

Father Patrick Francis Healy & The Healy Boys

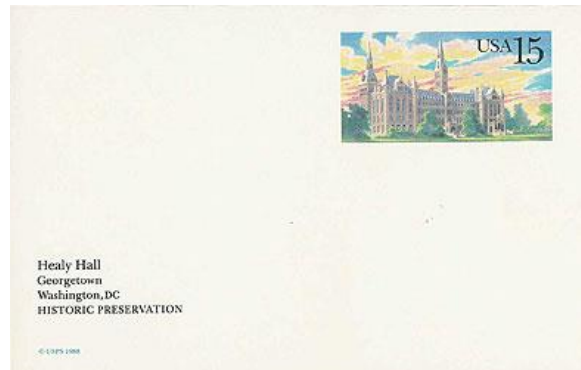


Patrick Francis Healy was born February 27, 1830 to Michael Healy, an Irish immigrant and Mary Eliza, a mulatto slave. As a result of the Georgia Land Lotteries, a process by which individuals were given land to populate what were then rural, unpopulated areas, Michael Healy acquired several plots of land including a farm and a bustling cotton plantation. The bustling cotton plantation just off the Ocmulgee River outside of Macon, Georgia is where Michael Healy met the beautiful slave woman Mary Eliza.

In 1829, Michael Healy, so entranced with the mulatto slave, purchased her and took her as his wife. By the winter of 1830, they welcomed their third of four male children. When it came to Michael and Mary, the power of love prevailed over fear because in Georgia in the early 1800's, interracial marriage was illegal and the children of such a union were legally considered slaves.

The Healy's lived happily without incident until the four boys were old enough to attend school, then reality set in. Michael Healy's wealth could not buy his mulatto children an education in 19th century Georgia. Michael Healy looked north for schools that would educate his boys, but found that he was met with opposition there as well. After an exhaustive search, the Healy's sent Patrick and his brothers Hugh, James and Michael to Quaker schools in Flushing, New York, and

later in Burlington, New Jersey. The boys eventually found themselves at the newly founded Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts for undergraduate studies.



Understanding the cost and value of their education, the Healy boys flourished to become notable firsts in their respective fields. On July 26, 1865, Patrick Healy would become the first [African American](#) to earn a Ph.D. from the University of Louvain, Belgium. His brother James would become the first black bishop in the American Catholic Church. Sherwood would go on to be the seminary director in Troy, New York, and rector of the Cathedral in Boston. Baby brother Michael, named after his father would take a different path from seminary and join the United States Coast Guard. In the USCG, Michael would leave his legacy and become known as "Hell Roaring Mike." He would also be the first African American to command a United States government battleship and become the inspiration for Jack London's book, *The Sea Wolf*.

Upon completion of his doctoral studies, Patrick Healy would become the first African American president of a major college or university. The small Jesuit University went by the name of Georgetown College and Healy would hail as its “second founder” for the efforts he realized during his tenure. He can be credited for improving the curriculum as well as the construction of a building which bears his name and is the oldest, most historic structure on the centuries old campus. Healy also expanded and improved the medical and law programs, and founded the alumni association. Under Healy’s tenure Georgetown College earned accreditation as Georgetown University.

On January 10, 1910 Patrick Healy was laid to rest in the Jesuit cemetery on the campus of the school he was credited with recreating.