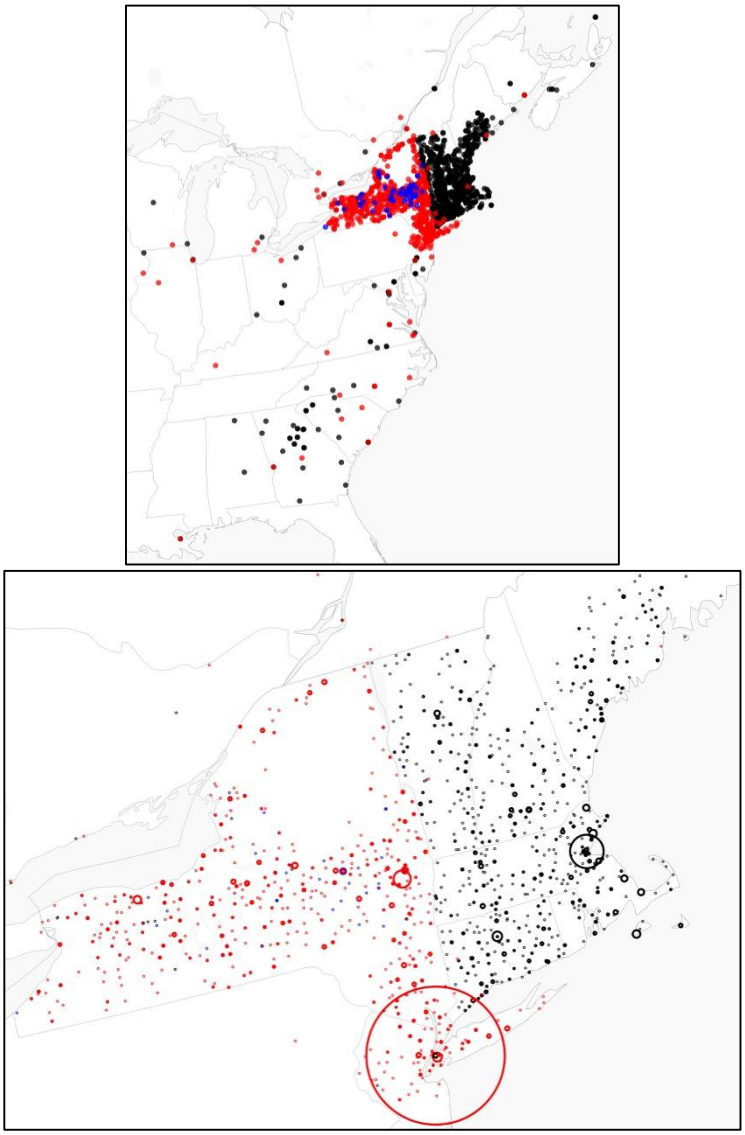

Figure 2. Places of residence of students at the time of their enrollment to ASD (black), NYSD (red), or the Central Institute (blue). Left: One point per student. Right: Circles scaled by the number of students from each school with the same place of residence.

Distribution of deaf attendees at the 1850 and 1854 gatherings. By September 1850 and September 1854, when the two gatherings took place in Hartford, many deaf attendees had moved from their earlier hometowns. Of the attendees at the 1850 gathering whose residences at enrollment are known to us, 50% (102/204) had moved distances greater than 10 miles, and 23% (47/204) had moved more than 50 miles.[8] Figure 3 shows, at two points in time, the area with the greatest density of residences of the deaf attendees at the 1850 gathering. Map A shows the residences prior to 1850—whether at the time of their enrollment at a school for the deaf, at birth if the individual did not attend a deaf school, or, in the case of Laurent Clerc, at the time of his earliest residence in the US. Map B shows the same area in 1850.[9]

Comparison of the maps in Figure 3 reveals that the earlier places of residence were more widely distributed across the northeastern US than the 1850 residences. Compared to the 141 unique towns accounting for the earlier residences, just 94 are represented in the 1850 data. This consolidation was

[8] Six deaf attendees are excluded from the geographic analysis because we could not find their places of residence prior to 1850.

