

The Network

An Enslaving Virginia Publication

May 6, 1999

The fourth issue of "The Network" includes a selection of runaway slave advertisements that contain information about the duties, responsibilities, and skills of personal slaves and enslaved men and women who worked in houses. All references are from the first volume (Virginia and North Carolina) of Lathan A. Windley, comp., *Runaway Slave Advertisements: A Documentary History from the 1730s to 1790*, 4 vols., Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1983. This issue also contains two letters that Sampson Matthews of Richmond wrote to Colonel John Cropper of Accomack County in 1785. Matthews directed Cropper to purchase six slaves—a personal servant for his wife and an enslaved boy who could wait in the house and drive a carriage. The third section of "The Network" lists two new books on slavery and the slave trade.

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Virginia Gazette—October 27, 1752

RAN away from the Subscriber, living in New-Kent County, on the first day of September last, a fair Mulatto Woman Slave, named Moll, about 22 Years of Age, and 5 Feet high, with brown Hair, grey Eyes, very large Breasts and Limbs, two of her upper fore Teeth are rotten and broken off; she took with her 4 brown Linnen Shirts, 3 Virginia-Cloth Petticoats, 3 Roles Aprons, several Holland Caps, and an old blue and white Virginia-Cloth Wastecoat; she stole about Five Pounds in Cash, so that its likely she may have bought other Clothes, she is a very sly subtle Wench and a great Lyar; she is very handy about waiting and tending in a House, and can wash, iron and sew coarse Work: It's likely she may change her Name, pass for a free Woman and hire herself. Whoever will bring her to Col. William Macon, in New-Kent County, to Mr. William Macon, Jun. in Hanover County, or to the Subscriber, shall have Two Pistoles Reward, besides what the Law allows.

Martha Massie

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, 27 October 1752 (Windley, p. 30).

Virginia Gazette—September 5, 1755

York-Town,
August 27, 1755

RAN away from the Subscriber, early on Saturday Morning last, a young Negroe Fellow, named Mingo, of a yellowish Complexion, slim made, about 15 Years of Age; had on when he went away, a light colored Russia Drab Coat; He was seen in and about Hampton, and pretended he was sent down to wait on a Gentleman. He took with him a Bay Horse, which has since been found near Hampton. Whoever will apprehend the said Slave, and deliver him to Mr. Jacob Walker, or Mr. George Walker, in Hampton, shall

have Half a Pistole Reward, besides what the Law allows.

John Norton.

N. B. The said Slave has been Outlaw'd.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, 5 September 1755 (Windley, pp. 32-33).

Virginia Gazette—October 20, 1768

RUN away from the subscriber in Chesterfield, the Wednesday before Easter last, a bright mulatto wench named JUDE, about 30 years old, is very remarkable, has lost one eye, but which I have forgot, has long black hair, a large scar on one of her elbows, and several other scars in her face, and has been subject to running away ever since she was ten years old. I have great reason to think she will pass for a free woman, and endeavour to make into South Carolina. She is very knowing about house business, can spin, weave, sew, and iron, well. She had on when she went away her winter clothing, also a blue and white striped Virginia cloth gown, a Virginia cloth copperas and white striped coat, besides others too tedious to mention. Whoever conveys the said slave to me shall be well rewarded for their trouble.

MARY CLAY.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., 20 October 1768 (Windley, p. 65).

Virginia Gazette—March 19, 1772

RUN away from the subscriber in Essex, a mulatto fellow (who some time ago belonged to Mr. Thomas Barnes) named JOE, of the middle size, well proportioned, combs his hair remarkably neat, has been always kept as a waitingman, is very smart in his answers, and understands house business, as well as the management of horses. He is a good shoemaker, and can do many other things, can read and write tolerably well, and probably may have a forged pass, or discharge, as he had one wrote by me to pass until the 31st of July. He has a variety of clothes, but those most commonly used by him are a blue Newmarket coat, a brown fustian do. leather breeches, an old green shag jacket, a coarse leaden coloured cloth coat and vest, with white metal buttons, a laced hat, and another bound with black ferret, several white shirts, stockings, &c. He carried with him a dark brown blooded mare, about 13 hands and a half high, about 8 years old, trots, has a little white I believe on one of her feet, and branded on her buttock WR in a piece. He was seen on Sunday the 30th of July with the said mare saddled, and a bundle of clothes, at Mr. Robert Tomlin's, in Richmond county. Whoever takes up the runaway and mare, and conveys them to me, living near Hobb's Hole, shall have 5 l. reward; and if taken upwards of 50 miles from Hobb's Hole, shall be paid for travelling.

