

Mungo Roy *People of London Town, Maryland¹*

There were a very few free people of color in and around London Town, and they went to desperate lengths to stay that way. Mungo Roy, described as a “free Negroe,” was contracted in 1718 to carry out a sale for the slave ship *Margaret*.

When the ship *Margaret* arrived in London Town James Carroll, who funded the slaving expedition, paid enough for every man, woman, and child present for the sale to drink six ounces of rum.² Anticipating that the crowd could get rowdy, Carroll also paid the constable Neale Clark, brother to the pirate Richard Clark,³ perhaps to act as muscle to keep customers under control.

Frightened enslaved people were likely lined up in chains, open for all to inspect. As the potential customers showed interest in an African, Charles M. Flanagan argues, Mungo Roy would step up and pitch each human being as an object worth their money. Then he would seal the deal and collect the fee.⁴

As Sean M. Kelley illustrated in *Voyage of the Slave Ship Hare*, American Africans could be used to comfort recently arrived enslaved Africans. Speaking their language and familiar with their customs, these Americanized Africans could reassure the new arrivals that they would not be killed, and that they were destined for labor, rather than death. They could also prepare them for the terrifying slave sales that were soon to come. Such relationships could reduce suicide among the new arrivals.⁵ It was perhaps this dynamic that made Roy valuable to Carroll’s efforts.

Mungo Roy tried to operate within the oppressive system by currying favor with those that might enslave him. Only three years earlier, the Maryland legislature passed “An Act Relating to Servants and Slaves.” The Act imposed draconian punishments for a range of offenses, but especially for harboring or assisting runaway slaves and servants. Free people of color were explicitly targeted by the law, which allowed for enslaving free “mullatoes” and “negroes.”⁶ Times were dangerous for men like Mungo Roy.

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.

² Charles M. Flanagan, *The Sweets of Independence: A Reading of the James Carroll Daybook, 1714-1721*, pages 236.

³ Colonial Families of Anne Arundel County, MD, The Conant Family, Page 95
<<http://wc.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=lanaclark&id=1775>>

⁴ Charles M. Flanagan, *The Sweets of Independence: A Reading of the James Carroll Daybook, 1714-1721*, pages 238-249.

⁵ Sean M. Kelley, *Voyage of the Slave Ship Hare*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016.

⁶ Maryland State Archives, “An Act Relating to Slaves and Servants,” *Proceedings and Acts of the General Assembly, April 26, 1715-August 10, 1716*, Volume 30, pages 283-292.