

John Poole

A member of Poolesville's founding family and enslaver of at least seven

John Poole (1769–1828), namesake of John Poole Middle School in Poolesville, was a second-generation member of the family originally settling the area and for whom the town came to be named. He is sometimes referred to as John Poole II or Jr. as his father was also named John. John Sr. and his brother Joseph came to the area from Anne Arundel County around 1760 and acquired adjoining tracts of land. Within four decades John Poole Jr. held at least seven individuals in bondage.

In 1793 John Sr. gave his son 15 of his 90 acres, on which John Jr. built a one-room log house and began running a store from the house. Beginning in 1810 his store also housed a post office, with a clerk he employed serving as a postmaster. For the post office's purposes, the area was officially designated as Poole's Store (although two of Poole's cousins—sons of Joseph—had acquired land nearby and opened a store of their own three years earlier as well). In 1816, John Poole sold his store to his clerk and moved to a 200-acre farm in nearby Beallsville that his wife had inherited. The clerk was not successful in continuing to operate the store, but the structure still stands in the center of town (with a later addition) and is one of the town's landmarks. With the growth of the community, its name was changed to Poolesville in 1819.

Poole had married Priscilla Sprigg in 1799. A year later, he purchased "one Negro girl." In the census that same year, shown here, he is listed as enslaving seven people. It is possible that along with the farm his wife inherited had come enslaved people. Her father, who bequeathed her the land, had

FREE WHITE MALES					FREE WHITE FEMALES				
Under ten years of age.	Of ten years, and under sixteen.	Of sixteen and under twenty, including heads of families.	Of twenty and under forty-five, including heads of families.	Of forty-five and upwards, including heads of families.	Under ten years of age.	Of ten years, and under sixteen.	Of sixteen and under twenty, including heads of families.	Of twenty and under forty-five, including heads of families.	Of forty-five and upwards, including heads of families.
to 10.	to 16.	to 26.	to 45.	45 & over.	to 10.	to 16.	to 26.	to 45.	45 & over.
All other free persons, except Indians, not taxed.									

eight enslaved people at the time of his death. (Through the English common law of coverture, a married woman's property passed to her husband.) Although records show the 1800 purchase of at least one enslaved female, it seems unlikely that John Poole would have acquired seven enslaved people to work on his own original 15 acres of land—definitely more laborers than needed for such small acreage.

In any case, the 1810 census lists "John Pool" as having 11 enslaved people. (This may be the same John Poole but it is not certain. Spelling of names on census records vary tremendously, with many inaccuracies.) No record can be found in the 1820 census, and he died before the 1830 census. Around the turn of the 19th century when Poole held seven enslaved individuals he would have been in comparable company to the vast majority of enslavers in the county. Only about 20 percent of the county's 929 enslavers at that time held greater numbers of people in bondage.

The school bearing John Poole's name was built in 1997—the newest of the schools whose names are currently under study. Over the years, the derivation of the name of the community itself—Poolesville—has been variously attributed to the Poole family in general or to one family member or another in the first two generations, including the namesake of the school. Generations of Pooles have lived in and around the town, which was incorporated in 1867 as "The Commissioners of Poolesville." The community's name was formally changed to the Town of Poolesville in a 2010 referendum.

Main sources:

Dona Cuttler and Dorothy Elgin, *The History of Poolesville*, 2000

Charles W. Elgin Sr., "Brief History of Poolesville,"

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/134500933427539/permalink/200580176819614>

U.S. Department of the Interior, National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form, "Poolesville Historic District," <https://mht.maryland.gov/secure/medusa/PDF/Montgomery/M;%2017-15.pdf>