WILLIAM ROANE.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., 17 August 1769 (Windley, p. 72).

Virginia Gazette—March 19, 1772

FREDERICKSBURG,

March 11, 1772.

FIFTEEN POUNDS Reward for taking up, and delivering to me, my Man CHRISTMAS. He is a lusty, well made, genteel Fellow, has waited on me from my Infancy, can shave and dress extremely well, and is about thirty Years of Age; his Complexion is rather light (his Father being a light Mulatto) very pleasant, and well featured. He has been inoculated for the Smallpox, but has no Marks except the Scar of the Incision on one Arm, and at present a large Cut on his Shin, the Effect of a late Night Revel; he can read, is very fluent of Speech, speaks with great Propriety, and is so artful that he can invent a plausible Tale at a Moment's Warning, which makes me suspect that he will now pass unmolested, under some Pretence or other, as a Freeman, which I presume will be most desirable to him; though he has lived little short of it with me, having been too indulged, and being very idle during my present Indisposition, he has grown wanton in Licentiousness, and several gross Acts of ill Behaviour this Week past, are now completed by an Elopement last Monday Night. It will be in vain to describe his Dress, as he has already changed his Livery, and it seems has taken a brown Kersey Waistcoat belonging to my Cook, which I presume he will retain as Part of his Dress. The above Reward will be proportioned, and paid according to the Distance he may be taken up and brought home, namely, FIVE POUNDS if above twenty and under fifty Miles, TEN POUNDS is [*sic*] above fifty and under a Hundred Miles, and FIFTEEN POUNDS for any Distance above a Hundred Miles in this Colony; but if he is taken out of the Colony, I will give TWENTY POUNDS.

JAMES MERCER.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., 19 March 1772 (Windley, p. 111).

Virginia Gazette—August 6, 1772

TAPPAHANNOCK,

Essex County,

August 1, 1772.

RUN away from the Subscriber's Plantation, about a Mile distant from the said Town, last May, a likely, well made, light coloured Mulatto Wench named PHEBE, about five Feet four Inches high, and about twenty two Years old; as she had formerly been a House Servant, she had a Variety of Clothes. A Propensity for Pleasure in the Night brought a little Punishment from the Overseer, which I suppose made her run off. Some Years ago I had her of a certain Ambrose Jones, then of this County, but now in Brunswick, where perhaps she may have strolled to. Whoever conveys her to me, or secures her in any of his Majesty's Jails, shall have FORTY SHILLINGS Reward, besides what the Law allows.

ARCHIBALD RITCHIE.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., 6 August 1772 (Windley, p. 118).

Virginia Gazette—November 5, 1772

TEN POUNDS REWARD.

RUN away from the Subscriber, in Northumberland, on Wednesday the 14th of October, a very likely young Virginia born Negro Man named DAVID, of a yellowish complexion, and about five Feet five Inches high; had on when he went off an Osnabrug Shirt, a Pair of Purple Virginia Cloth Breeches lined with white Linen, a Pair of Rolls Breeches over them, and a Fearnought Jacket with Horn Buttons. He carried with him a brown coloured Kersey Jacket, a blue and white Virginia cloth One with coarse Osnabrug Pockets, brown and white Linen Shirts, and sundry other Clothes which I cannot well describe; but, as he is a very cunning artful Fellow, I imagine he will sell and swap his Clothes as may suit him. Though his hair is of the Negro kind, he keeps it very high and well combed; but, as he wants to be free, I imagine he will cut it off, and get a Wig to alter and disguise himself. He had with him thirty or forty Shillings in Silver Money, and a Brass Medal with the Image of our present King and Queen on it, which he will endeavour to pass for Gold. He can read pretty well, and I make no Doubt will endeavour to pass for a Freeman and get himself a forged Pass, and endeavour for some foreign Part, either by getting on Board of some Vessel or stealing some Gentleman's Horse and make for Carolina. He has always been my Waiting Man when I went from home, and is a good Waiter, Driver, and Hostler, understands something of Gardening, of combing and dressing Wigs and Hair, can plough, work at the Hoe and Axe very well, and is, on the Whole, a very clever active brisk Fellow. Whoever will apprehend the said Runaway, and bring him home to me, or secure him in any Jail in the Colony, so that I get him, shall have FIVE POUNDS Reward, and reasonable Charges allowed; if out of the Colony TEN POUNDS, and reasonable Charges for bringing him home.

THOMAS GASKINS.

