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## Chapter 04: The Search for Stability, 1903-1923

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## **CHAPTER 4**

### **THE SEARCH FOR STABILITY, 1903-1923**

The search for George Morgan Ward's successor was unexpectedly brief. Shortly after Ward's resignation, a wealthy supporter put forward the name of William Freemont Blackman, a professor of Sociology at Yale University. The Executive Committee investigated his background, found him interested in the position, and recommended him to the Board of Trustees in January 1903. The following month, the Board appointed Blackman as the fourth president of Rollins with a salary at \$2,500 per year. (1)

Although lacking in fund raising and administrative experience, Blackman brought to Rollins a quality educational background, an academic record, a scholarly reputation and a brilliant mind. He held a BA from Oberlin (1877) and after receiving a BD from Yale Divinity School in 1880, he served for ten years as a Congregational minister in Ohio, Connecticut and New York. While he was pastor of the Congregational Church in Ithaca, New York, he worked on a doctorate at Cornell University, where, in 1893, he graduated with a PhD in Sociology. Following a year of study in Germany and France, he accepted a position as Professor of Christian Ethics in the Yale Divinity School. In 1901, Yale Graduate School appointed him lecturer in Social Philosophy and Ethics, a position Blackman held when Rollins called him in 1902.(2)

Blackman's active and interesting family would leave an indelible stamp on the college and Winter Park. His wife, Lucy Worthington Blackman, whom he met and married while a pastor in Stubenville, Ohio, was a woman of varied talents. She was educated in private

schools and afterwards traveled widely in the United States and Europe. Her gracious touch transformed the President's house into a cultural center both for the college and for the community. Their home became a place where educated and artistic folk gathered frequently for teas, receptions and musical recitals. By all accounts a superb hostess whose tea parties and dinners were memorable social events in Winter Park, Lucy Blackman immediately distinguished herself as an active worker on behalf both the college and the town. Shortly after arriving, she created a Domestic Science course that trained students in the management of the household. She taught the credit course herself until funds from the college became available for a full-time professor. Early on she formed the Ladies Auxiliary of Rollins College, forerunner of the Rollins Women's Association, that provided faculty wives a way of participating in college life. In one campaign, the association raised over \$2,000 for the college endowment fund. Mrs. Blackman served on the executive committee of the Florida Audubon Society, was Vice-President of the Winter Park Woman's Club, and in good Victorian fashion, she devoted a large portion of her time serving her husband "with selfless devotion."<sup>(3)</sup>

The Blackmans brought with them three young children: Berkley, 17, Worthington ("Win") 15, and Marjorie, 12. With just five years separating the oldest and the youngest, the three children were close companions. They were also gregarious children who made friends easily outside the family circle. At New Haven, their home had been a center for all children of the neighborhood, and this tradition changed little in Winter Park. The President's house in Winter Park became a beehive of perpetual activity as friends of all three children moved freely in and out. Still, the close-knit family made time for themselves. In the morning and almost every evening the family gathered around the piano to sing hymns and other

favorites, with the president playing while Lucy and the children formed a vocal quartet. The Blackman quartet became an institution in the Winter Park community as well. Lucy sang soprano, Marjorie, alto, Win tenor and Berkley bass. During the summer months they sang for funerals: "I wish I had a dollar," Marjorie wrote later, "for every time we stood at a yawning grave and sang 'Sleep Thy Last Sleep Free From Care and Sorrow.'"(4)

With its large, spacious rooms, and its rambling veranda, along with its cooling shade trees, the President's home (the old Frederick Lyman house at the corner of Interlachen and Morse Boulevard) was an ideal setting for entertainment and relaxation. Lucy, queenly and gracious, and President Blackman, dignified and scholarly, endowed the home with its warm-hearted atmosphere. One visitor described the home as "not prim but orderly. There were large easy chairs, piano open with music on it, books lying about, not books on display, but books to be read and reread. It was a home of a cultured American family."(5) The *Sandspur* depicted a student's view of the home shortly after the Blackmans arrived: "The hospitality of Dr. and Mrs. Blackman adds greatly to the social life of the college." the editor wrote and singled out one special evening of entertainment: "Japanese lanterns illuminated the veranda and the visitors enjoyed the spacious grounds sloping to Lake Osceola where launches were waiting for boat-loving guests."(6)

Given Blackman's lack of college administrative experience, one could reasonably assume that the Trustees had been attracted to the new President because of his scholarly, educational background, and therefore they saw in him the opportunity to raise the academic prestige and quality of the institution. Either the Trustees told him or he and his family assumed (the records are not clear on this point) that fund-raising would *not* be his primary concern. According to his daughter, he was led to believe that "he would devote

his brilliant mind, his fine education, his forceful personality to administrative duties, to lecturing about Rollins through the state, to increasing the number of students, and especially to improving scholastic standards.”(7) Ward had come with similar assumptions, leaving a lingering suspicion that at least some trustees, anxious to secure a president, dared not discourage such an assumption. Blackman's vision of himself as simply a college administrator and a scholarly spokesman received a rude awakening before he had time to properly assume office. On the morning prior to his inauguration (scheduled for the afternoon of April 2, 1903), the Trustees at the request of a wealthy physician and eccentric philanthropist named Daniel K. Pearsons called a special session of the Board. At that meeting, Pearsons presented the Board with a stunning proposal: "I will give you \$50,000 if you will raise \$150,000. I will give you one year to raise the money. This money is for a permanent endowment, only the income can ever be used. The original sum of \$200,000 must be kept intact forever for the use and benefit of Rollins College.”(8)

