

A History of the Land, Labor, and People of the Dumbarton Oaks Estate Until 1920

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Introduction

I would first like to acknowledge that this report was written on occupied lands of the Algonquin Nation. As a settler scholar who does not share the lived experiences of Native and Black communities, I have attempted to capture as accurately as possible the experiences of the Native Americans and enslaved people whose lives are chronicled in the following pages. This work is especially important because early settlers took the land and resources upon which Native Americans had relied for generations, and because the enslaved people who lived here continue to remain nameless despite their presence and livelihood on this land.

This report is a review of previously-known sources of information concerning the history of the Dumbarton Oaks estate, incorporating newly-found documents which aim to present a more complete picture of the individuals on the property throughout its history. Rather than explicitly answering some questions concerning the labor or agricultural production of the estate, many of the new details provide a larger context through which to better understand the owners. This report is organized chronologically by owner, followed by a discussion section addressing the questions arising from the information presented.

Before Ninian Beall's Arrival

Native Americans were part of the landscape in and around the property that is now Dumbarton Oaks for about 13,000 years, long before the arrival of British colonizers. Instead of permanently settling the area, they camped for brief periods of time before relocating; they were primarily hunter-gatherers, and there is evidence that they quarried rocks.¹ Part of the larger Algonquin Nation, some of whom were later called Anacostians,² the Tohoga tribe were among the area's first settlers, before Cecilius Calvert came into possession of a tract of land called the "Proprietor's Manor of Calverton."³ Calvert's family designated about 1,000 acres for themselves, and divided the rest of the land into 50-acre plots for the Native Americans to settle and farm—a decision that proved to make little sense, given that they did not choose to farm the land that, despite once being theirs, was newly "made available" to them.⁴

Ninian Beall, George Beall, and Thomas Beall of George (1703-1800)

On behalf of "Charles, Absolute Lord and Proprietor of the Province of Maryland,"⁵ Henry Darnell, Maryland's keeper of seals, issued the original patent on November 18, 1703 to Ninian Beall for the land upon which Dumbarton Oaks would eventually be built.⁶ At its largest, the land extended 795 acres.⁷ Beall named the tract "Rock of Dumbarton" after a land formation in his native country.⁸ The tract of land reportedly extended

in the said County Beginning at the South last corner Tree, of a Tract of land taken for Robert Mason standing by Potomeck River side at the mouth of Rock Creek on a point running thence with the said land North North West, six hundred and forty ps. then with the straight line by the Creek and River to the first bound.⁹

¹ Scott Einberger, *A History of Rock Creek Park: Wilderness & Washington D.C.* (Charleston: The History Press, 2014), 18.

² Grace Dunlop Ecker, *A Portrait of Old Georgetown* (Richmond: The Dietz Press, Incorporated, 1951), 4.

³ Maureen De Lay Joseph, Kay Fanning, and Mark Davison, Cultural Landscape Report (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Interior, 2000), 10.

⁴ Walter Muir Whitehill, *Dumbarton Oaks: The History of a Georgetown House and Garden* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967), 3.

⁵ Whitehill, 3.

⁶ Richard Plummer Jackson, *The Chronicles of Georgetown D.C. from 1751 to 1878* (Washington, D.C.: R.O. Polkinhorn, printer, 1878), 6.

⁷ Ecker, *A Portrait of Old Georgetown*, 5.

⁸ Whitehill, *Dumbarton Oaks: The History of a Georgetown House and Garden*, 3.

⁹ Thomas Willing Balch, *The Brooke Family of Wichchurch, Hampshire, England; Together with an Account of Acting-governor Robert Brooke of Maryland and Colonel Ninian Beall of Maryland and Some of Their Descendants* (Philadelphia: Press of Allen, Lane & Scott, 1899), 25.

Scott Einberger writes that “it is unknown to what extent Beall cultivated the land, his last will and testament suggests that he primarily used it for livestock grazing.”¹⁰ Indeed, in his will, Ninian Beall wrote: “I do give and bequeath unto my son George, my plantation and tract of land called the Rock of Dumbarton, lying and being at Rock Creek, containing four hundred and eight acres, with all the stock thereon, both cattle and hogs, them and their increase, unto my said son, George, and unto his heirs forever. ... his choice of one of my feather beds bolster and Pillow and other furniture thereunto belonging with two Cows and calves and half my sheep from off this plantation, I now live unto him and his heirs for ever.”¹¹ Though it is unknown how many enslaved people Ninian Beall owned, in his will he further “[bequeathed] unto my son in Law Andrew Hambleton my negro woman Alic unto him and his heirs for ever.”¹² Records indicate that he was given three enslaved people in 1699 for “laborious endeavors with regard to Indian affairs.”¹³

George Beall received 480 acres of his father’s 795 original upon his death.¹⁴ This land included the 795 original acres granted to his father Ninian in 1703, as well as more land further away from what would become Georgetown in 1751 as specified by the Maryland Act of 1751.¹⁵ The Act was contingent upon the sale of land owned by both George Beall and George Gordon, a nearby landowner. Beall did not want to give up any of his land, but he eventually parted with 33 and five-sixteenths of the 60 total acres that he and Gordon were to sell for the creation of the town.¹⁶ In ceding a portion of his land to the city, he perhaps became its namesake.

A 1783 assessment states that George Beall, now styled a colonel according to the fashion of the time,¹⁷ owned 281½ acres of land, of which 150 acres were cleared and which was valued at 200 pounds, perhaps because the land was used for crops.¹⁸ On this property could be found one “dwelling house kitchen stables & negro quarters.”¹⁹ This document, scanned from the original, raises more questions than it answers: which portion of the Rock of Dumbarton is referred to, if at all? Why would property still be attributed to George Beall if he died in 1780? An undated assessment further confirms that George Beall owned enslaved people, yet they go unmentioned in other documents.

