Maxwell Chambers and His Complicated Connections to Davidson College

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Hilary Green, Ph.D.

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Background

Davidson College appointed a Commission on Race and Slavery in 2017, in keeping with the college's commitment to the quest for truth. The group's charge was to examine the college's history, which is intertwined with the institution and legacies of slavery and the lives of enslaved persons.

In response to the commission's 2020 report, the Board of Trustees created a Special Committee on Acknowledgment and Naming. This panel of trustees was asked to develop a policy for naming buildings and public spaces on campus and, in extraordinary cases, responding to requests for removing names.

The special committee engaged in research, discussions with other institutions, visits by experts in the field and extensive outreach to the community, often virtually, due to the pandemic. The special committee outlined the proposed policy during an online session for the community and, then, presented it to the full board. The board approved the policy in April 2022.

Shortly after the passage of the policy, the Board took up a request to rename the Chambers Building. The Board asked Dr. Hilary Green, the James B. Duke Professor of Africana Studies and an expert in African-American and Civil War history, to conduct research on Maxwell Chambers. His bequest to the college in 1855 ensured that the small school survived a financial crisis that preceded the Civil War.

Chambers' name adorned a building that opened in 1860 but burned in 1921. The college opened a replacement building in 1930 but kept the name.

Green's research delved into the archives of Davidson College, Oberlin College and the Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina, among other sources. She consulted scholars and archivists, and she identified and made contact with some descendants of individuals who were enslaved by Chambers, interviewing them via video.

What follows is the most comprehensive account of the ties between Maxwell Chambers and Davidson College.

Introduction

Maxwell Chambers provided generous support to the Presbyterian Church. He gave the local minister in Salisbury, N.C., use of three of the homes that Chambers owned there, and he left the church a large bequest in his will. When Chambers died in 1855, however, the local paper noted that he was "not a member of any church."

Months before Chambers' death, he freed 19 enslaved persons and paid for their travel to Oberlin, Ohio. His will freed another 29. Yet he left dozens of other human beings enslaved and bequeathed them as property to relatives and friends.

He left in his will a gift to Davidson College, which he did not attend, so large that it made Davidson briefly the wealthiest college in the South. In business, though, he showed no charity. He enforced transactions to the penny, foreclosed on and seized properties and instructed the executors of his will to do the same with debtors.

Chambers' life is filled with inconsistencies and opaqueness. He accepted few public or high profile roles and concealed business and property holdings—including some of the individuals he enslaved—under relatives' or business associates' names. These factors leave gaps in what is known about him. Documents, however, including a detailed will, outline many pieces of his history. This information is useful in the context of the Davidson College trustees' examination of the Chambers name on the campus's central building.

Foremost is that Chambers derived his wealth, power and reputation through his involvement in the institution of slavery and the slave trade. He bought, sold and owned enslaved individuals. He accumulated his fortune off of the labor of enslaved people on plantations he owned through foreclosure and in a factory that he owned in Salisbury. His reliance upon slavery made possible his philanthropy to Davidson College and to the Presbyterian Church.

The legacy of Chambers' dependence on slavery remains vivid today. In the Oberlin, Ohio, area, there are several families descended from the enslaved individuals whom Chambers and his will freed. Some retain the surname Chambers, which their ancestors carried from their enslaver. They also have watched from a distance the discussion around the building's name at Davidson. Perhaps their most clear request is that they be acknowledged, not erased.

Salisbury

Chambers was born in Salisbury in 1780 to Joseph and Mary Campbell Chambers. His father died four years later, and the court placed Maxwell under the protection of male relatives. He received his education in Salisbury and spent years as a young man in Charleston. Some second- and third-hand biographical writings suggest that Chambers began accumulating wealth there, including reports that he was able to gain early information on cotton export pricing and sell at a large profit. Available documents, however, provide no evidence of his involvement in cotton trading and little record of his life in Charleston to confirm those reports.