[9] One point in Cuba is not shown in map A, and one point in South Carolina is not shown in map B.

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partly due to the growth of Hartford as a hub of the New England Deaf community: Of the attendees, only Laurent Clerc initially resided in Hartford, whereas 17 deaf attendees at the 1850 gathering lived in Hartford or East Hartford. The number of deaf attendees living in New York City grew from 15 to 22; there was no growth in the number of deaf attendees residing in the Boston area (20 vs. 19). Among the earlier residences, in addition to New York City and Boston, just six towns hosted three or more deaf individuals: Lyme (3) and Norwich, CT (4); Plymouth (3), Salem (3), and Sandwich, MA (4); and Peterborough, NH (3). In 1850, there were five towns with five or more deaf residents: Worcester (5) and Lowell (6), MA; Norwich (6) and Willimantic (6), CT; and Nashua, NH (5); and another eight towns with three or more deaf inhabitants. Prior to 1850, 107 out of 204 deaf attendees did not share a place of residence with any other attendee. By 1850, there were just 56 such attendees.

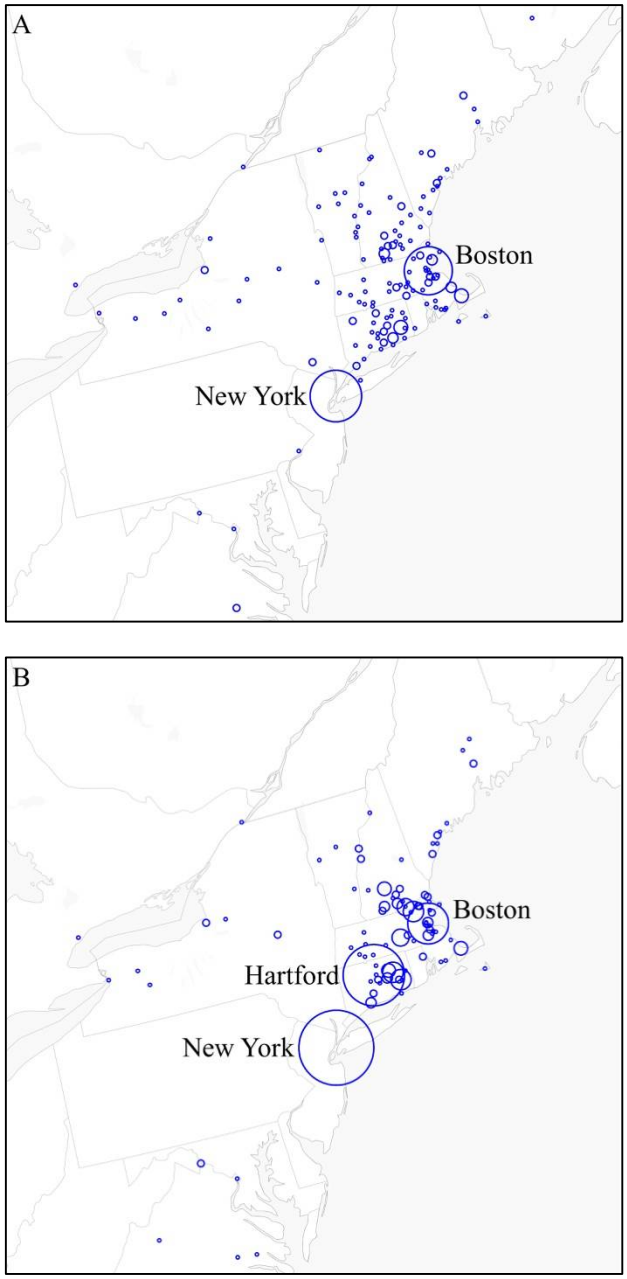

Figure 3. Comparison of deaf attendees' places of residence at the time of enrollment in a school for the deaf (A) and at the 1850 gathering (B). Circles scaled by the number of deaf attendees with the same place of residence.

