



# Blackbeard | Biography, Legend, Death & Facts

## Summary of Blackbeard

No other pirate in history ever reached the level of infamy achieved by Edward Teach, aka Blackbeard. Despite being dead for over three hundred years,

The memory of Edward Teach is still very much alive in modern popular culture. But what about the man behind the beard? It is generally thought that Edward was born around 1680, somewhere around Bristol, [England](#). As was customary for pirates, Edward Teach may have been an assumed name, and many surname variations are recorded, including Thack, Tack, and Teach.

[Historian](#) Colin Woodward is adamant that he went by Thatch and that an error by a newspaper report in the Boston News-Letter started the misnomer that he was known as Teach. When researching Blackbeard, Woodward found that accounts in which he was referred to as Edward Thatch came from those who knew him. Spelling had yet to be standardized, and people's names were often spelled phonetically.

This inconsistency – coupled with the variety of accents at the time – could explain the assortment of surnames attributed to the famous pirate. This confusion adds to the mystique and makes it impossible to find any record of Blackbeard's alter ego.



## Facts about Blackbeard



Edward Teach (Blackbeard) English Pirate



<b>Real Name:</b>	Edward Teach
<b>Nickname:</b>	Blackbeard
<b>Born:</b>	c. 1680, Bristol, <a href="#">England</a>
<b>Died:</b>	22 November 1718 (aged 35–40), Ocracoke, Province of North Carolina
<b>Cause of Death:</b>	killed in action (stab wounds and gunshot wounds)
<b>Rank:</b>	Captain
<b>The base of operations:</b>	Atlantic West Indies

### Blackbeard Early Life





The names Thatch do appear in Bristolian census rolls in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. According to Robert Earl Lee, the author of *Blackbeard, the Pirate, Teach – or Thatch* – was born into an intelligent and well-to-do family, making it more likely that his name was an alias. Lee was also the person to pinpoint Blackbeard's approximate date of birth, as he deduced that Black beard would have been between thirty-five to forty when he died.

In truth, not much is known about Edward's youth, other than that he went to sea at a young age. By the time he was in his early twenties, he was a privateer in the West Indies.

He possibly arrived on a merchant vessel or slave ship, and by 1706, he was based in Jamaica. Genealogist and historian Baylus Brooks found compelling evidence suggesting Edward might have had family living in Jamaica.

He found a record of Edward and Lucretia Teach and their son, Cox Teach, in the Jamaican settlement of Spanish Town in 1700. Brooks believes that Teach and Teach were interchangeable names and common variants of Teach. As there had been a 1739 report that an English visitor to Jamaica had met members of the late Blackbeard, Brooks concluded that Edward Teach was the father of the famed buccaneer.

Edward Teach was a captain and a man of status who had been wed twice before marrying Lucretia. Brooks also discovered a document from 1706 written on a Royal Navy ship by Edward Teach's son, also named Edward Teach. In the text, Teach the younger relinquishes any right to his dead father's Jamaican estate, leaving it to his stepmother for the "love and affection I have for and bear towards my brother and sister Thomas Teach and Rachel Teach."

Brooks theorizes that Thomas and Rachel were Edward's half-siblings. While there is no solid proof that Brook's findings relate to Blackbeard, the evidence is captivating. During the War of the Spanish Succession from 1701 to 1714, privateers were employed by many [European](#) powers. Privateers were essentially pirates who had the backing of their monarch. They were free to plunder the ships and settlements of rival countries without the fear of reprimand from their native governments. Privateering was a profitable yet shady business.



## Privateers and Pirates of the West Indies



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The first time Blackbeard came onto the scene as a fully blown pirate was serving under Benjamin Hornigold. Hornigold was another ex-privateer and apprenticed Edward in piratical ways. These men, amongst many others, were drawn into piracy when a fleet of Spanish ships was wrecked in a hurricane on Florida’s Atlantic coast in 1715.

The ships were loaded with treasure, causing many seafarers to descend on the area. Seeing potential in Edward, Hornigold soon elevated him to captain and gave him his own vessel and a small crew.



### **The Gentleman Pirate**

In 1717, they sailed together across the Caribbean Sea and plundered any ships they came across. During this time, they came across Stede Bonnet, the “**Gentleman Pirate**,” A plantation owner from Barbados. Bonnet’s crew was unhappy with their command, so Blackbeard took over Bonnet’s ship, the Revenge, for a short time. Off the coast of the Island of Martinique, Hornigold, Blackbeard, and Bonnet captured a [French Dutch Flute](#) called La Concorde.

This acquisition would be the biggest of Hornigold’s career as a pirate, and he equipped Blackbeard with the vessel that would become almost as famous as the man himself. La Concorde was a slave ship that was sailing to the [Americas](#) from Africa.

