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# Learning by Doing in the Segregated South: *The Robert Hungerford Normal and Industrial School for African Americans in Central Florida*

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## Abstract

The development of the Robert Hungerford Normal and Industrial School is an important chapter in the history of African American education in Florida. Through careful examinations of the school publications, records, archival correspondence, and newspaper clippings, the article seeks to document the history of the Hungerford School from its founding in the late nineteenth century until it became a public school in the Orange County, Florida in the early 1950s. Following Booker T. Washington's ideals, the school was established with a great emphasis on economic self-help and individual advancement for African Americans. Its mission was to teach vocational skills to Black youths in addition to a good work ethic, sound morals, and fundamental human values. By focusing on its curriculum development, student work, personnel, facilities, school operations, financial struggles, and community support, this research also sheds lights on the challenges and endeavors of African Americans and the race relations in the Jim Crow era. For over fifty years in the segregated South, Hungerford had become a cornerstone of the community and served the educational needs of African American youths in Central Florida and beyond. Even today, the school still remains an emblem of Black pride and hope in the historic African American community of Eatonville, Florida.

## Introduction

On August 15, 1887, guided by the belief that "colored people of the United States solve the great race problem by securing a home in Eatonville, Florida, a Negro city governed by Negros" (*Eatonville Speaker* 1889), a group of 27 African Americans came together to incorporate the town of Eatonville, Florida, one of the first self-governing all-Black municipalities in the United States. The group was led by Joseph E. Clark, an ex-slave from Georgia who lived with his wife on land and orange grove owned by his employer, Josiah Eaton (Mitchell & Magbie

2003). The first mayor of Maitland when it was founded in 1885, Eaton was a former White Union naval officer who sympathized with the cause of African Americans. However, it was his friend Lewis Lawrence who played a more active role in the creation of the first Black subdivision in Central Florida.

In the postbellum South, despite some notable social progresses in the Reconstruction Era that sought to redefine the relationship between African Americans and Whites, newly freed enslaved people still faced both harsh economic adversities and severe racial discriminations in the late nineteenth century (Bill of Rights Institute n.d.). Many White proprietors refused to sell to African Americans, and local town and county authorities often denied essential services to Black communities. An industrialist from Utica, New York, Lewis Lawrence was an abolitionist, philanthropist, "moral capitalist," and a seasonal resident of Lake Maitland, Florida. He was part of a modest group of white landowners who were happy to sell sufficient land to African Americans for a black settlement in Central Florida, and the newly formed "colored village" was named Eatonville to honor his friend Eaton (French 2018).

The 1887 incorporation meeting took place in the Oddfellows Hall in Eatonville, a building donated by Lewis Lawrence to the new community (Stewart 2022). The original city limits consisted 112 acres acquired by Joseph Clark and others, including a piece of real estate property deeded by Lawrence, which he presented to the trustees of the St. Lawrence African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. Founded in 1882 and named in his honor, St. Lawrence AME was the first African American church in the area (French 2018). Today, the religious institution still provides vibrant faith and other important services to the community. A second hallmark institution in the historical Eatonville was the Hungerford Normal and Industrial School for African Americans, which was founded in the late nineteenth century following the model of the Tuskegee Institute of Alabama (Stewart 2022).

## Founding of the Hungerford School as "Second Tuskegee" in Eatonville

Robert L. Hungerford was born in 1862 to Edward C. and Anna D. Hungerford in Chester, Connecticut. His father was a civil engineer by training and property owner in both Connecticut and Florida. After completing his medical education in New York, young Hungerford established his practice in Seymour, Connecticut. Due to his health conditions, in the 1880s Robert also spent wintertime in his father's residence in Maitland, Florida, where he befriended a small group of African American youths. Taking a strong interest in their welfare, he taught them how to read and write, and encouraged them to pursue education to improve their lives. While in town, he also provided free healthcare to local Black residents. Unfortunately, when tending an African American boy with typhoid fever, the young physician contracted the highly contagious disease and died on September 22, 1888 (*Hungerford School* n.d.).

Among the African American students mentored by Robert Hungerford was Russell C. Calhoun, who was

born in Mississippi and moved with his family to Central Florida at a young age. Recognizing the importance of education, Calhoun later enrolled at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, where he met his future wife, Mary Clinton. Upon returning to Eatonville, the Calhouns were inspired to establish a similar institution for African American youths in Central Florida. In 1898, when Edward C. Hungerford learned about the plan for a vocational training school in Eatonville, he donated a large piece of land in memory of his only son who lost his life a decade earlier. Hence, the original forty acres just outside the western city limit became the campus of the private school. To express their gratitude and to honor the young doctor who made the ultimate sacrifice to improve the lives of others, Russell Calhoun and other Black leaders in Eatonville decided to name the new academy the Robert Hungerford Industrial School (*Robert Hungerford Vocational School Bulletin 1940-41*).

On February 24, 1899, with supports from the community, and by planting one and half acres of sweet potatoes, a modest vocational training program for African American youths was launched in Eatonville, Florida (*Fourth Annual Report* 1903). "The beginning was small… One girl was taken home and taught how to cook, wash, iron, keep house and sew and an acre and a half of land was planted in sweet potatoes by the men of the place, for whom the women cooked dinner" (Jordan n.d.). Since both Calhouns had taught public school before, they strove to serve as the role model for their school and students. Their own horse, cow, chickens and hogs were carefully looked after, and their flower garden and orange grove inspired those about them to beautify and make profitable their own land. By the close of the first year, the school had received from E. C. Hungerford of Chester, Conn., and others of his family, the gift of 160 acres of land, as a memorial to Robert Hungerford.

The budding vocational training program for African Americans in Central Florida was made financially possible by strong support from citizens such as E. C. Hungerford and not only from local communities but throughout the country. The first cash donation was made by Miss Mary Brown of Winter Park, Florida, and the second gift of $400 came through Booker T. Washington of Tuskegee Institute (Blackman 1927). A Tuskegee graduate himself, Russell Calhoun subscribed to Washington's philosophy of vocational education for African Americans of the time, and he was determined to build what he called "a second Tuskegee" in Eatonville, Florida.

A prominent American educator, author and orator, Booker T. Washington was a dominant leader in the African American community at the turn of the twentieth century. Born into slavery in Virginia in 1856, Washington enrolled at the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in 1872. After the Civil War, Hampton Institute was founded in 1868 by former Union General Samuel C. Armstrong for the practical development of leadership of African Americans. Its mission, "educate the whole man is the idea; fit the pupil for the life he is likely to lead," was defined by Armstrong himself (Herron 1932). By holding a janitorial job and earning

scholarship from the school, Washington graduated with flying colors three years later. His Hampton years had profoundly shaped his beliefs as an African American in the Jim Crow South in the late nineteenth century.

Among his multiple works on race relations and African American education, Washington was known for his Atlanta Exposition speech, which he delivered on September 18, 1895 to a largely white audience at the Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta, Georgia. In that address, Washington enthusiastically endorsed the development of industrial training and vocational education for African Americans. “Cast down your bucket where you are -- cast it down in making friends in every manly way of the people of all races by whom we are surrounded. Cast it down in agriculture, mechanics, in commerce, in domestic service, and in the professions” (Washington 1906). Recognizing Blacks counted for one third of the Southern population, he strongly encouraged African Americans to seek opportunities for economic advancement and wealth creation and find their places in the worlds of commerce and industry. However, in terms of race relations, Washington as a conservative Black leader believed “In all things purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress” (Ibid.).

