The Role of Enslaved Persons at Episcopal High School
During the Antebellum Period (1839-61)

Introduction

Throughout the years, members of the Episcopal community have researched and shared accounts of the School's founding and history.[1] Many of these efforts have been comprehensive and collaborative and, in recent years, they have involved EHS students and faculty delving into Episcopal's archives as part of their work in U.S. History courses and other social studies electives.

A particular focus was placed on this research in the years leading up to the 2018 Commemoration of Fifty Years of Integration, especially in regard to the experience of African Americans at Episcopal. In the past year, this ongoing research has borne increased clarity about the role enslaved people played in the School's pre-Civil War history. It is in response to this clarity, and following extensive discussions relating thereto, that on June 15, 2022, the EHS Board of Trustees unanimously approved a resolution acknowledging the School's pre-Civil War history and connection to slavery and calling for the School to honor and commemorate in a meaningful, respectful, and lasting way the enslaved men, women, and children who helped build and sustain Episcopal in its early years.

This report provides contextual information about the region during the antebellum era, a description of the research process and methodology, and the substantive findings of this research to date.

Alexandria and Virginia during the Antebellum Era

When Episcopal High School was founded in 1839, the institution of slavery and its dehumanizing impact on the enslaved individuals had been deeply embedded in the economic and social fabric of Alexandria and Fairfax County for over two centuries. The transatlantic slave trade brought tens of thousands of enslaved Africans to Virginia before the trade was banned in 1808 with the primary purpose being to grow the tobacco that served as the foundation of Virginia's staple-crop plantation economy. A year after EHS was founded, the 1840 census reported the total population for Fairfax County as 9,370 with 3,453 (36.9%) being enslaved African Americans. At this time, the institution of slavery was an essential pillar of the regional and national economy, and enslaved people did every type of job, including the critical work necessary to operate schools like Episcopal. By 1860, the total population of Fairfax grew to 11,834, but the number of enslaved people fell by a few hundred to 3,116 (26.3%).[2] The economy of the region, once dependent on growing and exporting tobacco, began to shift in the late 18th century as tobacco prices dropped and worn-out land pushed farmers to move to grain production. The drop in the number of

---

[1] Currently there are three published histories of Episcopal High School including: *The Story of a Southern School* by Arthur Barksdale Kinsolving, EHS Class of 1881, published in 1917; *The High School* by former EHS Principal Richard Pardee Williams, EHS Class of 1904, published in 1964; and *Chronicles of Episcopal High School in Virginia, 1839 – 1989* by John White, published in 1989.

[2] Virginia Places Digital Project: Aggregate United States Census Data, Virginia 1840 Census, 1860 Census.

enslaved people recorded by census takers in Fairfax County can be attributed to those economic changes and to the growth of the domestic slave trade.[3]

As agriculture in the Chesapeake region underwent the long-term shift from tobacco to grain, the labor needs of farmers and plantation owners in the region reduced. In the decades after 1820, the domestic slave trade expanded drastically as slaveholders in the Chesapeake and upper South found themselves with excess labor and the demand for enslaved workers in the cotton and sugar fields of the deep South exploded. Alexandria, Baltimore, Richmond, and Washington, D.C., played a central role in the forced migration of approximately one million people from the upper South to the deep South in the decades before the Civil War.[4] Many enslaved people in northern Virginia were sold to slave traders during this time, often separated from their families and subjected to horrific violence.[5] Also, some slaveholders chose not to sell but rather hired out enslaved people to make a profit in an increasingly complex economic system that required more flexible sources of labor. Hiring out enslaved workers was especially common in areas close to urban centers like Alexandria.[6]

The Founding of Episcopal High School

Episcopal High School was founded in 1839 as the "diocesan school" for the Episcopal Church in Virginia.[7] Future Bishop William Meade and other clergy and lay leaders of the church raised the funds to purchase seventy-seven acres of land adjacent to the Virginia Theological Seminary in Fairfax County near Alexandria, purchasing the land and existing buildings including "Howard," a house built several decades earlier for $5,000.[8] Meade was selected to lead the board of trustees established to govern the new school and that group selected Episcopal clergyman William N. Pendleton to be the first "principal."[9] Pendleton started the School with thirty-five students, but

---

[3] For an excellent explanation of the transformation of slavery in Virginia and the impact on enslaved people in the antebellum period, see Calvin Schermerhorn, *Money Over Mastery, Family Over Freedom: Slavery in the Antebellum Upper South* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011).

