



This historical marker is the centerpiece of a memorial garden next to Robinson Hall.

they are difficult to uncover. The slaves owned by Washington College were men and women known to the historical record through their first names, prices, and relationships with white men.”

A look at two lists, reproduced on the historical marker, illustrates Burris-Janssen’s statement. In 1826, for example, a man named Gabriel was 31 years old and appraised at \$425. A girl named Caroline, 11, was deemed to be worth \$250. Eight years later, in 1834, Gabriel and Caroline — now valued at \$300 each — had created a family, with a 2-year-old son, Alexander, who was appraised at \$100. Further study of the two lists reveals marriages, deaths, births and ailments; it also shows professions, such as cooper, preacher, cook and shoemaker. As Burris-Janssen writes, “A great deal, however, happens in life when the record keepers are not looking.”

“We must ask ourselves how this could ever have happened,” said Kenneth P. Ruscio, the 26th

president of W&L, at the dedication of the marker in 2016. “We wonder how reasonable people could have ever believed that it was acceptable to claim ownership of another human person. We wonder how the men who led this institution at the time not only tolerated slavery but used these enslaved men and women to help maintain and fund a college. We must confront the knowledge that our institution has a history connected with the injustice of slavery.”

Ruscio concluded the dedication ceremony by saying: “We know that there are many other stories still to be told. So this is not a time to congratulate ourselves for recognizing this moment of our history. Instead, we must see this as part of an ongoing — and long-overdue — effort to tell the history of Washington and Lee courageously and completely, and to learn from it, and to always strive to make it a better institution, more just and truly respectful of all individuals.”

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