Let's now consider the geographical distribution of deaf attendees at the 1854 gathering. By 1854, 41.4% (146/353) of deaf attendees had moved more than 10 miles from their earlier residences, and

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24.1% (85/353) had moved more than 50 miles. Figure 4 shows that many of these moves served to consolidate the number of towns where deaf individuals lived. Prior to 1854 (map A), the 353 deaf attendees resided in 227 unique towns; in 1854 (map B), that number was just 169.[10] Prior to 1854, just six towns hosted five or more deaf attendees: New York (20), Boston (18), Salem, MA (6), Chilmark on Martha's Vineyard (5), Hartford (5), and Philadelphia (5). In 1854, 12 towns did so: New York (34), Boston (18), Hartford (17), Lowell, MA (9), Charlestown near Boston (7), Norwich, CT (6), Worcester (6), Lawrence (5), Natick (5), Philadelphia (5), Reading (5), and Waterbury (5). Prior to 1854, 161 individuals did not share a place of residence with another attendee. In 1854, there were just 108 singleton attendees.

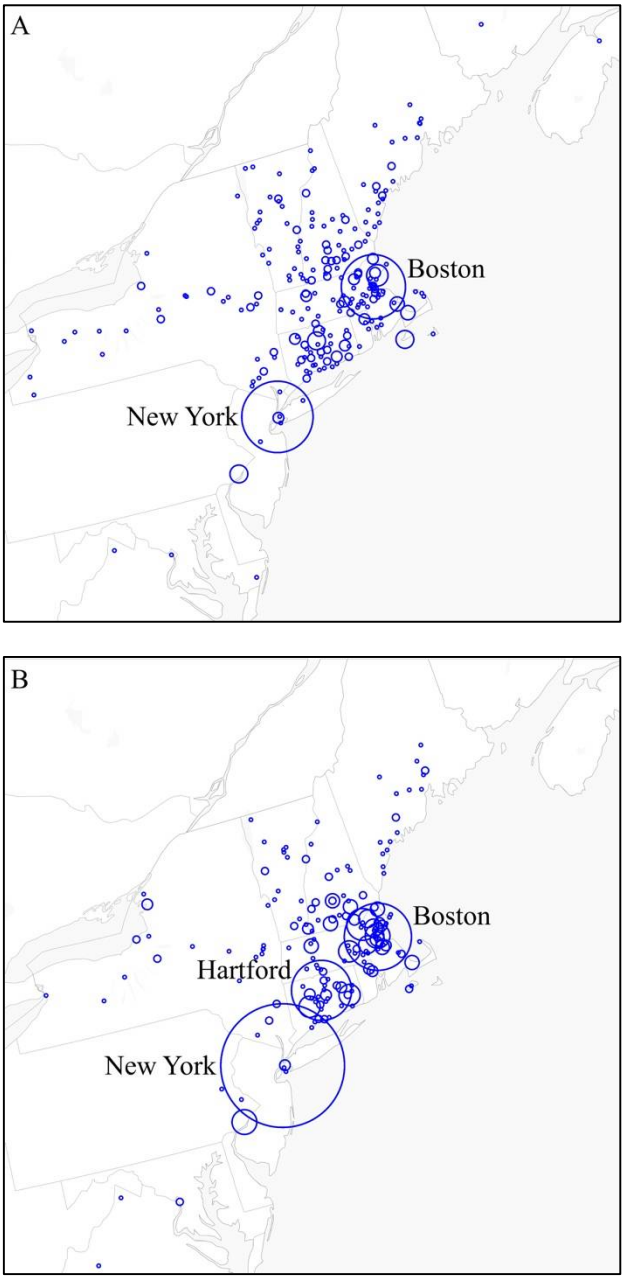

Figure 4. Comparison of deaf attendees' places of residence at their enrollment in a school for the deaf (A) and at the 1854 gathering (B). Circles scaled by the number of deaf attendees with the same place of residence.

[10] Two points in South Carolina and one point in Illinois are not shown in map A. Two points in Illinois and one point each in South Carolina, Michigan, and Wisconsin are not shown in map B.

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Residences of attendees at both gatherings. As noted, 136 (52f, 84m) deaf individuals attended both the 1850 and 1854 gatherings. Given the commitment of time and money necessary to attend both gatherings, these individuals may have represented the core of the early American Deaf community. Most of these two-time attendees were graduates of ASD (115: 45f, 70m); another 17 were NYSD alumni (7f, 10m); three did not attend an American school for the deaf;[11] and one man attended the Pennsylvania Institution.