[4] Schermerhorn, *Money Over Mastery*, 67.

[5] Slave traders Isaac Franklin and John Armfield created one of the most sophisticated commercial enterprises of the time in the United States with their slave trading business that operated out of an office and slave prison on Duke Street in Alexandria. See Joshua Rothman, *The Ledger and the Chain: How Domestic Slave Traders Shared America* (New York, Basic Books, 2021). The historical literature on the violence of slavery is vast, see an important contribution that connects that violence to the commodification of African Americans as property, Daina Ramey Berry, *The Price for Their Pound of Flesh: The Value of the Enslaved, from Womb to Grave, in the Building of a Nation* (New York: Beacon Press, 2017).

[6] For a detailed account of the hiring out system, see John Zaborney, *Slaves For Hire: Renting Enslaved Laborers in Antebellum Virginia* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012).

[7] An announcement of the plan to establish the School was printed in the *Alexandria Gazette*, June 17, 1839 and can be found here. Also see an advertisement for the school published in the *Richmond Enquirer*, August 4, 1843, here.

[8] In addition to the money raised to buy the land and Howard, another $12,000 was subscribed for additional buildings and equipment. Arthur Barksdale Kinsolving, D.D., *The Story of a Southern School: The Episcopal High School of Virginia* (Baltimore: The Norman, Remington Co., 1922), 22.

[9] The EHS Board overlapped with the Board of the Virginia Theological Seminary for the decades preceding the Civil War. The Board set tuition rates and selected the principal (or later rector) to lead the school and that person was given discretion to run the school as he saw fit and was responsible for financial operations. The principal was

enrollment quickly increased to eighty-five by 1841.[10] Pendleton resigned in 1844 amidst financial difficulties, and EHS was closed for the 1844-45 school year as the trustees searched for a replacement. Episcopal priest Edwin A. Dalrymple took over leadership of the School under the title "rector" in 1845. In his first few years, enrollment was limited, but Dalrymple soon reestablished EHS as a school that attracted the sons of wealthy families from Virginia and the broader Chesapeake region and the children of Episcopal clergymen. Dalrymple resigned in 1852, citing poor health, and the EHS Board replaced him as rector with one of their own, long-time board member and Episcopal priest serving as rector of two parishes in Essex County, Virginia, John P. McGuire. McGuire took over as rector of EHS in 1852 and served in that role until 1861. During McGuire's tenure, the School thrived and enrollment remained stable with around eighty students in attendance each year. EHS closed down in the spring of 1861 as the secession crisis in Virginia heated up and war seemed imminent. McGuire and his family fled campus when United States Army troops occupied Alexandria and the surrounding area in May 1861.[11]

Methodology and Current Research Findings

In recent efforts, those doing research for the School have explored historical primary sources and archival materials with the goal of better understanding the relationship between Episcopal High School in its early years and the institution of slavery. They have also sought to understand who the enslaved people were who helped support and sustain the operations of the School and what life was like for them on campus. Key findings come from United States Census records, the Personal Property Tax Records from Fairfax County and, most significantly, accounting ledger books held in the Episcopal High School Archives that were kept by the first and third leaders of the School, William Nelson Pendleton and John Peyton McGuire. Many other sources provide important context and information, including historical newspapers (especially the *Alexandria Gazette*); relevant archival collections (including holdings at the Library of Virginia); and published accounts of life in and around the Seminary Hill neighborhood during the antebellum era. Each new finding opens research opportunities that promise to help EHS better understand its early decades.

United States Census Data and Fairfax County Tax Records

The entry for William N. Pendleton, the first principal of EHS, in the 1840 U.S. Census for Fairfax County only includes his name as the head of household, but it also notes the age, sex, and racial categories for all others recorded by the census taker as living on the EHS campus. For Episcopal's second session in 1840, the census taker counted thirty-seven school age males on campus, seven white females, three free Black females and one enslaved male between the age of ten

required to pay a per student "tax" back to the Trustees. This arrangement was cited as a reason the school found itself in financial difficulty leading to Pendleton's resignation in 1844. Kinsolving, *The Story of a Southern School*, 26-28.