After a brief discussion, the Trustees unanimously accepted Pearson's offer. Along with the acceptance statement the Board offered this stirring homily to Blackman: “Rollins College has vindicated its right to existence by noble history: its field of usefulness is rapidly extending, and the need for it is more imperative than ever.” Characteristically the Board shifted the incredible burden of raising \$150,000 (more than 2 million in today's dollars) in one year on the shoulders of the new president. So much for Blackman's belief that he would not spend his time as a fundraiser. He reluctantly accepted the challenge, but he probably had no other choice. The gift did indeed seem to offer a golden opportunity to establish a much-needed endowment. In the end, it proved to be a burdensome mixed blessing. Trying to meet the terms of the gift probably damaged Blackman's health. Former

presidents had struggled mightily to raise as much as twenty-thousand a year. Blackman was expected to find over seven times that amount in the same period of time. True, the original gift from Pearson could act as a spur for a matching gift campaign, but the prospect facing a new president must have seemed overwhelming.

Throughout the following year Blackman received able assistance from Oliver C. Morse, a fundraiser hired during the Ward administration, and Treasurer William O'Neal, but most of the burden was his. He scarcely had the opportunity to tour the campus before he was "money-grubbing," to use his daughter's phrase. "in person and by letter, entreating, begging, pleading, exhorting, traveling to knock on hard doors, and harder hearts, wearily sitting in anterooms to talk to the wealth and various foundations, taking disappointment and even humiliation." (9) Through almost constant effort, by February he managed to raise all but \$40,000 of the required sum. In his first annual presidential report he reminded the trustees that the college was still short of the goal, and he also issued a warning: "failure would create a psychological effect that would be fatal to the college." Despite this plea, on the deadline of April 14, 1904, the collected funds for matching were still \$20,000 short. Morse, O'Neal and Blackman spent the day searching desperately for pledges, and when the day ended, the entire sum had been collected or guaranteed. (10)

Upon receiving Pearson's check, the president called for a rousing celebration. Classes were dismissed, games and entertainment were organized throughout the day and a celebration dinner concluded the day's activities. At the dinner, President Blackman noted that the Trustees contributed half the funds, while the rest came from seventy-three separate contributors. He then read a letter from Pearson congratulating the college on its success, proposed a toast to Pearson and then led the community in a college yell. With its

first endowment the college had taken a giant step toward financial stability. The long-range psychological and economic benefits would be even more impressive.(11)

The benefits of the Pearson gift did not to come without immediate cost. Although Ward had managed to make significant improvements in the college's financial condition, Blackman had nonetheless inherited a \$7,000 operating deficit. During his first year, unable to devote his attention to that problem, the college was unable to meet day-to-day operating expenses. Consequently, at the end of Blackman's first year the deficit had doubled to over \$15,000. This "perplexing debt," as Blackman described it, would plague his administration from the beginning to the end. Not a little of that burden was attributed to the diversion of so much of the college's energy was spent raising matching funds for Pearson's magnanimous gift.

The annual operating deficit was but one of the complications attending the Pearson gift; the Blackman family had to accommodate the additional burden of Pearson himself. The old philanthropist was in the process of disposing of five million dollars. Thus, he remained a potential source of income for the college. When, in October 1906, Pearson wrote the Blackmans hinting that he would like to stay at their home when he next visited Winter Park, they were scarcely in a position to refuse. Blackman wrote in a generous tone that he and Lucy would "welcome no one more heartily than yourself." Pearson having inveigled the invitation announced his further wishes: "I am an old man," he said, "who wants quiet. I do not like a crowd. I seek rest and perfect quiet. I do not wish to get acquainted with anyone. I know more people now than I desire to."(12)

The Blackmans would never forget that winter season when Pearson stayed with them. Lincolnesque in appearance with a tall spare frame and a granite-like face with a

jutting nose, Pearson spoke in a gruff manner that never included the social amenities of "please" and "thank you." Though probably an understatement, "eccentric" was the most common adjective used to describe his personal habits. The Blackmans had constructed a separate bathroom for Pearson but, according to Marjorie, he never used it. Every morning after breakfast he stuffed a handful of toilet tissue in his coat pocket and vanished into the woods behind the President's house. No one heard him taking a bath that entire season nor saw him change his old fashioned black garments, which were, Marjorie noted, "liberally embroidered down the front with a ghost of vanished meals." But no description of Pearson can match Marjorie's account of his most disgusting idiosyncrasy: "Doc had a full set of dentures. After every meal he removed them, dunked them up and down in his water glass, shook them onto the table cloth, and shoved them back into his cavernous mouth. The first time this happened I made a mad rush to the bathroom where I lost my breakfast." (13) As a measure of their Christian character, it is noteworthy that the members of this cultured New England family accepted this bizarre old man with a resolute cheerfulness. Sadly, except for a small gift to help build the library, Pearson never gave the college another cent. In terms of frustration, the Blackmans paid a heavy price for that \$50,000 gift.