Though he gave up a sizeable portion of his land in exchange for the two Georgetown lots near the Potomac River, George Beall maintained the land upon which Dumbarton Oaks now stands. This land was given to his son Thomas, whose name appears in print materials as Thomas Beall of George to distinguish himself from other relatives. Further shrinking the property upon which the extant buildings are found, the land Thomas received from his father in 1780 was south of “the Great Branch of Rock Creek that leads to the Saw Mill thence to the main road.”²⁰ The 1783 assessment cited above reveals that the property Thomas Beall received was 208 acres, of which 90 were cleared, valued at 312 pounds. Though the soil was “middling,” the presence of a “good” orchard, a “cyder house,” and “cyder” quarters indicate that the earth was conducive to growing crops. The only other building listed is one “small dwelling house”²¹—perhaps the residence of enslaved people.

Thomas Beall of George sold the land containing the current property to William H. Dorsey in 1793, but the 1790 Census reveals that the individuals living at his permanent residence were one white male over

¹⁰ Einberger, *A History of Rock Creek Park: Wilderness & Washington D.C.*, 21.

¹¹ Balch, *The Brooke Family of Whitchurch, Hampshire, England; Together with an Account of Acting-governor Robert Brooke of Maryland and Colonel Ninian Beall of Maryland and Some of their Descendants*, 28.

¹² Balch, 28.

¹³ Caleb Clarke Magruder, “Colonel Ninian Beall,” *Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Washington, D.C.* 37/38 (1937): (17-29), <http://www.jstor.org/ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/stable/40067489>, 22.

¹⁴ Whitehill, *Dumbarton Oaks: The History of a Georgetown House and Garden*, 5.

¹⁵ Whitehill, 5.

William A. Gordon, “Old Homes on Georgetown Heights” (lecture, Columbia Historical Society, March 17, 1914), 74.

¹⁶ Whitehill, *Dumbarton Oaks: The History of a Georgetown House and Garden*, 6.

¹⁷ Whitehill, *Dumbarton Oaks: The History of a Georgetown House and Garden*, 8.

¹⁸ Whitehill, 9.

¹⁹ Extract from “An account of all the lands in Middle Potomack Lower Potomack & Georgetown ... Joseph Sprigg Belt Assessor in that District 1783,” 7.

²⁰ Whitehill, *Dumbarton Oaks: The History of a Georgetown House and Garden*, 8.

²¹ “An account of all the lands in Middle Potomack Lower Potomack & George-town ... Joseph Sprigg Belt Assessor in that District 1783,” 4.

16 years of age—likely Beall himself—as well as four white women and three enslaved people. No records have yet been found revealing who lived at the Rock of Dumbarton during his possession of it. It is unclear whether he sold them or whether they were indeed on the property.

A land assessment notes that Thomas Beall owned three improved lots in Georgetown, valued at 608 pounds.²² What remains unclear, however, is the value of the land known as the Rock of Dumbarton. By 1798, his holdings had shrunk to three improved lots and 37 unimproved, for a total valuation of 3,500 pounds.²³ Thanks to Census information and records belonging to the city of Georgetown, a more complete picture of Thomas Beall's property surfaces, with the caveat that the information pertains to the decades after he sold the pertinent part of Rock of Dumbarton to William H. Dorsey. Two separate reports from between 1800 to 1807 note that Thomas Beall owned lots on Water Street, Cherry Alley, Gay Street, and lots in Beall's Addition.²⁴ Counted among his personal property are "2 old negro men, 2 negro men, 1 negro woman, 2 negro boys"²⁵; Dorsey listed their value as 300, 670, 120, and 100 pounds, respectively. Beall also owned horses, cows, carriages, a "waggon," cart, and furniture, valued at 250, 30, 500, 70, and 800 pounds, respectively. The relative lack of livestock on the property supports Whitehill's observation that Thomas Beall was not a farmer like his father; instead, he chose to sell off much of the land he inherited to the city of Georgetown.²⁶

It should be noted that much of the above information provides a clearer picture of Thomas Beall of George's land ownership and finances, yet does not directly deal with the time period during which he owned the land now known as Dumbarton Oaks—with the exception of the 1790 census, undertaken when he still owned that property. Two plausible records from the era list a Thomas Beall living with two white females and four white males under the age of 16, or with four white females;²⁷ one of these records lists him as Thomas B. Beall, and neither lists his suffix "of George." These records reveal little more about these people's ages, and it is unclear if day laborers or enslaved people also resided on his property.

William H. Dorsey (1800-1805)

Dorsey purchased 20 acres from Thomas Beall of George and enlarged the property to 22 acres in 1801.²⁸ The 1800 Federal Census reveals that 18 people lived on the property: four white males under 10 years old, one white male between the ages of 26 and 44, one white female under 10 years old and one between the ages of 16 and 25, and one white female between the ages of 26 and 44.²⁹ Two of those individuals are presumably Dorsey and his wife, while the others were either his children or various household members. Dorsey owned 10 enslaved people, recorded in the same census, but no further details are known about their ages or gender.

Multiple assessments taken between 1800 and 1807 by the City of Georgetown, now stored at the National Archives, reveal changes in both his finances and the number of properties he owned. The first report states that he owned "8 lots in G. Beall's addition, no. 75, 76, 77, 78, 83, 84, 85, 86, 92, 93,"³⁰ for a total value of 5,000 pounds. He owned other properties whose value reached more than 7,000 pounds. The National Archives records detail what was then called "personal property" as well: Dorsey owned 11 enslaved

²² "An Account of all the Land in Middle Potomack, Lower Potomack & Georgetown by Joseph Sprigg Belt, Assessor in that District 1783," (n.d.), 1.