He returned to Salisbury in 1820 and lived with his widowed half-sister, Rebecca Nesbit Troy. Chambers established himself as a money lender. He executed a variety of mortgages and deeds that show he loaned money to prominent citizens in Rowan County. When they could not pay off their loans, he acquired their homes or plantations. He placed business interests under the names of family members or friends to whom he loaned money, so his name does not show up in some financial documents or slave schedules of the federal census. For example, he publicly claimed to have sold his interests in the Salisbury Cotton Factory, which he had purchased and renamed the Rowan Factory. His will, however, revealed that he still owned it and bequeathed it to Davidson College. The surviving ledgers of the Rowan Factory reflect this practice and are retained by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in their Southern Historical Collection.

The Will

Following Chambers' death, on February 7, 1855, his will left money, stock, land and property totaling approximately $250,000 to Davidson College. The college never collected that full amount for reasons that included litigation by Chambers family members, but the gift made Davidson one of the wealthiest colleges in the nation in the antebellum era. The bequest led to the naming of the original Chambers building, completed in 1860, as the primary facility on campus, providing classroom, laboratory and dormitory space. After the building burned in 1921, the name was applied to the replacement—and current—structure.

Davidson College Trustee D.A. Davis was named in the will to carry out its provisions, an assignment that deeply entangled the college with the will. Among other provisions in the will, Davidson received:

- The Rowan Factory.
- The endowment of a professorship.
- Tuition, board and fees for the sons of several men.
- The transfer of land and stocks directly.
- The transfer of land and stocks apparently held in friends and family member's names once they were deceased. Those individuals included: Rebecca Caldwell, Polly Holland, James C. Caldwell and Maxwell C. Caldwell.
- One-third ownership of 760 acres known as the Frazerlands, near Salisbury, and another 204 acres, collectively valued at $15,000 and owned with Pinckney Chambers, Joseph F. Chambers and others.

The size of the bequest caused some difficulties for Davidson College. The heirs sued. At the August 7, 1855, meeting of the Board of Trustees, they designated one group of trustees to deal with the litigation process[1] and another to reduce the size of the bequest and to determine the best way to use the "donation and liberality of Mr. M. Chambers." Original committee members included R.H. Morrison, D.A. Penick, and D.A. Davis. W.W. Pharr was later added and helped to finalize the reduction process.[2] The process and precise details of the planned reduction were settled in closed door meetings and remain unclear. Trustee minutes documented their work, including an attempt to amend the college's charter with the State Legislature, which limited the college's financial holdings below the amount of Chambers' bequest. A full copy of the will was added to official trustee minutes for its June 25, 1856 meeting.[3]

In the summer of 1854, several months before his death, Chambers freed 19 enslaved people and provided basic provisions and transportation to Oberlin, Ohio, a hub of abolitionism and a stop on the Underground Railroad. The original nineteen who migrated to Oberlin are as follows:

- Adeline Cowan and her six children
- Adeline's sister Marget, her husband Garrison Chambers and their five children (Adelaide, Warren, Isabella, Haynes and John Henry)
- Garrison's mother Susan
- Adeline and Marget's four brothers (Edwin Haynes, Isham Haynes, Hugh Haynes and Chesley Haynes).[4]

After Chambers' death, his will determined the fates of many more of his enslaved human property. Of those, 29 more were freed, but more than five times that many remained enslaved.

Clause 32 directed the release of the first group of 19 manumits, in the event Chambers died before he could free them himself. The will does not mention several of them by name. (The above list was confirmed through records at Oberlin): "Being desire to emancipate some of my Slaves during the ensuing Spring, and having concluded to send them to the State of Ohio, I hereby request and direct my Executors in case of my death before effecting it, to liberate and release from slavery or involuntary servitude, my woman, Adeline and all her children, Marget and all her children and Garrison her husband; also Edwin, Isham, Hugh, and Chesley, brothers of Adeline and Marget, and to furnish them with a comfortable and plentiful outfit of good clothing, and a full supply of provisions for the journey, (say three or four weeks); also to hire a sober, steady person, with a wagon and team, to take them comfortably to their place of destination, and furnish all those over twelve years old with Sixty Dollars each, and those under that age with Forty Dollars each, in such money as will be current in Ohio, the children's money to be given to their parents. All those means to be furnished out of my Estate."[5]

