



Peerless Rockville Historic Preservation, Ltd.

Researching the Enslaved Persons of Glenview - December 2022

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Learning about the lives of people in the 19th century can be challenging due to the lack of written records, photographs, and other materials. It is generally much easier to find information about affluent, white landowners whose wealth meant their lives were documented in various ways: land transactions, property maps, taxes, wills, and other administrative records. Researching enslaved individuals is often much more difficult as they may only appear in documents as nameless property.

Peerless Rockville has undertaken efforts to identify the individuals enslaved at Glenview; to learn their names, relationships, and about their lives and experiences.

The first place we started our research was the census. The census is a snapshot of residents of a place at that time. The census records tell us how many enslaved people were at Glenview at a certain year, but do not provide names. Before 1850, the census named only the head of the household and counted all people by gender, race, and age group, White and Black, free and enslaved. In 1850 and 1860 all enslaved individuals were listed on a separate "Slave Schedule", while White residents and Free Blacks were found on the regular census. At this time they started listing the names of all the individuals in the household.

There is also the question of how race is addressed in the Census. Enslaved persons were listed in the census as "Black" or "Mulatto", a term for a mixed race individual. These terms are not exact, and someone who is mixed race may also be just referred to as "Black", and sometimes the same individual may be identified differently in different censuses.

While it is a primary goal to identify people by name, it can be extremely difficult to identify enslaved individuals by name. Census records show the names of Free Blacks, but not the enslaved. Other available records may show names, but none of the records we have examined up to this time provide us with any names of individuals at Glenview.

I. Census Records

I. 1840 census

In 1840, the census records seven enslaved people at Glenview: 2 males under 23 years old but older than ten years old, 2 girls under the age of ten years old, and three adult women.

Slaves - Males - 10 thru 23	2
Slaves - Females - Under 10	2
Slaves - Females - 24 thru 35	3

¹ During the era of slavery, this property was known as Glen View. We use the modern spelling of Glenview to prevent confusion and to avoid an arbitrary and unintentional detachment or separation between the past and the present simply because the property name has changed slightly.

Enslaved people were listed on a separate document called “Slave Schedule,” in 1850 and 1860. It recorded age, gender, and race (Black or Mulatto).

II. 1850 Slave Schedule

The 1850 census lists 11 enslaved people in 1850: An adult man and two women, two teenage girls, and six children.

Age	Sex	Race
21	M	B
12	M	B
4	M	M
2	M	M
6 Months	M	B
1 Month	M	M
42	F	M
24	F	M
18	F	B
16	F	B
8	F	B

III. 1860 Slave Schedule

In 1860, it records 21 enslaved people: Six adult women, four adult men, a teenage girl, a teenage boy, seven children, and two infants. The 1860 slave schedule reports that a woman, teenage boy, and two young boys were fugitives and missing. This document also lists two dwellings on the Glenview Property where the enslaved lived. It is not known where on the current property these building were.

Age	Sex	Race (Black or Mulatto)	Fugitive
48	F	B	
42	F	B	
40	M	B	
38	F	M	
35	F	M	X
33	M	B	
30	M	B	
30	F	B	
27	F	B	
23	M	B	
18	F	B	
14	M	M	X
12	M	M	X
12	M	B	
10	M	M	X
8	M	B	

6	F	B	
4	F	B	
3	F	B	
7 Months	F	B	
6 Months	M	B	

II. Non Census Records

There are a few documents that are commonly used when trying to identify or trace an enslaved person in Rockville – but none of the enslaved individuals at Glenview are represented in these documents.

I. District of Columbia Compensated Emancipation Act Records

In 1862, slavery ended in Washington, DC. All enslaved individuals in DC were freed, and their enslavers could apply to be compensated for their worth. Several Rockville enslavers, including the Beall family, applied for compensation. Richard J. Bowie did not apply. Most of the Rockville people freed under these circumstances had been rented out to work in DC and happened to be there at the time of the Act.

II. 1867 Slave Census

After emancipation, Montgomery County enslavers hoped to be financially reimbursed for the loss of their human property. A census was taken in 1867 to identify who had been enslaved for this purpose. Richard J. Bowie is not listed by any of the people on this census.

III. Freedmen’s Bureau

After national emancipation, the federal government established the Freedmen’s Bureau to assist the formerly enslaved establishing themselves in their new lives. Some of this agency’s records incidentally include information about where and by whom individuals had been enslaved. No references to Glenview or the Bowies have been found in the regional office records.

IV. Manumission/Sale Records

Manumission is the act of freeing an enslaved person. A slave could be manumitted by their enslaver or could self-emancipate by arranging to purchase their freedom. During slavery, the sale or freeing of a person was sometimes recorded in land records alongside property transactions. This was not always the case and sales could be conducted privately. No records of the Bowies selling, buying, or freeing a person have been found in Montgomery County deeds.

V. Episcopal Church Records

The Bowies were members of the Episcopal Church of Rockville. Church records include religious events for enslaved parishioners and often reference their enslaver. No mention of the Bowies’ enslaved people has been found in these documents. However, these records have not been transcribed and are at points difficult to read. It is possible that fully transcribed records could contain more information.

VI. Wills

The listing of the enslaved by name in inheritance instructions is often a fruitful way of identifying people. The Bowies died after slavery was abolished, so no such records exist for them. Bowie's parents' wills did not list any one by name. It is possible that other relations' wills could help identify individuals the Bowies may have inherited.

VII. Oral History

The one known name of an individual who was enslaved at Glenview, Benjamin Smith, was provided by the man himself. He shared his history with his family and descendants, who thankfully celebrated his life and story and shared it with Peerless Rockville and others. It is hopeful that there may be other family stories that simply have not been publicized. As the recognition of the importance and value of the lives of the enslaved is emphasized and commemorated, we hope that more descendants will be inspired to share stories.

III. Future Research

It is possible that there is further information – and potentially names or other identifying facts – about the enslaved people of Glenview in other kinds of documents. There may be tax and agricultural records about the Bowies and Glenview at the Maryland State Archives. As a congressman and judge, Bowie's personal papers may include some helpful material. Extended family wills may contain people inherited by the Bowies. The increasing digitization and transcription of various historical documents may also someday reveal more information in unexpected places.

Researching the life of the only named enslaved person – Benjamin Smith – and his family and community may help illustrate life after emancipation and suggest connections to others whose names are unknown. He purchased land from his enslaver and his home on Avery Road may have maintained ties with others he was enslaved alongside. Encouraging oral histories and family genealogy could better our understanding of his community.

Archaeology of the location on the grounds where the enslaved lived might also shed light on their experiences. Any maps or drawings the City or Mansion has that could indicate the site of the dwelling could pinpoint an area for investigation and excavation. This would be an opportunity to potentially learn about their daily life in a way that will not be found in documents.

IV. Conclusion

There remain mostly unanswered questions about the enslaved people of Glenview. We know that they were present at the estate and increasing in numbers throughout slavery, and that the Bowies advertised for compensated labor after 1864. The names of the individuals and the details of their families remain unknown at this time, despite the many sources reviewed.

It is also possible that most historical bureaucratic written sources of information will continue to only have counted the enslaved on a ledger and provide no names or personal information. While

disappointing, it is also typical and representative of a system that considered them property, not people. Peerless Rockville asserts that even if we do not know their names, we can continue to strive to learn about them as people, and value their lives and contributions to Rockville's history.