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Frederick Douglass Patterson Papers, Robert R. Moton Memorial Institute: Commemorative Celebration, 1986

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The Robert R. Moton Memorial Institute, Inc.

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The Robert R. Moton Memorial Institute, Inc., is a non-profit educational service corporation which provides a range of administrative, faculty and student services to institutions of higher education. The Institute was founded in 1952 and chartered originally in 1958 as the Robert R. Moton Memorial foundation and Conference Center.

Dr. Moton, the second President of Tuskegee Institute and successor to Dr. Booker T. Washington, retired in 1935 to live in Capahosic, Virginia, on the banks of the York River in Gloucester County. A series of important informal meetings and conferences held there by Dr. Moton focused on such substantive national and international subjects as education, employment, housing, race relations, voting, African development and international peace. The Moton Memorial Foundation stemmed from these gatherings at his estate which came to be called the "Capahosic Conferences," and the interest of a group of friends and supporters who were known as "Holly Knoll Associates."

Those meetings and the concerted work of Dr. Frederick D. Patterson, Dr. Moton's successor at Tuskegee Institute, contributed to the formation of the United Negro College Fund by 1944 and to the beginning of the services of the Moton Conference Center.
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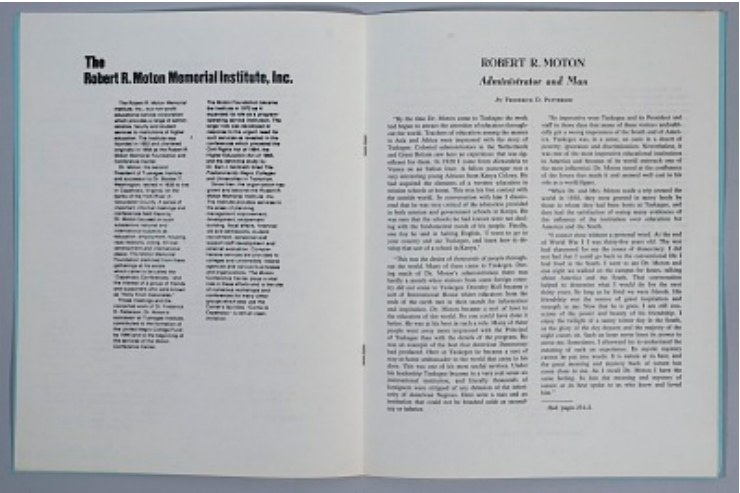
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The Moton Foundation became the Institute in 1972 as it expanded its role as a program-operating service institution. The larger role was developed in response to the urgent need for such services as revealed in the conferences which preceded the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Higher Education Act of 1965, and the definitive study by Dr. Earl J. McGrath titled The Predominantly Negro Colleges and Universities in Transition.

Since then, the organization has grown and become the Robert R. Moton Memorial Institute, Inc. The Institute provides services in the areas of planning, management improvement, development, endowment building, fiscal affairs, financial aid and admissions, student recruitment, personnel and support staff development and external evaluation. Comprehensive services are provided to colleges and universities, federal agencies and various businesses and organizations. The Moton Conference Center plays a vital role in these efforts and is the site of numerous workshops and conferences for many other groups which also use the Center's facilities. "Come to Capahosic" is still an open invitation.
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ROBERT R. MOTON

Administrator and Man



By FREDERICK D. PATTERSON

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"By the time Dr. Moton came to Tuskegee the work had begun to attract the attention of educators throughout the world. Teachers of education among the masses in Asia and Africa were impressed with the story of Tuskegee. Colonial administrators in the Netherlands and Great Britain saw here an experience that was significant for them. In 1928 I came from Alexandria to Venice on an Italian liner. A fellow passenger was a very interesting young African from Kenya Colony. He had acquired the elements of a western education in mission schools at home. This was his first contact with the outside world. In conversation with him I discovered that he was very critical of the education provided in both mission and government schools in Kenya. He was sure that the schools had had known were not dealing with the fundamental needs of his people. Finally, one day he said in halting English, 'I want to go to your country and see Tuskegee, and learn how to develop that sort of a school in Kenya.'

"This was the desire of thousands of people throughout the world. Many of them came to Tuskegee. During much of Dr. Moton's administration there was hardly a month when visitors from some foreign country did not come to Tuskegee. Dorothy Hall became a sort of International House where educators from the ends of the earth met in their search for information and inspiration. Dr. Moton became a sort of host to the educators of the world. No one could have done it better. He was at this best in such a role. Many of these people went away more impressed with the Principal of Tuskegee than with the details of the program. He was an example of the best that American Democracy had produced. Here at Tuskegee he became a sort of stay-at-home ambassador to the world that came to his door. This was one of his most useful services. Under his leadership Tuskegee became in a very real sense an international institution, and literally thousands of foreigners were stripped of any delusion of the inferiority of American Negroes. Here were a man and an institution that could not be brushed aside as secondary or inferior.

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"So impressive were Tuskegee and its President and staff in those days that many of these visitors undoubtedly got a wrong impression of the South and of America. Tuskegee was, in a sense, an oasis in a desert of poverty, ignorance and discrimination. Nevertheless, it was one of the most impressive educational institutions in America and because of its world outreach one of the most influential. Dr. Moton stood at the confluence of the forces that made it and seemed well cast in his role as a world figure.

"When Dr. and Mrs. Moton made a trip around the world in 1928, they were greeted in many lands by those to whom they had been hosts at Tuskegee, and they had the satisfaction of seeing many evidences of the influence of the institution over education for America and the South.

"I cannot close without a personal word. At the end of World War I I was thirty-five years old. The war had sharpened for me the issues of democracy. I did not feel that I could go back to the conventional life I had lived in the South. I went to see Dr. Moton and one night we walked on the campus for hours, talking about America and the South. That

conversation helped to determine what I would do for the next thirty years. So long as he lived we were friends. His friendship was the source of great inspiration and strength to me. Now that he is gone, I am still conscious of the power and beauty of his friendship. I enjoy the twilight of a sunny winter day in the South, as the glory of the day departs and the majesty of the night comes on. Such an hour never loses its power to move me. Sometimes, I afterward try to understand the meaning of such an experience. Its mystic mystery cannot be put into words. It is nature at its best, and the great meaning and mystery back of nature has come close to me. As I recall Dr. Moton I have the same feeling. In him the meaning and mystery of nature at its best spoke to us who knew and loved him."

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Ibid. pages 231-2.
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