

Anne Sullivan Macy

Miracle Worker Teaches Deaf-Blind-Mute Girl

Anne Sullivan Macy (1866-1936) was a woman whose brilliance, passion, and tenacity enabled her to overcome a traumatic past. She became a model for others disadvantaged by their physical bodies, as well as by gender or class.

Anne was a pioneer in the field of education. Her work with Helen Keller became the blueprint for education of children who were blind, deaf-blind, or visually impaired that still continues today. Samuel L. Clemens (Mark Twain) dubbed her a “miracle worker.” However, Anne’s personal story remains relatively unknown. Although some of her letters



Anne Sullivan Macy (1866-1936) overcame a destitute and abusive childhood to become a brilliant teacher who accomplished what few people believed was possible. She taught Helen Keller, a blind, deaf and mute child, to communicate. Sullivan coached her through Radcliffe College and accompanied her in public appearances worldwide. Though visually impaired herself, she served as Keller’s eyes and ears until her death.

still exist, it is primarily through the eyes of others that we know her. Some time after she married John Albert Macy in 1905, the young wife burned her private journals for fear of what her husband might think of her if he should read them. Similarly, she did not want her correspondence to be kept after her death. But for historical purposes, materials were retained and the Helen Keller Archives at the American Foundation for the Blind contain some of her letters, prose, and verse. Other materials

about Anne are located at the Perkins School for the Blind in Watertown, Massachusetts and the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, Massachusetts.