

**Rush to Judgement—
An Analysis of a New Interpretation
of the Pirate Blackbeard’s Origins**

By Kevin P. Duffus ©January 2016

In a July 2015 peer-reviewed article published in *The North Carolina Historical Review* titled, “Born in Jamaica, of Very Creditable Parents’ or ‘A Bristol Man Born’? Excavating the Real Edward Thache, ‘Blackbeard the Pirate,’” East Carolina University student Baylus C. Brooks proposes a new historical interpretation of the pirate’s origins.¹ His research of genealogical records available on internet databases of Jamaican deeds and marriage and birth records revealed the name, Edward Thache (or Theache) of Jamaica, which eventually led the author to conclude that the notorious pirate’s family “owned a large estate with slaves; they probably rode in their personal carriage to church in the capital of Spanish Town, and conversed with assemblymen and their families in the palace square.”²

In a broader view, Brooks recasts pirates like Blackbeard in a new social and economic strata, writing that “Early pirate leaders were most often not the struggling property-less proletarians that some writers would have us believe. Many, like Edward Thache of Spanish Town, Jamaica, were wealthy planters and mariners on an island where piracy was simply a way of life for the aristocracy. They were the upper class of the population, with resources at their command.” These characterizations of wealthy aristocratic pirates were necessary on the part of the author to remold the long-standing popular image of Blackbeard to fit the genealogical records of the Thatches and/or Theaches of Jamaica. In addition to Blackbeard’s aristocratic upbringing, Brooks contends that the man who became one of the world’s best known pirates had served for an unspecified number of

¹ *The North Carolina Historical Review* Volume 92, Number 3, July 2015, North Carolina Office of Archives and History

² Brooks, “Born in *Jamaica*, of Very Creditable Parents” or “A *Bristol Man Born*”? Excavating the Real Edward Thache, “Blackbeard the Pirate” *The North Carolina Historical Review*, 304.

years in the Royal Navy aboard the HMS *Windsor* which operated in Caribbean waters in 1706.

Following its publication in *The North Carolina Historical Review*, the article was retitled, *Blackbeard Reconsidered: Mist's Piracy, Thache's Genealogy*, and reprinted in a 46-page booklet by the Office of Historical Publications within the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. In December 2015, the Department issued a press release promoting Brooks's findings, and subsequently, a story was published in the London *Daily Mail*'s online edition on December 30, 2015, titled, "Was Blackbeard a Gentleman?—Historical records show feared pirate was actually an aristocratic family man who gave up his wealth to help his brother and sister."³ By mid-January 2016, the *Daily Mail* article had been shared 937 times and it received 22 mostly favorable comments from around the world on the paper's website.

As revisionist historical interpretations go, Brooks's suppositions about Blackbeard's Jamaican origins have received precipitous and remarkable acceptance from North Carolina's state-supported historical community and their social media outlets. In a promotional endorsement for the booklet, the Office of Historical Publications wrote this: "In *Blackbeard Reconsidered*, historian Baylus Brooks examines the myth of Blackbeard in the light of official government records in Jamaica and Church of England records. This new evidence allows Brooks to present the immediate lineage of Edward Thache, a respected resident of Spanish Town, Jamaica, and to place the gentleman's actions within an accurate historical context that successfully challenges the violent image of Blackbeard."

On the surface, the article is professionally written and possesses the appearance and format of a typical academic paper with copious citations. The article consists of nearly 15,000 words, 139 footnotes, and nine illustrations. Somewhat troubling, the article has an overabundance of historical descriptions which are made using the qualifying words: may,

³ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-3373461/Was-Blackbeard-GENTLEMAN-Historical-records-feared-pirate-actually-aristocratic-family-man-gave-wealth-help-brother-sister.html>

might have, may have, likely, probably, possible, possibly, probable, perhaps, if, suggests, assumes, presumably, and assuredly. For example, the author writes: “If Edward moved from Sapperton to Bristol this might explain his disappearance from Gloucestershire records.” These hedge words used by the author to justify or support numerous historical hypotheses represent considerable hurdles for the acceptance of his thesis.

Naturally, any new interpretation of an immensely-popular, nearly 300-year-old story will be subject to careful scrutiny by well-informed readers, fellow Blackbeard scholars, and interested members of the pirate living history community. How well will this new “peer-reviewed” theory of Blackbeard’s origins, his Anglican, aristocratic upbringing, his wealthy, privileged life on Jamaica, his service in the Royal Navy, stand up against a careful and thorough examination of the records Brooks utilizes in justifying his argument?