²³ Assessment Book, Rockville, Maryland, "An account of the houses and lotts in Georgetown by Joseph Sprigg Belt, Assessor 1798" (n.d.), 2.

²⁴ Thomas Beall of George, *Assessment of Real and Personal Property: 1800-1807* (National Archives Microfilm Publication M605, roll 7), Records of the City of Georgetown (D.C.) 1800-1879. Microfilm.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Whitehill, *Dumbarton Oaks: The History of a Georgetown House and Garden*, 9.

²⁷ 1790 U.S. Census, Montgomery, Maryland, population schedule, microfilm series M637, roll 3, page 54, RG 29, Thomas Beall.

²⁸ Whitehill, 14.

²⁹ 1800 U.S. Census, Georgetown, Washington, District of Columbia, population schedule, microfilm series M32, roll 5, page 872, William H. Dorsey.

³⁰ William H. Dorsey, *Assessment of Real and Personal Property: 1800-1807* (National Archives Microfilm Publication M605, roll 7), Records of the City of Georgetown (D.C.) 1880-1879. Microfilm.

people: two men, two boys, two women, three girls, and two younger children. The records state a total valuation of 850 pounds. On the property were also three horses, a “waggon,” three cows, and furniture,³¹ bringing Dorsey’s wealth to about 14,430 pounds. The second report from the same period lists fewer lots—presumably sold—but the valuation of Dorsey’s property increased to 19,900 pounds.³²

Whitehill notes that “[neither] plans nor the name of the architect” of the house survived,³³ yet an independent source claims that “[the] house was probably designed by Dr. William Thornton, architect of the Capitol Building.”³⁴ It is plausible that Thornton designed it, especially if the house bears a resemblance to other structures that he designed. Whitehill also suggests that Dorsey himself was the architect, which was not unusual for wealthy landowners at the time.³⁵ The house itself is a smaller part of the extant building, featuring “five bays, and built of red brick . . . a slightly receding central bay for the entrance, and countersunk panels of stone between the horizontal rows of twelve-pane windows.”³⁶

Despite having to mortgage the Rock of Dumbarton to General John Peter Van Ness before selling it to Robert Beverley for \$15,000,³⁷ Dorsey continued to speculate; his real estate was valued at about \$9,700 from report dating to the 1813-1818 period, while another dating to 1815 lists five properties valued at \$4,095.³⁸ Perhaps Dorsey would have remained on the property for a longer span of time had he not found his finances in tatters; in this context, of great interest is his law practice—which counted Alexander Hamilton among his clients³⁹—and his financial habits.

Robert Beverley and James Bradshaw Beverley, 1805-1822

Dorsey sold the property to Robert Beverley for \$15,000 in 1815.⁴⁰ Unfortunately, no census records describing either Robert or James Bradshaw Beverley’s activities at the Rock of Dumbarton; furthermore, their names do not appear in Virginia census records. City records⁴¹ do reveal, however, that he did live in Georgetown during the years as indicated by Whitehill, but despite owning several lots within the city proper, his ownership of the Rock of Dumbarton remains undocumented as defined by legal assessments. On many maps of Georgetown city lines dating to the late nineteenth century, the property appears to be implicitly accepted as part of the city without necessarily possessing a lot number. Several maps indicate it outside of Georgetown city limits, as the city appears to end at what is now R Street (then Road or U Street). While his ownership of the property has been recorded by secondary sources, the assessments of the period do not document ownership. The Rock of Dumbarton, renamed Acrolophos⁴² during Beverley’s residence,⁴³ does not show up on assessment records likely because the property was not properly part of Georgetown, even if it was considered so by its residents.

In any case, in 1810, Beverley—sometimes spelled Beverly—appeared to own lots 64, 65, 72, 70, and 207; all lots were vacant and valued at a total of \$5,200. These lots were on Gay, Washington, and Dumbarton Streets.⁴⁴ He appears to have sold lot 70 and purchased lot 73, as well as building a brick

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Whitehill, *Dumbarton Oaks: The History of a Georgetown House and Garden*, 15.

³⁴ Unknown excerpt; found at Peabody Room, Georgetown branch of the D.C. Public Library.

³⁵ Whitehill, *Dumbarton Oaks: The History of a Georgetown House and Garden*, 15.

³⁶ Whitehill, *Dumbarton Oaks: The History of a Georgetown House and Garden*, 15.

³⁷ Whitehill, *Dumbarton Oaks: The History of a Georgetown House and Garden*, 16-17. Presumably the currency had changed by this time, explaining the shift from pounds to dollars.

³⁸ William H. Dorsey, *Assessment of Real and Personal Property: 1815* (National Archives Microfilm Publication M605, roll 9), Records of the City of Georgetown (D.C.) 1800-1879.

³⁹ William H. Dorsey, *Legal Fee Book and Ledger of William Hammond Dorsey, the Builder of Dumbarton Oaks*, 1785.

⁴⁰ Whitehill, *Dumbarton Oaks: The History of a Georgetown House and Garden*, 17.

⁴¹ Robert Beverley, *Assessment of Real and Personal Property: 1815* (National Archives Microfilm publication M 605, roll 10, page 88), Records of the City of Georgetown (D.C.) 1800-1879.

⁴² Greek for “grove on the hill.” Here, Beverley evokes his classical education at the University of Cambridge.

⁴³ Whitehill, *Dumbarton Oaks: The History of a Georgetown House and Garden*, 19.

⁴⁴ Robert Beverley, *Assessment of Real and Personal Property, 1813-1818* (National Archives Microfilm publication M605, roll 9), Records of the City of Georgetown (D.C.) 1800-1879.

structure on lot 65, bringing the value of that property to \$3,500. The total valuation of his properties, however, remained around \$5,200. Records from 1815 indicate that Beverley owned lots 64, 65, 73, and half of 72, for a total value of \$4,090.⁴⁵ All but one plot of land remained vacant.