At the time of its delivery, Washington's speech was well received and regarded as "revolutionary" by both African Americans and Whites (Bauerlein 2004). Washington was hailed as the "Wizard of Tuskegee" for his political wisdom and his skills in the creation of a nationwide political machine based on the Black middle class, white philanthropy, and Republican Party support (Harlan 1983). However, his 1895 address was later criticized as the "Atlanta Compromise" by other African American leaders especially W. E. B. Du Bois. While both Washington and Du Bois regarded education as the best means to improve the lives of African Americans in the post-Civil War era, Du Bois saw segregation robbed Blacks of any dignity that Washington hoped them to gain through economic achievement and began to argue that economic equality would not be possible without political rights (Moore 2002). Noting that Washington was too accommodating to white interests, Du Bois and his supporters sought more actions to remedy the disfranchisement of African Americans and gradually shifted their supports to civil rights activism, especially after Washington's death in 1915.

Nevertheless, at the end of the nineteenth century when the Hungerford School was founded in Eatonville, Central Florida still had an overwhelmingly rural and agricultural economy, where the majority of African Americans were employed in farming or domestic works of wealthy white residences. By focusing on teaching and learning critical skills for employment, the new vocational training program at Hungerford was designed to provide an opportunity for the uplift of African Americans at time when these opportunities were few and far between for Black youth in Florida.

Inspired by Washington’s beliefs in education, the school followed the successful Tuskegee model. On July 25, 1901,

the cornerstone of the first dormitory on campus was laid; and on March 18, 1902, the Booker T. Washington Hall was dedicated with Mrs. Washington giving a speech for the event (Eatonville 1902). On March 27, 1902, Washington himself gave his endorsement to the new school: "This is to state that I have known Mr. R. C. Calhoun both as a student at the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute and as a worker since his graduation, and I have full faith in his honesty, and believe that he is capable of building up a school in Florida that will be of help for our people, and I bespeak for him a hearing wherever he may go." (*Fourth Annual Report* 1903). In addition, in his 1907 *Negro in Business*, Washington described the founding of the Hungerford School and praised Calhoun as "one of those leaders for the creation of whom Tuskegee exists, and he was filled with the enthusiasm for unselfish and devoted service to his fellows which we attempt to instill at Tuskegee" (Washington 1907). Three years before his death, Washington toured Hungerford and lent his continual support for the vocational program in Eatonville (Jackson 2003).

Over years, Washington's wisdoms had a substantial, lasting impact on the growth of the Hungerford School. In February 1909, Hungerford students resolved to support forever the teachings of Booker T. Washington. To implement their pledge, they formed mothers' and women's clubs in the communities around Eatonville, made displays for the county fairs, and taught new agricultural methods to local farmers (Enck 1976). The school brochures routinely featured motivating quotes by Washington, such as "The country which was not safe with ignorant slaves cannot be safe with ignorant freemen," and "A man might as well fill his head with so much cheap soup as with learning, unless he is going to use his knowledge" (*Hungerford School Annual Bulletin Spring 1945*).

## The Aspiring Mission and the Practical Curriculum for Black Youths

Following Washington's political philosophy, Hungerford was developed with a great emphasis on economic self-help and individual advancement for African Americans. The goal of the school was to "teach a vocational trade or skills to Black boys and girls. In addition, a good work ethic, sound morals and human values and proper social grace were fundamental to all of the educational program" (Mitchell and Magbie 2003). Perhaps the following motto best summarizes the spirit of the vocational training program in Eatonville for African Americans: "'Not a coin in his hat, but a tool in his hand.' That is right. No better thing can be done for a boy or girl than to teach them how to do things. Teach them the use of tools and how to use them. Give the boys and girls training along practical lines; give them a vocation and you start them off in a way that will spell success all through their lives" (*Hungerford Co-Operator* 1931). Therefore, Hungerford's aim was "to encourage, inspire and otherwise help to make useful men and women; better citizens out of the girls and boys committed to our care" (Ibid.).

Clearly, in the Jim Crow South at the turn of the twentieth century, there was a great need for the education of African Americans in Central Florida.

According to one report, about 50,000 African Americans lived in Central Florida and the Black population in Orange County was around 14,000; however there was no other industrial school was specifically designed to serve the educational need of African American community (*Fourth Annual Report* 1903). More strikingly, although Blacks counted for one-tenth of the population of the United States, they received only one-half of one percent of the benevolent gifts and legacies of the country, which means that 99.5% of the gifts and donations went to help white population (Hungerford School 1938). Charles. W. Dabney, former assistant secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, further pointed out: “There is no vocational school for Negro youth in this part of Florida. The rural schools for Negro children give them only a limited training in the 'Three R's' [reading, writing, and arithmetic]. The great majority leave school at the end of the fourth grade. There are four hundred untrained Negro boys and girls of this class in Orange County alone… Hungerford is now organized as an agricultural and industrial high school and will teach the boys agriculture and shop work and the girls home economics, poultry raising, etc.” (Heron 1932).

Over the history of several decades, the school’s mission was further refined. According to the 1938-39 bulletin, Hungerford’s purpose was “to meet the needs of modern Negro students for an education based on vocational and avocational training in work which is most likely to be available for them; to encourage fine character and unselfish leadership, under the guidance of teachers of High Christian Character” (*Hungerford School 1938-39*). In the ensuing years, although its core charge remained relative stable, Hungerford had further outlined a series of six ambitious learning goals and objectives for its students:

1. **RELIGIOUS:** Hungerford aims to develop in each student the Christian attitude toward life. It seeks to provide Christian leadership for the Christian Church. While Hungerford is not a denominational school, sound principles of Christian character are stressed in the training of each student.
2. **ACADEMIC**: Hungerford aims to stimulate in its students a desire for knowledge that reflects itself in understanding, based upon clear thinking.
3. **SOCIAL:** People must live in a changing world, a world made up of social groups ranging from the family to the nations of the world. Realizing this, Hungerford aims that its graduates shall be worthy members of these social groups. It aims that they shall cultivate an appreciation and a knowledge of social order which makes for human betterment and Christian living - that they may stand fast, holding to those values which endure.
4. **AESTHETIC:** Hungerford aims to lead its students to the realization that there is but "one delight - the beautiful."
5. **PHYSICAL:** Hungerford aims to develop the whole man, and for this reason, courses in Physical Education and Health are taught.
6. **VOCATIONAL**: The school be-

> lieves in "Learning by Doing," and aims to send forth graduates who are self-sustaining members of society, imbued with a code of Christian Ethics that constrains them toward an attitude that is consistent with social betterment (Robert Hungerford School 1940-41).

Given Hungerford was set up as an agricultural and industrial high school, it was not surprising that academic and physical were among the core requirements. However, it is interesting to see that both social skills and aesthetic ability were identified as important learning goals. More noteworthy is that the Christian faith was listed first while vocational training last among the six objectives. Nonetheless, the real-life, hands-on learning experience was still emphasized throughout its program: "Hungerford students learn by doing. *They earn to learn and learn to earn" (Hungerford School* n.d.). According to its *Fourth Annual Report* (1903): "We gave instructions in 12 industries to 105 students last year, the chief being blacksmithing, Wheel-wrighting, Carpentry, Farming, Cooking, Sewing, Laundering, Poultry Raising and Dairying." As a vocational school, Hungerford also strove to maintain a balance between academic requirements and field practices. "All of the forenoon and evening we give to classroom work—with a course of study mapped out, for the present, to cover the common English branches. Each student is given thorough drill in all lessons, and at no time are books neglected for the industrial work" (Ibid.).