The size and speed of the slave ships made them the perfect vessels for piracy, which may have been the reason Blackbeard and Hornigold targeted it. On its last fateful voyage as a slave ship, Captain Pierre Dosset reported that there were 516 enslaved people aboard when they left Juda, but sixty-one died during the crossing. They were headed to Martinique but were intercepted by the pirates and captured just before reaching their destination.

The crew had also suffered fatalities and illness, and it took only two volleys from the pirate’s cannons for Captain Dosset to surrender. La Concorde, plus her crew and hostages, were then taken to the island of Bequia, where the cabin boy, Louis Art – along with three or four of his crewmates – voluntarily joined the pirates.

Blackbeard then commandeered the captured vessel and forced ten more French crew members to stay aboard. Included in this number were three surgeons, two carpenters, and the ship’s cook. Some theorize that Blackbeard gave the enslaved people the chance to join, but most of them were left as captives of the remaining French sailors.

Blackbeard then provided the French crew who had not joined the pirates with a forty-ton Bermuda sloop to transport the enslaved Africans to their designated destination.

### **The Queen Annes Revenge**



The French sailors called their new ship *Mauvaise Rencontre*, aptly meaning “**bad encounter**.” Blackbeard added cannons to his newly acquired ship and gave her a new name: *The Queen Annes Revenge*. It is unknown why Blackbeard chose this name for his ship, but it is thought that it displayed his loyalty to the House of Stuart, of which Queen Anne was the last monarch. Shortly after this event, Blackbeard and Hornigold parted ways.

Blackbeard continued to engage in piracy, while Hornigold decided to take advantage of the offer of a king’s pardon that was extended to all British pirates. Around this time, Blackbeard and Stede Bonnet also parted ways, although the two would meet up again in March 1718. Bonnet failed to capture a ship, and his crew left to join Blackbeard. He became Blackbeard’s prisoner, although he was treated well. Eventually, Bonnet would take up command later that summer.

In late 1717, though, Blackbeard and his crew sailed north, plundering ships near St. Vincent, St. Lucia, Nevis, and Antigua, arriving in Puerto Rico by December. In a few months, by early 1718, Blackbeard had amassed a crew of 300-400 sailors. He had cultivated his signature look of long black hair and a huge black beard tied with ribbons by this time.

This fearsome-looking man’s reputation soon grew, probably due to his theatrical flair of adding fuses to his wild hair and lighting them before an attack so thick smoke encircled his face. The version of the Jolly Roger attributed to Blackbeard was probably the least jolly of all the variations.

Blackbeard’s flag depicted a skeleton with horns, holding an hourglass in one hand while the other held a spear pointed at a bleeding heart. Supposedly this signaled to Blackbeard’s victims that their time was running out, and death awaited any who resisted. However, the first appearance of this design is in an article published in 1912 and was only associated with Blackbeard much later, so it is impossible to verify whether this was actually the flag he flew.

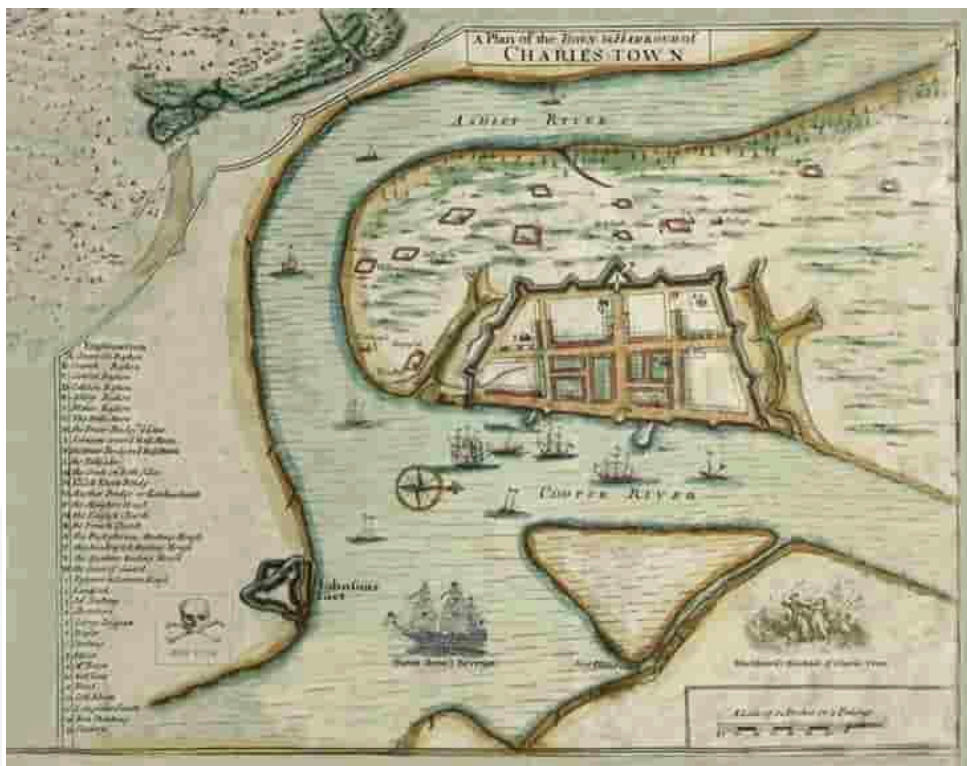
We also now know that Edward did not really like using violence and, despite his heavily armed ship, most of his success came from the fear he inspired. His reputation and dramatic appearance allowed him to take many vessels with little to no bloodshed. Of



course, the articles and rumors that circulated about him at the time painted him as a cruel and murderous villain.