Beverley built the Orangery in about 1810,⁴⁶ though this knowledge is tentative and requires further confirmation in the form of architectural plans or other documents. At present, all else that is known about Beverley and his son James Bradshaw is that the former left his son in charge of the property in 1815. James Bradshaw did not properly attend to the property,⁴⁷ however, leaving it to fall apart as early as 1816, which prompted his efforts to sell it.⁴⁸ Whitehill's commentary perhaps explains why few, if any, agricultural records pertaining to the property exist: "Acrolophos was not self-sufficient, nor big enough to farm with slave labor. It was a handsome suburban property that would produce only outgo rather than income."⁴⁹

Throughout 1818 and 1819 a series of repairs took place: painting; maintenance on the outhouses, steps, and kitchens; installation of a pump. James Bradshaw even attempted to hire a gardener, but could not due to the state of the gardens,⁵⁰ suggesting that the sharp slope of what is now a terraced garden proved to be too difficult to cultivate. Indeed, he remarks that "[he] had hoped much from the garden and the fruit this Summer, but the fruit, all of the tree kind is totally destroyed."⁵¹ He does not specify whether the crops failed due to a lack of care, or because the slope of the land was not conducive to their growth in the first place—if the latter is true, it could be a plausible explanation for the lack of agricultural data for the property. The hiring difficulty he faced further implies that it may have been also unfeasible for prior owners to render the land agriculturally profitable; records about Ninian and George Beall mention some kind of agricultural production, but they may have been successful merely because the portion of land they owned was far larger and likely less hilly in places.

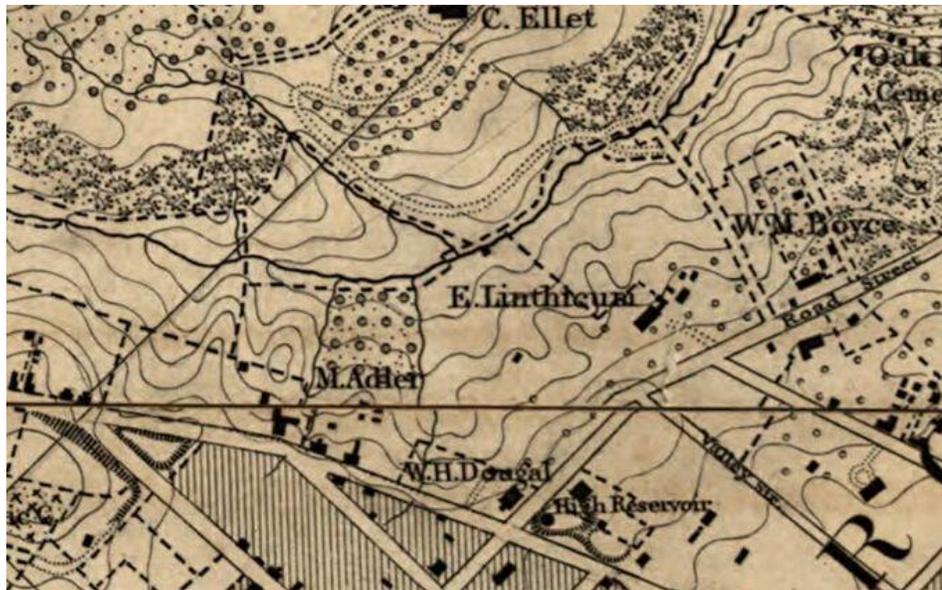


Figure 1 Topographical map of the District of Columbia (Washington, 1861). Library of Congress.

⁴⁵ Robert Beverley, *Assessment of Real and Personal Property, 1815* (National Archives Microfilm publication M605, roll 10, page 88), Records of the City of Georgetown (D.C.) 1800-1879.

⁴⁶ Whitehill, *Dumbarton Oaks: The History of a Georgetown House and Garden*, 19.

⁴⁷ Whitehill, 33.

⁴⁸ Whitehill, 28.

⁴⁹ Whitehill, 29.

⁵⁰ Whitehill, *Dumbarton Oaks: The History of a Georgetown House and Garden*, 33.

⁵¹ Whitehill, 34.

The Calhoun Family (1822-1829)

James Bradshaw Beverley sold Acrolophos to James Edward Calhoun and Floride Bonneau Colhoun, John C. Calhoun's brother-in-law and mother-in-law, respectively, in 1822, and the deed was completed on April 1, 1823.⁵² Unlike John C. Calhoun's other properties, Oakly—renamed from Acrolophos—was not used for agricultural purposes. Calhoun biographer Margaret L. Coit writes that “Oakly was no farm. But in the thirty acres of garden and woodland, a man could stretch his legs. . . . To the rear was the rise and fall of hills, to the east the old-fashioned flower gardens, and beyond them fruit trees, crouched low against the sloping earth. A ‘Lover’s Lane’ wound along the stone wall at the orchard’s border.”⁵³

Pendleton, Calhoun's other property in South Carolina, was his primary location away from Washington, making Oakly somewhat of a financial burden that would be confirmed in letters to his mother-in-law, brother-in-law, and friend Major Christopher Van Deventer. He wrote to James Edward that the family was “on the heights of Georgetown, and [found] the residence delightful. The health of the children [was] very much improved by the fine air and abundant exercise in the Grove.”⁵⁴ Calhoun would rent Oakly to Van Deventer beginning in 1826, but this rental came to an end in 1827 when the latter was abruptly dismissed from residing in Washington.⁵⁵

Even before Van Deventer's occupation of the property, however, Calhoun worried about its upkeep. Though in his letters Calhoun mentions enlarging a then-extant building, there is no evidence that this took place, especially given that his primary motivation for selling the property was a difficult financial situation—which likely would have been worsened by the cost of multiple repairs. Calhoun found it difficult to sell the property, however. By 1828, he had succeeded in doing so for a high enough price that his mother-in-law could live in comfort.