Map A in Figure 5 shows the residences of these individuals when they enrolled at a school for the deaf. Inspection of the map reveals that, among the 98 unique places of residence, there were two large groups of deaf individuals whose homes were in Boston (9) and New York (11). All other circles in that map represent four (in Sandwich, MA) or fewer individuals. Map B shows that, by 1850, the places of residence of these 136 individuals were less dispersed, with 64 unique towns and three main centers: Boston (8 residents, plus 4 in the nearby towns of Roxbury, Somerville, and Charlestown), Hartford (12, plus 1 in East Hartford), and New York City (14). Other main concentrations of deaf attendees were Lowell, MA (6), Norwich, CT (5), and four other cities each with four deaf attendees. The situation in 1854 was largely the same as in 1850, though with a slightly greater number of unique places of residence (69); see the map C. The three main centers remained Boston (8, plus another 8 nearby), Hartford (11, plus 1 in East Hartford), and New York City (12), with Norwich (6), Lowell (5), and four other cities (4 residents each) representing the other main concentrations of deaf attendees.

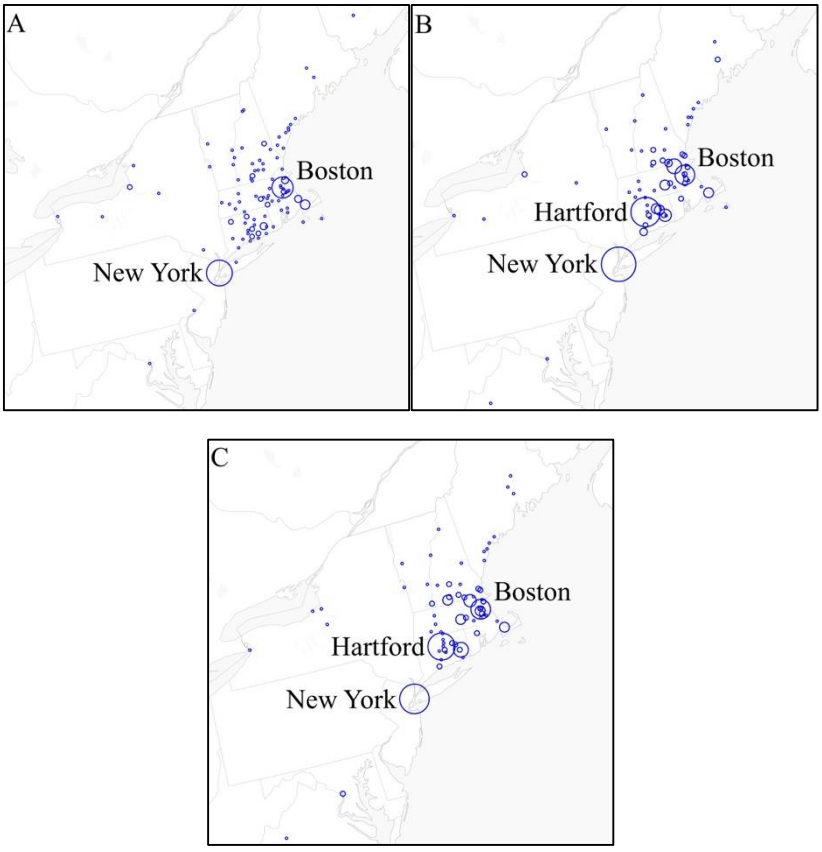

Figure 5. Places of residence of the deaf individuals who attended both reunions: at enrollment (A), in 1850 (B), and in 1854 (C).

Why did these deaf individuals move between their enrollment and the later Hartford gatherings? After moving to Hartford or New York for their schooling, many likely decided to remain

[11] This figure includes Clerc and two individuals who likely never attended a school for the deaf. For Clerc, we used Hartford as his initial residence, as noted; for the other two, we used their birthplaces.

