

Albert Gallatin Jenkins accomplished much during his short life. He was a graduate of Marshall Academy and after attending Jefferson College in Pennsylvania studied law at Harvard University. He was the owner of a sizable plantation on the banks of the Ohio River in the Greenbottom area of Cabell County. Prior to West Virginia's statehood, he served as a member of the United States Congress as a representative from Virginia. He was later elected to serve in the First Congress of the confederate states. He was commissioned as a brigadier general in the Army of the Confederacy. He led his troops in many significant battles with union soldiers. He was wounded in the battle of Gettysburg and after recuperating he was killed at the age of 33 in the Battle of Cloyd's Mountain. There is little question that he was a brave soldier and outstanding leader.

General Jenkins was also an active participant in a sad and tragic part of our nation's history. He kept more than 60 slaves on his Greenbottom plantation. In addition to owning slaves, he aggressively sought to capture runaway slaves seeking sanctuary in the North. There is some evidence that he even captured former slaves who had been freed by their owners to return them to slavery but we have been unable to document that fact.

In 1932, decision makers on behalf of Marshall College determined to recognize General Jenkins by adding his name to a campus building. We do not, and cannot know, the considerations which prompted their decision. We have no reason to believe that in doing so they departed from policies in effect at that time. The Marshall Board of Governors is now obligated to determine whether that name should remain.

The Board of Governors has carefully considered the report and recommendations of a special

committee appointed by President Gilbert and chaired by Christie Kinsey of this Board to consider this issue as well as the names of all other campus buildings. The Committee concluded that no other building names required modification. With respect to Jenkins Hall, under the outstanding leadership of Ms. Kinsey, that committee held a public meeting and received numerous comments online and in person from persons who support changing the name of Jenkins Hall and those who oppose any change. We have also carefully considered an alternative recommendation of Dr. Gilbert.

We recognize that there are compelling arguments and firmly held opinions on both sides of this issue. Current Board of Governor policies dealing with the naming of buildings, while not technically applicable in this case, permit the bestowing of this recognition with respect to persons “whose accomplishments are of an enduring and lasting value.” We are unable to conclude that the military achievements of General Jenkins in battles against the United States meet this test and the name “Jenkins Hall” would not be chosen under the current Board policies. Nevertheless, we have determined that the name “Jenkins Hall” should remain in place. We believe it is the duty and responsibility of an institution of higher learning to provide its students a full and balanced view of history. The story of General Jenkins is a significant part of the history of our state and our region. Removing the name Jenkins will not erase the mistakes in our nation’s history or the decisions in the history of Marshall University.

While we think it is likely that many people who see the name Jenkins Hall will attach no significance to the name, those who do will be reminded of the terrible period of slavery as well as the hardships, challenges and indignities which African Americans have been forced to endure as a result of such practices as Jim Crow laws, poll taxes and segregation.

We believe there can be no question as to demonstrated commitment of this University to the principles of diversity and the equal treatment of all persons, in order to leave no doubt as to the position of the University in 2019 and beyond, we have determined that there will be installed in a prominent location at Jenkins Hall, a permanent plaque which recognizes the abhorrent nature of slavery and its lasting impact on Americans of African American descent. This plaque will make it clear that Marshall University will constantly confront and challenge bigotry, intolerance and unwarranted discrimination in all of their manifestations.

Marshall University Board of Governors

James R. Bailes, Chairman