Brooks’s article was designed to support his central thesis that Blackbeard’s true identity—a legendary but mysterious figure whose official piratical career spanned a surprisingly brief 23 months between December 1716 and November 1718—was that of an Edward Thache (or Theache), Jr., who was a member of a family living in Spanish Town, Jamaica, and who, contrary to traditional accounts, was a man “burdened by concerns for his family’s welfare” and who was “starkly different from [a] ‘demonic’ character.”⁴ Statements by the author within the article describe Blackbeard’s Jamaican origins as if it is an indisputable fact. Among many examples are these: “A substantial clue to Blackbeard’s family there has been well known since 1740 but was largely regarded as an anomaly in the absence of detailed family records to confirm it;” and, “These deeds indicate that the only Thache family on Jamaica was Blackbeard’s family,” and, “The only male old enough to have been this Elizabeth’s legitimate father was Edward Thache Jr., then serving aboard the HMS *Windsor*, and later known as ‘Blackbeard the Pirate.’” Even though there are dozens of times within the article when other historical statements are qualified with the

⁴ Brooks, “Born in *Jamaica...*” 263.

ambiguous hedge words “likely” or “probably,” the author never equivocates when referring to the pirate’s Jamaican origins. Yet, despite the author’s confidence in his assumptions, the article presents not a single item of direct evidence that connects the pirate Blackbeard to Edward Thache (or Theache), Jr. of Jamaica.

To bolster such confidence in his thesis and strengthen his argument, it was necessary for Brooks to find additional justifications for readers to accept his Jamaican Blackbeard. Apart from the conspicuous similarity to the surname most popularly associated with the pirate’s “Blackbeard” alias, Edward Teach (or Thatch as it appears in nearly all official records), Brooks’s assertions of the pirate’s true identity and Jamaican roots are essentially supported by three pillars of evidence: a). an author who once wrote in 1724 that the pirate was born in Jamaica; b). a Royal Navy officer who purportedly wrote in 1739 that Blackbeard was born in Jamaica; c). and, an historian writing in a 2012 academic article who suggested that the pirate’s piratical journey commenced from Kingston, Jamaica, early in 1716. Strangely, Brooks overlooks a fourth source identifying Jamaica as Blackbeard’s possible point of origin, which will be shared later in this paper.

As for his argument’s first pillar of support, Brooks cites the first edition of the book, *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pirates*, published in London in May, 1724, under the name, Captain Charles Johnson, that states in chapter five that, “Edward Thatch (commonly called Black-beard,) was born in Jamaica, and was from a boy bred up to the sea.”⁵ The use of this reference by an historian as positive evidence that Blackbeard came from Jamaica is problematic for numerous reasons, not the least of which the book is not a primary source and many historical statements in the book, particularly related to Blackbeard, can easily be proven to be false. In the second edition of the book published just three months after the first edition, substantial alterations were made by the author, most notably that, rather than

⁵ Charles Johnson, *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the most notorious pyrates...*, 1st edition, May 1724. (London: printed for Ch. Rivington).

Blackbeard's birth occurring in Jamaica, he was "a Bristol man born but had sailed some time out of Jamaica in privateers." Fairly, the Jamaica references to Blackbeard's origins and travels in the two editions of *General History of Pyrates* cannot be dismissed. Nevertheless, there is a significant difference between being born in a place and sailing out of a place. Sailing "some time out of Jamaica in privateers" can be interpreted in more than one way—was Jamaica the future Blackbeard's home port or was it a port he frequently sailed to and from?

Brooks's devotes a substantial portion of his article to the identity of the author of *General History of Pyrates*, the author's political and economic motivations for what he wrote, how he may have acquired information for his book, and why the author found it necessary to portray the man who was Blackbeard as a low-born, brutal, bloodthirsty pirate. In order to delve more deeply into these subjects, Brooks relies heavily on the trail of research blazed by German historian and Assistant Professor of History at Ontario's Trent University, Arne Bialuschewski.