[10] Kinsolving, *The Story of a Southern School*, 24; Pendleton Account Book, 1840-1844, Episcopal High School Archives.

[11] McGuire's wife, Judith Brockenbrough McGuire, published her diary from the war years as *The Diary of a Southern Refugee, During the War by a Lady of Virginia* (Richmond: J.W. Randolph and English publishers, 3rd Edition, 1889). Her account of fleeing the EHS campus can be found on 13-14.

and twenty-four.[12] Another key source from 1840 comes from the records of personal property taxes paid to Fairfax County. Residents of Virginia paid yearly property taxes to the county or city they lived in on a list of enumerated possessions, including for the enslaved men, women, and children they owned or hired out.[13] In 1840, Pendleton paid taxes for six enslaved people. It was usual for white people who "hired out" the labor of enslaved people from slaveholders to pay the taxes due to the county, so these records indicate that Pendleton owned the one man listed in the census records and hired out the other five people he paid taxes for in 1840.[14] The tax records show that Pendleton paid taxes annually for between two and eight enslaved people during his time as principal of EHS.[15]

The 1850 federal census for Fairfax County lists Edwin A. Dalrymple, the second leader of the School, and the names of sixty-four students attending EHS, but for the 1850 census (and again in 1860) information about enslaved people was recorded in a separate "slave schedule." Dalyrymple's name does not appear in the separate slave schedule for Fairfax County, but the tax records for the county reveal that he paid taxes for seven enslaved people in 1850, and in 1851 he paid taxes for eleven enslaved people. That combination of records makes it likely that the enslaved people for whom Dalrymple paid taxes were hired out by him from slaveholders in the region to work at the School. The soon-to-be third leader of EHS, John P. McGuire, appears in the Essex County, Virginia, 1850 slave schedule, owning thirteen people. McGuire served as the rector of two parishes in Essex County, Virginia, prior to coming to Episcopal. McGuire took over as rector of Episcopal in 1852 after Dalrymple resigned, and every year from 1853 to 1860, McGuire paid property taxes to Fairfax County for between twelve and thirteen enslaved men, women, and children. Many of these enslaved people were likely those he and his wife, Judith Brockenbrough McGuire, owned and brought with them from Essex County, but McGuire's account book in the EHS archives also makes it clear that he hired out the labor of numerous enslaved people during his time at Episcopal.[16]

---

[12] 1840 Census, Fairfax County, Virginia, Population Schedule, 158, accessed via ancestry.com. The two pages of the 1840 census records with entries for Pendleton and EHS can be found here and here.

[13] The property tax records consist of preprinted forms with a list of all taxable property categories across the top and then the name of the taxpayer written along the left side. For enslaved people, the form includes two columns, one for "slaves who have attained the age of 16 years" and for "slaves who have attained the age of 12 years." Enslaved children between 12 and 16 years old were taxed at a lower rate. Fairfax County Personal Property Tax Records: 1839-1861, Library of Virginia.

[14] "Hiring out" the labor of enslaved people was a common practice in Alexandria and the surrounding region, with local newspapers reporting frequently on "hiring day" in early January of each year. See an example here from 1854. Pendleton, Dalrymple and McGuire made extensive use of the hiring out system in order to meet the labor needs of the School as is made clear in the tax records and in the Pendleton and McGuire account books. That the person hiring the labor of an enslaved person paid the taxes due the county is confirmed in Zaborney *Slaves For Hire* and email correspondence with John Zaborney, Aug. 26, 2021. Also see Sarah Hughes "Slaves for Hire: The Allocation of Black Labor in Elizabeth City County, Virginia, 1782-1810," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 35 (April 1978): 260-286.

[15] An exhaustive search was conducted in the Fairfax County personal property tax records from 1839 until 1861 and the number of enslaved people for whom the first three heads of EHS paid taxes for each year can be found here.

[16] 1850 Census, Essex County, Virginia, Slave Schedule, 497 accessed via ancestry.com. An image of the census page can be found here. McGuire Account Book, Episcopal High School Archives.

Census and tax records are important sources that help provide an idea of the number of enslaved men, women, and children who were either owned by Episcopal's early leaders or were hired out from other slaveholders in the region to work to support the School. Numbers, while important, do not tell us much about the people themselves, and the information gleaned from these government records when combined with other sources help offer a more full picture of the lives of the enslaved people who lived and worked at EHS.