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in those cities rather than return to their hometowns. For example, John Burpe of Frederickton in New Brunswick, Canada attended ASD from 1842 to 1847. He finished his schooling at the age of 15 and, evidently, remained in Hartford after graduation: He was resident there in 1850 and 1854, working as a "mechanic". George Burchard resided in Watertown in northern New York before enrolling at a school for the deaf. He attended both the Central Institute in Canajoharie and NYSD between 1835 and 1842. In 1847, he married Elizabeth Disbrow (1839–1845) of South Brunswick, NJ. In 1850 and 1854, the couple lived in New York City, where George worked as a "printer".

Others moved to Hartford or New York to work at one of the schools. Jane Campbell of Bedford, NH graduated from ASD in 1848 and remained there to work in "domestic service". In 1860, she married Salmon Crosset, who was the school's Assistant Steward. Jeremiah Conklin of Huntington, NY attended NYSD from 1826 to 1834. He later became an instructor at NYSD; he was a resident of New York City in 1850 and 1854.

Some deaf individuals apparently moved to be closer to the Deaf community or to play a part in its formation. Jonathan P. Marsh (ASD 1827–1833) of Winchester, CT married Paulina Bowdish (ASD 1831–1836) of Douglas, MA in 1840. At the time of the 1850 gathering, the couple lived in Willimantic, CT together with Paulina's deaf brother Moses (ASD 1830–1833) and a former schoolmate Samuel Lewis (ASD 1829–1834). By October 1850, Jonathan and Paulina had moved to Roxbury, then a small town just a few miles south of Boston. Together with 10 other deaf individuals, Jonathan started a Bible study group at the Park Street Congregational Church in Boston; in 1851, the group was officially called the "Deaf Mutes' Bible Class" (Marsh 1857: 242–45). The class may have attracted other deaf individuals to Boston: Marsh reported in 1857 that there were some 30 to 35 who attended weekly. Later, Jonathan became one of the founding members of the Boston Deaf-Mute Christian Association and one of the Directors of the Boston Deaf-Mute Library Association (see Swett 1874).

Summary. By 1850 and 1854, the deaf population in New England, New York, and eastern Canada had become more urban, concentrated to a greater extent in populous cities such as New York and Boston, as well as Hartford. Many deaf attendees at the Hartford gatherings (1850: 47/204; 1854: 85/353) had moved distances greater than 50 miles since their enrollments at a school for the deaf. There were many factors driving these moves, likely including marriage, the desire by some graduates to remain close to their school-based signing community, the availability of employment at schools for the deaf, and the desire to support the fledgling Deaf community in large cities like Boston.

4. Conclusions

In the early decades of the 19th century, the deaf population in the eastern US and Canada was distributed across a vast area. During this same period, many deaf individuals were born into families with other deaf members: 31% of the 1,700 students who attended ASD between 1817 and 1867 had at least one first-degree deaf relative (Power & Meier 2023). However, many others likely represented the only deaf individuals in their hometowns and in the surrounding area. After the 1817 founding of ASD, hundreds of deaf students from across New England and beyond called Hartford home for 4 to 6 years on average (Power & Meier 2023). In this way, much of the New England deaf population was drawn together into one location and the roots of a signing community were planted there.

After leaving ASD, this new signing community faced a challenge to its persistence. How would the community maintain its social and linguistic ties across vast geographic space once community members had dispersed to their hometowns? Prior scholarship has shown that many deaf individuals fostered connections within the community via letter-writing, through marriage, and by traveling to visit one another on the expanding rail network in the northeastern US (Lane et al. 2007; Edwards 2012; Power & Meier 2023, 2024). The 1850s also witnessed the founding of the first deaf-led organization in the US, the New England Gallaudet Association, of the first US deaf church, St. Ann's Church for the Deaf in New York City, and, as we have seen, of the first deaf-led Bible class in Boston (Edwards 2012, Berg & Buzzard 1989, Braddock 1975). These were the first among many other deaf-led organizations that started in the 1850s and 60s.