President Blackman found the young college's academic program reasonably sound. The new curriculum earlier inaugurated by Ward retained high academic standards commensurate with New England colleges, and yet was flexible enough to allow for an increase the number of students in the liberal arts program. The number rose from 9 in 1900 to over 30 a decade later. This increase could have been higher, Blackman pointed out, if the state's woefully inadequate public school system could have adequately prepared students for college entrance. The state of Florida still maintained only a few high schools

and just a scattering of fully equipped grade schools. Inadequate one-room schools dotted the rural areas. A 1907 Rollins graduate remembered that she could have gotten a teacher's certificate at the age of 14, and she was urged to do so by her well-meaning teacher.(14)

Blackman knew that Rollins must draw from those areas that did prepare young people for college, namely the Northeast. To attract prospective students from that area, the college needed to establish a national academic reputation. Unfortunately, no commonly acceptable standards for judging academic quality existed. The Rollins president could proclaim loudly the college's high level of admissions and graduation requirements; he could extol the qualifications of its faculty and declare that Rollins students transferred easily into the Northeast's major colleges and universities, but who was listening? The college needed a clear manifestation of this quality. Blackman thought he had discovered a way to demonstrate publicly Rollins's high academic standards. In 1906, Andrew Carnegie startled the world of higher education by announcing the funding of a new philanthropic institution: the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. The organization proposed several means of advancing teaching, but the proposal that caught Blackman's attention was the Retiring Allowances Fund, which made available pensions for retiring college professors. Because most colleges found it a challenge to afford reasonable salaries, much less provide for retirement funds, these pension grants seemed heaven-sent. When the Foundation set high academic standards for the grants, Blackman saw the means of quickly achieving a national reputation.

Henry S. Pritchett, the Foundation's director, explained in detail the Foundation's proposal in a May 1906 article in the *Outlook* magazine. The Foundation, he wrote, viewed the pensions as privileges, not as rights; consequently, specific requirements would be

established: a college must employ "at least six professors giving their entire time to college and university work; must provide a course of four full years in Liberal Arts and Sciences; and must require not less than the four years of academic or high school preparation or its equivalent for admission. Furthermore, pensions would go only to those colleges not under state or religious control. Even further, a participating college could not require its officers to belong to a specific religious sect. (15)

Colleges meeting these requirements would be placed on an accredited list of the Carnegie Foundation, and professors meeting age and time in-service requirements would be automatically eligible for retirement allowances. Professors from institutions not on the accredited list would be dealt with individually by the foundation. The original accredited list included thirty of the leading colleges and universities in the Northeast. Only two Southern schools (Tulane and Vanderbilt) made the list.

Two weeks after the article appeared in the *Outlook* President Blackman wrote Pritchett inquiring about application procedures. When the foundation returned a copy of the rules governing retiring allowances, Blackman quickly saw Rollins's problem. Because the college departments were so small that not all professors could teach full-time, a portion of their teaching load had to include courses in the Academy. When Blackman made application, he sent, along a college catalogue and his inaugural address, which, he said, dealt with what he called "the Southern problem, that is, the inability of the Florida public school system to provide adequately qualified students. This condition, he wrote, Pritchett will "throw light on whether Rollins ought to be placed on the accredited list of the Carnegie Foundation." Later, when the president's son Berkley passed the examination for a Rhodes scholarship, Blackman also rushed this information to the Foundation as further evidence

of Rollins's quality.(16) It was all to no avail. In March, Blackman received a polite rejection from Pritchett: "I think our only question about the admissions of an institution like Rollins College," he explained, "is that notwithstanding its high standard of admissions, it is for at present mainly a preparatory school with a good but very small college department at the top." (17) Pritchett's insight struck directly at the heart of what had been the college's problem since its founding; this condition would continue to plague the college for the next two decades.

In the rejection letter Pritchett did imply that the Foundation would deal generously with individual applications and although disappointed with second-best, Blackman applied for a pension for Professor Frances Ellen Lord, a 72-year old Latin teacher who had been at Rollins for eleven years. But even here Rollins ran afoul of the foundation rules: though entirely free from denominational control, the college, in order to guarantee an annual grant had made an agreement with the Congregational Educational Society to maintain a majority of Congregationalists on the Board of Trustees. Again, Blackman tried to explain away an annoying hurdle. "Rollins is in a rather unfortunate predicament," he complained to Pritchett. "I always advertise her with much emphasis as an undenominational college--and thus offend the sectarians. On the other hand, the Carnegie Foundation treats her as a denominational college and cuts her off from help." In order to qualify for the Carnegie grant Blackman convinced the Board of Trustees to seek release from the Congregational Educational Society. The Society agreed but it also cancelled a \$10,000 Endowment Grant earmarked for the college. "Thus we are martyrs in a good cause," Blackman dejectedly wrote Pritchett. The break with the Congregational Association allowed the Carnegie Foundation to consider individual Rollins professors. Between 1908 and 1921, four of them-

-Frances Lord, Susan Longwell, Thomas Baker and James Hoyt -- received Carnegie pension grants. By the time Rollins qualified for the accredited list, the original pension program had been replaced by another retirement organization (Teacher's Insurance and Annuity Association) that required no special qualification for membership.(18)

Even though the Carnegie Foundation refused Rollins's initial request for acceptance to the accredited list, the possibility of receiving a future grant continued to exert considerable influence on the college's academic development. The Ward administration had introduced such pre-professional programs in music, arts and business. Blackman not only had accepted these diversions from traditional liberal arts but also had encouraged others. Lucy Blackman's Department of Domestic and Industrial Arts included courses in cooking, basket weaving, sewing and dressmaking. Such programs were necessary, Blackman explained, for Rollins "to fulfill the vocational needs in Florida." In addition to encouraging vocational education, the administration also relaxed slightly its admissions requirements. Heretofore, those entering the college were required to have a certificate from the Rollins Academy or to pass an examination on subjects selected by the college. In 1905, acknowledging the improvement in public education, the college began allowing students who had successfully completed the "standard course of study for the Public High Schools of Florida" to enter without examination.(19)

