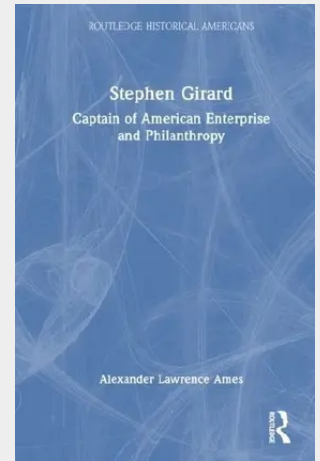


Stephen Girard

Captain of American Enterprise and Philanthropy

This book is the first systematic scholarly analysis of Stephen Girard's views on race, gender, class, and enslavement, connecting the details of Girard's life with litigation surrounding his estate and school. By the time Girard died, the merchant banker was one of the wealthiest men in the United States. He shocked the people of his adopted city and nation by posthumously devoting his fortune to philanthropic projects—most notably the construction of a charity school for White orphan boys. For nearly 200 years, Girard's name has been mired in controversy because of his last will and testament, which became the centerpiece of numerous legal battles. With narrative sophistication and probing analysis, this book combines a succinct overview of Girard's life with much-needed context for making sense of his decisions and legacy. In doing so, it further addresses controversial topics in the modern U.S. public sphere—freedom of religion, institutional racism, gender equality, and the relationship of private philanthropy to the public good—directing the reader to reconsider the health of American republican institutions in the twenty-first century in the light of Girard's history and legacies. Augmented by many historical images and primary-source documents, including the text of his much-debated last will and Supreme Court arguments about his philanthropy, this book is an ideal resource for students and scholars of American history, Atlantic world studies, legal history, history of education, and history of philanthropy.

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