

## Press Release

Baylus C. Brooks, a student in East Carolina University's Maritime Studies Program has discovered the true family of Blackbeard the Pirate! And, they were not the typical pirate family.

ECU's Maritime Studies professors and nautical archaeology students have been excavating the remains of Blackbeard's massive 40-gun vessel, the *Queen Anne's Revenge (QAR)*, wrecked in Ocracoke Inlet in June 1718. Their efforts have been ongoing for the past 15 years since the salvage company, Intersal, Inc. found it in 1996 and made an agreement with the State of North Carolina. That wreck site has produced more than 30 cannon, bells, gold dust and jewelry, medical supplies, and a great number of artifacts revealing its identity as Blackbeard's famed ship. It has also sparked detailed historical investigation like that undertaken by Brooks.

Brooks' historical discovery is just as exciting as the gold dust! Anglican Church records on Jamaica revealed the family of Capt. Edward Thache on Jamaica – the only Thache family to ever live on the island. After discovering their names and vital information, it was an easy matter to hunt down their deeds and wills in Jamaica's Registers General Department at Spanish Town, Jamaica.

Brooks was, needless to say, astounded by what he found!

He is publishing a peer-reviewed article on his findings, titled "'Born in Jamaica of Very Creditable Parents' or 'A Bristol Man Born'? Excavating the Real Edward Thache, 'Blackbeard the Pirate'" in the July issue of *North Carolina Historical Review*, available in print this September.

Capt. Edward Thache, probably the son of Anglican minister, Rev. Thomas Thache of Gloucestershire, married his wife Elizabeth most likely in Bristol. They had two children before sailing to Jamaica before 1695. Jamaican records revealed that Elizabeth died in St. Catherine's Parish in January 1699 and Edward Sr. remarried to Lucretia Poquet Maverly Axtell, twice widowed in Spanish Town, also called *St. Jago de la Vega*.

They had three children before Edward Sr. died in November 1706. At that point, his oldest son, Edward Thache Jr., then serving on HMS *Windsor* in Queen Anne's War, deeded his inheritance to his family so that they could survive in war-torn Jamaica.

These findings reveal a rather different man than the one that we have come to know from Capt. Charles Johnson's *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pirates*. That book was published in 1724 and its author was actually Nathaniel Mist – Johnson was a pseudonym for the controversial Jacobite publisher of the *Weekly Journal* in London.

In Mist's book, he tells of Edward "Teach" as a "Bristol-man born" who served as a privateer from Jamaica. "Teach" joined Benjamin Hornigold by 1716 and said that, together they captured a large French slave vessel called *La Concorde*, which Hornigold gave to "Teach" or Blackbeard. Blackbeard then mounted it with 40 guns and proceeded to terrorize the Eastern Seaboard, even holding South Carolina's port of Charleston hostage for nearly a week before coming to North Carolina and wrecking his ship in Beaufort Inlet. "Teach" then supposedly wrecked his massive *QAR* on purpose to save more of the spoils for himself. He then marooned part of his crew on a desert island.

Brooks says “Why would he do that? To destroy the only real advantage he had as a pirate would be ridiculous.” Mist claims that he wanted to marry and settle down in North Carolina, but there are no actual records that prove this. Plus, Blackbeard went back to piracy as soon as the chance availed itself.

“It’s fairly easy to see what happened.” Mist took his ideas about the “treacherous” Blackbeard from trial records of Blackbeard’s former crew in Charleston soon after these events – some of the men were those marooned by Blackbeard. The only two pirates who said that Blackbeard wrecked the *QAR* on purpose were David Herriot and Ignatious Pell, also the only two pirates not prosecuted. They agreed to concessions as witnesses for the prosecution. Later, Herriot was killed in a jail break attempt before the trial was over. “Now, how innocent could Herriot have been,” says Brooks. “Undoubtedly, he lied. Even the men marooned by Blackbeard never said that he did it on purpose – just Herriot and Pell.

About Blackbeard’s alleged promiscuity and vicious behavior with women, Brooks tells “Mist made it up to sell books. Well, Edward Thache was probably not that kind of a man.” Brooks believes that no documentary evidence proves that Blackbeard even killed anyone before the Royal Navy came after *him* late in 1718. Furthermore, he had family back on Jamaica that probably assisted him in his piracy and waited for him to come home. The records may indicate a daughter of Blackbeard’s who married a local and prominent physician in Spanish Town only two years after his death in Ocracoke Inlet.

“Edward Thache was an aristocrat and a war veteran. He was revered by his community,” says Brooks.

Brooks says “Most historians today realize the financial needs and profit possibilities in Mist’s efforts to publish his criminal biographies of pirates. He may even have been persuaded by the British government to turn against all pirates in the Americas. You see, they needed help because America used to love its pirates. The average American colonist rarely met them on the sea, yet still benefitted wholly by their better-than-average cocoa and sugar prices acquired at the docks. Pirates were our heroes and Britain hated that.”

Brooks is planning a book to follow his article. To be published in late 2015 or early 2016, *Quest for Blackbeard: The True Story of Edward Thache and His World* will cover all of these new discoveries and more.

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