The Carnegie Foundation's requirements for membership, however, changed this trend. The pre-professional programs continued, but the administration began to publicize more the liberal arts course of study. In a speech to the college later distributed to the newspapers, Blackman implored students to avoid over-specialization. Instead they should set their faces "like a flint to becoming an educated man, to knowing something of

everything." A more explicit and official statement appeared in the 1910 catalogue under the heading, "Note With Reference to Technical and Professional Studies": "Rollins is a college, as distinguished from the university or the professional, the technical or the agricultural school. Its mission is to provide for those who come to it for a liberal education, a generous culture and a thorough training in the physical, intellectual and moral nature. It believes in the value of a full college course as a preliminary to technical studies and it is opposed to all shortcuts into the professions." In 1908, the college dropped its automatic admission waivers to Florida high school graduates and restored the examination requirement. None of these additional efforts succeeded in getting Rollins on the Carnegie accredited list, but the prospects of being accepted had led the college to increase its standards for admission and to reverse the trend toward creating professional programs.(20)

During these years the college acquired an international flavor by the arrival of a sizable number of Cubans. Although the college was forced to spend money on special English classes, the increase in full pay students and the advantage of cosmopolitan diversity more than compensated for the extra expense. However, by the time Blackman became president, the Cuban presence began to jar Southern racial sensibilities. When several local parents threatened to withdraw their children, the college bowed to the pressure and imposed a limit on Cuban admissions. Blackman sent a form letter to all applicants from the island: "Public opinion is such in the South that we cannot accept Cuban students if there is in them any admixture of colored blood and we will be obliged to send him away in case he were to come to us through any misunderstanding." Not for the last time, a Rollins president would experience the dilemma of a liberal college located in a racially conservative

region of the country. Nevertheless, Cuban nationals who graduated from Rollins later expressed the value of their educational experience.(21)

Given the small size of the student body, it was inevitable that the three brilliant Blackman children would stand out. Berkley immediately became a campus leader visibly active in the athletics and in the social and academic life of the campus. Probably the college's brightest student, he also starred as halfback on the football team and was the leading member of both the debating team and the Glee Club. He organized the popular Lakeside Club named for the boys dormitory. Each year the club presented a variety show that became an anticipated annual event. One member recalled one of most memorable: "One number was a debate on prohibition [of alcohol.] Ben Shaw as a dude delivered his argument in poetry. Maurice Weldon as Charlie Chaplin acted his in silence. I was a German pleading for beer. Then a quartet, featuring Dean [Arthur] Enyart, Fred Hanna, Ray Green and Erik Palmer, sang a parody arguing against prohibition to [the old gospel] "Blest Be the Ties That Bind." After graduation, Barkley was awarded a Rhodes scholarship--the first given to a graduate of Rollins and only the second to a student from Florida. Upon completion of his studies at Queens College Oxford, Berkley returned to Rollins as an instructor in physics and chemistry, and in 1911, he replaced the retiring Thomas Baker as Professor of Natural Science, a position he held until his father retired in 1915. Berkley Blackman thus ranks high among the outstanding graduates of Rollins.(22)

Worthington and Marjorie, also exceptional scholars, were a bit less serious than Berkley. They were often involved in the lighter side of college life. Both were quite mischievous, constantly embarrassing their father with youthful pranks that often set the college and Winter Park community abuzz for weeks. April Fools' Day, from the students' perspective,

was a time to strain against of Victorian restrictions. Each year the president and the faculty braced themselves for some outrageous prank. They were rarely disappointed. The minutes of the faculty meetings following each April Fools' Day record stories of mischief, reprimands and occasionally suspensions. In 1905, students removed the college bell from Knowles Hall. It was later found several miles away at Clay Springs. For days the college was without a way of announcing mealtime and recitation periods. Greasing the Dinky Line tracks was a perennial April Fools' prank. Students loudly cheered as the little train spun its wheels in place.

One incident in 1908 gave heart tremors to not a few administrators. As related to the faculty: on the night of April 1, Messrs. Walter Frost, Walter Bettis and Hollam Donaldson came across the field, apparently quarreling, much excited and using very unseemly language. As they reached Cloverleaf Cottage, three pistol shots were fired. "Someone is shot," a voice cried. Residents in Cloverleaf then heard groaning as if someone's injured. When students ran to the lawn to give aid to an apparently injured student, they discovered the April Fools' joke. Although the students later apologized for their "profane language before ladies" and claimed that their joke was without "malicious intent," the faculty voted to suspend them for the rest of the year.

No April Fools' prank, however, caused so much embarrassment to the president and the college community as the one concocted by Worthington and Marjorie Blackman. During the dinner hour, on the eve of April Fools' Day in 1904, Marjorie surreptitiously collected panties from the girls' rooms in Cloverleaf, later passing them along to Worthington. The next morning the faculty awakened to gales of student laughter: there in the middle of the Horseshoe for all the campus to see was an assortment of female panties

strung neatly on the flagpole, complete with identification tags and flapping proudly in brisk spring breeze. The following day President Blackman called a special faculty meeting to consider "a serious case of misdemeanors, to wit: the flying from the flagpole on campus of certain articles of personal property." After careful consideration, the faculty deemed that Worthington Blackman and Frank Stodderman were "debarred from participating in all social and athletic activities for the remainder of the year." Marjorie feigned total innocence. Her role in the caper, forever called "Undie Sunday," was not known until years afterward.(23)