Others received their freedom after being required to work for two years at the Rowan Factory, which was bequeathed to Davidson College. Clause 33 directed the two-year hiring of five enslaved men at the Rowan Factory. The terms of the hiring contract dictated the charge of "fair, reasonable prices, and to have them well provided for in lodging, clothing, provisions, [and the rest] and in case of sickness, well attended to, and to pay each of them monthly out of their wages two dollars." These enslaved men's names were: Augustus, Stephen, Albert, Arthur, and Peter.

This was a previous self-purchase agreement between Chambers and the men. This practice was common. It allowed enslavers to maximize the labor and complicit behavior of individuals under the agreement that freedom could be possible.

After the end of two years, all, except for Peter, could claim their freedom and depart for a new life in either a free northern state or Liberia.[6] Since the Rowan Factory became a Davidson College property, the school directly benefitted from labor of Augustus, Stephen, Albert, Arthur, and Peter. This suggests a deeper connection to the institution than previously understood.

Like the first wave of the Ohio Chambers will manumits, these men received their funds, manumission papers, and basic supplies "for their departure and uninterrupted journey;" however, since their wives and children were not included in the provision, the men as outlined could "decline the office" and "select a master to purchase them as a reasonable price." Augustus of the Rowan Factory hire is known to have migrated to Oberlin.

Death indirectly provided freedom in the case of a few more manumits who joined the Oberlin, Ohio, community. Chambers bequeathed several enslaved persons to recipients in his will with the condition that the enslaved individuals be freed upon the death of their new enslaver. Once freed, they joined the others in Oberlin. For example, the will, in clause 35, granted Scipio to Chambers' half-sister, Rebecca M. Caldwell, who died in November 1855, according to her tombstone. This allowed for Scipio's freedom. Scipio, described as a "carriage-driver, waiting man, and gardener," received transportation, basic supplies, and manumission papers.[7] Once in Oberlin Ohio, Scipio Torrence married Evaline and established their family. He eventually enlisted in the Twenty-Seventh USCT (United States Colored Troops) regiment during the Civil War. He died in January 1866 and his family received a pension.[8]

Clause 36 designated the offer of freedom to "remained of my slaves not hereinbefore provided for." Each were to receive $100. This sounds like Chambers was freeing all of his slaves, but he was not. This type of provision—giving enslaved people a choice of freedom or choosing a master, but not specifically naming the people to be freed—was not uncommon at the time. It was a way that enslavers could wash their hands of what happened to those enslaved by them after the enslaver's death without actually securing freedom for the enslaved persons. Maxwell Chambers would have been familiar with the language used, and familiar with the fact that the common practice was for new masters to claim that the enslaved person chose to remain enslaved under the new master. The enslaved person likely never was told about the will provision. Since no other individuals enslaved by Chambers were freed, beyond the 48 in the two groups before and after his death, that appears to be what happened in this case.

The courts at the time would enforce will provisions that freed enslaved people by name. Such acts, though, were unusual, and Chambers' release of the two groups specified by name complicates his story. Will provisions that did not name an individual, such as clause 36 in Chambers' will, were not honored by the courts. Even after the Civil War, some formerly enslaved people brought lawsuits asking for money or property they claimed should have been paid to them as part of a will. Those who were not named specifically lost those lawsuits. Harriet Tubman's mother, Rit, is an example of such a case.