N.B. He is suspected to have carried with him a Drab coloured Sailor's Jacket with Slash Sleeves, Leather Buttons on the Sleeves, if not on the Breast, and lined through with red and white Swanskin; also a Pair of old white Plush Breeches, which are missing.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., 6 August 1772 (Windley, p. 123)

Virginia Gazette—June 30, 1774

AUGUSTA, June 18, 1774.

RUN away the 16th Instant, from the Subscriber, a Negro Man named BACCHUS, about 30 Years of Age, five Feet six or seven Inches high, strong and well made; had on, and took with him, two white Russia Drill Coats, one turned up with blue, the other quite plain and new, with white figured Metal Buttons, blue Plush Breeches, a fine Cloth Pompadour Waistcoat, two or three thin or Summer Jackets, sundry Pairs of white Thread

Stockings, five or six white Shirts, two of them pretty fine, neat Shoes, Silver Buckles, a fine Hat cut and cocked in the Macaroni Figure, a double-milled Drab Great Coat, and sundry other Wearing Apparel. He formerly belonged to Doctor George Pitt, of Williamsburg, and I imagine is gone there under Pretence of my sending him upon Business, as I have frequently heretofore done; he is a cunning, artful, sensible Fellow, and very capable of forging a Tale to impose on the Unwary, is well acquainted with the lower Parts of the Country, having constantly rode with me for some Years past, and has been used to waiting from his Infancy. He was seen a few Days before he went off with a Purse of Dollars, and had just before changed a five Pound Bill; most, or all of which, I suppose he must have robbed me off [*sic*], which he might easily have done, I having trusted him much after what I thought had proved his Fidelity. He will probably endeavour to pass for a Freeman by the Name of John Christian, and attempt to get on Board some Vessel bound for Great Britain, from the Knowledge he has of the late Determination of Somerset's Case. Whoever takes up the said Slave shall have 5 l. Reward, on his Delivery to GABRIEL JONES.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie and Dixon, eds., 30 June 1774 (Windley, pp. 149-150).

Virginia Gazette—July 5, 1776

LANCASTER, June 13, 1776.

RUN away from the subscriber, on Monday the 10th instant (June) two men slaves, both Virginia born, viz. BILLY, a stout well made black fellow, about 5 feet 6 inches high, 25 years of age, who has been used to gardening, cooking, taking care of horses, and very handy, if he pleases, about any kind of house business. KITT, a stout mulatto fellow, much knock kneed, between 17 and 18 years of age, stammers a little in his speech, and is about 5 feet 9 inches high. Billy had on a leather cap, and both of them went off in their work clothes, of country cloth. I will give 40 s. reward to any person who will deliver the said negroes to me, or secure them so that I get them again.

MUNGO HARVEY.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., 5 July 1776 (Windley, p. 252).

Virginia Gazette—June 6, 1777

MECKLENBURG,

June 2, 1777.

RUN away from Doctor David Black's of Blandford, some Time in August last, a Negro Fellow named SAM (now my Property) about 40 Years of Age, 5 Feet 8 or 9 Inches high, has a large Sore on the Inside of his right Ankle, and his Leg in general much swelled. He carried with him an old black gray Coat, a striped Worsted Cap, Trousers, &c. He may probably endeavour to pass for a free Man, as he is fully acquainted with Household and Kitchen Work, and frequently said his Name was Sam Leismore before he left the West

Indies. Whoever apprehends the said Fellow, and delivers him to the Subscriber, or secures him in any Gaol in Virginia, shall receive TWENTY SHILLINGS, besides what the Law allows.

JOHN MURRAY.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Dixon and Hunter, eds., 6 June 1777 (Windley, pp. 184-185).

Virginia Gazette—August 8, 1777

RUN away from the subscriber, the 21st of July, a mulatto girl named KATE, or Catharine, about 5 feet high, has been brought up in the house from her infancy, and can work well with a needle. She is 19 or 20 years of age, has a smiling countenance when spoke to, and at some times is rather impertinent. She has endeavoured to pass for a free girl, and was going to the West Indies with the mate of some vessel, but was detected. She has now made a second elopement. I imagine she may be lurking about some of the shores, in order to get off. She has a great number of very good clothes, therefore it is uncertain what she may have with her. I will give a reward of 3 l. to any person that will deliver her to col. John Wilson, or mrs. Mary Bradley, at the N. W. Landing, Norfolk county, or to the jailer of Elizabeth City.

(?) BRADLEY.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., 8 August 1777 (Windley, pp. 263-264).

Virginia Gazette—December 19, 1777

NORTH CAROLINA State,
BUTE County,
Nov. 20, 1777.