The Blackman administration was the first to make organized sport activity an integral part of campus life. Traditional gymnastics remained the main source of physical exercise, tennis, golf and basketball became continued as intramural activities. The college fielded its first intercollegiate football and baseball teams in 1905. The football lost all its games that first year, and suffered several losing seasons thereafter. It disappeared altogether as an organized sport in 1912. Baseball, however, remained a major organized activity in the pre-World War I period, but the college had difficulty in fielding a winning team. With no association to enforce recruitment rules, Rollins, as with other Florida institutions of higher learning, openly hired professional athletes to play for them. In 1903, pitcher George Edward "Rube" Waddell appeared on campus ready to play and coach the baseball team. Waddell, who had steered the Philadelphia Athletics to an American League pennant in 1902, claimed to be taking classes at Rollins. Actually, he never saw the inside of a classroom. A professional catcher he brought along did attend one or two classes in the academy but gave them up as a waste of time. Rollins won all its games with this battery on the diamond, but when Waddell and his catcher left after the Christmas holidays to begin spring training, the team collapsed. While college presidents deplored this sorry state of the

professional presence in college athletics, few made any attempt to correct it. Professional methods were necessary, stated an editorial in the *Sandspur*, because in the Darwinian world of baseball "it is the case of survival of the fittest."(24)

During the first decade of the thirteen-year Blackman administration, the college realized substantial growth in all areas. The total number of students averaged around 170 annually while the liberal arts college itself hovered around 30 most of the years, a three-fold increase since 1900. The Pearson grant created an initial endowment that rose to over \$200,000 by 1912. Most spectacularly, the Blackman administration added three large buildings to the campus. Chase Hall, a gift from Loring Chase who still remained connected to the college. The two-story brick dormitory was dedicated in 1908. Built on the south side of Pinehurst, it was the first non-wooden structure built on the campus. It contained fourteen rooms, a large common room and a terrace overlooking Lake Virginia. For over a half century the building was publicized in the literature as a signature building for emphasizing the unique setting of the college.

One year later the prominent American philanthropist Andrew Carnegie provided funds for the college's first library. The two-story, sand-lined brick building with a red tile roof contained an interior richly decorated with stained, carved wood. The first floor housed a library reading room and space for bookshelves, while the second floor contained administrative work places, including the President's office. Blackman and the trustees felt that the library should be placed near the center of the campus, and surveying the grounds, they came to the conclusion that Cloverleaf occupied that spot. Cloverleaf was therefore moved, and Carnegie Hall was constructed in its place. The third building came as a result of the fire that destroyed Knowles Hall, leaving the college without recitation rooms. The

college replaced the first Knowles with an additional small gift from Carnegie, and with money from the Frances B. Knowles family. Placed on the east side of Cloverleaf next to Cloverleaf, Knowles II contained class rooms as well as a large chapel and science laboratories.

However, despite (or perhaps because of) this growth in the physical plant, Blackman failed to solve the problem of financial indebtedness that had plagued the college since it had admitted its first students. The Carnegie gift, like the Pearson bequest, required raising matching funds for the building of the library, which again left the President little time to raise funds for daily expenses. Like the Pearson gift, Blackman came to see Carnegie grant as another mixed blessing. "After the increasing struggle of the past five years to meet conditional offers of this sort," he stated in his 1909 President's report, "I feel both depression and elation in the view of the tasks set before us."<sup>(41)</sup> Thus, the college faced a curious paradox: at the time that it was growing and its assets were ever increasing, operating expenses were driving the college deeper and deeper into debt.<sup>(25)</sup>

The academic year 1912-1913 brought two further financial disappointments. The first came when the General Education Board of the Rockefeller Foundation rejected a Rollins request for a \$50,000 grant. Correspondence between the college and the General Education Board concerning this grant pointed to a perennial conundrum facing the college in these early years. The General Education Board had established a policy of providing aid to Southern schools only. For decades Rollins advertised itself as a college built on Northern educational standards and traditions. In his application for a grant Blackman pictured the college as a thoroughly Southern institution. The result appeared often comical, sometimes pathetic, but in reality was quite serious because it uncovered a systemic schizophrenia.

Although of northern origin and thinking of itself as a Northern school, the college was situated in a southern state and surrounded by southern culture. When seeking northeastern money, the presidents depicted the college as northern; when seeking Rockefeller Foundation money, they emphasized its southernness.

During the period the Board was deliberating the Rollins grant, Blackman inundated the Foundation with evidence of its southern characteristics. In another letter he appealed to the northern predisposition to see the South peopled by ignorant folk in need of Yankee schooling. The college, Blackman wrote the Board, could "take the most ignorant, lazy, unimaginative and unadjustable Florida cracker and make something of him." Blackman cited the story of admitting a "redheaded cracker student whose preacher wanted him to get away from a drunken father, and though he was having trouble adjusting, we are doing our best to make something of him." Blackman pleaded with the Board that one of the college's missions was to help solve "the Southern problem," meaning that the college "was making a conscientious effort to penetrate the Southland with those ideas and ideals which have vitalized education in New England."

The Board was not moved by Blackman's condescending approach. As one Foundation visitor noted with a kind of backhanded compliment: Rollins "is really a northern school on southern soil. The courses of study are considerably better than is usual in southern colleges and the faculty is quite good. But the influence and patronage for this school is primarily from the North and it is therefore not sufficiently in touch with the people and the educational movement in the State." As if to pour salt on the wound, at the same time the Board turned down Rollins's request, it approved as \$75,000 grant to the college's rival, Stetson University, a few miles away in Deland. Blackman complained bitterly to a friend,

not without some justification, that it paid "to be a Baptist" when one was negotiating with the General Board of Education, meaning that Rockefeller himself was a committed that sect.(26)

On the heels of the Board's rejection came a second financial disappointment. In 1914, Henry Flagler died. Ward had promised that once he began preaching in Flagler's Chapel he could convince the old railroad magnate to designate Rollins as a beneficiary. Flager's will made no mention of Rollins. To make matters worse, Blackman heard that Rollins was in the will at one time but had been removed. He felt betrayed by Ward who had told him eleven years earlier that the college would definitely receive money from the Flagler estate. Again, heaping insult upon injury, the newspapers reported that Flagler had given \$75,000 to Stetson University. (27)

