

Dickinson

STATEMENT BY THE RENAMING COMMITTEE

Adopted February 24, 2020

PREAMBLE

Our renaming recommendations today are not intended to condemn anyone. All historical figures were flawed in various ways, because they were human, just like all of us. We also recognize that nobody from the past should be judged by present-day moral standards. Historical context matters. Yet common sense also dictates that a building namesake is not the same thing as being the subject of scholarly or classroom study. When a college puts someone's name on a building, it conveys a sense of gratitude and recognition. Especially in the cases of historic figures serving as namesakes, it also suggests a deliberate representation of the institution's values. The Dickinson & Slavery report highlighted various ways that our college has sometimes extended recognition in the past (and even in the recent past) to former slaveholders and defenders of slavery. That information did not really shock any of us and by itself was not the basis for our recommendations, but it was nevertheless revealing. What was even more compelling to all of us, however, were the stories of formerly enslaved people and their significant contributions to Dickinson as long-serving and popular employees of the college during the decades before and after the Civil War. It should now be apparent to everyone that whole sections of the Dickinson community have been essentially erased from previous institutional efforts at historic commemoration. Our college has provided plenty of tributes for former graduates, faculty, trustees and college presidents, but has done precious little to remember college staff. We want to encourage the Board of Trustees to begin rectifying this omission. Toward that goal, we have adopted four resolutions.

RESOLVED

- 1) That in the spirit of recognizing devoted but sometimes forgotten members of our diverse community, Dickinson College should immediately rename Cooper Hall as Spradley-Young Hall in honor of Henry Spradley and Robert Young, two formerly enslaved men and longtime college employees who helped integrate the Dickinson campus in the nineteenth century.
- 2) That in the same spirit of inclusivity, the college should also rename East College Gate as the Pinkney Family Gate, honoring both Carrie and Noah Pinkney, who were popular African American food sellers on campus for decades in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Currently, Noah Pinkney is the only formerly enslaved person recognized on campus, but his plaque (near East College Gate) makes no mention his wife and partner, Carrie Pinkney.
- 3) That the House Divided Project will be tasked with developing content for public explanations about these name changes that can eventually be disseminated on the college website and through exterior wayside markers and interior lobby exhibit panels. We also believe the college should continue to try to find ways to make the Dickinson & Slavery exhibit at 61 N. West Street more accessible to a wider public and to consider developing a program of additional

campus wayside markers that can help better explain the story of Dickinson College's ties to slavery and anti-slavery.

4) That the President's office should set a new date in 2022 for further consideration of other potential name changes to the remaining nine residence halls formerly known as "The Quads," which first received their historic namesakes in 1991, and also to Montgomery House (current home to the Theatre & Dance Department) [SEE ATTACHMENT]. This second stage renaming process should be transparent for the entire community, including students and alumni, and should be open-minded about recognizing any type of historic college figure, without simply focusing on their ties to slavery or anti-slavery. We do not expect that all of these buildings will be renamed, but the goal in 2022 should be to create greater diversity in our campus commemoration efforts while also continuing to recognize those Dickinsonians who have made the most significant contributions to our institution, our region and our nation.

POSTSCRIPT

We have been charged as the Renaming Committee, but we now see our mission more properly as offering ideas for recalibrating the nature of campus memory. The Dickinson & Slavery initiative helped expose a past namesake process that while often well-meaning was still rather limited in its historical imagination. Of course, the same criticism might one day be leveled at our own efforts. Yet even if so, we still want to remind our fellow Dickinsonians that it is our shared responsibility to keep striving to find ways to use commemoration on campus to help unify our community and to continue our college's impressive 237-year tradition of providing a useful and progressive education to all of its members.

Renaming Committee

Co-Chairs:

Matthew Pinsker, Professor of History and Director, House Divided Project
Tonian Ortega '18, Young Alumni Trustee

Members:

Kaliph Brown '20

Say Burgin, assistant professor of history

Brian Falck, associate vice president of college advancement

Karen Neely Faryniak '86, chief of staff & secretary of the college

Jim Gerencser '93, college archivist

Angie Harris, associate dean of students

Kendall Isaac, general counsel

Dana Marecheau '20

Albert Masland '79, trustee & president of the Alumni Council

Connie McNamara, vice president of marketing and communications

John Staruh, housekeeper, facilities management

Cooper Wingert '20

ATTACHMENT:
Select Dickinson Campus Buildings With Historic Namesakes

- **Montgomery House** –named in 1950 for John Montgomery, founding trustee and Revolutionary era political figure

- “The Quads,” named in 1991, now part of the network of traditional residence halls:
 - **Armstrong Hall** –named for John Armstrong, early trustee and American military figure
 - **Atwater Hall** –named for Jeremiah Atwater, third president of Dickinson College
 - **Baird-McClintock Hall** –named for Spencer F. Baird (Class of 1840), secretary of the Smithsonian and John McClintock (faculty, 1836-1848), leading Methodist intellectual
 - **Buchanan Hall** –named for James Buchanan (Class of 1809), US president
 - **Conway Hall** –named for Moncure Conway (Class of 1849), abolitionist
 - **Cooper Hall** –named for Thomas Cooper, leading scientist, free speech martyr, and faculty member (1811-1815)
 - **Davidson-Wilson Hall** –named for Robert Davidson, second president of Dickinson and James Wilson, college trustee and US constitutional framer
 - **Longsdorff Hall** –named for Zatae Longsdorff (Class of 1887), first female graduate of the college