Pendleton and McGuire Account Books in the Episcopal High School Archives

The EHS archives hold three account books that offer much more information about who the enslaved people working on campus were and what jobs they performed to support the operations of the School. Two of the account books were created by the first principal of Episcopal, William N. Pendleton, and cover the time period between 1839 and 1844. Pendleton recorded money he received for tuition payments, and he meticulously kept track of expenses. In his expense accounts we find the names of many of the enslaved people who worked at EHS and, in the case of those who were hired out from slaveholders, the names and amounts paid for their labor. A few examples from the account book entries will illustrate how they help open a window into better understanding the role enslaved people played at Episcopal. At the beginning of the first school year in 1839, Pendleton paid small amounts of money, ten and twenty-five cents, to "Madison, servant," an enslaved man who appears frequently in the account book until his death in January 1843. From an obituary published in the Episcopal *Southern Churchman* and Pendleton's account book, we know that Madison Carter lived on campus and eventually died at EHS, and that he performed a variety of tasks to support the daily needs of the students and faculty.[17] An enslaved man named Adam also appears frequently in the account book. In January of 1844, Pendleton noted that he paid a local slaveholder $75 "for Adam's hire" and also recorded Adam working as a gardener and doing various other labor intensive jobs like repairing fences and gravelling walkways.[18] The records also frequently show Pendleton paying enslaved women small sums, typically for overwork.[19] Individuals who were identified with just their first name in the account book as Jane, Celia, and Dinah all likely worked as washerwomen and helped cook and prepare meals.[20] Pendleton's account book offers snapshots of information about the enslaved men and women who worked at EHS in the earliest years of the School and makes it clear that their labor played a fundamental role in operations of the School from its inception.

---

[17] Pendleton Account Book, 1839-1840, October 1839 entry, Episcopal High School Archives; "Madison Carter Obituary," *Alexandria Gazette*, January 14, 1843, reprinted from the *Southern Churchman*. A link to a page in Pendleton's account book can be found here and a link to the obituary can be found here.

[18] Pendleton Account Book, 1840-1844, January 1844 entry, Episcopal High School Archives.

[19] It was typical for slaveholders to pay enslaved people they owned and those they hired out small sums of money for overwork on Sundays and holidays and for work that fell outside of their daily regimen of tasks. Those who hired out the labor of enslaved people were also obligated to buy them clothing and give them small amounts of money to pay for necessities. Both the Pendleton and McGuire account books include dozens of notations indicating these types of payments. For more on enslaved people's "internal economy" and how access to cash impacted daily life see Dylan Penningroth, *The Claims of Kinfolk: African American Property and Community in the Nineteenth-Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

[20] For more on enslaved women and the ways that gender norms impacted their lives and work see Deborah Gray White, *Ar'nt I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South*, Revised Edition (New York: WW Norton, 1999) especially chapter two "The Nature of Female Slavery." Also see Stephanie Camp *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

The account book kept by John McGuire, spanning the years 1853-1858, is more detailed, including the names of enslaved people who lived and worked on campus and more information about their lives and the jobs they performed. The account book is organized with each student's parent or guardian having itemized expenses and tuition payments listed on adjoining pages and a general listing of school expenses at the half-year point and at the end of a school session. It also includes detailed records kept by McGuire keeping track of payments made and money owed to specific enslaved individuals. In February of 1854, McGuire recorded that for the first half of the year he paid $1,662.50 for teachers' salaries and directly beneath that he recorded $550 for "servants."[21] McGuire, as was the norm for the time in Virginia and the rest of the South, consistently referred to enslaved individuals as servants.[22] For the second half of the 1853-54 school year, he noted that he paid another $550 for enslaved workers, totaling $1,100 for the year.[23] On numerous occasions, McGuire also listed by name the enslaved men and women to whom he gave money in order for them to purchase clothes for themselves. Men usually received $10 for winter and $5 for summer clothes, and women were given $5 for winter and $3.50 for summer clothes.[24] These lists provide the names of the enslaved men, women, and children who worked and very likely lived on the EHS campus, and other notations in the account book show how enslaved men and women earned extra money. In 1854, an enslaved person identified as Kitty was paid $1 for cooking over the Christmas week, a time when enslaved people were typically given a reprieve from work, and in 1856 an enslaved person identified as Henry Haney was given $3 "for wash money and work at Christmas."[25] McGuire also recorded individual accounts he kept with enslaved men and women for money owed them for doing jobs like cleaning the students' shoes. In 1856 an enslaved person identified as Abram earned $15 cleaning shoes, and McGuire recorded similar payments to four other enslaved men, Henry Haney, Nat, Marshall, and Oscar Payne.[26] On a number of pages, McGuire also recorded the payments he made to slaveholders to hire out the labor of enslaved people. On a page detailing payments made to his brother-in-law, William Brockenbrough, McGuire noted that he paid $225 "for Aaron and Carter's hire for 1857." McGuire paid Alexandria resident Mary Dade quarterly for "Oscar's hire," amounting to $106.25 in 1856, and that same year he paid H. Allen Taylor $57.25 to hire an enslaved woman identified as Fanny. He also paid $65 to William Gooding to hire another enslaved woman identified as Kitty.[27] The level of detail in the McGuire account book makes clear the integral role that enslaved people played in the daily operations of the School.