In early 1914, Blackman persuaded the trustees to hire a financial assistant who would bear sole responsibility for raising uncommitted funds. The solicitor was expected to raise not only \$8,000 a year for the college's current expenses but enough to cover his own salary. The outbreak of war in Europe in the summer of 1914 effectively destroyed any chance the new solicitor might have had. Male students left for the Armed Forces and donors faltered in the face of uncertain economic conditions. Blackman wrote his financial assistant a plaintive letter: "I had the most confident anticipation when you decided to join our forces, and that my burden would be lightened. This hope has not been realized though through no fault of yours; we must place the responsibility on the German Kaiser and this frightful war." (28)

Like the presidents before him, Blackman had simply worn himself out mainly in a seemingly endless search for the elusive dollar. On February 24, 1915, thoroughly humbled

by his failure to improve the college's financial condition, he submitted his letter of resignation. The years of fund raising, the prevailing "disturbed business conditions caused by the war in Europe," he lamented to the trustees, had simply drained him of all his energies. He believed that once economic conditions improved the college could find the funds it needed, but he could no longer "endure the strain of it." Blackman admitted that he was suffering from chronic nausea and a "haunting" insomnia brought on by the worry and strain of the presidency." For several months prior to his resignation he had realized only an "hour or two of sleep at the beginning of each night and then a lighted lamp and wakefulness most of the time until welcome daylight." Marjorie Blackman wrote later that her mother invariably "read him to sleep every night, and as long as he could hear her voice, he slept peacefully. But when from sheer weariness her book fell from her hands and her eyes closed, he was wide awake again, worrying."(29)

Blackman's resignation returned the burden of the college's problems to the Board of Trustees. In a letter to Frederick Lyman, Blackman pointed out the difficulty such a situation created: the Board was not financially helpful. He had raised ten thousand dollars during the 1912-1913 academic year but the members of the Board had provided only two thousand of that. Blackman himself had given five hundred for repairs to the president's home and Mrs. Blackman had raised three hundred from her social organization. The rest had come from sources not only from outside the Board but from outside the Winter Park community. Now that same inactive board was entrusted with the responsibility of keeping the school open while it searched for another president. The prospects did not seem promising. Despite Blackman's early notice that he would be retiring in 1915, the members had made only a token effort to find his replacement. With no one to administer the school

when it opened in October 1915, the chore fell by default to Dean of the College Arthur Enyart and Treasurer William O'Neal, who served as co-acting administrators. In the meantime, the trustees were begging George Morgan Ward to return to the institution. (30)

Ward refused at first, but when the trustees persisted, he agreed to return for one year, but only if the Board would accept some stringent conditions.(31) He asked for a trustee promise to pay off the \$64,000 debt so that he could devote time to providing for new expenses, reorganizing the college and searching for a permanent leader. Thus, he lectured the members, if he was willing "to mortgage the next year of his life," he expected them to show good faith by meeting his conditions. The trustees agreed to these harsh terms and appointed Ward as acting president. As he promised, Ward had the college back on its financial feet within the year. The trustees retired the debt and the accumulated unpaid bills of 1915-1916 were paid. The college closed the year without a deficit for the first time in ten years. (Blackman may have justifiably asked "where were they when *he* need them?") Having assured the college of "its continuance during distressing times throughout the world," Ward resigned his position in June 1917. At the same time the Trustees appointed a permanent president, Dr. Calvin Henry French.(32)

French came to Rollins with encouraging qualifications. Between 1898 and 1913, he had served as president of Huron College in South Dakota, where he built the institution from virtually from scratch, constructing several buildings and raising a \$500,000 endowment. In the early months after his appointment, French spent a large portion of his time developing a plan to "save the college." In February 1919, he presented his fantastic proposal to the Board of Trustees: he would turn the college into a major university with a three million-dollar endowment. French was not just casting about for ideas. He tied his

presidency to this plan, informing the trustees that if they could not accept it, he would resign. The Board was astounded. Raising funds simply to meet current expenses in the wake of the European war was a major undertaking. In the face of these uncertain conditions, French wanted the Board to approve a multi-million dollar campaign to transform the college into a university. With heads still reeling from hearing such a plan, the members of the Board flatly rejected French's plan. True to his word French resigned. He had served less than two years. Ward, who had been serving as chairman of the Board, again became acting president while the Trustees looked for another executive.(33)

Ward spent the remainder of the academic year at Rollins but, because of commitments to his Palm Beach church, he persuaded the trustees to hire James Brooks as his assistant. Brooks, given the title Chancellor of the College, came to Rollins in the summer of 1919 to assist (in his words) "in the rehabilitation of the college after the somewhat disastrous effects of the World War, a chore, he thought, that involved "the establishment of an improved morale on the campus, expulsion of some unruly elements, and measures to increase attendance." With the help of Ward, and also with the approval and encouragement of the Board of Trustees, Brooks undertook a one million-dollar endowment campaign. As a way of giving the effort an initial boost, Charles Morse, a prominent local figure and a Rollins trustee, pledged \$100,000 if the board would raise \$400,000 by October 1, 1920. On October 1, even with the help of a \$168,000 gift from the George Rollins estate, the college was \$60,000 short at the deadline date. At that point Morse withdrew all conditions and gave the \$100,000 "as an expression of his appreciation of the generous response of the people of Florida." The campaign had increased the endowment by over \$503,000.(34)

While this surprisingly successful effort significantly improved the endowment fund, the college simply could not raise enough operating funds to prevent further indebtedness. This ubiquitous downward slide led Ward for a third and last time to resign from the presidency, complaining that he was "no longer able to spare the nervous energy necessary to carry the responsibility for the institution." The trustees offered the position to Chancellor Brooks, and when he declined, they turned to the recently appointed Dean of the College, Robert Sprague.(35)

