

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 17<sup>th</sup>'s edition. Presumably, Flack had been captured or had returned by that time.

*Februcry 23, 1747.*

**W**HEREAS, a certain *John Flack*, on the 17<sup>th</sup> Instant, borrowed of the Subscriber, Overseer to *William Cumming*, Esq;  $\odot$  the *Mill Plantation* near *Annapolis*, a small Bay trotting Horse, a Bridle and an old Saddle without a Pad in it, on Pretence of going to the late Dwelling-Plantation of *Mr. Mordecai 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  $\odot$ ; 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 Gooch*. 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.<sup>1</sup> 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.”

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**R**A N-away from the Subscriber, on the 16th Instant, a Servant Man named *John Flack*, alias *Evans*. He is a short sprightly Man. He is a very artful, sly, smooth-tongued fellow; has his story by heart, is pretty much given to drink, and when in liquor is very Impudent. 'Tis probable he will pass for a Sailor or a Sail-maker, which Businesses he knows very well; and 'tis likely he will appear in a Sailor's dress. He is very much mark'd with Gun-Powder: Under his right Breast, he has the representation of *Adam* and *Eve* sitting under a Tree; and on the back of one of his Hands **J O H N**, and on the other **F L A C K**, and has many other Marks on his Arms and Body. It is suppos'd he is gone Northward.

Whoever takes up said *Flack*, and brings him to the Subscriber, in *Annapolis*, shall have Three Pounds Reward beside what the Law allows, if taken in this Province; and Three Pistoles if in any other Province.

WILLIAM THORNTON.

*N. B.* There is run away from the said *Thornton*, a tall lusty Negro Fellow named *Cato*, he speaks bad English, and has lost part of each Foot by the Frost.

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*Maryland Gazette, August 18, 1747, Page 3*

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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<sup>1</sup> Wilson Somerville, *The Tuesday Club of Annapolis (1745-1756) as Cultural Performance*, University of Georgia Press: 1996, page 161

**WILLIAM BICKNELL,**  
*SAIL-MAKER, in ANNAPOLIS,*  
**HEREBY** gives Notice to a-  
 ny Gentlemen who want to have any **SAILS**  
 made, either for Ships, Snows, Brigs, Schooners,  
 or Sloops, that they may depend on having as good  
 Work done by him, as cheap, and as well fitted,  
 as any brought from *Europe*; having already done  
 the following, to the Satisfaction of his Employers,  
*viz.* Sails for one Ship, two Brigantines, one  
 Sloop, and a Schooner, for Mr. *Galloway*; two  
 Snows and a Brigantine, for Dr. *Stuart*; one Ship,  
 one Snow, and a Sloop, for Mr. *Roberts*; one  
 Brig each, for Mr. *Ridgely* and Mr. *Sligh*; and a  
 great deal of Work for Mr. *Creagh*, and many o-  
 thers, too tedious to mention. His Price for Work  
 by the Bolt, is 7 *s.* 6 *d.* Sterling, or equal to that  
 in Currency: If by the Job, as he can agree. He  
 likewise makes Bed Bottoms, if the Employer finds  
 Canvas, at 8 *s.* or, if he finds it, at 20 *s.* And  
 his Employers may depend on being served with  
 Fidelity, by  
*Their humble Servant,*  
*William Bicknell,*  
*N. B.* He has a Servant Man from *London*,  
 who can make or mend Seines or Nets.

*Maryland Gazette, August 30, 1753*

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.

**R**AN away from the Subscriber,  
in *London Town*, on the 31st of *March* last,  
a *Servant Man*, named *John Flack*, alias *Evans*,  
by Trade a *Sail-Maker*; he is a short sprightly  
Man; he is a very artful, sly, smooth tongued  
Fellow, has his Story by Heart, is very much given  
to Drink, and when in Liquor, is very impudent;  
he is very much mark'd with *Gun Powder*; under  
his right Breast he has the Representation of *Adam*  
and *Eve* sitting under a Tree; and on the back of  
one of his Hands *J, O, H, N*; and on the other  
*F, L, A, C, K*, and has many other Marks in his  
Arms and Body; and under the Ham of his left  
Leg is full of Sores. He had on when he went  
away, a striped red and white Flannel Jacket, a  
Shirt made of Sheeting Linnen, and a Pair of Duck  
Trousers much tarr'd.

Whoever takes up the said Servant; and secures  
him so that his Master may have him again, shall  
have Twenty Shillings Reward, besides what the  
Law allows.

*William Bicknell.*

*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.