By 1829, the Calhouns no longer occupied Oakly: the property was sold to Brooke Mackall, whose family had resided in Georgetown for generations. Given that he and his family owned the land from 1822 to 1829, they did not occupy it during a census year, which could have given more insight into who, exactly, lived there. He, his wife and children, and mother-in-law all lived there at various points, but few details beyond those concerning immediate family are known. Calhoun's desire to relocate permanently to South Carolina perhaps suggests that the land surrounding the house was not developed, but these details are also not certain.

Brooke Mackall (1829-1846)

The new owner of Oakly was Brooke Mackall, a Georgetown mainstay about whom Whitehill has the following commentary: “[it] is not clear how a minor government official was able to keep up a place that John C. Calhoun had found too expensive even for a Vice President of the United States.”⁵⁶ He lived there for 17 years and fathered several children during his period of ownership. The 1830 Federal Census for “Brook” Mackall lists three individuals on the property—it is probable that this misspelled name refers to the owner in question of Oakly, but it is not entirely certain. The Census lists one 20-30 year-old male, one 40-50 year-old male, and one 30-40 year-old female.⁵⁷ No property records exist for the time during which he lived at Dumbarton Oaks, though some dating to the 1870s reveal that the value of the land owned to be between \$3,000 and \$4,000.⁵⁸ More interesting, however, is that Mackall paid his taxes in June of 1891, even though they appear to have been billed in 1878 and 1879. This detail perhaps suggests a precarious financial situation, one that was certainly true in 1846 when he sold Oakly: “[u]pon] the death of his father in 1843, Brooke

⁵² Whitehill 36, 38.

⁵³ Margaret L. Coit, *John C. Calhoun, American Portrait* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1950), 136.

⁵⁴ John C. Calhoun to James Edward Calhoun, Georgetown, August 7, 1823, in *Correspondence of John C. Calhoun* (Washington: Govt. Print. Off. 1900), 211.

⁵⁵ Whitehill, *Dumbarton Oaks: The History of a Georgetown House and Garden*, 45.

⁵⁶ Whitehill, *Dumbarton Oaks: The History of a Georgetown House and Garden*, 48.

⁵⁷ 1830 U.S. Census, Tenley, Washington, District of Columbia, microfilm series M19, roll 14, page 200, Brook Mackall.

⁵⁸ Brooke Mackall, *Assessment for Real Property Taxes, 1877 (pt)*. (National Archives Microfilm publication M605, roll 21), Records of the City of Georgetown (D.C.) 1800-1879.

Mackall's financial position further deteriorated, and in 1846 he was forced to sell the house in which he had lived pleasantly for seventeen years. ... Mackall got \$11,500 for the property, which was \$3,500 more than he had paid for it in 1829."⁵⁹

Edward Magruder Linthicum and Edward Linthicum Dent, 1846-1891

Owner of a hardware store on the northwest corner of now-Wisconsin Avenue and M Street, and a Town Council member,⁶⁰ Edward M. Linthicum was the first owner in more than 20 years to change the appearance of the house itself. Building permits or other documentation of the changes Linthicum made, other than a few photos, have not yet been found.

The 1830 Federal Census lists one "Edward M. Louthiaun," in what appears to be a misspelling or misinterpretation on behalf of later transcribers; on his property lived two white males between the ages of 10 to 14; one white male between the ages of 30 to 39; one white female between the ages of 10 to 14; one white female between the ages of 20 to 29; six enslaved people—two boys, one man, two girls, and one woman.⁶¹ Unfortunately, no identifying information or names are listed, but Linthicum, his wife, and his adopted daughter Kate likely were three of the individuals listed.

Though Whitehill writes that Linthicum was born in 1787,⁶² this census information indicates that he may have been born about a decade later. Indeed, the 1850 Federal Census lists Linthicum's birth year as 1797.⁶³ Find a Grave Index lists Linthicum's birthdate as July 16, 1797, that of his wife as October 29, 1805, and that of Kate Linthicum as January 27, 1833, further corroborating the census information.⁶⁴ The real estate value of the property—listed as dwelling number 171—was \$35,000, while Linthicum's occupation was that of a merchant.⁶⁵ By this time, the census had been updated to include names and ages of the individuals listed on a property; also present were Mary A. Linthicum, age 40; Mary Turner, age 25; Kate Linthicum, age 17; coachman George Golding, age 28; Mary Golding, age 20; Anna Golding, age 2.⁶⁶ All except Anna, who was born in Washington D.C., were born in Maryland. This information further conflicts Whitehill's text, in which he writes that Kate was nine years old in 1846 and thus born in 1837.⁶⁷ George Golding's occupation is listed, but it is not clear who Mary Turner was; perhaps she was a maid, yet no details are provided.

By the 1870 Federal Census, the property was listed as dwelling number 694 and the Linthicums as family number 695.⁶⁸ Edward Linthicum had passed away in 1869, however, leaving the estate to be listed under his wife's name; the real estate value was \$200,000 and the personal estate value was \$50,000.⁶⁹ Thus, in ten years the value of the property had quadrupled, perhaps because of the west wing addition that took place after the Civil War.⁷⁰ Lawyer Josiah Dent, Kate Linthicum's husband, also lived on the property; his real estate was valued at \$25,000 and his personal property at \$12,000.⁷¹ At this time, the other two individuals at

⁵⁹ Whitehill, *Dumbarton Oaks: The History of a Georgetown House and Garden*, 48-49.

⁶⁰ Ecker, *A Portrait of Old Georgetown*, 107.

