



William Goldsborough, Alexander Keech, and the Maryland Agricultural College

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CONTEXT

The Maryland Agricultural College (MAC) was founded in 1856 to promote agricultural reform and train the next generation of farmers in new farm management and technology practices. It was the first iteration of the University of Maryland College Park. It sits on the land of Charles Benedict Calvert, a wealthy enslaver and politician (Fig. 1).

Many of the MAC's earliest trustees, like William Goldsborough, were also wealthy "planters" and enslavers. The school was originally surrounded by the lands of several "planters" and enslavers, including Alexander Keech. The MAC was engulfed by the institution of slavery, both geographically and administratively. The research for this poster illuminates ways in which the land that the MAC sits on tells the stories of its connections to the slave economy. This research offers an exploration into the lives of the enslavers that interacted with the MAC (particularly William Goldsborough and Alexander Keech), and the lives of the individuals that they enslaved.



Figure 1. Charles Benedict Calvert
Charles Benedict Calvert. Photograph.
<https://www.loc.gov/item/2002722829/>.

SIGNIFICANCE

Projects like this one, that seek to tell stories previously untold, are crucial as they use smaller stories to disrupt and expand larger narratives. They give human voices to statistics and facts to create more complete histories.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. Who were the individuals that owned land neighboring that of the MAC? Were they enslavers? How did they live?
2. Who were some of the earliest members of MAC's Board of Trustees? Were they enslavers? How did they live?
3. What was life like for those enslaved around the MAC?

MATERIALS & METHODS

- United States Federal Census Records and Slave Schedules (1850 – 1880)
- Newspaper Databases
- United States Federal Slave Statistics (1864)
- Document Transcription

LIMITATIONS

Since there existed a national, legal understanding of enslaved individuals as property, as opposed to human beings, many records that document the existence of enslaved individuals merely mention their race, sex, and age. On the chance that their names are recorded, a surname is often unknown. For these reasons, tracing the lives of enslaved individuals can be a difficult, though not impossible, task.

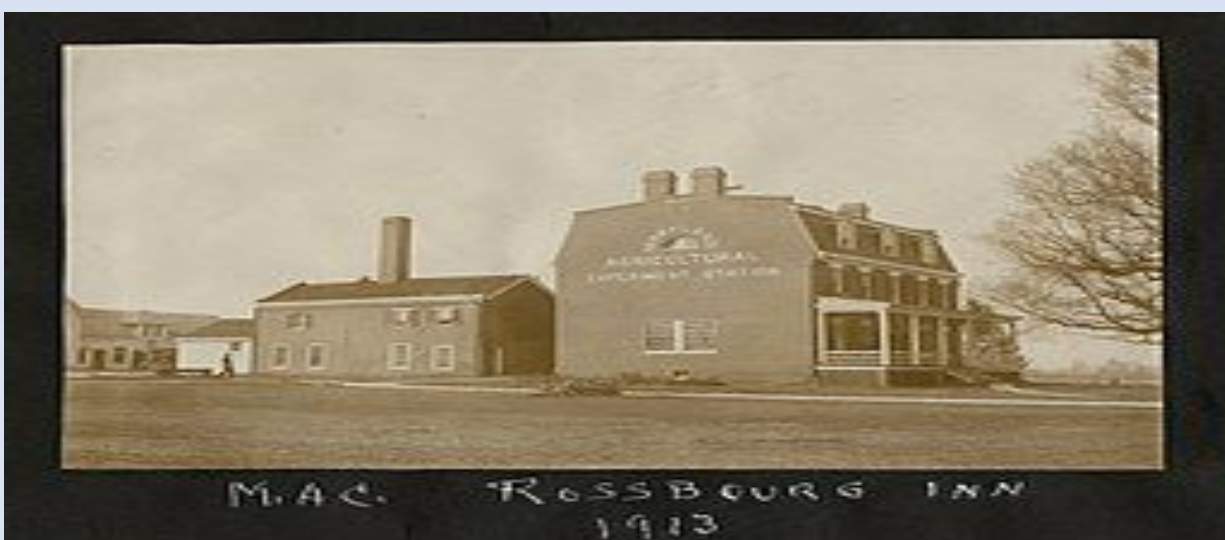


Figure 2. A building of the MAC
Rossborough Inn, Maryland Agricultural College, 1913. Photograph.
<https://libguides.nybg.org/c.php?g=655116&p=4597670>

Figure 3. A portion of William Goldsborough's Slave Schedules from 1860
U.S. Census Bureau. 1860 U.S. Federal Census Slave Schedules for William Goldsborough, 1860. Prepared by Ancestry.com.

WILLIAM GOLDSBOROUGH

William Tilghman Goldsborough was born in 1808. He married Mary Lloyd Smith, daughter of Edward Lloyd V (enslaver of Frederick Douglass). Together, they would have at least 5 children. Goldsborough, coming from a political family, lived a life in politics, occupying several political offices in his adulthood. He was also an enslaver of at least 55 individuals (Fig. 3), possibly including Robert Bennett, Rhoda Gamby, Sarah Bennett, and Emma Williams (Fig. 6).

