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A Preface

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PREFACE

In 1984, I was appointed College Historian by President Thaddeus Seymour and granted a year's sabbatical to write a centennial history of Rollins College. For a number of reasons, but mainly because I returned to full time teaching, the first-draft manuscript remained unedited. Now thirty years later, with the earlier issues resolved, the history deserves to see the light of day because Rollins College played a critical role in Florida's past as well as in the nation's higher educational history. The college achieved national recognition in the 1930s when it adopted John Dewey's theories of progressive education. As a measure of its national prominence, Sinclair Lewis, in his 1932 Nobel Prize speech, cited Rollins College as only one of four colleges in the United States that exhibited high standards of innovation and of intellectual life.

Therefore, given its national significance, I thought it essential to write a full account which would tell the whole story, which would depict a struggling little college on a sparsely settled Florida frontier slowly building character from adversity as well as from successes, from failures as well as accomplishments, from conflict as well as community. I have tried to portray a college guided by trustees, administrators and faculty who were at times less than competent and at other times almost heroic, and of students who were sometimes indifferent learners and at other times agents of change. This is the story of an institution's life and as with all life, its character was formed by remarkable successes as well as by debilitating adversities.

The readers will also perceive that this account is an institutional history of a college evolving over time. By the nature of such an approach, those who were most responsible for shaping the college—the trustees, presidents, administrators and the faculty—occupy

most of the story. I do spend time discussing students and their collegiate life in those moments where they help shape the institution. I have also attempted at every period to place the college in a larger context of the changes in the higher education and the influences the larger society.

I have chosen perseverance as a theme of my story of the college's first one hundred years. Perseverance may be defined as steadfastly committed to a mission in the face of difficulties and delays in achieving success. The reader will see the college struggling with adversity in almost every administration. Yet it not only endured but was strengthened by all that adversity. Rather than defeating the college, the many incidences of hardship strengthened it, preparing it to meet the challenges of the future with the greater confidence. The college endured these tribulations and thereby secured its liberal education mission for generations to come.

One of Hamilton Holt's most endearing conventions was the way in which he began faculty appointment and reappointment letters. At most other institutions, such letters began bureaucratically: "I am pleased to offer you (re)appointment to the faculty for the following academic year." This was not Hamilton Holt's style. His letters began: "I call you to serve for another year on the faculty of Rollins College." What today seems a quaint expression struck a responsive chord with me. Holt had chosen a word often used in the Victorian era to mean loving an institution or someone enough to make a commitment without a sense of personal gain. Shortly after I arrived in 1963, during the administration of Hugh McKean, I observed a personal attachment to the college among the older faculty I had never experienced in other institutions. My research in the Archives revealed that this sentiment had been going on for multiple generations. Within a short time, I too had

become infected with an incurable affection for Rollins. The opportunity to tell the story of the college's past considerably reinforced that attachment.

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