By April 1718, Blackbeard's crew were in the Bay of Honduras, where they captured a sloop named Adventure and forced the captain – David Herriot – to join them. They then sailed east, passing near the Cayman Islands, and off the coast of Cuba, they added a Spanish sloop to their fleet. The following month, Blackbeard made the most brazen attack of his piratical career.

## Blackbeard's blockade of Charleston



In May 1718, Blackbeard's fleet blocked the port of Charleston, South Carolina, for nearly a week. The pirates seized ships arriving or attempting to leave, and they





captured the crew and passengers of one boat, holding them hostage. You may think gold and jewels would be the pirate's motivation for this audacious attack. However, the ransom that Blackbeard demanded in exchange for the return of the hostages was a chest of medicine.

Once the medication had been delivered, the pirates released all the captives and continued up the coast. It seems that disease was more of a threat to the pirates than the law. Archaeologists excavating the wreck of the Queen Anne's Revenge – which was discovered in 1996 – found a urethral syringe containing traces of mercury, which was used to treat syphilis.

Imagine trying to use that on a swaying ship! After leaving Charleston, the Queen Anne's Revenge and the Adventure were both grounded on a sandbar in North Carolina and abandoned. Herriot later stated in a deposition, "the said Thatch's ship Queen Anne's Revenge run aground off of the Bar of Topsail-Inlet" and that the Adventure had "run aground likewise about a Gun-shot from the said Thatch." During this deposition, Herriot claimed that Blackbeard had intentionally grounded the ships to break up the company, which may have become increasingly unmanageable, and demanded their share of the loot.

Blackbeard left some pirates stranded and absconded with a smaller handpicked crew and the most valuable plunder. Blackbeard and his select crew sailed to Bath to meet with Governor Charles Eden. The relationship between Eden and Blackbeard has been much speculated, with some thinking they were close friends and others believing they merely had a working relationship. Eden granted the king's pardon to Blackbeard and his crew, doubling the population of Bath and adding citizens that had valuable combat experience to the populous.

The fact that these newcomers also brought considerable wealth probably helped ingratiate them into the community. It seemed that Edward's piratical career was over. He married a local girl and set up a home on Ocracoke Island, becoming a model citizen ... for about a minute! Soon, Blackbeard was back at sea. He returned to Bath with a ship he claimed to have found deserted and floating in the ocean. Whether anyone believed this was a moot point, as Blackbeard was granted salvage rights of the vessel and legally allowed to keep the ship's cargo of sugar and cocoa.



This allowance was most likely aided by some barrels of sugar being given as bribes to the authorities. However, Blackbeard's salvation lasted just about as long as his civilized life. Governor [Alexander](#) Spotswood of Virginia was less amicable to the pirates, as were many powerful traders who saw piracy as undermining their legitimate business. Spotswood dispatched Lieutenant Robert Maynard and a [British](#) naval force to deal with Blackbeard and his crew, offering one hundred pounds for the capture of Edward, dead or alive. Blackbeard had less than thirty men at his command when he boarded his sloop to face the British force.

## Death of Blackbeard



On November 22, 1718, the British ships ran aground on a sandbank, and Blackbeard fired his cannons at the stranded vessels. One of the ships, commanded by Lieutenant Robert Maynard, drifted towards Blackbeard's ship. The pirates boarded the boat, and a bloody battle broke out.

This battle would be the deadliest of Blackbeard's career and one that he would not survive. It was recorded that Blackbeard "**stood his ground and fought with great**



**fury**, till he received five and twenty wounds and five of them by shot. At length, as he was cocking another pistol, having fired several before, he fell down dead.” About a year after Blackbeard began his solo piratical career, he was dead, and his head hanging from the bowsprit of Maynard’s sloop.

The stories and legends relating to Blackbeard make it impossible to know the truth behind the man and his time as the most feared pirate that sailed the seven seas. Some say he was a heartless cutthroat who routinely tortured those aboard any ship he targeted. Others think he was an intelligent and well-educated man who didn’t kill anyone until his final battle. Regardless of the long-obscured reality, the myth of Blackbeard endures and continues to fascinate to this day.

## People Also Ask?

### Was Blackbeard a real person?

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### Who is the most famous pirate?

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### How did Blackbeard die?

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