On February 24, 1902, exactly three years after its founding and the original planting season, the first commencement was held in Eatonville. Two years later, at the commencement in 1904, prizes were given for the first time to students for the most faithful all-round work, the best knowledge of *Bible*, and the most orderly room (Jordan n.d.). After two decades of development, Hungerford further expanded its outreach in Central Florida. By 1920, the school had grown to 350 acres of land and 12 buildings, along with 13 teachers and 119 students, among them 47 males (Sheats 1920). To serve the growing educational needs of the African American community, Hungerford had established three departments: Academic, Mechanical and Agricultural. Classes in the Academic Department ranged from kindergarten up through the senior high school. In the Mechanical Department, practical courses were offered in carpentry, blacksmithing, shoemaking, tailoring, printing, painting, and glazing; while in Agriculture, the main work consisted of various truck-gardening work (Ibid.). According to Blackman (1927), "the school has upwards of a hundred boarding pupils, and a number of day scholars; it also carries on a night school for adults."

Although Hungerford had some primary and evening programs, its core curriculum focused on grades 6-12. Its elementary courses covered grade 4 to 8, and high school courses for grade 9 to 12, both complying with the state requirements and using the state-approved textbooks (*Hungerford Co-Operator* 1931). In the segregated South, since a proper educational experience for African Americans was rather limited, the school gradually developed its program

in vocational training in Central Florida. Besides occupational work in industrial arts, blacksmithing, carpentry, bookkeeping, typing, home economics, dressmaking and agriculture, Hungerford also expanded courses in college prep with subjects such as English, history, general science, biology, algebra, geometry, and physical education. Since Hungerford was a private institution, every student was required to make his or her arrangement to attend the school. It was only through a special agreement with the Orange County in 1938, that young African Americans residing in West Winter Park were able to attend Hungerford as commuting students by daily bus (Hall 2005).

Following the gender stereotypes of the time, Hungerford had different curricula for male and female students. To meet the program need, a young graduate with her B.S. degree in Domestic Science from the Hampton Institute was recruited to teach female students various works around kitchen, dining room, bedchamber and bathrooms. Likewise, clothing and tailoring were taught as a part of specialty courses. In addition, office management skills including shorthand and typewriting were also offered to young women who aspired to pursue careers in business. For male students, besides academics, they would be given training such as carpentry, printing, equipment maintenance and shop repair work, and take lessons in soil management, truck gardening, planting vegetables, etc. (*Hungerford Co-Operator* 1931). Since this was a vocational training program, chores were distributed to students outside of the classroom to teach them important lessons of taking responsibilities, such as maintaining the school's chicken coops, gardens, dairy farm, classrooms, and dormitories.

By the 1940s, Hungerford further organized its school into the general, agricultural, home Economic, and business divisions, and the requirements for graduation were sixteen units based on the Carnegie Unit of course credits, excluding credits for physical education, remedial reading and English, or music (*Hungerford School Bulletin* 1945). Each student had to spend at least one year, normally the last year, in regular attendance at Hungerford to be eligible for a diploma. While the majority of its students were from Central Florida, some came from Miami, Ft. Lauderdale, Ft. Myers, Tampa and St. Petersburg, as well as several other states in the South. For those students interested in study beyond high school, Hungerford's curriculum met the requirements of the Florida State Board of Education, and its graduates were accepted in major Black colleges and universities across the region. According to one report in 1938-39, thirty-eight percent of Hungerford graduates of the past five years entered colleges such as Hampton, Tuskegee, and state institutions in Florida, Georgia and North Carolina (*Hungerford School* 1938-39). For those who decided to work after Hungerford, typical employment included housemaids, waitresses or cooks for female graduates, and butlers, chauffeurs or garage assistants for males.

## Student Work at Hungerford

Like any other educational establishments, students were at the core of

the Hungerford School. At its founding, initial students varied in age from seven to thirty-five years old. From early on, the school offered both boarding and commuting options. In 1903, Hungerford had 39 students in its boarding program, coming from seven counties in Florida, while 66 day-students came from Eatonville—making the total enrollment at 105. Most of them were required to work each morning since they could not pay the full cost of attendance of $8.50 per month. On each weekday, the school had a morning bell at 5 a.m. and retiring bell rings at 9 p.m. to ensure eight hours of sleep for students. In the afternoons and Saturdays, Hungerford offered various hands-on learning programs such as blacksmithing, carpentering, painting, trucking, farming, poultry raising, dairying, cooking, sewing laundering and domestic science. The school also had an active music curriculum to lift the spirit of the work (*Fourth Annual Report 1903*).

To enroll at Hungerford, before August each student was required to submit an application along with the registration fee of $7.50 for boarding or $5.00 for day student (*Hungerford Co-Operator* 1931). All new students would take an examination before being assigned classes, and no student would be admitted to the High School Department unless he or she could demonstrate satisfactory completion of elementary works. To manage the student population and "promote the welfare and happiness of all," Hungerford also established specific rules and policies. For example, regular and punctual attendance upon study hour, recitation, chapel hour, all religious exercises and all public exercises were required of every student. The approved dress code for ordinary occasions was simple, inexpensive and neat; extremes in dress, shoes, jewelry, etc. that were not in good taste anywhere were prohibited (Ibid.). Visiting off the campus was discouraged. The use of profane language, tobacco, or intoxicating drinks would not be tolerated. Other than "the accepted standards of good manners, morality, good citizenship and good will… a student may be dismissed as being undesirable without having any specific charge placed against him" (*Hungerford School* 1945).

Being a private school that relied on community support to sustain its operation, Hungerford also had strict regulations in fiscal management. All students must register, pay their bills and report for classes immediately upon arrival. No students could enter classes until all bills were paid. Every student had to come with the money needed for books as well as with the required entrance fee. Students without books were dropped from class and forfeit all credit in such class. All bills were payable in advance on the first of each month. Students were taken from classes and assigned to work if bills were not paid by the tenth. No refund of tuition or fees were made if student left on his own or was dismissed, and no student would graduate who was in debt to the school (*Hungerford Co-Operator* 1931). Despite the tight restrictions, Hungerford did offer limited scholarships: those from any elementary school in Florida who had the highest scholastic average in his or her class received a full tuition scholarship ($45.00), and they were required to maintain a scholastic average of "C' or better and dem-

onstrate characteristics of leadership at Hungerford (Ibid.).

To encourage leadership development and recognize both academic and vocational accomplishments, Hungerford also gave out multiple awards to its students. Top on the list was the Booker T. Washington Medal, awarded annually to the senior who had shown the most interest in Hungerford traditions. For example, in 1945, academic awards given annually included a prize to the student achieving the highest scholastic average; an award to a student who had produced the best specimen of painting, drawing or other fine arts; and an award by the Women's Auxiliary of Negro Veterans of WWI to the student with the best grade in American history. The vocational recognitions included a prize to the male with the best manual arts work in wood or metal work; an award to a female with the best work in home economics; and an award to a male with the greatest diligence in farm operations, exclusive of flower gardening. The leadership awards included a prize to the graduating student who made the greatest contribution to the development of a high-standard of conduct in the student body; a prize to the student with the best attendance record at rehearsals and concerts of the Hungerford Singers; and the principal's award to the student who had shown the most interest in the upkeep and beautification of the grounds (*Hungerford School* 1945).

