



Hickey Robertson

Erastus "Deaf" Smith, oil portrait by Thomas Jefferson Wright, San Jacinto Museum of History Association.

"What Hath God Wrought?"

In 1836 Samuel F. B. Morse invented the telegraph and indirectly began the chain of events that led to the founding of Gallaudet College, the only college for the deaf in the world.

Morse was married to a deaf woman. He spoke to her by tapping his fingers in her hands. Morse hired Amos Kendall to be his financial manager. When Morse was first experimenting with the telegraph, a line was strung from the Library of Congress in Washington to Baltimore. This line ran through Kendall's Northeast Washington estate. Over this line, on May 24, 1844, flashed the immortal words "What Hath God Wrought?" Both men became wealthy from the Morse Telegraph. Kendall donated much of his wealth to the interests of deaf people. He started the Columbia Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb and Blind on his beautiful and spacious estate, offering some land and a building. Kendall also made a generous contribution to the construction of the Calvary Baptist Church in the city. For many years this church has had a class for deaf persons.

Deaf Smith

In what is now Texas, another kind of history was unfolding that year. Texas was fighting for its independence from Mexico. In April General Sam Houston, commander of the Texas Army, and his men met the Mexican Army commanded by General Antonio de Santa Anna in the crucial Battle of San Jacinto.

Erastus "Deaf" Smith, a Texas soldier, had been hand picked by Houston as his chief scout and spy. Smith's severe hearing impairment dated back to childhood. Born in New York in 1787, Smith grew up in Mississippi and moved to Texas in 1821. When

Five dollar Texas bill with Erastus "Deaf" Smith's portrait.