In total, 48 individuals freed by Chambers or his will eventually moved to Oberlin. Other known manumits who arrived in Oberlin are Hiel, Henry and Lucy Chambers and their children. Richard Chambers, Henry and Lucy's eldest son, enlisted as a substitute and served in the Ninth U.S. Colored Heavy Artillery. It is unknown who, if anyone, chose life in Liberia.[9]

The rest did not receive their freedom. Chambers did not manumit the 150 enslaved people mentioned in a 1999 *Davidson Journal* article.[10]

For those who remained in bondage, some had their care specified. Clause 34 required executors to care for Peter and another elderly enslaved woman named Lucy. Chambers designated bonds, surplus money derived by any hiring out contracts, and interest to be used until their deaths.

Upon the death of Peter and Lucy, this clause directed all unspent money and interest to the Trustees of Davidson College. Both Peter and Lucy indirectly become enslaved dependents of the college.

Others were bequeathed to the extended Chambers family, principally Pinckney, Joseph, Thomas S. Chambers and other named individuals in the will. The extended Chambers family created a "Maxwell Chambers Fund" and maintained "Birth and Death of Negroes" lists for allotting money received based on the enslaved portion. This practice continued into the early twentieth century. These carefully maintained lists are available at the Southern Historical Collection at the University of UNC Chapel Hill. The Chambers family also continued to benefit from Maxwell Chambers' practice of obtaining enslaved people and plantations if loanees defaulted. For instance, clause 21 of Chambers' will notes that Samuel Taylor both owes a debt to the Chambers family and has been using enslaved persons actually owned by

Maxwell Chambers: "all the Negroes that I own that is and has been in his possession." If Taylor fails to pay the remaining debt, Thomas S. Chambers will repossess both human, land, and other property. On the eve of the Civil War, the Chambers family still benefitted from the human property secured through Maxwell Chambers' financial dealings. Based on the heirs' accounting and list making, they retained 162 enslaved individuals worth more than $485,000. Neither the bequests to Davidson College nor the manumissions of 48 individuals lessened the family's wealth in human property obtained through Maxwell Chambers' business dealings.[11]

Most enslaved Chambers property remained in the Mecklenburg, Iredell and Rowan County areas until the end of the Civil War. Many of them retained the last name of Chambers and of others connected to the named individuals of the will and the broader Davidson College community.

Many More Were Left Behind

Maxwell Chambers' manumitting of 48 individuals to the Oberlin area, directly or through his will, has been praised at different points over the years. The record shows those actions were more complicated than benevolence. They were the exceptions. Most of his human property remained enslaved after his death, according to Chambers family papers held at UNC Chapel Hill. His will bequeathed some individuals to relatives and friends.

Davidson College has had little interaction with manumitted individuals and their descendants, including those who use the Chambers surname.

These communities pride themselves on their complex freedom story, including the USCT military service of some members during the Civil War and the use of Oberlin College to protect their manumission papers. The contesting of Chambers' will created concern at the time among these communities in Oberlin that their freedom was precarious, so they voluntarily secured their freedom papers with Oberlin College. William E. Bigglestone, an Oberlin College archivist, documented the lives of these communities in several biographical sketches in *They Stopped in Oberlin* (1981) and in detailed research files contained at the college. There are still living descendants from those who are named in the will in the area. These communities also maintained communications with individuals not manumitted in the will and others in the extended North Carolina community.

There has been no meaningful engagement between these descendants and Davidson College, but they have paid close attention to the building renaming questions and development of a process for raising those questions.

They do not want to be ignored, whitewashed or erased. They want acknowledgment.

They want meaningful inclusion in campus narratives about the building's namesake and any updates made in how that is presented. They also understand that they are not the only descendants connected to either Maxwell Chambers or other antebellum Davidson College campus community members. A few have been in communication with the author, but I have not been given permission to provide their names or contact information. One individual also reached out to Stephanie Glaser, associate vice president for campus and community relations.

Acknowledgment means updating the campus narrative on Chambers and the campus history. It can take the form of signage, markers, video presentations and other mediums. Whether the building name is removed or retained, they expect affirmation of their history. They also intimated the desire to engage with other descendants and to forge a pathway forward with the college. The younger generation (under 40 years old) have discussed future reparative justice through scholarships and revised admission requirements in the vein of Georgetown, the University of Virginia and other schools both before and after the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision curtailing the use of affirmative action in college admission.

