

# Girard College, Founder's Hall

## 1831

Stephen Girard, merchant, mariner, banker and patriot dies, leaving the bulk of his seven-million dollar fortune to the city of Philadelphia, to build and operate a residential school for "poor white male orphans." He specifies a two million dollar construction budget to build his school.

## 1832

Thomas Ustick Walter wins architectural competition to design Girard College.

## 1833

Construction of the school's original classroom building, originally called the "Main Hall" but now called "Founder's Hall," begins July 4.

## 1834

First petition made that Girard's will and wishes for the construction of Founder's Hall have been grossly violated.

## 1842

Independent committee finds that the Girard trust has lost 400,000 dollars through "neglect and mismanagement."

## 1844

Girard's nieces and nephews sue over the opening of the school, hiring Daniel Webster as their attorney to argue to the U. S. Supreme Court that since Girard forbade ordained ministers on campus, that the school was godless and therefore unconstitutional. The Supreme Court disagrees and upholds the will of Girard.

## 1847

Construction of the original campus (Founder's Hall, the four flanking dormitories, two security lodges and the ten-foot high campus perimeter wall) is completed. Founder's Hall is the second most expensive building at this point in American history, second to only the U. S. Capitol in Washington, D. C.

## 1848

Girard College opens on January 1 with ninety-five students.

## 1851

The body of Stephen Girard is disinterred from Holy Trinity Catholic Church (6th and Spruce Streets) and entombed in the front hall of Founder's Hall, September 30.

## 1854

First class of thirty-three students graduate and are bound out as apprentices.

## 1876

Girard College hosts over 200,000 visitors during the Centennial Celebration. About 100,000 climb on on the Founder's Hall roof to enjoy the spectacular view of Philadelphia.

## 1886

Student population at 1300.

## 1887

In this era, the stunning third floor rooms of Founder's Hall are used as classrooms for 1) French and Spanish, 2) mathematics, 3) natural history, and 4) to display the Stephen Girard relics.

## 1891

First boys of color apply for admission to Girard College. Their applications are rejected.

## 1916

All classroom functions are moved out of Founder's Hall, due to poor acoustics, difficult floor plan and the challenge of heating the huge spaces,

## 1940

Student population reaches an all-time high of 1733.

## 1950

City Councilman Raymond Pace Alexander seeks court ruling on racial segregation of Girard College.

## 1954

In *Brown vs. the Board of Education*, the U. S. Supreme Court rules that separate but equal schools for blacks and whites are unconstitutional. African American boys apply for admission to Girard College and are denied on basis of race. Suit follows on students' behalf seeking to gain admission.

## 1956

Pennsylvania Supreme Court claims Girard College is private and Girard's will cannot be changed; thus, students denied admission again.

## 1957

: The U. S. Supreme Court rules that the will's "whites-only" provision is illegal and that school cannot discriminate because its Board is a state agency. Case returns to lower courts.

## 1965

Cecil B. Moore, as President of the local NAACP begins nine months of picketing at the Girard College front gates. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. speaks outside the Girard gates on August 2, promising that the walls of Girard College, will "come tumblin' down" just like the walls of Jericho.

## 1967

Judge Joseph S. Lord, III of the U. S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, rules that 1) Stephen Girard left his money to the city of Philadelphia, and 2) the city may not be involved in racially discriminatory behavior, 3) so Girard College must integrate by race.

## 1968

The U. S. Supreme Court, agreeing that Judge Lord's decision was correct, refuses to hear the Girard Case.

## 1972

First four black boys enter Girard College on September 11. Two will go on to graduate. 1972: Conditions deteriorate at Girard College and enrollment drops to its lowest level since its earliest years.

## 1974

Charles Hicks is the first African American student to graduate from Girard College.

## 1977

Charles' Hicks younger brother Theodore, graduates as Girard's first African-American valedictorian.

## 1982

Lawsuit is filed on behalf of a female student seeking admission. Girard College trustees request Orphan's Court for permission to admit girls.

## 1984

First female students admitted to Girard College.

## 1993

First female students graduate.

## 2008

Girard College celebrates its 160th anniversary.