John Flack (alias Evans)

People of London Town, Maryland

John Flack first appears in the historical record in February of 1747. Richard Mount, an overseer at Mill Plantation working for William Cumming near Annapolis, places an advertisement in the Maryland Gazette calling for the capture of Flack. Under the pretense of visiting a nearby house, Flack borrowed a horse and disappeared. For the next several weeks the advertisement was repeated in the Gazette, disappearing by the publication of March 17th's edition. Presumably, Flack had been captured or had returned by that time.

February 23, 1747.

WHEREAS, a certain John Flack, on the 17th Instant, borrowed of the Subscriber, Overseer to William Cumming, Esq; O the Mill Plantation near Annapolis, a small Bay trotting Horse, a Bridle and an old Saddle without a Pad in it, on Pretense of going to the late Dwelling-Plantation of Mr. Mordicai Hammond, deceased; but has never since been heard of. The Horse has a Star in his Forehead, a black Mane, with a Switch Tail, and is branded on one Buttock, or Shoulder, (but which is not certain) thus O; he has also the same Brand under his Mane. The said Flack is a short well-set Man, with black Hair; and had on a Felt Hat, loop'd up with white Thread; two Cotton Jackets, one dyed with Sumack Berries, the other of a yellowish Colour; a Pair of Leather Breeches, light colour'd Worsted Stockings, and French Fall Shoes.

Whoever will secure the said Flack, so as he may be brought to Justice, shall have Thirty Shillings Reward; and whoever will bring the said Horse, Saddle, and Bridle to the Subscriber, shall have the same Reward, paid by Richard Mount.

N. B. The said Flack frequently changes his Name, as he lately did by subscribing his Name John Evans, to an Instrument in Writing between him and Mr. William Govans. It is also imagined that he has got a Pass.

Maryland Gazette, March 10, 1747 Page 4

Only a few months passed before Flack was in trouble again. This time he ran away from his master, a merchant by the name of William Thornton. Interestingly, Thornton and Cumming
appear to be friends, exchanging polite jabs as members of the Tuesday Club in Annapolis.\(^1\) Thornton penned a colorful description of his servant. With tattoos on both of his hands as well as his chest, Flack was scarred with gunpowder, and afflicted with sores. His clothing is that of a sailor, matching the professions he claims. Despite these unsightly marks, John Flack is described as “very artful, sly, smooth tongued fellow.”

Within a month the advertisement disappears from the Maryland Gazette. Flack had once again been returned to his servitude.

For several years Flack disappears from the historical record. We do know that Flack’s servitude was purchased by August 30, 1753 in Annapolis by William Bicknell. Bicknell produced supplies for the ships on the South River, and in Annapolis as well. It was his skill as a sailmaker that made Flack so appealing to Bicknell, a fact evidenced by the mention of Flack in Bicknell’s advertising his services.

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\(^1\) Wilson Somerville, *The Tuesday Club of Annapolis (1745-1756) as Cultural Performance*, University of Georgia Press: 1996, page 161
Flack had added the skill of netting to that of a sailor and sail maker. It was not long before Flack was running again. At the end of March the following year, he fled from his master in London Town. The opportunity to escape may have come from the fallout following the mutiny on the sloop *Hopewell* a few days before, which resulted in the kidnapping of London Town based servant James Manshore and slave George Cook. Whatever the cause, Bicknell took to the *Gazette* to publish the third runaway advertisement for the same servant in seven years. Interestingly, the advertisement uses many phrases word for word from the one placed by Thornton in 1747.
Maryland Gazette, 11 April 1754, Page 3

For a full month this runaway advertisement is published in the Maryland Gazette, eventually pushed out by other advertisements and news about the start of the French and Indian War. Whether he was captured or escaped, John Flack’s ultimate fate is unknown.

* 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.