⁶¹ 1830 U.S. Census, Georgetown, Washington, District of Columbia, population schedule, microfilm series M19, roll 14, page 170, Edward M. Louthiaun.

⁶² Whitehill, *Dumbarton Oaks: The History of a Georgetown House and Garden*, 49.

⁶³ 1850 U.S. Census, West of 7th St. Turnpike, Washington, District of Columbia, population schedule microfilm series M432_57, page 217A, image 547, Edward M. Linthicum.

⁶⁴ Ancestry.com. U.S., *Find a Grave Index, 1600s-Current* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA, 2012.

⁶⁵ 1860 U.S. Census, Georgetown, Washington, District of Columbia, population schedule, microfilm series M19, roll 14, page 170, Edward M. Linthicum.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Whitehill, *Dumbarton Oaks: The History of a Georgetown House and Garden*, 51.

⁶⁸ 1870 U.S. Census, West Part, Washington, District of Columbia, population schedule, microfilm series M593_127, page 786A, Edward M. Linthicum.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Whitehill, *Dumbarton Oaks: The History of a Georgetown House and Garden*, 50.

⁷¹ 1870 U.S. Census, West Part, Washington, District of Columbia, population schedule, microfilm series M593_127, page 786A, Edward M. Linthicum.

Dumbarton Oaks were Kate and Josiah's nine-year-old son, Edward Linthicum Dent, and Eliza Quinn, a 34-year-old housekeeper born in Ireland.⁷²

By 1880, changes had been made to the federal census, leading to the removal of property values and increased standardization of square and lot numbers—perhaps because by this time, Georgetown had been organized like Washington D.C. after being incorporated into the latter in 1871. The property, now dwelling number 217—the family number was 231—was home to Mary Linthicum, age 70, widowed, and head of household; lawyer Josiah Dent, age 60; Dent's son Edward L. Dent, age 18; niece Mary Turner, age 50; Irish-born nurse Eliza Herne, age 45; and servant Annie Franklin, age 23.⁷³

The population census information stops short of further explaining how the individuals on the property occupied their time or if any of them farmed the land. One agricultural census record, dating to 1850, has survived: The Oaks was 22 acres of improved land valued at \$17,500.⁷⁴ Linthicum owned \$25 worth of “farming implements and machinery,” two horses, and one cow for milk—indicating that grazing and extensive cultivation of the land was not his primary occupation. In 1850, however, The Oaks did produce 20 bushels of Irish potatoes and 10 tons of hay; the value of the orchard product was \$25 and that of the market gardens was \$50.⁷⁵ The relative paucity of livestock on the property and the mentions of a market garden and orchard suggest that the extent of agricultural output was limited. It is currently unclear whether photographs of the land surrounding the house survive, but given this census record, if they did exist, they would likely show low crop activity.

Linthicum's property ownership shows a fortune large enough to build new structures at The Oaks and to add to the existing buildings. A report from the Historical Buildings Survey casts some doubt on when the east wing was built, noting that “the main block's wing is later, although how much later can be debated,”⁷⁶ and that, further, “since the east wing is clearly visible in the painting [in which Kate Linthicum appears], a typographical error was made in the caption or Mr. Whitehill was unsure of his presumed chronology,”⁷⁷ and even raises the question of whether the orangery was built during Beverley's or Linthicum's ownership.⁷⁸ Such conflicting reports make finding any building records even more important, but the same difficulty as that concerning documentation of the main house arises: the preservation of such documents, if they were ever created.

Edward Linthicum Dent, Linthicum's grandson, began to sell off portions of the property to capitalize upon rising land values, only for all the remaining property to end up in the hands of two trustees, Gordon and Tayloe, before being sold to Henry and Lucia Blount in 1891.⁷⁹ Dent divided the original 22-acre plot into four quadrants; today's Dumbarton Oaks sits upon the southeast corner that was sold to the Blounts, who also received a third of the northeast corner.⁸⁰ Just west of that third was the Home of the Incurables, to be further detailed in the next section. Two streets serving as dividing lines were cut through the property: Observatory Place, now part of 32nd Street, and Linthicum Place,⁸¹ which is now shorter—that is, no longer cutting through the land now transformed by Beatrix Farrand's gardens.

Henry Fitch and Lucia Eames Blount (1891-1920)

When the Blounts purchased The Oaks, it was designated not as the entire 22-acre plot of land that Linthicum had bought in 1846, but rather just the southeast corner of the original property. The Blounts also

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ 1880 U.S. Census, Washington, Washington, District of Columbia, population schedule, roll 121, page 13B, enumeration district 001, Mary Linthicum.

⁷⁴ *Schedule 4—Productions of Agriculture West of the 7th St. Turnpike, 14-30 December 1850*, agriculture schedule, microfilm series M1793, p. 717.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Historic American Buildings Survey, *Dumbarton Oaks* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior), 5.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 6.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 5.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 4.

⁸⁰ Whitehill, *Dumbarton Oaks: The History of a Georgetown House and Garden*, 54.

⁸¹ G.M. Hopkins and Co. Real estate plat-book of Washington, District of Columbia, volume 3, 1894 – Plate 18.

purchased an additional six acres of the northeast portion;⁸² Whitehill’s language makes it seem as though the Blounts had bought the rest of the northeast corner, while the map below presents a different visualization. An 1894 real estate plat-book shows their land as a rectangular lot bordered by the land allotted to the Home for Incurables and surrounded by land still owned by Dent.⁸³ This visual rendering highlights a discrepancy between Whitehill’s research and city records. The map also reveals that the road now known as S Street extended into the property, with the name “Linthicum Place.”



Figure 2 Real estate plat-book of Washington, District of Columbia, volume 3, 1894 - Plate 18 (Washington, 1894, 22.5 x 28.5 in.). Washingtoniana Map Collection.