At Hungerford, students also had vibrant extra-curricular activities. The school's newsletter *Co-Operator* was first launched in 1905. In addition to the Student Council and the Science Club, there were the Chapel Committee and the Youth Fellowship, a religious organization that conducted the Sunday Vesper Services. Other student organizations included the Debating Society, which sponsored forums and debates on relevant current topics. The New Farmerettes was a female student group interested in all phases of agriculture, from planting and growing gardens and flowers to maintaining dairy and raising poultry and swine. The Home Economics Club consisted of female students interested in homemaking. The Athletic Club included both male and female students in all athletic endeavors. Winter Park resident and student class president Clyde Hall once fondly remembered his winning seasons on Hungerford football games of 1940 and 1941, including beating the Jones High School of Orlando for the first time in school history, and hosting the Florida A&M football team on campus, since the racial segregation laws that time prevented them from staying in the white hotels in Orlando (Hall 2005). However, in terms of reputation and community impact, the most notable student group was the Hungerford Singers, the school's mixed chorus with a female group and a male quartet, who gave concert performances each Sunday afternoon during the tourist season and made numerous trips to hotels and organizations throughout the state (*Hungerford School* 1945).

Although Hungerford was set up as a non-sectarian school, developing the Christian character for its students was underscored throughout its program, and the phrase *Jehovah My Strength* was selected as the school motto in 1902 (Jordan n.d.). While "the school is strictly non-sectarian," *Hungerford Co-Opera-*

*tor* conspicuously declared that "careful attention is given to the moral and religious life of the students. The *Bible* is regarded as of such importance that it is given a place in the curriculum. *Bible* is required of all students" (1931). According to an early report:

No teacher or student is, at any time, spoken to in regard to their church connection, but at all times we endeavor to teach the principles of true Christianity. Our students sing Grace three times a day; we have devotional exercises each morning at the opening of school; prayers each evening; general prayer meeting every Friday evening, in which each student takes a part, as he or she likes; we visit the Sunday schools of the village Sunday mornings; we have Sunday school in our chapel at 2 o'clock and prayer service Sunday evening. The whole school attends preaching service twice a month… Each teacher and student must attend all religious exercises. (*Fourth Annual Report 1903*).

Another study noted that Hungerford administrators judged its religious work to be "exceptionally high" and claimed that its customary Week of Prayer had converted all but four students to Christianity (Enck 1976). As the school bulletin proudly stated, "Hungerford is a school where a faculty of Christian men and women train the sons and daughters of careful parents" (*Robert Hungerford School 1940-41*).

Among school publications, the character-building component of its vocational training was highlighted at Hungerford throughout the years. As noted in the 1931 school newsletter: "We propose to develop character in our students. Character is nurtured by ideals from within one's self. These ideals will grow best when they find expression in the performance of some task… Send us your boys and girls, then watch their character grow, as it finds expression in the better performance of each common task" (*Hungerford Co-Operator* 1931). As a private school for vocational and avocational training of young African Americans, Hungerford aimed "to encourage fine character and unselfish leadership, under the guidance of teachers of High Christian Character," and enable their graduates "to become self-respecting, reliable, hard-working American citizens, capable of supporting themselves and their families by their own industry and skill" (*Hungerford School* 1938). Even by the mid-1940s, developing Christian character was still promoted in school campaigns. "Instruction in the *Bible* is a part of the curriculum. Character-building is uppermost in the minds of all members of the faculty, and is effected through work, study and play. The faculty and boarding students are regular church attendants. Students develop their religious life partly through their study of Negro spirituals" (*Hungerford School* 1944).

At Hungerford, the length of a regular school year was about eight months, starting in early September and ending in late May, with a Christmas break between the two semesters. One state report noted that Hungerford graduates settled mostly in the South, though quite a few made their homes in the North; at least 90 percent followed the trades they learned at school, or became efficient teachers and leaders in their communities (Sheats 1920). Being a vocational training program, students

were required to work a substantial part of their time; accordingly, Hungerford generated various products and provided valuable services to the community. For example, in 1902-03, in addition to one wagon and one buggy, its blacksmith and carpenter shops made wheelbarrows, tools and tool handles, horseshoes, tables, benches, bedsteads, washboards, ladders, etc., and general repair work amounted to $238,60. In addition to milk, butter and eggs, the school farm produced about 1,500 pounds of cassava, 50 bushels of sweet potatoes, 25 bushels of peas, 5 barrels of velvet beans, 2 tons of hay, and 25 cords of manure. In sewing classes, female students mended 200 pieces and made 350 items of mattresses, pillows, sheets, pillowcases, shirts, aprons, shirt-waists, dresses, sofa pillow covers, crochet shawls, Battenberg collars, table cloths and center pieces, and handkerchief bags. The canning program produced 300 jars of peaches, pears, apples, plums, blackberries, guava jelly, wild grapes and strawberries, and the laundry turned out 8,000 pieces and made 300 pounds of laundry soap (*Fourth Annual Report* 1903). Many of the items were exhibited at the local Tuskegee Negro Conference held at the Hungerford Chapel on Nov. 27, 1902. This civic program attracted 275 delegates, most of them farmers from Central Florida. Over years, the school actively participated in local fairs and other community events. For instance, in the Orange County Fair in 1937, in an open competition with other African American schools in the region, Hungerford was awarded 107 blue ribbons, 75 red ribbons, and some cash prizes for its student products. In the following year, Hungerford was officially requested by the fair organizers not to compete, since the superiority of its exhibits discouraged other schools from competing, which Hungerford took as a high compliment to its work (*Hungerford School* 1938).

## Hungerford's Personnel, Facilities and School Operations

Because of the "separate but equal" doctrine confirmed in the Plessy v. Ferguson Supreme Court decision of 1896 (National Archives n.d.), the Florida legislature had passed specific laws to ensure the racial segregation in the state' education systems. Even for vocational programs such as Hungerford, the school could only recruit African American teachers and enroll Black youths. Following the Tuskegee model, Hungerford had three of its charter teachers from Tuskegee, Russell and Mary Calhoun, and the instructor in blacksmith. Two other teachers attended Florida schools and the woman's principal came from Connecticut. Because of the community demands and the need for a night school for those who could not attend the day program, initially each teacher had to work twelve to fifteen hours a day, and the average salary was less than $18 per mouth (*Fourth Annual Report* 1903). Later on, given its vocational curriculum fulfilled the need of African American youths in Florida, through a special arrangement with the Orange County, the state began to provide one teacher for the school year, but the expenses for the rest of faculty still relied on philanthropy support from the community (Sheats 1920).

R. C. Calhoun served as the founding principal of Hungerford until his death on November 10, 1910, then his wife Mary C. Calhoun served as the second principal for the next twelve years. She was followed by Elijah Chisholm, S. Baker, and J. Jordan (Blackman 1927). After the Calhouns, Lorenzo E. Hall was a noteworthy leader in the history of Hungerford. Growing up in Alabama, he studied agriculture and received his B.S. from Hampton. After serving as a schoolteacher and working for the federal government in the South, he became the principal of Hungerford in 1931 and held that position until 1940. Meanwhile, his wife, another Hampton graduate in home economics, served as the dean of women and assistant principal (Herron 1932). Under their leadership, Hungerford recruited additional teachers from Hampton and Clark University and sustained the school's growth in the ensuing years. Another notable couple in the school history were John and Lillian Hall. A Jackson and Rust College graduate, John Hall served as the school principal from 1940 to 1949 while teaching English and Economics at Hungerford; his wife Lillian B. Hall, a graduate of Fisk University, worked as vice principal and taught Music and English in the 1940s (*Hungerford School* 1940, 1941 and 1945). Hungerford's last principal was Frank M. Otey, who served from 1949 to 1967. A Tuskegee and Florida A&M graduate, Otey moved to Eatonville in 1938, taught science and physical education at Hungerford, and lived through its conversion to a public high school in the early 1950s and the transition to the Wymore Technical Center in the late 1960s (Oliver 1991; Comas 2002).