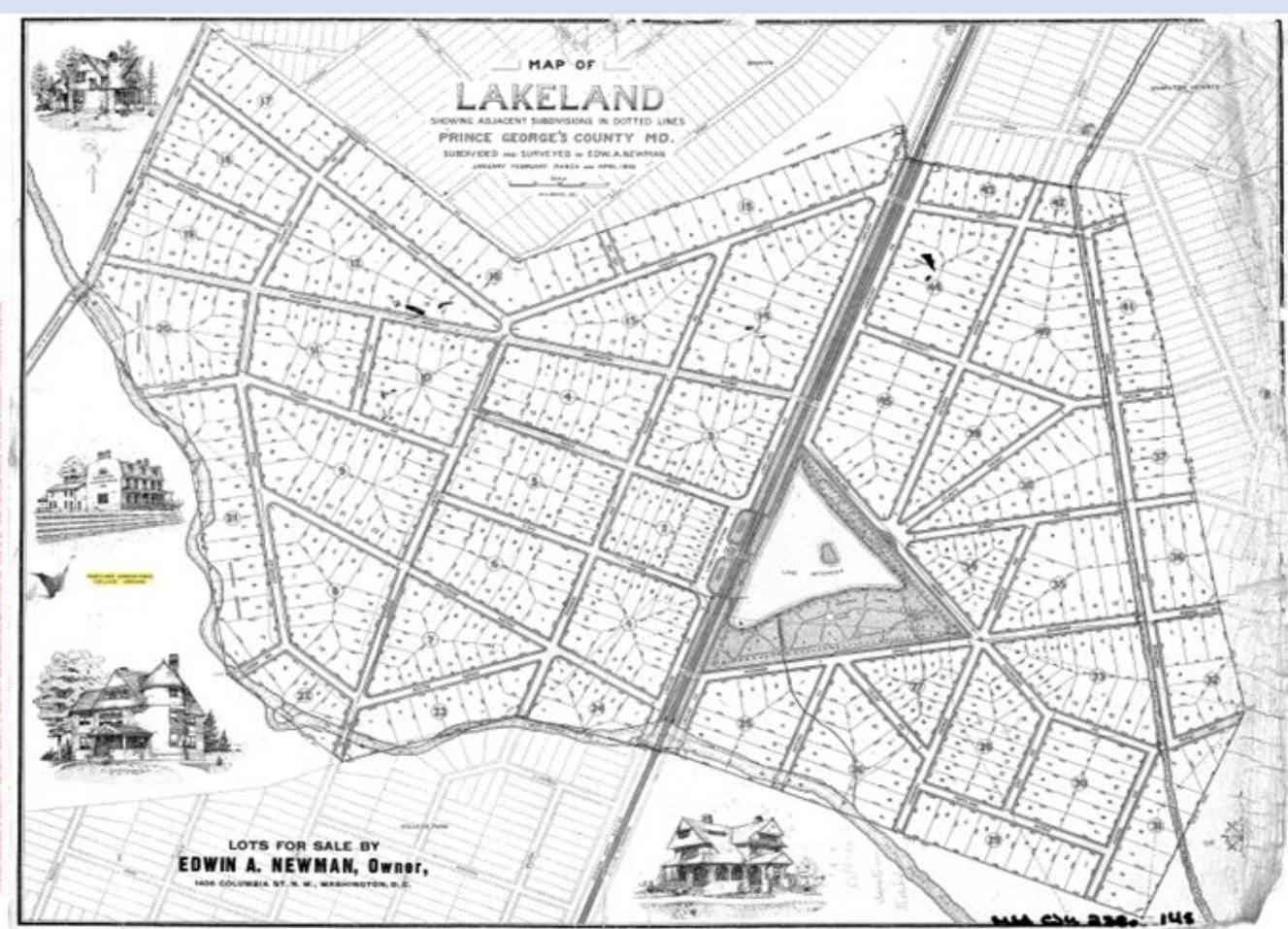


Figure 4. A Map of Lakeland that includes an icon of the MAC in the southwest corner.
Lakeland, Map of Land Records. Map. From MD Land Records, Plats.net.
<https://plats.msa.maryland.gov/pages/unit.aspx?cid=PG&qualifier=C&series=2380&unit=145&page=adv1&id=1698801270>

ALEXANDER KEECH

Alexander Compton Keech was born in 1797. He married Mary Frances Smith and together, they had at least 5 children. Keech was an educator, working at and presiding over many schools including one on his own estate. He was an enslaver of at least 20 individuals (Fig. 5) including Charlotte Wright, who would continue to work for the Keech family post-enslavement (Fig. 6). Keech's lands Northeast of the MAC were eventually sold to developer Edwin Newman. The area would come to be known as the historically black community of "Lakeland" (Fig. 4).

Figure 5. A portion of Alexander Keech's Slave Schedules from 1860
U.S. Census Bureau. 1860 U.S. Federal Census Slave Schedules for Alexander Keech, 1860. Prepared by Ancestry.com.

Figure 6. 1880 Census Record that lists Charlotte Wright as a cook in Mary Keech's household
U.S. Census Bureau. Mary Keech in 1880 U.S. Federal Census, 1880. Prepared by Ancestry.com.

Figure 7. 1880 Census Record that lists Rhoda Gamby as a servant in Mary Goldsborough's household.
U.S. Census Bureau. Rhody Gameby in 1880 U.S. Federal Census, 1880. Prepared by Ancestry.com

FUTURE RESEARCH & QUESTIONS

- Given Keech's lifelong role as an educator, why was he not more involved in the founding of the MAC?
- What are the stories of the individuals enslaved by other trustees and neighboring landowners?
- What are the stories of the people who inhabited the land that eventually became "Lakeland"? What are their connections to the founding, sustenance, and operation of the MAC?
- "Tilghman" (Goldsborough's middle name) may have been an important family name in the area. Who were the Tilghmans? What is their story?

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