Beyond the Oberlin communities, there are other African American Chambers in the surrounding Davidson College community. This is an opportunity to fully recognize and engage with these ignored and intentionally forgotten African American descendants of enslaved persons. Genealogical workshops, programming, and other measures might be considered to address these individuals as well. This is an opportunity to right the wrongs of the past and develop a more honest and inclusive pathway forward.

Chambers, the Civil War and a Prison

Davidson College trustees settled the contested Chambers will in 1857, but they did not immediately sell the property and other interests received.[12] According to the surviving minutes, the Board of Trustees appointed select Rowan County members to care for the property. D. A. Davis, a Rowan County trustee member, oversaw the estate throughout the contested probate process and ensured that profits came to the school.

The outbreak of the American Civil War threatened Davidson and other institutions of higher education, irrespective of wartime loyalties. All schools heavily relied on tuition dollars and not their endowments. When students chose military service, institutions struggled to remain open. Some North Carolina schools turned to educating white women. Some schools became military academies where elite families found refuge for their sons. Some remained open while actively securing favor from the Confederate government. Davidson College trustees chose the latter course.

Mary Beaty's "A History of Davidson College" (1988) and other accepted college publications discuss the institution's commitment to the Confederacy, financial precarity and struggle to remain open.[13] Beaty even relays an incident of rogue federal troops who entered the Chambers building and "damaged the scientific apparatus." The college's investments in Confederate bonds and institutions became "nearly worthless."[14]

These publications, however, do not address how the college's support extended to the sale of the Rowan Factory and other interests to the Confederacy. The connection between the Confederate prison in Salisbury and Davidson College's Rowan Factory received from the will is noted in the NCPedia account of Maxwell Chambers and confirmed by the college's archives.

On November 2, 1861, Davidson College trustees sold the factory. The July 15, 1862 trustees meeting noted the sale of the Salisbury property to Confederate officials who, over the course of the war, would use it as a prison for conscientious objectors, Confederate deserters, Federal POWS, and transferred Federal civilians seized by Confederate soldiers from other prisons.[15] R. I. McDowell's treasurer's report noted the sale of the Rowan Factory, lot of land, and the final amount received, according to the report, is $16,086.47 for the factory. The report notes that $5,000 of the payment was in Confederate bonds, which were worthless after the war. In total, the school had received $234,297.03 from the Maxwell Chambers estate at the time of the sale.[16] Trustees also authorized five Rowan County trustees to sell "property belonging to D. College within the Town of Salisbury, for a sum not less than 3000$ (three thousand dollars)."[17] In the next meeting, R. I. McDowell's Treasurer Report of July 14, 1863 noted the sale of other Salisbury land lots received in the Chambers will. The school received the desired sale amount for the land and the profits from the additional sale of machinery and paint not included in the Rowan Factory sale agreement by D. A. Davis.

Trustees acknowledged D. A. Davis for his role in the sales and for maintaining the Salisbury interests while he managed the Maxwell Chambers estate. They also rewarded him. At the July 15, 1862 meeting, they unanimously adopted a resolution that read:

> "That the thanks of the Board of Trustees of D College be tendered to Mr. D. A. Davis for the able, efficient, and satisfactory manner in which he has managed the Estate of Maxwell Chambers, made peculiarly difficult and trying owing to the litigation of opposing interest, and that, as a slight testimonial of its gratitude to Mr. Davis, the Board relinquish to him (the said D. A. Davis) all the undivided interest of Mr. Chambers' Estate in the Female College at Salisbury."[18]

It is not clear whether the trustees knew about the transformation of the factory property into a prison, but President John L. Kilpatrick does comment on the lack of Sabbath observances by the Confederate prison guards. He does not acknowledge the prisoners' conditions and deaths.[19]

