

**HENRY LEFAVOUR
FIRST PRESIDENT OF SIMMONS COLLEGE
1901-1933**

Henry Lefavour was born in Salem, Massachusetts in 1860. He received the B.A. from Williams College in 1883. Upon graduation from Williams, Lefavour took a position as Instructor at Williston Seminary in East Hampton, a position he held until 1884. In 1884, he became an Instructor at his alma mater, and two years later, he completed his work there for the Ph.D. In 1887, Lefavour was made Dean of the Faculty.

Lefavour took two years off beginning in 1888 to study physics in Germany at the University of Berlin, and while there, he traveled throughout Europe. On his return to the United States, he was promoted to Professor of Physics. In 1901, Lefavour was asked to do a study and report on a program of organization for the Corporation of the recently founded, but still unopened, Simmons Female College. Lefavour presented his report to the Corporation on September 26, 1901. As part of his presentation, he stated:

I should advise then at the outset a technical college of high standard, receiving girls who have already a foundation of general knowledge and graduating them well-equipped with both a broad intellectual or artistic foundation and a specialized technical training that will open to them some avenue of remunerative labor. (1)

The Corporation was so impressed with Lefavour's report and ideas, he was elected President of the College on December 6, 1901. During Lefavour's tenure as President, Simmons College acquired the land for and built the Main College Building at 300 The Fenway. He also started many of the schools at Simmons, including the School of Social Work, the first academically affiliated school of social work in the United States. Simmons College grew from one hundred forty-six students and twenty-eight faculty to 1,577 students and one hundred forty-seven faculty.

President Lefavour retired from Simmons College in 1933. He remained a member of the Simmons College Corporation after his retirement. He was active as a board member or chair of many other organizations, including the Trustees of Williams College, the Women's Educational and Industrial Union, and the Massachusetts Minimum Wage Committee. Lefavour also served as President of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

Henry Lefavour was often described as a quiet man of few interests outside of his academic studies, with no time or inclination for games or hobbies. He married late, at the age of 57, and spent his leisure time on an island off the coast of Maine, where he took walks and read the occasional detective story. Lefavour died in 1946 at the age of 86; he left \$50,000 to Simmons College for the already established Lefavour Fund.

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

Footnotes:

1. Programme of Organization, A Report Presented to the Corporation of Simmons Female College, September 26, 1901 by Henry Lefavour, pp. 4-5, Office of the President, RG 4, The College Archives, Simmons College, Boston, Massachusetts.