RUN away from the Subscriber last Night, a Negro Man Slave named PETER, about 5 Feet 6 Inches high, made in Proportion; he has, from his Infancy, been a waiting-Man, and drives a Chair very well, has a smiling Countenance, and very complaisant, had a Squeel in his Speech, and Chews Tobacco, at other Times takes Snuff; he carried with him two Suits of Clothes, one green Frize Half wore, the other a grey Coat bound, and the Binding now almost white, the Jacket for that is a born, 4 or 5 Pair of Breeches, one of which is Leather, 4 good Shirts, 2 of them striped Cotton, marked WP, with Bands of the same, stamped with red as the Shirts, 3 pair of new Shoes, and 1 Pair Half soled, two good Dutch Blankets, an old Worsted Cap and a Hat, with a Piece Burnt off one Side; he is a good Plantation Waggoner, careful of his master's Horses, as a waiting Man, and very honest. I can assign no Reason for his running away, but quarreling with his Wife. I will give TEN DOLLARS to any Person that will deliver him to me, and pay all Charges, let him be well used.

WILLIAM PARK.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Dixon and Hunter, eds., 19 December 1777 (Windley, p. 190).

Virginia Gazette—May 29, 1778

Two Hundred Dollars Reward.

RUN away from the subscriber in Northumberland, two negro men, viz. JOE, a tall black fellow, who has a fine smooth address, a hole in one of his cheeks and is very artful. He can read a little, is fond of singing hymns, and exhorting his brethren of the Ethiopian tribe. BILLY, a stout well made dark mulatto, has very black hair, and is remarkably cunning. They are both good house servants, and understand the business of a stable. The above reward will be paid on their being delivered to me, or one half for either.

JOHN GORDON.

Source: *Virginia Gazette*, Purdie, ed., 29 May 1778 (Windley, p. 270).

Virginia Gazette and Weekly Advertiser—September 20, 1783

RUN away from my farm near Fredericksburg on the 9th July last . . . A likely well grown negro lad, about eighteen years old, named ROBIN, absconded from me about the same time; he was brought up from his infancy a house servant, hath been in England, and sent back for pilfering; the same cause induced me lately to put him to labour in the field. I cannot describe his dress; what is most remarkable in his person, is long slim feet and legs, the calves of which are rather higher than common, his head is I think less than proportionate, and and [sic] forehead low, and his mouth pretty large, his hands and feet both delicate, having never been used to hard work, or to go without shoes; he is very fluent in speech, and much addicted to lying. I will give one half of the rewards offered for Anthony [ten dollars if taken within 20 miles, 15 dollars if 40 miles, 20 dollars if more than 60 miles, and 30 dollars if out of the state of Virginia, and reasonable travelling expenses, or the like sums for securing him in jail, till I can send for and get him], to any person who brings him home, or secures him in any jail till I get him.

CHARLES YATES.

Source: *Virginia Gazette and Weekly Advertiser*, Nicolson and Prentis, eds., 20 September 1783 (Windley, pp. 220-221).

Virginia Gazette or American Advertiser—October 16, 1784

TWENTY POUNDS REWARD.

RAN AWAY from the subscriber, near Leeds-Town, on Rappahanock River, about the first of October, 1783, a likely Mulatto woman named CHARITY, who carried with her three children, two boys and a girl; her husband, a Negro man belonging to Col. William Fautleroy, of Naylor's Hole, carried them on the South side of James River, near the

City of Richmond, where he secreted them until April, 1784; they were then brought to Naylor's Hole with the small pox on them, and some time in June they went away again. I cannot tell whether they are marked with the small pox, as I never saw them after they had it, nor can I describe the cloathes they carried with them, as neither myself or family had been at home for several months before they went away. She is a likely wench, has an uncommon good voice, is a good house servant, and can spin and knit very well. About the same time a young Negro fellow named FRANK, a house servant, also went away; he was in possession of Mr. Brownlow, of Fredericksburg, until some time in June, and in July I had him brought home, but he ran away again; he is a likely active lad, about 18 years old, and about five feet six inches high, well made, has large full eyes, but no not remember any other particular mark. I will give FIVE POUNDS for the wench and children, to be secured in any gaol, and notice given that I may get them again, or TEN POUNDS to have them brought home. The same Reward will be given for Frank, or as they are unwilling to stay at home, I will sell them, or either of them, to any gentleman inclinable to purchase, who will get them in possession, and make application to
 THOMAS TURNER.

Source: *Virginia Gazette or American Advertiser*, Hayes, ed., 16 October 1784 (Windley, pp. 364-365).