The prison housed POWs, federal deserters and dissident Confederates for most of the war with an estimated death rate of 2 percent. The population, however, swelled from October 1864 until February 1865, at which point prisoners were released. During that period, insufficient food, diarrhea and unsanitary conditions spiked the death rate to 28 percent. An estimated 4,000 prisoners died at the prison, most during its last five months. Bodies were collected and buried in a nearby cornfield. The site is now part of the Salisbury National Cemetery.[22]

After the Civil War, the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands seized and sold the prison and property as confiscated land. When announcing the sale, Bureau agents specifically named Davidson College Trustees for selling the property to the Confederacy and its conversion to the prison.[20] The federal agency

does not mention Maxwell Chambers or his will. Rather, agents highlighted the wartime actions of Davidson College trustees. *The Carolina Watchman*, a Salisbury, NC newspaper, later reported that H.H. Helper purchased the property for $1,600 in November 1866.[21] The purchase value is indicative of the collapsed southern economy and the rebuilding effort during Reconstruction. The prison commandant who operated the converted Salisbury prison faced a postwar trial. Unlike the Andersonville, Georgia, prison commandant, the Salisbury commandant's life was spared following his trial in 1866.

These institutional actions complicate the legacy of Maxwell Chambers, the campus building named after him, and previous institutional decision-making. This documented relationship to the Confederacy and the Salisbury prison raises questions regarding U.S. military veterans, possible questions of repair to the descendants of captured veterans and civilians imprisoned and/or who died at the property. An acknowledgement of how the Freedmen's Bureau and Civil War era contemporaries assessed of institutional harm of this aspect of the Chambers bequest is recommended.

The Building and the Legacy

Within weeks of Chambers' death, trustees laid the foundation for his campus legacy. At the board's February 28, 1855 meeting, trustees pledged to "cherish a grateful veneration for the memory of Mr. Chambers as a munificent benefactor to this college" and resolved themselves to embrace suitable opportunities for perpetuating the name of Mr. Chambers by designating future Halls and Professorships."[23] Other commemorative acts included obtaining the "likeness of M. Chambers and W.L. Davidson" for display on campus and creating the Maxwell Chambers Day, in April 1890, when Seniors delivered speeches before their peers and faculty. The tradition continued at least through 1919, according to records in the college archives.[24]

Trustees officially established the Maxwell Chambers professorship at the August 7, 1855 meeting. They created the terms, selection process, and other details for the endowed professorship designed to support the teaching of Chemistry. They used $20,000 paid through the transfer of 200 shares of the Bank of Cape Fear from the Chambers bequest for the initial endowment. Post-war financial pressures forced the liquidation of the Bank of Cape Fear in 1865, but the Chambers name remained attached to the professorship without the funding. Between 1856 and 1998, six individuals held this endowed professorship: W.C. Kerr (1856–1861); J.R. Blake, (1869–1870); William J. Martin (1870–1896); William J. Martin, Jr. (1896–1912); Howard Bell Arbuckle (1912–1945) and J. Nicholas Burnett (1981–1998).[25] The professorship no longer exists.

The original Chambers Building is the clearest manifestation of his legacy and campus lore. When destroyed and rebuilt, the decision to keep the name involved selective remembrance of the man, his ties to the institution of slavery, and Lost Cause understandings of Davidson's Civil War history.

Trustees envisioned a larger dormitory-classroom building. They hired noted architect Alexander J. Davis. The final building featured a stately columned portico with flanking wings on either side. Construction began in 1857, and the building opened for classes in early 1860. The Chambers Building signaled a new era in the campus history. It featured 72 dorm rooms, five classrooms, three laboratories, and a Commencement Hall which also functioned briefly as a library and museum.[26]

The original Chambers building survived the Civil War. Poor institutional finances, resulting from the college's support of the shortlived and failed Confederate States of America, allowed little funding for upkeep and contributed to the gradual deterioration of the building over the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In addition, the campus community's views focused on the building, rather than who it honored. Instead of remembering Maxwell Chambers, most late-nineteenth century students recalled the classroom experiences, their work in the various laboratories, and dorm life. They also crafted ghost stories and other myths surrounding the building and not the man. By the 1920s, the Chambers building embodied a shared experience that united students, faculty, and alumni. Their reverence, though, was for the building and not its namesake.

