Margaret Brown
People of London Town, Maryland

Margaret was the fourth child and third daughter of William and Susannah Brown. She was born in London Town on August 8, 1759. It may be that she was born in the William Brown House, which still stands on the grounds of Historic London Town and Gardens. She appears to have still been living there with her four siblings and her parents in the 1776 census.

Although it is unclear when, Margaret married the sea captain John Steuart of Annapolis. He commanded a privateer schooner named the Molly in 1780, fighting in the American Revolutionary War. After the war, Steuart continued as a sea captain, sailing goods to Annapolis in the Willing Tom. Certainly the two are married by 1794, and housed the destitute William Brown. Margaret’s father died at their residence that year, leaving what little he had left to her husband. It is unknown if the Steuarts had any children.

Margaret was not yet through with tragedy. John died only three years later. Handling the estate of her deceased husband was John Shaw, the most famous furniture maker of Maryland in the early United States. As part of his handling the estate, John Shaw freed the three-year-old enslaved girl Jenn.

Shaw married Captain Steuart’s widow, and Margaret likely moved into Shaw’s house which still stands today in Annapolis. In reference to their wedding, the silversmith and watchmaker William Faris refers to Margaret as “Peggy.” The couple were wed on March 4, 1798.

Margaret and John welcomed a daughter named Jane into the world on October 1, 1799. Their family was short lived. On May 22, 1801, Jane died. No other children followed, and Margaret Shaw died on July 5, 1806.