The appointment of Sprague was an act of pure desperation, for the trustees could hardly expect the new president to do what Ward and Brooks had failed to accomplish. The college's options were becoming fewer and fewer. Some trustees suggested that the college should become a preparatory school arguing that the Academy Department had realized far more success over the decades than the college. Such a move would mean abandoning the founders' dream and sacrificing the labor of four decades. Led by William O'Neal, the trustees pulled back from that drastic decision. In fact, because of the competition provided by the state's growing public school system, the Trustees in 1921 decided to drop its preparatory schooling altogether. The last academy class graduated in 1923, ending what had been a happy and even necessary marriage between the preparatory department and the liberal arts college. But now for better or for worse, the liberal arts college would have to stand or fall on its own merits.

Another option for the college in the immediate post-World War I era was to search for what Sprague called a "super-president." That was hardly helpful because the trustees had been searching of this ideal person for several decades. In their visions such a president would know rich friends who would gladly and generously fill the college coffers. He would

be an astute administrator who would direct the college's academic future, and he would be a scholar who would give the college the academic prestige that in turn would attract qualified students and faculty. Such an educational utopia would relieve trustees of responsibility for the college's wellbeing. They could then vacation in Winter Park, Florida, once or twice a year, listen to this super-president extol the college's wonderful prosperity, enjoy the lavish entertainment and then return home to bask in the prestige of being a trustee of a flourishing educational institution. Why such an outstanding educator would wish to come to a failing college, no one tried to explain, especially in view of the fact that the Rollins presidency had been passed around so casually the office had become, in Sprague's words, "something of a joke." Because it would have been the simplest solution to a complex problem, and again would have allowed them prestige without responsibility, the trustees never abandoned hope that such a person could be found.(36)

Acting President Sprague provided a more sensible option that the trustees ultimately pursued: he proposed to join with the Southern Presbyterians who seemed determined to build a college in central Florida. According to the plan, the Florida Presbyterian Synodical Committee would promise to add half a million dollars to Rollins's endowment and to build several new buildings. In return, Rollins would agree to elect one-half of its members to the Board of Trustees from the Presbyterian assembly. When the Florida Congregational Association protested this drastic shift from the college's historic Congregational tradition, Sprague countered with a proposal for a Rollins Union governed jointly by the Presbyterians and the Congregational churches. Such a union, Sprague argued, would make Rollins "one of the great centers of Christian liberal education in the South." The Congregational Association consented to the union, but at the last moment the Presbyterians balked.

Despite extensive campaigning by Sprague, their final decision was against the combination.(37)

The failure of the union plan left the college in far worse condition than before. Many of its old friends had opposed the change. Most significantly, when he learned that the trustees intended to change "the character of the college," George Morgan Ward threatened to resign from the board. He opposed, he said, changing the college from "a free, independent, Christian college with a self-perpetuating Board of Trustees, the ideal of its Founders, to a denominational institution governed by a denominationally appointed Board of Trustees."(64) Many others who opposed the union refused to fulfill their pledges for contributions. Thus, as long as the proposal remained active the financial situation of the college continued to deteriorate at an alarming rate. At several consecutive trustee meetings the board authorized the treasurer to negotiate a loan with some bank. The college struggled simply to meet expenses one day at a time, as indicated by a query from the treasurer to Sprague: "Next week the faculty pay-roll amounting to \$2,513 comes due. How are we going to meet it?"(38)

Because the failure of the union plan made Sprague's position untenable, the board appointed another presidential search committee, which, between May and July 1924, presented three names to the board. All were offered the Rollins presidency, and all turned it down. Finally, a candidate was found who was willing to take on the work. The records do not show how William C. Weir came to the attention of the committee or who recommended him. William Clarence ("W.C.") Weir had worked at the Bellingham, Washington Normal School, had also been active in the Red Cross during World War I and had served in the Foundation for Education of the Congregational Churches of America. He had recently

resigned as president of Pacific College, a Congregational school in Oregon. Except for his apparently undistinguished work at Pacific, he had little to recommend him for the serious task awaiting him at Rollins. But obviously, the trustees were in no position to be selective.(39)

Weir seems to have surprised everyone with his administrative qualities and his capacity for strong leadership. He immediately laid plans to meet the college's financial and academic problems, encouraging many to believe that he might lead the college out of its malaise. He pursued new contributions energetically. He restored discipline in the student body, while lifting morale among the faculty.(40) Suddenly, inexplicably, his presidency was over. A cryptic note in the trustee minutes on May 22, 1925 declared Weir the victim of a "serious illness." Four days later the Board announced that he would be incapacitated for a long period of time. Two days later, on March 28 the Executive Committee sent terse, not to say blunt memo to Weir: "To Dr. W.C. Weir, President: The Executive Committee in conference with the Trustees of Rollins College deem it for the best interest of the college that you resign."(41) Weir quietly left the campus.

The trustees reappointed Sprague acting president and once again began what had by now become the seemingly unending occupation of a presidential search. For the past five years, the college had experienced three presidents and four acting presidents. Now the Trustees were forced to organize another effort at securing a permanent leader. Fortunately, for the future of the college it was to be the last presidential search for over twenty years. The trustees finally found that super-president who could stabilize the presidency, halt the slide into academic oblivion and set the college on a course that would lead it to the top of American academia. The trustees discovered Hamilton Holt.

## NOTES

1. Trustee Minutes, January 12, 1903; February 18, 1903.

2. The preceding and following biographical history of the Blackman family is reconstructed from short biographical manuscript sketches in the Blackman Papers.

