

Annie Mansfield Sullivan Macy

Annie Sullivan was born in April 1866 in Feeding Hills, Massachusetts. Her father, Thomas, had a difficult temper and her caring mother, Alice Cloesy, died of tuberculosis when Annie was eight years old, leaving behind three children. While her sister and brother were taken in by relatives, Annie was left at home with her father. Early in Annie's life she contracted trachoma, which caused her eyes to continually weaken and eventually, Annie could no longer take care of her father. She was transferred in 1876 to the state poorhouse in Tewksbury. On October 7, 1880, Annie entered Perkins School for the blind where she spent a great deal of time with Laura Bridgman, who taught her the manual alphabet. Annie graduated from high school as valedictorian. At age 21, Annie arrived

in Tuscumbia, and began teaching Helen Keller who was both deaf and blind. Annie would spell constantly into Helen's hand as she described the world around them. Both Helen and Annie moved into a cottage on the Keller property to begin the process of instilling independence, which was the key to Helen's voyage into the hearing and seeing world.

In 1904, Helen graduated cum laude from Radcliffe College, which was the fulfillment of a dream for both Helen and Annie. Helen also began writing and in 1902 she published her famous autobiography, "The Story of My Life." It was while writing this book that a young man named John Albert Macy came into their lives to help Helen edit her book. On May 2, 1905, Annie and John were married. They were a passionate couple, but the relationship began to fall apart in May of 1913 when John sailed for Europe. By the end of 1914, the marriage was over but Annie stayed loyal to John and they were never divorced. For the next 26 years, Annie's life consisted of travel, lectures, meetings, and operations. In 1917, the household relocated to Forest Hills, New York. In 1924, both Helen and Annie began to work for the American Foundation for the Blind as fund raisers and advocates. Many times Annie fought hard for Helen and her right to be rewarded for her hard work. This constant fight gained Annie much admiration and Helen many benefits. But the greatest benefits were gained by the people for whom they worked so hard. Nella Braddy entered Annie's life in 1927 to write her biography, "Anne Sullivan Macy," which was published in 1933. In 1932, she received an honorary degree from Temple University.

Annie Mansfield Sullivan Macy died in Forest Hills, New York on October 20, 1936 at the age of 70. In June 1960, a fountain at Radcliffe College was dedicated in memory of Annie Sullivan Macy. At the dedication Helen said only one word, "Water," which was the first word Helen had spoken and learned from Annie.