

Anthony Beck

*People of London Town, Maryland**

Anthony Beck was a sea captain based in London Town for part of his life. He was married at least twice. His first wife was Elizabeth West, daughter of Stephen and Martha West. Thus, in 1743, Stephen West conveyed lot 44 in London Town (previously owned by Richard Hill) to Anthony and Elizabeth Beck.¹ However, upon Captain Beck's death in 1749, the administrator of his estate was a Jane Beck, who was referred to as his wife within the testamentary proceedings regarding his estate. Captain Beck had at least one sister, Ann Johnston. He had two brothers who were both wig (peruke) makers. Arthur Beck lived in Cartmel, Lancaster County, Great Britain and Roger Beck lived in Kendall, Westmoreland County, Great Britain.²

Captain Beck was a member of the South River Club, a gentleman's social club that is believed to be one of the oldest, continuously meeting social clubs in the country.³ According to the roster of members taken in 1742, Captain Beck was elected a member prior to 1742,⁴ but it is not known precisely when he became a member because the early records were destroyed in a fire that burned the club house in 1740 or '41.⁵ As part of his membership obligations, Captain Beck served dinner a total of eight times from 1742 until his death in 1749. The first two documented dinners took place on February 11 and February 25, 1742. However, it seems that because of his profession, Captain Beck was not always able to attend meetings, as evidenced by entries in the record book listing proxies who served in place of Captain Beck. His proxy on April 19, 1744 was Richard Moore and on May 4, 1744 was Dr. Samuel Preston Moore. On September 4 and September 18, 1746, John Brewer was his proxy. Captain Beck was present to serve his last two meals on November 24 and December 8, 1748.⁶

Captain Beck was the master of a number of ships throughout his lifetime. His first documented command is the snow rigged *London Town*, which arrived at the island of Madeira on August 16, 1733.⁷ Two years later, he loaded tobacco onto the *London Town* at a rate of seven pounds per ton before leading her to Gravesend, England before sailing into Deal.⁸ Beck led the *London Town* on yet another voyage to Madeira from Philadelphia in 1738.⁹ In 1740, Beck

¹ [ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY COURT \(Land Records\) Anthony Beck, 1743, Liber RB 1, folio 305, MSA CE76-18, MdHR 4785.](#)

² [PREROGATIVE COURT \(Testamentary Proceedings\) Anthony Beck, 1758, Liber 37, folio 73, MSA S529-55, MdHR 993.](#)

³ Historical Committee of the Club, *The Ancient South River Club: A Brief History* (Menasha, WI: George Banta Publishing Company, 1952), 8.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁶ [SPECIAL COLLECTIONS \(South River Club Collection\) South River Record Book, Anthony Beck, MSA SC 332.](#)

⁷ "A List of Ships Arrived..." *London Daily Journal*, October 29, 1733, page 1.

⁸ "Home Ports," *London Daily Journal*, April 21, 1736; John M. Hemphill, II, "Freight Rates in the Maryland Tobacco Trade, 1705-1762," *Maryland Historical Magazine* (54(1), March 1959; 54(2), June 1959), 175; "Port News," *Read's Weekly Journal, or British Gazetteer*, May 5, 1736, page 2.

⁹ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 20, 1738, page 3.

commanded the schooner *Charming Hannah* on a short voyage to Philadelphia and back, returning later that year with the schooner *Marlborough*.¹⁰ In 1746, he was captain of the schooner *Hopewell* when it was on its way from Annapolis to New York.¹¹ On April 6, 1747 in Annapolis, he was documented as the captain of *Frances & Elizabeth*, a 100 ton ship with a square stern owned by Patrick Creagh.¹² This would prove to be a fatal command.

In 1748, Captain Beck sailed the *Francis & Elizabeth* to London and then to Holland on his final voyage. He spoke with fellow Marylander Captain Creagh, of the *Speedwell*, on Christmas Day of that year at sea when their vessels crossed paths.¹³ Beck again passed through London on the return voyage to Philadelphia, this time in company with a convoy of vessels, all of which were loaded with "Palatines and Swiss Passengers."¹⁴ On that return voyage, Beck took ill and died aboard *Frances & Elizabeth*, along with "many" of his passengers. A notice of his death appeared in the *Maryland Gazette* on September 20, 1749.¹⁵ He died with no legal issue, leaving his wife, Jane, a widow.¹⁶

According to Captain Beck's inventory, he owned nine slaves: Moll, Dinah and her child Jenny, Nannah and her children Sarah and Rebecca, London, Priscilla, and an unnamed woman who was levy free. His total inventory totaled to a value of £509.4.21.¹⁷

Since he died at sea, Captain Beck died intestate, meaning he died without a legal will. From 1752 until 1758, his siblings, Ann Johnston, Arthur Beck, and Roger Beck, brought Jane Beck to trial multiple times because she had not exhibited accounts of her administration of Captain Beck's estate or an inventory of her husband's "separate and desperate debts."¹⁸ According to the Prerogative Court testamentary proceedings entry from July 11, 1758, Jane Beck refused "with some frivolous pretences" to produce the requested documents. His siblings claimed that they were "intitled" to a third of his estate, to be divided between the three of them equally.¹⁹ Jane Beck did claim that, upon her husband's death, she "took out Letters of Administration on his Estate and by Virtue thereof possessed herself of all the Personal Estate of the said Anthony Beck."²⁰ However, she also claimed that "no part of the Personal Estate whereof her Interstate died possessed hath yet come to her Hands except what is contained in the Inventory."²¹ In addition, she said that she had "no satisfactory Proof" that Arthur and Roger Beck were in fact the brothers of her husband and that she refused to pay them any part of her husband's estate.²² However, when they produced satisfactory proof, then she was "ready and

¹⁰ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, June 19, 1740, page 2; September 12, 1740, page 3.

¹¹ "[Schooner Hopewell](#)," *Maryland Gazette*, September 16, 1746.

¹² Vaughn W. Brown, *Shipping in the Port of Annapolis 1748-1775*, (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1965).

¹³ *Penny London Post*, January 13, 1749, page 3.

¹⁴ *Penny London Post*, July 10, 1749, page 3.

¹⁵ "[Ship Frances & Elizabeth](#)," *Maryland Gazette*, September 20, 1749.

¹⁶ PREROGATIVE COURT (Testamentary Proceedings) Anthony Beck, 1758.

¹⁷ [PREROGATIVE COURT \(Inventories\) Anthony Beck, 1750, Liber 43, folio 72, MSA S534-43, MdHR 1150](#).

¹⁸ PREROGATIVE COURT (Testamentary Proceedings) Anthony Beck, 1752-1758, Liber 33-37, MSA S534-50-55, MdHR 989-993

¹⁹ PREROGATIVE COURT (Testamentary Proceedings) Anthony Beck, 1758, Liber 37, folio 74.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 76.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 77.

²² *Ibid.*, 76.

willing and always was upon the said Proofs being made to pay" Captain Beck's siblings.²³ There is no known resolution of the case between the Beck siblings and Jane Beck.

* 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.

²³ Ibid., 77.