Scholars used the Greek language inscription on the Rosetta stone to solve the parallel inscription in hieroglyphics. In this process, European professors used skills identical with those that might be used to solve a secret code from a foreign country.

When Albert Meyer composed a signal manual in 1864, he included large excerpts from the English surgeon William Blair's grueling and tedious research into cryptography and ciphers dating back to 1807.

Edgar Allen Poe, now famous for his short stories, was an avid amateur cryptologist. As a magazine editor, he often challenged readers to send him challenge ciphers he could not solve. He also incorporated ciphers in his famous short story in 1843, The Gold Bug.

In 1851, Meyer wrote his M.D. thesis at the University of Buffalo on sign language. His study of gestures, hand signals, and finger spelling inspired his future flag code.