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In this paper, we have highlighted other ways deaf individuals sustained the early American Deaf community. The Hartford gatherings themselves surely served to renew ties among former schoolmates. In 1850 and 1854, large proportions of former ASD students were drawn back to Hartford: Nearly a third of living ASD graduates attended the 1854 gathering. Many of these former schoolmates had married one another; 56 such marriages were represented at the 1854 gathering, and 36 ASD couples traveled to Hartford together. Some couples may have formed at the gatherings, or perhaps resumed earlier relationships that had begun at ASD. For example, Albert Barnard of Nantucket (ASD 1832–1839) overlapped for one year at ASD with his eventual spouse, Rhoda Edson (1838–1845) of Hartford, VT. Both Albert and Rhoda (then living in Lowell, MA) were unmarried when they attended the 1850 gathering in Hartford. The couple married in 1851 in Nashville, NH and together attended the 1854 gathering.

The Hartford gatherings open a window onto the state of the early Deaf community. That 136 deaf individuals attended both the 1850 and 1854 gatherings lends support to the idea that a core of the community had developed in the first half of the 19th century. Intriguingly, that community encompassed both schooled and, to a limited extent, unschooled deaf individuals. Thomas Daggett of Providence, RI and William Plumley of Boston both attended the Hartford gatherings in 1850 and 1854, though they evidently never attended any school for the deaf. By the 1850s, the community was no longer centered in schools, nor was it mainly composed of adolescent students, as it initially had been. The mean age of ASD students who enrolled in the 1850s was 12.4 years (n = 396, *SD* = 4.0), while ASD alumni at the Hartford gatherings were in their 30s on average (1850: *M* = 34.2; 1854: *M* = 34.6). In sum, in the four decades from 1817 to 1854, the demographic structure of the early American signing community had changed in important ways.

Several factors drove the community towards greater geographic consolidation. The marriages of deaf individuals who had met at ASD tended to reduce the geographic distribution of the deaf population, as couples began to share a residence. As noted, several former students were employed at ASD and NYSD as teachers, assistant matrons, or in other capacities. Others, though not working at a deaf school, settled in Hartford or New York. The increasing number of deaf adults in Hartford who were not then students at ASD meant that a more encompassing signing community—in terms of age, marital status, and employment, among other characteristics—was developing in that city.

Broader societal trends, such as those leading to urbanization, also drove many deaf individuals to move from their hometowns to more populous economic centers. Former ASD students, such as Rhoda Edson, John Ham, Charlotte Lovejoy, and James Whittlesey, moved from their various hometowns in New Hampshire to Lowell, MA to work in the burgeoning textile industry there (see, e.g., Dublin 1979, Gross 1993). As we have seen, Jonathan Marsh and Paulina Bowdish moved from Willimantic, CT to the Boston area, where Jonathan worked as a "piano forte maker". There they established a Bible study group and became key members of deaf-led organizations. Whatever the precise reasons for the movements of deaf individuals to urban centers during this period, those movements ultimately brought deaf people closer and, thus, likely fostered the growth of the American Deaf community.

Finally, our analysis of the Hartford gatherings sheds light on the inter-regional ties that had developed by the mid-19th century among school-based communities and that may have worked against the emergence of regional linguistic barriers within the American Deaf community. The geographically distinct schools for the deaf were likely sources of regional variation in early ASL (for discussions of school-based variation in BSL, see Schembri et al. 2010, Stamp 2013). But the links among ASD and NYSD alumni revealed by our analyses may have served to level such variation (see Bayley et al. 2002, Stamp et al. 2016). As we have seen, multiple marriages united alumni of these two schools; several students attended both ASD and NYSD; ASD graduates such as Fisher Spofford (ASD 1819–1826) were employed as teachers at NYSD; and NYSD graduates such as James Wheeler taught at ASD (see Edwards 2012). Others, such as Charles Parker of West Rupert, VT (ASD 1841–1849), moved from New England to New York, where he worked in the printing industry. He was likely a member of St. Ann's; he and Ellen Wright (ASD 1847–1852) married there in 1856 (Gallaudet

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1856). The full extent of such cross-regional ties awaits fuller investigation using a broader data set. The types of links represented at the Hartford gatherings provide an outline for such future research.

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