Fire destroyed the original Chambers Building on November 28, 1921. The entire Davidson community mourned. Fundraising began immediately. Alumni pledged their financial support and dedication to seeing the Chambers structure rebuilt. Presidents of other colleges sent condolences and concerns for the school's resilience after the loss. Recognizing the deteriorating state of the original Chambers, the University of South Carolina President called the fire a "blessing in disguise."[27] Like its predecessor, the new Chambers Hall would create a new era for the college.

President William J. Martin spearheaded the rebuilding effort. With more than $107,000 in insurance money received, Martin envisioned the new Chambers to be the "heart and core of the teaching life of the College ... and housing nearly all of the teaching quarters."[28] In another appeal, Martin explained the modern features of the New Chambers and suggested that donations would "save [Davidson College] from serious danger of loss in efficiency"[29] The uneven nature of fundraising resulted in the completion of the south wing over three years (1924–1927). After its completion, another fundraising effort financed the north and center portions using a General Education Board grant and donations. At the laying of the cornerstone for North and Center wings, S. Clay Williams briefly mentioned the original building resulted from "the splendid gift of one man, Mr. Maxwell Chambers..."[30] During the June 3, 1930 dedication ceremony, though, former President Martin recalled the fire and his pledge to rebuild, praised the work done by the Nashville architect, and handed the key to the Board of Trustees' Committee on Buildings and Grounds. He never mentioned the name of Maxwell Chambers.[31]

More recently, renewed campus research led to calls for renaming the building. Since the early 2000s, an increasing number of colleges and universities have begun the difficult work of examining their institutional histories that are tied to the systems of slavery, the slave trade, and segregation. For Davidson College, the campus rediscovery of Maxwell Chambers, and his widely accessible biography and archival record, has become a flashpoint during and after the Commission on Race and Slavery's work. Based on this recent history and concerns raised by the campus community, the Commission's 2020 report proposed that "the college should rename the Chambers Building" and the "selection of a new name should be a deliberate anti-racist action."[32] The report established a framework and recommendations for future work by Davidson College to examine the institution's history and be accountable in the present. Those proposals included the establishment of two special trustee committees focused on commemorating and honoring the enslaved individuals whose labor was exploited by the college and developing a process and policies for how the college names buildings, spaces, funds and campus programs. There remains a large contingent of the campus community who want to rename the Chambers building. These individuals can neither overlook the namesake nor continue to embrace the Chambers Building as a shared positive symbol.

Moving Forward

This moment presents an important opportunity to be more truthful about Maxwell Chambers, the unacknowledged history of the African American Chambers affected by the same will that allowed for the school's survival, and the history of the building. Regardless of the decision regarding the name, an updated history on the campus website, accessibility of all pertaining documents, and meaningful recognition of the African American Chambers both physically and virtually is recommended. I am, therefore, recommending the addition of history and appropriate contextualization. This is a moment to be honest about this past and lay the foundation for future inquiry by students, scholars, and African American descendant communities.

By adding history and appropriate contextualization, current descendants of Maxwell Chambers might feel comfortable in building better relations with the college. As such, a clear process for engaging with known and soon-to-be-known descendants should be established.

Reference Notes

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3 BOT Minutes, 254, 256-268.