Virginia Gazette or American Advertiser—May 10, 1786

RUN away from the Subscriber, a mulatto man named JOE, about 5 feet 6 or 7 inches high, 25 years of age, bandy legged, thick lips, and speaks broken English, being raised at the Illinois. He is a good Barber, and a handy fellow about a Gentleman's person, being always kept as a waiting-man. He is well acquainted in Richmond, and it is expected he will make for that place. Whoever will bring said fellow to me again, or give such information that I may get him, shall be handsomely rewarded.

JOHN BRECKINRIDGE.

Albemarle, March 27, 1786.

Source: *Virginia Gazette or American Advertiser*, Hayes, ed., 10 May 1786 (Windley, p. 384).

Virginia Gazette or American Advertiser—May 24, 1786

TEN DOLLARS REWARD.

RAN AWAY form the Estate of the late John Mayo, deceased, in February last, a negro man, about 35 years of age, of a yellowish complexion, much pitted with the small pox, 5 feet 8 or 9 inches high, he calls himself WILL QUASH, and sometimes WILL DAMAR, and affects to be a Cook and Waterman; formerly belonged to Mr. Norton, and lived in Williamsburg. As it is highly probable he may attempt to pass for a free man, all persons

are forewarned not to carry him out of the State. Whoever will apprehend the said Slave, and deliver him either to Mr. John Beckley, in Richmond, or Mr. William Mayo, near thereto, shall receive the above reward, besides what the law allows.

RICHMOND, May 20, 1786.

Source: *Virginia Gazette or American Advertiser*, Hayes, ed., 24 May 1786 (Windley, p. 386).

Virginia Independent Chronicle and General Advertiser—July 28, 1790

Run away from the subscriber, last Fall, from Richmond, where he was hired, a negro man, named GLOUCESTER. He formerly waited on my father, and is a very artful, cunning fellow, being acquainted in many of the States; he is near six feet high, his legs rather small, and knocked kneed, has a large scar over his right eye, a very white set of teeth, and about forty years of age; he is a native of Jamaica, and has a brand on the shoulder ; speaks in the dialect of the West-Indies, and professes himself an hostler; he

understands the cooking business, and formerly belonged to Doct. John Baker, with whom he lived some years in Williamsburg. He will endeavour to pass as a freeman, as I understand he informed many persons whilst in Richmond he was free, and called himself John Baker. I have been informed he intended to Petersburg, Goochland, or Alexandria, the latter I think the most probable place. All masters of vessels, and others, are forewarned taking the said fellow out of the country, at their peril. Any person delivering him to me in Gloucester, or securing him in any jail so that I get him again, shall be handsomely rewarded, exclusive of what the law allows.

Source: *Virginia Independent Chronicle and General Advertiser*, Davis, ed., 28 July 1790 (Windley, pp. 417-418).

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In 1785 Sampson Mathews of Richmond wrote two letters to Colonel John Cropper of Accomack County about the purchase of six slaves. He wanted a slave girl to wait on his wife and an enslaved boy who could wait in the house and drive a carriage.

Richmond 14th Febr'y 1785

Sir

Since the 3d. ulto. (at which Time you was Kind Enough To under Take the Purchas of four slaves) my wife has Lost her maid, which is very Inconvenient, therefore if the Purchase be Not Compleat before this goes To hand, youl Pleas Procure a Likely Negro girl from 12 to 18 years that Can Shew, & is acustomed To Wait on Ladies honest & well disposed, or in other words Such a one as you think may Suit

[on reverse]

Sir,

I should be glad of a Compleat house servant that Could Drive a Carriage, sober & well disposed, one Suitable To these Purposes[&] By Youl Not Hesitate for Price Provided you have Not already made the Purchase of the whole order

Richmond 29th March 1785

Sir

I wrote you the 14th. Febry & have Not Recd any Answer or Information how you have succeeded in the Purchase of Slaves which you was kind Enough To under Take for me, in the Letter Last wrote I Requested you To Purchase a Negroe girl about 15 years of age accustomed To Shew & wait on Ladies & a boy of about 14 or 18 years accustomed To wait in the house; I hope before this Time you have Completed the Purchase & forwarded the Slaves. if Not I Earnestly Request you To Compleat the Purchase as Soon as Possible upon the Best Terms you Can & as Near To the Instructions as oppertunatie may offer. If oppertunatie offers this way by Craft Please send what you may have Purchased.

Source: John Cropper Papers, 1779-1820, Virginia Historical Society Mss:1C8835a.

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New Books on the Slave Trade and Slavery
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Klein, Herbert S. *The Atlantic Slave Trade*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Melish, Joanne Pope. *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and "Race" in New England, 1780-1860*. Ithaca, NY & London: Cornell University Press, 1998.