During the 1930s, a major lawsuit that lasted five years seriously threatened the very existence of Hungerford, when the former principal John Jordan attempted to take over the ownership of the school property by foreclosing a mortgage he had acquired, which amounted to $22,391.05 including principal, accrued interests and other claims (*Hungerford School* n.d.). However, Jordan's attempt was valiantly opposed by the Board of Trustees led by Rev. Richard Wright. An immigrant from Dublin, Ireland and a graduate of Brown University, Wright did pastoral work in Massachusetts with the Congregational Church before resettling in Winter Park, Florida, where he took strong interests in the welfare of the Hungerford School and served as its chairman of the board for more than a dozen years (*Orlando Sentinel* 1944). Wright believed it was the board's sacred duty to honor the wishes of the original donors and perpetuate the school for its purpose of educating African American youths in Florida. Fortunately, the Circuit Court of Orange County agreed with the school board, and the Supreme Court of Florida finally declared in 1937 that Jordan's mortgage was illegal, null and void, and ordered it to be cancelled. The Circuit Court and the Supreme Court further declared that Hungerford School was an essential part of the educational system for African Americans in Central Florida, and as such it must be safeguarded as a high-class private school under the protection of the Attorney-General of the State of Florida (Feltus 1990).

At Hungerford, besides human capital, land and buildings were the

most valuable tangible properties. As noted earlier, E. C. Hungerford was a primary benefactor of the school, who contributed a large track of family real estate for the initial development. The first building on campus was erected with funding support from the community, which was named the Booker T. Washington Hall and dedicated in 1902. Constructed by students as a classwork, the two-story building contained a kitchen, dining room, music room and meeting space on the first floor, and living space for female teachers and students on the second floor. By 1903, Hungerford had 200 acres of land, one dormitory, one blacksmith and wheelwright shop, printing press, household goods, reading room, fences, tools, two cows, three calves, 120 chickens, turkeys and guineas, hogs, etc., and the total value of school property was estimated at $5,286.75 (*Fourth Annual Report* 1903). In late 1903, Hungerford also bought three old buildings and relocated them to the school grounds. With student labor, those wooden structures were converted into kitchen, laundry, dining room, and commissary. By the end of 1904, the school's property value had increased to $12,741.25 (Jordan n.d.). In the following year, with the completion of the principal's cottage, the campus had ten buildings, large and small. Eight additional acres of land were cleared for garden and farms, and total annual enrollment was at 102, including 52 boarding students from eleven counties and 50-day students (Ibid.).

Along with the Hungerford family, George B. Cluett was another major donor in the early development of the school. A leading businessman from Troy, New York, Cluett provided $8,000 for the construction of the men's dormitory in 1904, which was named the J. W. Alfred Cluett Hall in memory of his brother. Cluett also gave $4,000 for the purchase of an orange grove near the campus. In addition, he provided funding for the construction and annual maintenance of Hungerford's dining facility, which was named the Calhoun Hall to honor its founding principal. After the original, wood-structure Cluett Hall along with the school barn and the dairy was destroyed by fire in 1923, a stone-structured Cluett Memorial Hall was rebuilt largely with student labor a few years later (Blackman 1927). The building included the library and five classrooms on the first floor, teachers' quarters on the second floor, and living space for male students on top floor. The other notable structures on campus included the Domestic Science Building and the Richard Wright Hall for women's dormitory, which was named to honor the school's long-serving board chairman. By the late 1930s, the school property consisted of 365 acres for farm operation, grazing land for cattle, an orange grove, large chicken yard, athletic field, and basketball courts. Hungerford's campus comprised five large buildings and three smaller ones, and the total value had been estimated at about $58,000 (*Hungerford School* 1938). With community support, the campus was eventually furnished with a dining hall, library, chapel, manual training workshops, laundry facility, home economics laboratory, barn, farmland as well as business teaching facilities.

Being an active vocational training program in Central Florida, student tu-

itions and labor contributed markedly to the school's financial operations over the years. When Hungerford was first established, many students could not afford the cost of attendance of $8.50 per month. Therefore, they were required to work to cover their expenses. Throughout its history, Hungerford constantly faced serious financial challenges and counted on incomes and labors from students for its survival. After three decades, the school was still struggling to stabilize its operations. According to the *Hungerford Co-Operator* (1931), all boarding Students were required to pay $5.00 registration Fee, $1.50 for incidentals, and $1.00 each for athletics and ordinary medicine; then the monthly payments included $3.00 tuition for high school students, $2.50 for those below 8th Grade, and $14.00 for room, board, lights, meals and laundry. Day students would pay the same tuition without room and board, and girls may do their own laundry without paying the laundry fee of $2.00 per month, but special music sessions in vocal or instrumental would require additional $2.50 per month.

At the outbreak of World War II, Hungerford's property increased to 400 acres, and its farm curriculum was emphasized as an important part of program for national defense. "Most important of all is the training of young negro students in farming and in self-support, that they learn to face hard times bravely, cheerfully, and with the satisfaction which comes of knowing the rewards of hard work, intelligence and personal initiative" (*Hungerford School* 1941). By the mid-1940s, student registration fee increased to $7.50, tuition per semester was $22.50, and boarding fee was $12.00 per month. In addition, every student must do some work in the maintenance of the institution, a limited number may earn a part of their expenses at Hungerford, and a few may do work over and above their "duty work" and receive credit toward payment. Depending upon the difficulty and time required, jobs paid $2, $4 and $6 per month, which was applied to tuition, room, electricity and laundry costs (*Hungerford School* 1945). While credit was granted for certain "jobs," no student may earn his board but pay in cash, and no student may earn more than $54 per year when taking the full schedule of classes. A student may, however, take less than the full load and work more in farm, laundry and kitchen and earn much more than $54 per year (Ibid.). In comparison, around the same time, the general fee including tuition, room and board at Rollins College, a private liberal arts institution in the nearby affluent Winter Park, Florida was at $1,150 per student (*Rollins College* 1944-45).

## Financial Challenges and Community Support

As a private institution, Hungerford relied largely on philanthropy support from community for its growth and development. In 1903, Hungerford's total operating expenses were $3,103.27, plus a school debt of $370.32, but all donations only amounted to $2,687.75 (*Fourth Annual Report* 1903). After listing all gifts large and small from Florida and other parts of the country, the same report also detailed the essential resources required for school operation:

Our needs for the coming year are $1,600 for teaching, 2 good mules for farm work, they can be bought for $300.00. Our farm can and will become one of the strong forces for the maintenance of the school, if some friend or friends will give us $500.00 for that purpose. There is not a sawmill in four miles of the school and $800.00 put into a small sawmill would furnish us with lumber and at the same time aid many young men through school. Our boys are now all quartered in a small building 25 x 35 feet. We have the plans for a dormitory which can be erected with student labor for $4,600.00. This much needed building will accommodate 92 boys, the most of whom have already made application to enter next fall (Ibid.).

