John Craggs
People of London Town, Maryland

John Craggs was born in the village of Sunderland Bridge, County Durham, England on May 23, 1736. There is, as yet, no information about what brought Craggs to America, but he was certainly on the South River by 1775. It was on the 27th of July that year when he married Mary Burgess, doubtless a descendant of London Town’s founder Col. William Burgess.

On January 14, 1777, Mary and John welcomed the first of four boys into the world. John Jr. was joined on December 22, 1778 by James, then October 4, 1784 by George. John Jr. led a short life. One of his parents wrote solemnly into the family’s Book of Common Prayer:

My Dearly Beloved Son John Craggs Departed this Life the 25th of March 1787 Aged Ten years and Two months fifteen Days

His parents laid John to rest in All Hallows Parish under a stone that you can still see today.

Later that year, John and Mary gave birth to their last son, also named John. Craggs was certainly living in London Town in 1782, though it is possible he had lived there earlier. By 1780 he was advertising his trade: horses.

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1 Letter from John N Pierce, Director of Planning and Programs, James Monroe Museum and Memorial Library, to Michael J Mennard, Administrator, London Town Publik House and Gardens, August 23, 1991, relating to Craggs-Burgess-Stansbury-McElhinny Book of Common Prayer, printed by Alexander Kincaid, 1768. Inscriptions written by the Craggs family are transcribed in this letter. Date is marked “O.S.” meaning Old Style, prior to the full acceptance of the Gregorian Calendar in the British empire, and so eleven days would be subtracted from his birth to come at the “true” date.
2 Pierce letter.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
5 “A List of Letters...,” Maryland Gazette, October 10, 1782, page 2.
Through 1795, Craggs advertised imported, “well bred,” “high bred,” and “thorough bred” horses for covering and sale. He even informed the public that he would be traveling to England in 1792 to collect “horses for the turf, stud, saddle, or carriage.” Craggs’ horses had such fanciful names as Sweeper, High-Flyer, Venetian, and Northern Eclipse.6

John Craggs was a neighbor of William Brown. It is unclear precisely where he lived in relation to the brick manor house that William Brown built, lived in, and operated as a tavern. A newspaper advertisement placed for the sale of enslaved people gives some hint of their relation to each other.

Within a year, William Brown was out of his home, which was purchased by Colonel John Hoskins Stone, former commander of the 1st Maryland Regiment in the Revolutionary War, politician,

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6 Maryland Gazette, October 18, 1787, page 3; July 10, 1788, page 3; December 1, 1791, page 3; June 12, 1794, page 3; May 17, 1795, page 3.
and soon to be Governor of Maryland. Sometime shortly thereafter, the Craggs family moved into the William Brown House. Their son wrote in the family *Book of Common Prayer*:

George Craggs was  
14 years of old in August  
27th / 1798 Then he was a  
living in John C Stone’s  
House London Town was  
bilt by Mr William  
Brown a large Bricke  
house

The reference to “John C Stone” appears to be an error on the part of the young man.

The family would not be living there for many more years. A notice in the *Maryland Gazette* of November 28th, 1805 mentioned the death on of John Craggs at Hammond’s Ferry. Ten years later Mary died there as well, and George followed them at Hammond’s Ferry in 1822, all of which suggests the family had moved there by 1805.

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1 As the research into colonial London Town’s inhabitants is an ongoing process, the caveat is offered that additional information may be found at any time and that a correction of information might also occur at any time.

8 Pierce letter.
9 *Maryland Gazette*, November 20, 1805, page 3; Pierce letter.