The 1900 Federal Census details the occupations of the individuals on The Oaks and is more complete than past censuses. The following people lived on the property when the information was collected: Henry F. Blount; Lucia E. Blount, his wife; their children Mary F., Henry F., and Walter E. Blount; Dorothea Groff, a family guest; chambermaid Lizzie McKay; servant family Edward, Catherine, and daughter Ruth Middleton; coachman Marshall Foster; day laborer Henry Liggett; florist Oswald Edart and his wife Johannah Edart.⁸⁴ Of the servants that lived on the property, all were black except Lizzie McKay and Oswald Edart and his wife. By 1910, the date of the next census, there were fewer individuals on the property and The Oaks gained an updated address conforming to the contemporary manner of labeling the streets.

By 1920, the last census taken before Robert and Mildred Bliss purchased the property, Henry Blount Sr. had died, leaving The Oaks in the hands of his widow Lucia. Living with her were Crozat F. Cable, a white 44-year-old temporary lodger working for the United States government, and Nancy Galloway, a black 43-year-old servant.⁸⁵

Rather than make changes to the external structure of The Oaks, the Blounts chose to expand the usefulness of the interior, adding a 200-person theatre in the attic of the house.⁸⁶ A drawing by John Sargent White shows a finished bathroom and storage to the east of the attic, and two rooms labeled “BR” to the west—either two bathrooms or bedrooms, though the former is more plausible given the purpose of this part

⁸² Whitehill, 54-55.

⁸³ G.M. Hopkins and Co. Real estate plat-book of Washington, District of Columbia, volume 3, 1894.

⁸⁴ 1900 U.S. Census, Washington, Washington, District of Columbia, population schedule, microfilm 1240158, page 5, Henry F. Blount.

⁸⁵ 1920 U.S. Census, Washington, Washington, District of Columbia, microfilm series T624_210, page 1A, enumeration district 165, Lucia E. Blount.

⁸⁶ Whitehill, *Dumbarton Oaks: The History of a Georgetown House and Garden*, 56.

of the house.⁸⁷ Lights could also be found to the west of the theaters, with windows to the north.⁸⁸ Whitehill writes that the Blounts planted boxwoods, having bought older trees from nearby property owners before they moved away; the resulting trees supposedly reached “nearly a hundred feet in circumference.”⁸⁹

Of note is a newspaper report from August 1900, which reported on the death of Mary Zollner, the wife of former gardener Herman Zollner.⁹⁰ Zollner had been previously employed by Blount, and his wife had returned to the garden in a fit of “insanity” after the birth of her child. The key item of interest in the *Washington Post* article is the mention of a lily pond 100 yards west of the house. A 2013 blog post from The Dumbarton Oaks Oral History Project claims that Lovers’ Lane Pool is indeed the site of Mary Zollner’s death.⁹¹

The Blisses would eventually gain the Blounts’ land as well the plot upon which stood the Home for Incurables. This land was originally purchased by Bessie L. Kirbey.⁹² Its borders are listed in both the 1900 and 1910 Federal Censuses; in 1900, Mary B. Boersig ran the house and was designated head of household.⁹³ There were two officers, six nurses, and four servants—this staff of 13 cared for the 34 individuals who were housed there due to chronic illnesses that could not be cured. Some of them were immigrants, some could not read or write, and still others could not speak English. The youngest patient was 11 years old.⁹⁴ By 1910, there were 12 staff members and nine servants, as well as the head of household, caring for the 58 patients.⁹⁵ The youngest patient was five years old; as in 1900, some could not read or write, and many of the women, as was customary, had lost their children due to high infant mortality rates. Also noteworthy is the racial makeup on the patients: all of them were white, implying that the same type of long-term care was not available to black Americans at the time. A complete list of all the individuals on the property, as well as their ages and other information, can be found at the end of this report.

A photograph in the Dumbarton Oaks Garden Archives shows the southeast corner of what was once the House of Incurables. This photograph also shows a railing resembling those at North Vista; indeed, the viewpoint from which the picture was taken suggests that extant railings are now roughly in the same position. It is thus not far-fetched to conclude that the House of Incurables once stood approximately at the site of the copse, and perhaps extended into the Bowling Green.

⁸⁷ John Sargent White, *To Keep the Declaration*. S.l], ephemera, Privately Printed, 1978.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Whitehill, *Dumbarton Oaks: The History of a Georgetown House and Garden*, 57.

⁹⁰ “DEAD IN THE LILY POND,” *The Washington Post (1877-1922)* (Washington D.C.), 1900.

⁹¹ J. Wilson, “The Dumbarton Oaks Gardens,” *Archiving Dumbarton Oaks’ History* (blog), The Dumbarton Oaks Oral History Project, July 26, 2013, <https://doakshistory.wordpress.com/2013/07/26/the-dumbarton-oaks-gardens/>.

⁹² Whitehill, *Dumbarton Oaks: The History of a Georgetown House and Garden*, 56.

⁹³ 1900 U.S. Census, Washington, Washington, District of Columbia, microfilm series T624, FHL microfilm 1240158, page 5, enumeration district 0002, Mary B. Boersig.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ 1910 U.S. Census, Precinct 7, Washington, District of Columbia, microfilm series T624_152, page 1A, enumeration district 0135.



Figure 3 A view from North Vista showing the Home for Incurables (Washington D.C., n.d.). Garden Archives Historic Photographs, Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.

Remnants of stone columns from the Home for Incurables can now be found in the meditation garden at La Quercia Apartments, located at 1619 30th Street, NW. These blocks of stone came from the Seneca quarry, and were found on the south side of the refectory.



Figure 4 Fragments of stone columns from the Home for Incurables (Washington D.C., 2019). Courtesy of author.

Remaining Questions and Further Work Needed

This section, the contents of which are intimately connected to the facts presented in each prior section, stands alone due to the patterns that emerged from the commonalities among many of the owners' tenure at Dumbarton Oaks.