---

[21] McGuire Account Book, Episcopal High School Archives, 59. An image of this page can be found here.

[22] It is clear that when McGuire used the term "servant" in his account book he was referring to enslaved people. See similar examples from the findings of researchers working with records in the University of North Carolina archives here.

[23] McGuire Account Book, Episcopal High School Archives, 59, 100. Using the inflation calculator MeasuringWorth.com, $1,100 in 1854 equates to the labor value in 2020 of $286,000.

[24] An example from the account book can be found here.

[25] McGuire Account Book, Episcopal High School Archives, 304 and 350. For an example of how McGuire kept records regarding the money he paid enslaved workers see the page for Henry Haney here.

[26] Oscar Payne escaped from slavery at EHS in the summer of 1858 and made his way, utilizing the Underground Railroad, to Philadelphia and the home of abolitionist William Still. For a brief account of Payne's escape and journey, see Michael Reynolds, "Oscar Payne's Escape to Freedom from Antebellum Alexandria" *Alexandria Chronicle*, Spring 2020, 14-19. Also see an advertisement offering a reward for Payne's capture here.

[27] McGuire Account Book, Episcopal High School Archives, 80, 110, 112, 254. For an example from the account book for payments recorded for hiring out the labor of enslaved men Aaron and Carter see here.

Names of Enslaved People Who Worked at Episcopal High School

The names of the following people were recorded by William N. Pendleton and John P. McGuire in their respective account books. From the context of the entries in the account books and other historical sources, it is certain that they are the names of people who were either owned by Pendleton or McGuire or were hired out to work on Episcopal's campus. These names are listed in the order in which they appear in the account books. Thirty-one are only first names and four include first and last names. Other identifying information and the type of work they did on campus is included when supported by evidence. This list is not comprehensive, and the School will continue its research to learn more about these individuals and the names of other enslaved people whose forced labor supported and sustained the School.

William	Simon	Margaret
Jane	William Bell	Kitty, cook
Madison Carter	Alonzo	Evelina
Dinah	Martha	Edgar
Betty, washerwoman	Louisa	Aaron
Anna, washerwoman	Henry Haney	Nat
Milford	Julia	Carter
Van	Gustin	Matilda
Celia	Frank	Sarah
Beverly	Abram	Marshall
Billy	Oscar Payne, waiter	Fanny
Adam, gardener	Mildred	

Conclusion

While the research efforts by the School have uncovered a much more significant and specific understanding of Episcopal's connections with the institution of slavery and the experiences of the enslaved individuals on the campus, it is understood that this research thus far is limited. There are many details of life at Episcopal during this time period that remain unknown. As the School develops plans to honor and commemorate these enslaved persons who helped build and sustain Episcopal in its early years, additional research will help develop as clear and complete an understanding of these individuals and their experiences as possible. Fundamental questions remain about where on campus these individuals may have lived, what other types of work they may have done, what their personal lives entailed, and what happened to these individuals when the Civil War commenced and the School closed, becoming a United States Army hospital. As more information is learned in advance of the efforts to honor and commemorate these individuals, the School will continue to update the Episcopal community.