

# Rockwood Giddings

August 8, 1812 - October 29, 1839

Interred: Section E, Lot/Row 85, Space 1



**Rockwood Giddings**

A native of New Hampshire, he was called “bookish” as a child and graduated in 1833 from Waterville College in Maine. He studied medicine but answered a call to the ministry. Friends of Grove Cemetery tour guide Mike Harrod says, “He dropped the medicine books to become somebody to pump life into the church. Boy, did he make the right decision!”

In the winter of 1835, Giddings was ordained as a Baptist minister and visited Shelbyville where he received a unanimous call to become the preacher at the local Baptist church. In a short time, his church was thriving and he had earned recognition as a leading Kentucky Baptist and noted evangelist.

While serving in Shelbyville he married Shelby County resident Mary Hansbrough (December 10, 1818 - March 11, 1839). Giddings accepted the leadership role of Georgetown College the autumn of 1838. Sadly, his young bride died within 12 months of their vows.

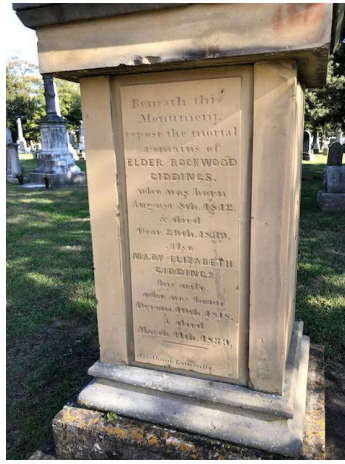
In 1838, Georgetown College had a few students, two teachers, a small amount of money, and one wooden building. Harrod said, “The College was looking for someone to do for the college what Giddings had done for the (Shelbyville) church.” Upon election as Georgetown College’s fourth president, only the third to fill the position, the 26-year-old Giddings told the College Board, “Everybody on this Board who disagrees with me theologically can quit.”



**Giddings Hall at  
Georgetown College**

Georgetown College was on the verge of closing but under his leadership, the cornerstone was firmly placed for the college’s future success. In the first eight months of his presidency, Giddings raised \$80,000 through his fervent speeches to Baptist congregations and other groups in about one-third of Kentucky’s counties. Tragedy struck on October 13, 1839 at Long Run

Baptist Church. Giddings collapsed after eight days of preaching and died of exhaustion on October 29.



**Giddings Monument – Grove Hill Cemetery**

He and his wife were buried in the Shelbyville Baptist Church yard but were re-interred at Grove Hill in 1868, along with her father Joel (1778-1844) and mother Lucey (?-1860). Two of Joel Hansborough's sisters were killed September 1781 during what is known as the Long Run Massacre when Indians attacked the Painted Stone Station in what was the first settlement in this area.

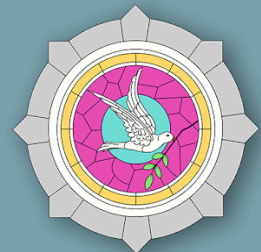
Georgetown College erected an obelisk of Kentucky marble at the college in Giddings' memory. Giddings had commissioned the construction of the first permanent building on the campus to be named Recitation Hall. In tribute to the young president's vital contribution it was renamed Giddings Hall to be "commemorative of his Christian character and of their gratitude for his self-sacrificing services in behalf of the cause of education and religion."

Tributes to Giddings in 1859 reported "he was beloved by all who knew him... He was a great favorite with his aged brethren in the ministry, many of whom still living cherish his memory with the feelings of a parent for a departed child."

**This Monumental Differences page was created by: Susan Smith (SCHS Junior) and John Jones (SCHS Junior).**

**Monumental Differences** – A Project Based Learning Partnership of Shelby County High School Junior History Class 2024, Friends of Grove Hill Cemetery, Calvary Cemetery Friends, and Shelby County Historical Society.

Thanks to all the students and educators from SCHS who worked with us to provide this historical record for our community.



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