4 William E. Bigglestone, *They Stopped in Oberlin* (Oberlin: Oberlin College, 1981, repr. 2002), 35-41, 58-59, 101.

5 BOT Minutes, 254,263.

6 BOT Minutes, 266.

7 BOT Minutes, 264.

8 Bigglestone, *They Stopped in Oberlin*, 200-201.

9 Bigglestone, *They Stopped in Oberlin*, 39.

10 Lee Burnett, "Chambers' Gift: The Legal History," *Davidson Journal* (Spring 1999), 3.

11 "Birth of My Negroes," vol. 2, Chambers family, box 1, folders 10-12, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC.

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14 Beaty, *A History of Davidson College*, 107-108.

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16 BOT Minutes, 377.

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18 BOT Minutes, 381.

19 John L. Kilpatrick to President of the Confederate States, May 26, 1862, accessed at Fold3, *h11ps:'lww11•.LMdJ.c:011i1nurg, 6./2999629*.

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24 BOT Minutes, 222; "Who Knows?," *The Davidsonian*, April 10, 1924, 8; Beaty, *A History of Davidson College* 154.

25 BOT Minutes, 231-232, 243-244; Emily Privott, "What are the different named professorships on campus and who has been awarded them?" LibAnswers: Archives, Special Collections, and Community: College History," https://davidson.libanswcrs.com/cl·cc-colleg hi tor Ila / J0917, last updated December 9, 2020.

26 Beaty, A History of Davidson College, 65-67; Cornelia Shaw, "Chambers I - Construction," *Davidson College* (1923), pp. 91-92, clipping in D-File.

27 Beaty, 284-287; For the various condolence letters and pledges of financial support by alumni and campus supporters, see RO 2/1.11 2 Chambers Building Fire (Letters of Sympathy and Rebuilding) President's Office - Martin, Williams J folder, Archives and Special Collections, Davidson College, Davidson, NC.

28 Beaty, 287-288.

29 William J. Martin, "What We Must Have in the New Chambers Building and Why," D-File.

30 Beaty, 288; "Davidson Ends Finance Drive, January 30, 1924, "Davidson Lets Contract for First Chambers Unit," February 1924, clippings and "Remarks of S. Clay Williams of Winston-Salem, N.C., Upon the Occasion of the Laying of the Cornerstone of the New Chambers Building at Davidson College on May 29, 1928, D-File.

31 William J. Martin, Dedication of Chambers Building, June 3, 1930. This event occurred as part of the inauguration events of President Walter Lee Lingle.

32 Report to President Carol Quillen from the Commission on Race and Slavery.

Hilary Green, Ph.D., James B. Duke Professor of Africana Studies

Professor Hilary Green has long pursued the American history that didn't make it into standard textbooks—those accounts often omitted, or the glossed-over details about enslaved human beings who built so much of the United States.

Telling their stories, from enslavement to freedom, has become her life's work.

Green, the James B. Duke Professor of Africana Studies at Davidson College, is a distinguished scholar in Reconstruction studies and Civil War memory whose work probes the intersections of race, class and gender in pre-1920 African-American history.

She is the author of *Educational Reconstruction: African American Schools in the Urban South, 1865–1890* (Fordham University Press, 2016), which explores how African Americans and their white allies created, developed and sustained a system of African American education schools during the transition from slavery to freedom in Richmond, Virginia, and Mobile, Alabama.

Green's forthcoming book manuscript focuses on how African Americans remembered and commemorated the American Civil War and its legacy. Her forthcoming co-edited volume for non-historians, *The Civil War and the Summer of 2020* (2024), focuses on how Americans remembered the intertwined and persistent connections to the Civil War during that fateful summer.

As an associate professor in the Department of Gender and Race Studies at the University of Alabama, Green created the Hallowed Grounds Project, which includes an hour-long walking tour of slavery's history on campus. The inspiration came after a Black student wondered why they were talking about slavery at the university, "because slavery didn't exist here."

She joined Davidson College as the visiting Vann Professor of Ethics in Society during the 2020–2021 academic year and, then, as the college's public historian and a professor of Africana Studies in 2021.

Green earned her bachelor's degree in history from Franklin and Marshall College, a master's degree in history from Tufts University and a doctoral degree in history from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.