

BANCROFT BEATLEY
SECOND PRESIDENT OF SIMMONS COLLEGE
1933-1955

Bancroft Beatley was born December 13, 1894, to James and Clara Beatley of Roxbury, Massachusetts. His father was the head of the German department at Boston English High School. His mother, a pioneer in the women's suffrage movement, was also a teacher in Roxbury prior to her marriage. The Beatley household was liberal; James Beatley was such a strong advocate of the peace movement that he insisted his family live in Roxbury to avoid mandatory military training in certain Boston schools.

President Beatley attended Roxbury Latin High School and graduated from Harvard College in 1915. After receiving his M.S. in arts and sciences from the Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Science in 1916, he took his first teaching position as principal of Northboro High School.

He served in the military from 1917 to 1919 during World War I. Thereafter, he taught math at Danvers High School and then history at Hanover (New Hampshire), where he also served as Headmaster. During the year Beatley was in Hanover, he also lectured at Dartmouth College.

In 1920, Beatley accepted a position at the newly established Harvard Graduate School of Education, serving successively as instructor, assistant professor, and associate professor. He received an M.S. in 1922 and a Ph.D. in 1923 from the Graduate School of Education. Also in 1923, Beatley married Grace Cobb, a 1921 graduate of Radcliffe College.

In his Harvard 15th Reunion report, Beatley stated:

Still teaching at the Harvard School of Graduate Education...For the past few years, I have also been administering the Summer School courses in education and giving a graduate course at Brown University...Since the last report, I have completed curriculum surveys of Moorestown Friends School, Weston School, and Friends Central School -- all in the vicinity of Philadelphia -- and have participated in school surveys in Lowell, East Bridgewater, and Culver Military Academy.(1)

In 1933, Beatley was named President of Simmons College at the age of thirty-eight. During his tenure as President, Beatley worked against the Massachusetts Teachers Loyalty Oath, which he believed to be an infringement of academic freedom. He also spoke out in defense of Professors Harrison Harley and Waldo Emerson Palmer, who were brought before the Senate Internal Security Sub-Committee for their involvement in the Samuel Adams School (a school based on socialist ideals and employing ultratraditional educational methods). Beatley was a strong advocate of comprehensive colleges for women and spoke regularly to a variety of professional groups.

Beatley's presidency at Simmons College is often seen as a time of stability -- a period when the directions and ideas begun by President Lefavour were brought to maturity. The Class of 1937 wrote that Beatley "brought to Simmons youth, vigor, and enthusiasm coupled with progressive educational views particularly well-adapted to a progressive institution such as Simmons."(2)

In his 35th Harvard Class Report, Beatley described Simmons College's contribution during World War II:

During the War, Simmons organized several programs for training war workers, and many of our grads served as nurses, dietitians, map makers, librarians, scientists, and social workers in the various Women's Services.

My faith in the validity of the Simmons' programs of general and professional education has been strengthened...More G.I. women have elected [Simmons] as the place in which to complete their education than have sought any other independent women's college.(3)

Commenting on his retirement, Beatley stated:

As I look back over my professional life, I feel grateful for having had the privilege of membership in the Harvard and Simmons faculties with all the satisfying associations such membership entails. What more might one ask of life?(4)

Bancroft Beatley died April 23, 1992, at the age of 97.

Publications: *Secondary Education* [in Lancaster, Pennsylvania], Section of a Survey Report by Paul H. Hanus and others, Harvard Graduate School of Education, 1924-25; *The High Schools in Twelve Cape Cod Towns*, Section of a Survey Report for the Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce by L.O. Cummings and others, Harvard Graduate School of Education, 1924-45; and *Achievement in the Junior High School*, Harvard University Press, 1932.

Offices held: Member of Town Government and School Board, Belmont (MA); Trustee of Simmons College, Beaver Country Day School, North Bennett Street School, Women's Educational and Industrial Union, Educational Research Corporation, Massachusetts Society for Social Hygiene, and Boston Center for Adult Education; member of the Advisory Committee of the Library Planning Board of the Massachusetts Library Association.

President Beatley's recollections at age 96 (excerpted from a taped interview by Megan Sniffin-Marionoff, Simmons College Archivist, May 1991):

I grew up with a favorable slant towards Simmons simply not knowing anything particular about it then....I agreed to go and see Mr. Lefavour and then, of course, I got what the backdrop was to the College, and I saw how completely, as far as my interests were concerned, that this decision to educate women so they could earn their livelihood as well as be good in the head was the major aim of the institution, and he [Lefavour] had helped define it.

At that time what was a woman to do if she didn't want to be a teacher and didn't want to be a nurse?....She could go work in a store and hand out groceries and that kind of thing. But where was the chance for a woman with advanced education to go?

The field that was most common at Simmons at that time was the School of Secretarial Studies. And the School had fifty percent of the graduates. I've forgotten which the second was, it may have been Household Economics. But....those two schools were seventy-five percent, I guess, of the total production. But, in each of them, graduates

of Simmons College had gone beyond the secretarial level or gone beyond a home economics or household economics or whatever that there was or going that way.

Why library science? What's a librarian?...There was a science to it, and Simmons was at that time and, when I went there, it was noted for producing the best cataloguers in the United States.

I used to talk about the comprehensive high school. And I thought to myself was that Simmons was perhaps the first of the comprehensive colleges for women. It was limited to women because women were an underprivileged class as a whole. And the idea appealed to me that I had something from my education to the idea of a comprehensive college.

There were three schools that you might call afterthoughts of Mr. Lefavour's plan for the College: Social Work, the Prince School of Retailing; and the Bouve-Boston School of Physical Education [later moved to Northeastern].

Lucinda Wyman Prince, I don't know how she got started....I knew that she was trained as a teacher from one of the teacher's colleges, and she got the notion that sales girls had to be educated on the job. That they did not know their merchandise, they didn't study their customers and so forth, and she had ideas for a training department in the stores to train these people who came here just for Christmas and the rest of the time.

As you probably well know, I didn't want my name on the Simmons College Library School....I, who hardly ever read a book, am named the head of a library. While Park, who was all steeped in literatures and religion and all those good things in life, [is named] the head of a science building....But I don't mind it now.

Compiled by Peter Carini and Richard Carroll, The Simmons College Archives, 1994-1996

Notes:

1. *Harvard Class of 1915, 15th Anniversary Report*, (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1940), pp. 14-15.
2. Undetermined.
3. *Harvard Class of 1915, 35th Anniversary Report*, (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1940), p. 24.
4. *Harvard Class of 1915, 50th Anniversary Report*, (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1965), p. 24.