Then Principal Calhoun passionately pleaded: "Will you kindly aid us a little in the above needs when such aid will do so much good? (Ibid.). Shortly after, in 1904, a donor in Kansas offered three mules, a horse and two cows to the farm stock, and C. H. Morse of Chicago gave much needed windmill tower and fans.

Throughout the years, the leadership team at Hungerford made multiple attempts in raising critical funds to sustain its operation. One such effort was to draw visitors to Eatonville so that the school could demonstrate to potential donors its valuable work in improving the lives of African Americans in Central Florida. According to the school report, more than 200 tourists visited Hungerford in 1902, most of whom contributed some funding support (*Fourth Annual Report* 1903). In her autobiography, the famed African American author and anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston, who grew up in Eatonville while her father served as city major and a member of the Hungerford's Board of Trustees, vividly described her personal experience of sitting in Calhoun's classroom in the early 1900s:

The Whites who came down from the North were often brought by their friends to visit the village school. A Negro school was something strange to them, and while they were always sympathetic and kind, curiosity must have been present also. They came and went, came and went. Always, the room was hurriedly put in order, and we were threatened with a prompt and bloody death if we cut one caper while the visitors were present. We always sang a spiritual, led by Mr. Calhoun himself. Mrs. Calhoun always stood in the back, with a palmetto switch in her hand as a squelcher. We were all little angels for the duration, because we'd better be. She would cut her eyes and give us a glare that meant trouble, then turn her face towards the visitors and beam as much as to say it was a great privilege and pleasure to teach lovely children like us (Hurston 1942, 33-35).

As a private institution located in a frontier region with very limited resources, Hungerford focused its fund-raising efforts primarily on white patronage. When it was founded in 1887, Eatonville was named after Josiah Eaton, a white settler and the first mayor of Maitland, Florida. As French (2018, 66) pointed out, "Eatonville's reputation as a model Black community, worthy of patronage and protection by neighboring Whites, rested in part on the public endorsement and charitable support of wealthy white 'snowbirds' who invested considerable social and political capital in the start-

up venture. As members of a racially subjugated caste, frequently targeted by hostile Whites who resented their aspirations to freedom and equality, Eatonville's Black founders understood the value of white patronage." Besides the town's name, Eatonville leaders also publicly acknowledged and celebrated their white patron saints by naming the town's first church after Lewis Lawrence and the Robert Hungerford Industrial School for the Hungerford family.

In the early twentieth century in the Jim Crow South, despite its political autonomy, many Eatonville residents still made a living by working in orange groves and homes of wealthy white landowners in nearby towns. Noted the school bulletin, "Our business and homes in this community need Hungerford School to help train Negroes to become the best kind of co-workers in the upbuilding of Florida… Hungerford is not merely a school. Its force is felt in the community, state and country." (*Hungerford School* n.d.). In promotional brochures, the close proximity to more affluent white communities in Central Florida were frequently emphasized with descriptions such as: Hungerford School, near Maitland and Winter Park; two miles of north Winter Park; ten minutes ride from Winter Park, etc. In addition, Hungerford also used the school's choir as an active fund-raising tool in community outreach. Multiple references noted its musical performances in local churches, hotels, and social gatherings in Winter Park and Maitland. According to the school description: "A notable achievement at the School is their singing. Friends come out every Sunday afternoon at 4 o'clock to hear the far-famed Negro Spirituals, sung by young people who have a song in their hearts. Visitors are always welcome. Many go home impressed with the work and send a substantial donation so that the work may continue" (*Hungerford School* 1938).

Following the successful models of Hampton and Tuskegee, Hungerford also launched multiple fund-raising campaigns and pleaded directly to sympathetic supporters in the North. Promoting Booker T. Washington's notion of industrial education for African Americans, school leaders made repeated claims that its vocational training was for Hungerford students to "have every opportunity for an education" and a chance at the "abundant life." After listing various urgent needs for its students and curricular development each year, the school publications were always filled with catching expressions such as: "Wouldn't you like to make an investment in humanity?" "The larger the investment, the greater the dividends," "Thou shalt not dare to pass thy neighbor by, without recognizing his hunger for life" (*Hungerford School* 1938-39 & 1940-41). "Penned in an earnest, matter-of-fact tone, they were designed to give the white reader an impression of humble self-sacrifice, hard work, and strong character consistent with the best of the Washingtonian tradition" (Enck 1976, 76). However, unlike Hampton and Tuskegee, Hungerford had neither a high profile nor resources to sustain its capital outreach in northern states. The school had to face challenges from the increasing competitions among Black solicitors, while some fraudulent appeals and cases of

wastefulness made the fund-raising an extremely difficult task. Furthermore, continual curricular expansions and standard improvements also demanded substantial resources and sustained investment. After taking over the school when her husband passed away, Mary Calhoun complained to Washington of her inability to raise money in the North and warned that she might "have to go in debt if friends do not come to my rescue" (Ibid., 86). On several occasions, Hungerford noted that it needed "an endowment of at least $300,000, which will make the school, free from dependence on the charity of its friends (*Hungerford School* 1938-39). However, this ambitious goal was never materialized, and Hungerford had to constantly solicit funds from its more affluent "friends" both local and national.

Nevertheless, despite multiple economic recessions and a lack of strong industrial base in the region, many of its "friends" and community members had indeed stepped forward and did what they could to support Hungerford's operation as an independent school for more than half a century. Some leading citizens of Winter Park, Maitland, and Orlando had served on Hungerford's Board of Trustees and lent their support for the vocational training of young African Americans. Notable names include Loring Chase, real estate developer and co-founder of Winter Park; George Cluett, President of Cluett Peabody; Reverend Richard Wright, Winter Park Congregational Church; Nathalie Lord, Rollins College employee and Booker T. Washington's former teacher; and Buel Trowbridge, a faculty member at Rollins. In later decades, besides its Board of Trustees, the school also established a Bi-racial Advisory Board to expand its outreach and support in Central Florida, which included many prominent community members such as Hamilton Holt, Irving Bacheller, Joshua C. Chase, John Martin, Ray Stannard Baker, Isabelle Sprague-Smith, and Fannie French Morse. While a few were Winter Park residents, civic leaders and donors, several of them were members of Rollins academic community.

## Hungerford School and Rollins College

Over the first half of the twentieth century, the Hungerford School's relationship with Rollins College is especially noteworthy. Founded in 1885 by New England Congregationalists who sought to bring their style of liberal arts education to the Florida frontier, Rollins is a private, four-year coeducational institution and the first chartered college in the state. As the only institution of higher learning in the greater Orlando area from the late nineteenth century until the 1960s, Rollins has contributed substantially to the growth of education in the Sunshine State. Miss Nathalie Lord, who worked at Rollins from 1897 to 1908 along with her sister Frances Lord, was the first notable link between Rollins and Hungerford. Growing up in Maine, Lord attended Vassar and taught at the Hampton Institute during 1873-1880, where she met and mentored Booker T. Washington. Deeply impressed by "his quiet, unassuming manner, his earnestness of purpose and faithfulness," Lord

gave special instructions to young Washington in elocution, and later helped him rehearse his commencement speech at Hampton (Lord 1902). At Rollins, while her sister taught Latin, Lord served as secretary to the faculty and President William Blackman. Because of her experiences working with African Americans and her relationship with Washington, Lord actively involved herself with the newly founded Hungerford School. She served on its Board of Trustees for multiple years and wrote essays to promote the growing vocational training program in Central Florida (Lord 1908, 1910 & 1912). In *The Story of My Life and Work and Working with the Hands*, Washington fondly recalled the mentorship he received from Lord at Hampton and praised her support for Hungerford in later years (Moore 2012).

