

## SPELMAN COLLEGE HISTORY AND TRADITIONS

Spelman, one of the nation's most highly regarded colleges for women, was founded by Miss Sophia B. Packard and Miss Harriet Giles, two friends who were commissioned in 1879 by the Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society of New England to study the living conditions "among the freedmen of the South." Appalled by the lack of educational opportunity for Black women, the missionaries returned to Boston determined to affect change. On April 11, 1881, they opened the Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary in the basement of Atlanta's Friendship Baptist Church with \$100 provided by the congregation of the First Baptist Church of Medford, Massachusetts. The first eleven pupils, ten women, some former slaves, and one girl, determined to learn to read and write.

Totally dedicated, Miss Packard and Miss Giles returned to the North in 1882 for more funds. At a church meeting in Cleveland, Ohio, they were introduced to Mr. John D. Rockefeller, who became Spelman's principal benefactor.

The original name for Spelman College was Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary. In 1884, the institution became Spelman Seminary, named after Lucy Harvey Spelman, mother-in-law of John D. Rockefeller.

### SPELMAN COLLEGE PRESIDENTS

Sophia B. Packard	(1881 -1891)
Harriet E. Giles	(1891 -1909)
Lucy Upton	(1909 -1910) Acting President
Lucy Tapley	(1910 -1927)
Florence Read	(1927 -1953)
Albert E. Manley	(1953 -1976) First African American President
Donald M. Stewart	(1976 -1987)
Dr. Barbara Carter	(January-June, 1987) Acting President
Johnnetta Betsch Cole	(1987 -1997) First African American Woman President
Audrey Forbes Manley	(1997 -2002) First Alumna President
Beverly Daniel Tatum	(2002 - present)

### COLLEGE TRADITIONS AND SYMBOLS

**Founders Day** is celebrated on April 11. A major highlight of Founders Day is the **Founders Day Convocation**, which is preceded by the pageantry of an academic procession in which members of the Senior Class wear their academic regalia for the first time.

The **College Motto**, embedded on the **Spelman Seal**, is "**Our Whole School for Christ.**" It serves as a testament to the faith of the Founders. Though Spelman was founded in a basement of a Baptist church, it has no formal ties to any denomination and has always been open to women from all religious affiliations.

Inside the original **Spelman Seal** is the Star of Service. The Star itself represents the six departments of instruction that were offered at Spelman College; College, Teacher Training, Nurse Training, Music, Academy and High School. Home Economics was later added to the curriculum. The current seal only has five stars because the High School was discontinued.

The oldest building on campus is **Rockefeller Hall**, completed in 1886. The next oldest building is **Packard Hall**, built in 1888. **Sisters Chapel** is named in honor of Mrs. Laura Spelman Rockefeller and her sister, Lucy Maria Spelman. **The Grover-Werden Memorial Fountain** was dedicated on May 31, 1927 and is located in the center of the campus oval. It was built to provide ice-cold water, since it was not available elsewhere on campus on hot summer days. It now represents a fountain of knowledge and a fountain of Life Eternal.

**Class Day** is a tradition in which the senior class comes together to reflect on their years at Spelman. The **Ivy Oration** is delivered by the valedictorian. At the end of the exercises, she plants ivy beside one of the buildings to contribute to the beauty of our campus. Following Class Day, the senior class proceeds to **March through the Alumnae Arch**. The **Alumnae Arch** is located within the campus oval, near the walk between Rockefeller Hall and Reynolds Cottage. Seniors take part in a ceremony symbolic of their leaving the College and going into greater service by following alumnae through the Arch. Alumnae wear white dresses to celebrate this occasion.

The **Bench Ceremony** was initiated by the Class of 1941. This bench, only to be used by seniors, was

made from two beams from an old barn that was used to house the Founders. This barn is important because it was the last remaining building connected with the early days of Spelman. The current bench, made from pews from Sisters Chapel, is placed near the Alumnae Arch each April and remains until after Commencement.

The College colors are blue and white; yet each class is represented by its own emblems and colors, which are passed from the graduating class to the incoming first-year class. The tradition of identifying classes by emblem and color began in 1927. The Class of 1928 began the practice choosing the color blue and the wise owl as their symbol.

**CLASS OF 2007, 2011, 2015**

Color - Yellow

Emblem - The Sphinx

“The Sphinx points out a definite pattern to progress, obedience, honesty, ethical rules, manners, and unselfishness to its followers.”

**CLASS OF 2008, 2012, 2016**

Color -Blue

Emblem - The Owl

“Let our reach exceed our grasp. The Owl represents a wisdom deeper than the spoken word.”

**CLASS OF 2009, 2013, 2017**

Color - Green

Emblem - The Lamp

“The Lamp represents light and guidance. Just as the lamp dispels the darkness, so the members of this class strive to send forth their light.”

**CLASS OF 2006, 2010, 2014**

Color - Red

Emblem - The Eagle

“The Eagle inspires its followers to a superior wing-spread of knowledge and urges them to fly high to mountains of noble achievements.”

The **Class of 1888 dedicated the Class Tree**. It is the magnolia tree located between Rockefeller and Packard Halls. Sophia Packard planted the original tree. The **Class of 1901 dedicated the College Class Tree**. It is the water oak tree between Reynolds Cottage and Sisters Chapel.