Blackman's dissertation--"The Making of Hawaii: A Study in Social Evolution", a model turn-of-the-century sociological study in what today would be called a third world nation, was published by Macmillan in 1899.

3. Lucy Blackman was essential to the success of her husband's success, but her most notable role was her work with the clubwomen movement that began in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century as women became active in seeking remedies to societal ills. Blackman was a member of a number of women's groups, including the Woman's Club of Winter Park, which she helped found in 1915, the League of Women Voters, and the Business and Professional Women's Club. Lucy served as president from 1923-26 for the Florida Federation of Women's Clubs, the statewide umbrella for women's groups around the state that pressed for legislation on a number of fronts, from conservation to prison reform to child welfare. The following two years she chaired the education department of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, the national organization that carried great political clout in the United States.<sup>[6]</sup>

Her service with women from across the state inspired Blackman to write a two-volume history, entitled *The Women of Florida*, published in 1940. "It is high time that this were done," Lucy wrote, noting many local and state histories "deal in the main with men only; their authors seem to have been oblivious to the fact that in all these years there have been women in Florida" The history, the first of its kind in the South, offered accounts of women in Florida since its earliest times and provided biographies of women active in different state organizations. "In view of the changes taking place in the social, political, industrial, and financial institutions in our country, it seems a propitious and an appropriate time to make inquiry into the value of the part women can claim in the making of the commonwealth, and in particular the period during the past half-century covering their 'awakening' and the use of their reluctantly bestowed citizenship," Lucy wrote.

4. Marjorie Blackman, "Whom God Has Joined: The Story of William and Lucy Blackman," Manuscript, R.C. Archives.

5. Speech by Hamilton Holt at Lucy Blackman's Memorial Service, 1942. Holt Presidential Papers.

6. *Sandspur*, 1903.

7. Blackman, "Whom God Has Joined."

8. Trustee Minutes, April, 1903. Pearson graduated from a medical school in Vermont, moved to Chicago and made a fortune in selling real estate. Influenced by the way he was supported at college, he began giving away his fortune to several financially strapped small colleges. It is not clear what he was doing in to Winter Park or how he learned Rollins's needs. The restrictions on the Rollins award was typical of his college gifts. He wrote a popular book entitled "A Guide to Practical Philanthropy."
9. Blackman, "Whom God Has Joined."; President's Annual Report, 1904.
10. *Orlando Star*, April 29, 1904.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Pearson to Blackman, October 3, 1904; Blackman to Pearson, October 29, 1904; Pearson to Blackman, November 19, 1904.
13. Blackman, "Whom God Has Joined."
14. Patty Howe, "Rollins Twenty-five Years Ago," *Alumni Record*, 5 (1928).
15. Henry S. Pritchett, "Mr. Carnegie's Gift to the Teachers," , *Outlook*, 83 (MAY 4, 1906), 120-125.
16. Blackman to Pritchett, May 22, 1906. August 2, 1906; February 28, 1907. Copy of Blackman's inaugural address in Blackman Papers.
17. Pritchett to Blackman, March 15, 1907.
18. Blackman to Pritchett, April 9, 1908. TIAA remained the Rollins retirement program until 2014.
19. President's Annual Report, 1904; Catalogue, 1905.
20. Blackman' Speech, October, 1906; Catalogue, 1907, 1908, 1910.
21. Faculty Minutes, October, 1901; Blackman to Dr. S.J. Cuervo, October 22, 1906; "Memoirs of Dewitt Taylor," Archives. For a longer discussion of the Cuban-Rolins relationship see "Cuba: The Roots of Rollins' Global Citizenship," *Rollins 360*, September 19, 2015.
23. *Ibid.*, April, 1904; Marjorie Blackman, "Recollections"; Anthony Morse, "Recollections," Manuscripts, in Blackman Papers.
24. Information on sports has come mostly from the weekly *Sandspur*.

Waddell was a remarkably dominant strikeout pitcher in an era when batters mostly slapped at the ball to get singles. He had an excellent fastball, a sharp-breaking curve, a screwball, and superb control (his strikeout-to-walk ratio was almost 3-to-1).

25. See President's and Treasurer's Annual Reports for this period.

26. Fred Ensminger to General Board, January 2, 1902; Blackman to General Board, October 20, 1905; General Board to William Baldwin, November 7, 1903. Rockefeller Foundation Archives. Copies of extensive correspondence between the Blackman administration and the General Board in the R.C. Archives.

27. Blackman to Morse, June, 1903; Morse to Blackman, June 9, 1913; Blackman to Frederick Lyman, June 14, 1913.

28. Blackman to Pratt, October, October 3, 1914.

29. Blackman, "Whom God Has Joined"; Trustee Minutes, February 1915.

30. Blackman to Lyman, October 17, 1913.

31. [Trustee] Edward Bower to Ward, April 17, 1916; Ward to Board of Trustees, April 12, 1916; Trustee Minutes, February 16, 1916.

32. Ward to Board of Trustees, January 25, 1916; Trustee Minutes, February 1918.

33. Trustee Minutes, February 1919.

34. *Ibid.*, November, 1919; *Tampa Tribune*, February 18, 1921.

35. Treasurer Annual Reports, 1920, 1921; Trustee Minutes, November 1921.

36. President's Annual Report, 1923.

37. *Ibid.*, 1924; Trustee Minutes, February 1924.

38. Memorandum to Sprague, March 7, 1924. Sprague Papers.

39. Trustee Minutes, May 1924.

40. *Ibid.*, 1925.

41. *Ibid.* There are strong suggestions in the records that Wier was involved in an affair with his secretary.