Through Nathalie Lord, William Blackman, the fourth president at Rollins, also took a special interest and lent his support to Hungerford. On February 11, 1916, he issued a strong endorsement: "I have been familiar with the work of this admirable institution for the past thirteen years, and am glad that I can commend it heartily and without hesitation to all who are interested in the education of the colored people. It is doing a great work on the very small means. I know of no more worthy or appealing cause" (Words of Commendation 1916). Besides Blackman, William R. O'Neal was another early Hungerford supporter at Rollins. A lawyer by training, O'Neal was a businessman, banker, Rollins' long-serving treasurer, and trustee member. As a Republican, he sympathized with the plights of African Americans in the South. On March 6, 1916, he wrote on behalf of Hungerford: "I have known of the work done by this School for many years and know it to be one of the greatest works being done for the advancement of the Negro race. It is entitled to, and should receive the support of all interested in the uplift and betterment of the Colored People" (Ibid.).

On May 17, 1917, Rollins President George Morgan Ward delivered the annual commencement speech at the Hungerford School. However, it was during the administration of Hamilton Holt that Rollins established a more substantial relationship with Hungerford. A journalist, internationalist, and educator, Holt served as Rollins' eighth president from 1925 to 1949, and it was under his leadership that Rollins emerged as a national leader in pragmatic liberal arts education. On social issues and race relations, Holt took a very liberal stand of his time and strongly condemned the segregation, racial discrimination and violence against African Americans in the South. Believing in equity for all, he was a founding member of the NAACP, and the commencement speaker at Tuskegee in 1922 (Holt 1922). During the Holt era, more concrete steps were taken to strengthen the connections between Rollins and the African American communities in Central Florida. Edwin Grover, Professor of Books at Rollins, helped Zora Neale Hurston relaunch her literary career after her return to Eatonville in the 1930s, to whom Hurston dedicated her novel *Moses, Man of the Mountain* to honor Grover (Hurston 1939). Hurston's first novel, *Jonah's Gourd Vine* (Hurston 1934), was dedicated to Robert Wunch, a theater professor

at Rollins, who helped bring Hurston's African American folklore performance *From Sun to Sun* to Rollins in 1933 (*From Sun to Sun* 1933; O'Sullivan and Lane 1991). Among faculty and students, fund-raising efforts were organized to support the vocational training program in Eatonville. According to Hungerford's newsletter: "We wish to express our sincere thanks to all those who are doing so much in helping us with the re-organization. Especial thanks go to Rollins College for the most valuable gift of opera chairs to put in our Chapel. Many others have given money and labor. With such cooperation Hungerford can go forth fitting the boys and girls for a useful life" (*Hungerford Co-Operator* 1931).

More notably, the Hungerford School Committee at Rollins was organized by Dean Enyart with Professor Ralph Lounsbury appointed as chairman (Enyart to Holt, May 5, 1932). At its meeting on May 19, 1932, the Committee discussed the various needs and fund-raising efforts for Hungerford, recommended that college personnel not to use derogatory language when describing African Americans, and expressed their concerns for "a good deal of opposition by west coast counties to the repeal of the law making it a minimal offense for a white person to teach in a negro school" (Hodson 1932). At its October 29, 1932 meeting, Professor Royal France reported:

> *He had succeeded in getting the consent of the American Civil Liberties Unions to finance a case in the courts, testing the Florida law, which states that it is a crime for a white man to teach a negro. However, the Hungerford School does not wish to become involved in the affair as they are afraid of clans attacking them, so we will have to building up a case independently… Dr. [Edwin] Clarke then remembered that he had broken the law this summer by giving a Florida negro an examination within the state in connection with his work in Atlanta University. He consented to being arrested for the act, and means of procedures to be investigated (Sprague 1932).*

Unfortunately, Rollins was soon engulfed in a major crisis known as "the Rice Affair" that led to the terminations of several key faculty members including both Ralph Lounsbury and Robert Wunch, official AAUP censure, and the eventual founding of Black Mountain College in North Carolina. While no other archival records can be located to document the outcome of Rollins' proposed legal challenge against the segregation legislation in Florida, it is still quite striking to note Hungerford's reluctances for its fear of racial violence from local KKK members, which was a clear indication of Hungerford leaders trying to avoid antagonizing white Southerners in the age of Jim Crow segregation.

Nonetheless, a more prominent event, the Conference on Vocational Education of Negroes, was held at Rollins College, on February 6, 1933. The speakers for first panel included C. A. Vincent (Hungerford Board of Trustees), Arthur D. Wright (President of Slater and Jeanes Funds), J. R. E. Lee (President of Florida Agricultural and Mechanical College for Negros) and W. T. B. Williams (Dean of

Tuskegee Institute). The panel explored the development of Hungerford and then discussed the aims and methods of vocational education for African Americans; the second session took place at the Knowles Memorial Chapel, with President Hamilton Holt presiding. Notable speakers included Thomas Jesse Jones (Director of Phelps-Stokes Fund), Arthur Howe (President of Hampton Institute), S. L. Smith (Director for the South of the Rosenwald Fund), L. E. Hall (Principal of Hungerford School), and Richard Wright (Chairman of Hungerford Executive Committee), who examined the "need of vocational education in Florida" (*Sandspur* 1933).

To lend additional institutional support, President Holt vowed to strengthen the college relationship with Hungerford. "Much as Rollins needs help from its alumni and friends, Hungerford School needs aid more, and I am proud that we have taken Hungerford, as it were, somewhat under our academic wing" (Holt 1935). Led by Irving Bacheller, a Winter Park author and member of Rollins Board of Trustees, a series of events were organized to benefit the vocational training program in Eatonville (Bacheller 1935). The Hungerford School Committee was expanded into the Rollins Race Relations Committee, which sought to improve relationships with African Americans in Central Florida. After the brutal lynching of Claude Neal in Marianna, Florida, the Committee drew up strong resolutions to condemn the racially motivated crime. Signed by Hamilton Holt, four deans, and 450 students, faculty and staff members, the letter was sent to President Roosevelt, Governor Sholtz, Florida congressmen and Orange County legislators (Clarke 1934). In the following years, Rollins saw further encounters with Hungerford students. After Rollins' Chapel Committee contributed funds for equipment greatly needed by Hungerford, on January 16, 1935, Hungerford singers gave a recital of "Negro Work Songs and Spirituals" in the Recreation Hall to express their appreciations to Rollins community (*Sandspur* 1935a). Then on April 11, another program was presented by the Hungerford choir in the same venue, where voluntary contributions were collected for the benefit of the school (*Sandspur* 1935b). Even when Hungerford was on the verge of being converted to a public school, Grover still made a last-minute effort to save the school's educational training program for African Americans, including a proposed affiliation as a preparatory school for the Bethune-Cookman College of Daytona Beach, Florida, where Grover had served on its Board of Trustees for years (Grover 1950).

## The Aftermath and Conclusion

Throughout its history of over fifty years as an independent school for African American youths in Central Florida, Hungerford had faced numerous challenges that included multiple economic recessions, a major legal contest, two world wars, the gradual shift in social focus of American education, the waning support for vocational training programs across the country, and more significantly, the rising oppositions against the segregated education system in the South. The severe disfranchisement of African Americans

eventually led to the growing calls for civil rights activism in the country. Even before Brown v. the Board of Education (National Archives 1954), the public schools in the segregated South could no longer ignore the educational needs of African Americans as they did decades ago. Accordingly, public support for private programs in Black vocational training such as Hungerford began to diminish.