One important item of note is the accuracy of the narrative presented in Walter Muir Whitehill's book, *Dumbarton Oaks: The History of a Georgetown House and Garden*. In his foreword, he writes "[for] the period before 1920, I have relied very heavily upon the material assembled for Mr. and Mrs. Bliss by Messrs. Vander Poel and Colket. The rest comes from conversations with Mrs. Bliss and friends."⁹⁶ Whitehill otherwise provides no bibliography, making it difficult to ascertain which parts of the account were taken from the Vander Poel and Colket records, other unlisted sources, or from oral histories. Furthermore, it is unknown how thorough and detailed his sources were, and, thus, how many gaps were filled with Whitehill's own speculation—a not unheard-of practice of historians at the time. Enough contradictions between his text, primary sources, and secondary sources have presented themselves that it is not unreasonable to be somewhat skeptical of all the details in his narrative.

In conjunction with current topographical maps, a map showing the extent of Ninian Beall's original tract would shed further light on both Ninian and George Beall's agricultural practices. As stated in Ninian's will, he gave livestock to his son, and George himself chose to follow in his ancestors' footsteps by cultivating some part of the land. Yet present-day Dumbarton Oaks is hilly, as is much of the surrounding land that would have once been part of the Beall's land: which portion of it would have been conducive to growing crops? Further work is needed regarding cross-reference of these maps, as well as further searches into accounts of the time to better ascertain which types of crops, and how, could have been grown.

A critical issue arising from the research so far conducted is the limits of the jurisdiction of Georgetown and its documents. Most, if not all, of the taxation records reveal that Dumbarton Oaks' various owners also possessed lots, portions of Beall's Additions, or portions of the Rock of Dumbarton, yet the taxation records do not mention Dumbarton Oaks itself. Further work should be done to determine when this property was considered part of Georgetown; plat maps from the 1870s show the property, but it does not appear as though it was incorporated into the city until a few decades later. Interestingly, however, even by the 1910s and 1920s, by the time the Blounts owned the land, it still does not appear in tax records. This lack of information, especially for the nineteenth century, during which much of the construction for many extant buildings took place, merits a closer look. There is also the possibility that certain records do not exist simply because the owners were never required to file taxes or other official documents concerning the property. While it is generally accepted that the main house was built in 1801, for example, no building permits survive—either because they were destroyed or because, since Dumbarton Oaks existed outside the jurisdiction of Georgetown, they never existed, were not required to be filed, or were filed elsewhere. This situation of extra-jurisdiction perhaps explains why there is little agricultural data from the 1820, 1860, 1870, and 1880 censuses. Of course, regarding agriculture, it is also likely that there was little to no agricultural output during those years for other reasons.

In light of these questions and others to come, it is important to consider the occupations of the owners themselves, as well as their time period. These two factors may have had a large degree of influence upon the types of records created regarding the property. Thomas Beall was more concerned with profiting from the sale of his land; Dorsey was a well-connected lawyer; Beverley was primarily from Virginia, where his main home was located; Mackall was a lower-level government official; Linthicum was a merchant. Perhaps given their occupations, they would not have thought to record construction details beyond the costs, let alone who built the house and other surrounding buildings. All these men owned the land when slavery was still legal: it is likely that the 1801 house was built by enslaved people, and that they also constructed other onsite buildings.

⁹⁶ Whitehill, x.

Accounts suggest that the Orangery was built in the Beverley era; an important part of further research is locating any building plans, drawings, or permits. A document by Historical American Buildings Society suggested that it was, in fact, much later than Whitehill's text suggests, possibly altering a generally-accepted timeline. Such a suggestion merits more research, especially given that it is not improbable: Beverley bought the house with money given to him from his mother, and quickly let the property deteriorate, especially once in the hands of his son—even though Beverley Sr. *de facto* owned the house. Such an incident suggests a lack of funds: if this was the case, why and how could Beverley build the Orangery? During the time that James Bradshaw Beverley lived at Acrolaphos, the house itself fell into a state of disrepair, suggesting that the land itself was perhaps untended to.

Other than the house itself, perhaps the largest changes to the buildings on the property took place during Linthicum's ownership. Beyond Gordon's description listed in that section, we know little of the construction process. Resulting questions are thus very similar to those posed about Dorsey: did enslaved people enlarge the house or possibly the Orangery? If they did so, what happened to them after Emancipation? Who was the architect or supervisor of construction?

Perhaps the property was large enough with a terrain difficult to render agricultural production nearly impossible. The owners' occupations also bear mentioning in this context: these men were themselves not farmers, yet their limited financial records do not indicate that they hired others to cultivate the land on their behalf. This lacuna in the available records does not render this explanation impossible, however. The topography and elevation of the property would certainly have posed a problem regarding large crop fields and space available for livestock to graze.

A few major themes arise from this analysis: a lack of maps and land surveys, as well as a gap in tax records and agricultural records. The former certainly merit further searches, while it is possible that the latter will be more difficult to find, given the location of the property outside Georgetown city limits. Since Dumbarton Oaks was a secondary property for many of the owners, they may have viewed it as less important or less worthy of chronicling. This report perhaps raises questions about the way history is recorded: some of the owners of Dumbarton Oaks were neither very rich nor very famous, making it less likely that their records, if any, survived. History is often written by those powerful and capable enough to do so and conveys what that individual or group considers important. If indeed the main house was built by enslaved people—to say nothing of some of the other buildings on the property—then it may be possible that the landowner may not have deemed the construction practices and builders important enough to record. Finally, the owners, depending on their occupation or financial state, may have chosen not to write down details pertaining to their property. Such observations are not meant to deter further work but, rather, should be kept in mind as further research is conducted.

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