With very limited resources and manpower, Hungerford constantly struggled for its survival. During the height of the Great Depression, its enrollment declined to only 33 students, even Doyle E. Carlton, 25th governor of Florida, had to step forward and pleaded for public support to sustain its educational program (*Winter Park Herald* 1932). In March 1944, a major fire destroyed the Cluett Hall along with six classrooms, equipment, a library, and a dormitory for ninety students that required $100,000 to restore (*Winter Park Topics* 1944). Around that time, as the country centered all efforts to win World War II, both students and staff were called to serve in military services, among them the school's science teacher and athletic coach Frank Otey and student Clyde Hall, who served three years in the US Navy as a carpenter and later received his diploma from Hungerford in 1946 (Hall 2005). With declined enrollment and further deteriorated facilities, Hungerford fell on hard times. After its appeals for community support, a successful campaign was launched that was led by William F. Pelham of Winter Park, chairman of the Hungerford Board of Trustees (*Winter Park Topics* 1947). Still, it took several years to raise the much-needed critical fund to resume its normal operations. By the late 1940s, it had become abundantly clear that Hungerford would not survive without substantial support from the local governments or external organizations with sufficient resources.

On June 24, 1949, Mrs. J. S. Kirton, the board secretary and treasurer, issued a public letter to the school's friends and community supporters: "Hungerford has reached a crossroads. It must either become a public school, or else develop into strictly a boarding school with closer supervision of its educational program than obtains at present" (Kirton 1949). By then Hungerford had only 48 boarding students in a total enrollment of 250. The board preference was for Hungerford to remain a private institution and "an important place in the Christian Education of Negro youth." According to William H. Gray, President of Florida A&M College of the time, there was a need for a boarding school for African American youths in Central Florida. After some considerations, the school trustees entered a 99-year lease with the Committee on Negro Work of the Presbyterian Church of the United State (Ibid.). However, despite the board's recommendation, the agreement with the Presbyterian Church never materialized. Since the vast majority of its student population resided in the Orange County, and the school district already subsidized expenses for Hungerford teachers and facilities for some years, finally in 1951, Hungerford became a part of the public school system with funding support from the Orange County Board of Education (*Orlando Sentinel* 2023).

The conversion of Hungerford to a

public high school in Orange County had met with some protests. As a result of the agreement, the Orange County Public Schools (OCPS) took over Hungerford including hundreds of acres of land, buildings and other facilities for $16,571, one tenth of the property value of the time (Ibid.). Some outspoken, loyal supporters of the school felt such an action betrayed the wish of original donors who desired Hungerford to remain an independent school for Black youths in Central Florida. Mary McLeod Bethune, renowned African American educator who was also a friend of Russell Calhoun, visited the campus in 1949 and publicly declared her support for Hungerford. "I am deeply interested in seeing the Robert Hungerford School at Eatonville, retained as a private institution in affiliation with Bethune-Cookman College, which does not carry a High School. There is nothing more needed in Florida, as I see it now – educationally – than a good private finishing High School for Negro youth – not just for the people of Florida, but for those who would come to us from all over the United States" (Grover 1950). Constance Hungerford Fenske, the only daughter of Robert Hungerford, also sent a telegram in opposition. "My family has poured many thousands of dollars into the Hungerford School to prepare colored youth for their life work, and build Christian character. My whole family protest strongly that 50 years of successful effort should not be thrown away, and a secular High School with no vocational or religious training be substituted in its place" (Ibid.).

Despite the controversies, the transition proceeded as scheduled. After OCPS took over, Hungerford facilities were subsequently improved with funding from the county's school bond. After functioning as a neighborhood high school in Eatonville in the 1950s, the decade of the 1960s saw the integration of Orange County Schools, and Hungerford eventually became a countywide vocational-technical education facility for those who did not plan to continue their education beyond high school. In 1967, following the district's geographical naming policy, the Hungerford High School was renamed the Wymore Career Education Center and Technical School, since it was located on Wymore Road. However, many Hungerford alumni in Central Florida vocally objected the measure by the county school board, and an ensuing lawsuit was filed to no avail (Briggs 1967; Yothers 1973). As an alternative school, Wymore drew youths from across the county who had behavioral issues at other area schools, and those low-performing students with no local roots further tarnished the reputation of the program. No longer a neighborhood school, it could not serve the educational needs of the immediate community either. Finally, in 1999, Wymore was renamed Robert Hungerford Preparatory High and reopened in 2000. However, as a magnet school specialized in science, technology, business and culinary arts, the school with declining enrollment and shrinking budget could not sustain its growth in the ensuing years. The district had to supplement the school's operation substantially each year, while facing millions of expensive renovations in the near future. After weighting its cost and benefit options, in March 2007, the OCPS Board voted 4

to 2 to phase out the magnet program, despite the passionate pleas from enrolled students and multiple calls from local residents for transforming Hungerford into a new community school in Eatonville (Hobbs 2007).

Notwithstanding its final closure, the development of the Hungerford School is an important chapter in the history of African American education in Florida. At the end of the nineteenth century, because of the "separate but equal" doctrine of 1896, the Florida legislature had passed laws to ensure the racial segregation in the state' education systems. When Hungerford was first founded, Central Florida still had an overwhelmingly agricultural economy, where the majority of African Americans were employed in farming or domestic works of wealthy white residences nearby. Undoubtedly, there was a great need for the education of African Americans in the Jim Crow South. A Tuskegee graduate and a disciple of Booker T. Washington, Russell Calhoun recognized the importance of education, and was determined to build "a second Tuskegee" in Eatonville, Florida. Following Washington's ideals, Hungerford was established with a great emphasis on economic self-help and individual advancement for African Americans.

The goal of Hungerford was to teach a vocational trade or skills to Black youths in Central Florida, in addition to a good work ethic, sound morals, and fundamental human values, so that they would not only make an honest living and improve their lives, but also grow to become good citizens and useful men and women of the community. Although it was set up as non-sectarian, the character-building component of its vocational training was emphasized at Hungerford. In the first half of the twentieth century, because of the discrimination measures in the South, a proper educational experience for African Americans was rather limited; therefore, Hungerford developed its curriculum in vocational training to meet the urgent economic needs of the African American community in Central Florida. By focusing on teaching and learning critical skills for employment, the program at Hungerford provided a chance for the uplift of African Americans at a time when these opportunities were very limited. Following the Tuskegee model, Hungerford students learned by doing through real-life practices. They built houses, raised gardens, and cultivated fruit groves; they worked in carpentry, garages, and mechanical shops; they cooked meals, washed laundries and sewed clothes. They not only learned basic literacy skills but also gained substantial hands-on working experiences, and many of them grew to become pillars of their community after graduation.

As a private institution located in a frontier region with very limited resources, Hungerford School relied largely on philanthropy support from the community and focused its fundraising efforts on White patronage for its survival and growth. In addition to its primary mission in education, through the dedication and hard work of its school leaders, faculty, staff, and students, Hungerford had provided valuable services to the local community and its various products greatly benefited residents of Central Florida. For over fifty years in the segregated South,

the Hungerford Normal and Industrial School had become a cornerstone of the community and served the educational needs of African American youths in Central Florida and beyond. Even today, Hungerford still fondly remains in people memory as an emblem of Black pride and hope in the historic African American community of Eatonville, Florida.

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