Writing for the *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, Bialuschewski was the first historian to postulate that the name Captain Charles Johnson, author of *General History of Pyrates*, was likely a pseudonym for Nathaniel Mist, the London Tory and Jacobite publisher of *The Weekly Journal*.⁶ Bialuschewski's research was groundbreaking, and his argument for Mist being the author of the influential book of pirates was persuasive, even if his research failed to convince himself beyond a shadow of a doubt. Eight years later in an article written for *The Washington and Jefferson College Review* titled, "Blackbeard: The Creation of a Legend," Bialuschewski wrote: "The author of the *General History*, whoever he was, seems to have been relatively well informed, but his account—in the revised edition in particular—was a sophisticated melding of the actual and the imaginative." For some readers, it might seem odd that Bialuschewski would share this uncertainty eight years after he first explored Johnson's

⁶ Arne Bialuschewski, "Daniel Defoe, Nathaniel Mist, and the General History of the Pyrates," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*. (2004) 98.

identity, yet Bialuschewski never wrote that Mist was the author of *General History of Pyrates*, only that “there is a reasonable amount of evidence” that Mist was responsible for the book. Nevertheless, in his *North Carolina Historical Review* article, Brooks states as absolute fact, directly citing Bialuschewski and no one else (even though other historians have found more convincing evidence, most notably Britain’s E.T. Fox), that Captain Charles Johnson was Nathaniel Mist.⁷

It was necessary for Brooks to devise an explanation as to how the author of *General History of Pyrates*, the Jacobite publisher Nathaniel Mist, may have acquired his information about Blackbeard and the pirate’s purported Jamaican connections. Again, Brooks turned to Bialuschewski for his inspiration, and this is where the pillars of Brooks’s thesis begin to collapse in a rather spectacular manner.

In “Blackbeard: The Creation of a Legend,” Bialuschewski wrote: “An early historian of Jamaica, Charles Leslie, noted years after the *General History* was published that Blackbeard was born on the island and that members of his family lived as respectable citizens in Spanish Town.” The source cited by Bialuschewski, titled *A New History of Jamaica, from the Earliest Accounts, to the Taking of Porto Bello by Vice-Admiral Vernon—In thirteen letters from a gentleman to his friend*, was published originally in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1739.⁸ Because the publication of *A New History of Jamaica* post-dated *General History of Pyrates* by 15 years, Brooks had to find a credible way to connect the information relating to the Spanish Town family of Edward Thache, Jr., to the purported Blackbeard birthplace of Jamaica published by Mist in the first edition of the pirate compendium in 1724.

⁷ The British scholar E.T. Fox, PhD, found that *General History of Pirates* was serialized in several newspapers, without the permission of the author. For example, a note in *Parker’s London News* of Sep. 9, 1724 reads: “Since our Opposers in the Printing of Half-Penny Polls, have begun the History of the Pyrates in their Papers of Monday last, we think the same to be as free to be copy’d by us as by them; and therefore intend to continue it from the Beginning to the End, to oblige our Customers, but with this Regard to Mr. Mist, the Proprietor thereof, that if can he prevail with others to desist, we shall cheerfully do the same.”

⁸ Charles Leslie’s claims were explored by both Patrick Pringle in his 1953 *Jolly Roger: The Story of the Great Age of Piracy*, and Robert E. Lee in 1974 in *Blackbeard: A Reappraisal of his Life and Times*, and both men dismissed the notion of Blackbeard’s Jamaican birth on the grounds of insufficient evidence.

How did this information that “Blackbeard was born on [Jamaica]” reach the ears of Nathaniel Mist? Inexplicably, Brooks suggests that Mist’s source was likely to have been Captain Edward Vernon, who, between 1719 and 1721, was commander-in-chief of his majesty's ships at Jamaica. Upon his return to England in August 1721, Brooks attests that Vernon soon after shared his knowledge of Blackbeard’s Jamaican origins with Mist while the Jacobite publisher was writing his book in prison:

Mist most likely received his information for *A General History* from recent arrivals in London like Capt. Edward “Old Grog” Vernon, who returned late in 1721 with two pirates from Port Royal locked in his brig on the HMS *Mary*. Vernon, who may have met the Thache family on Jamaica, had adequate opportunity to speak with Mist, who wrote *A General History* while confined in King’s Bench Prison in 1721, about the time that Vernon arrived.⁹

There are substantial errors and conjectures in the preceding quotation from Brooks’s article. Vernon had indeed returned to London from Jamaica, not with suspected pirates but with two suspected Jacobites—a merchant captain and a ship’s master—who Vernon had arrested at Port Royal for saluting with ship’s guns the birthday of James III, known as The Old Pretender. Vernon’s actions indicate that he was loyal to the ruling Whig party of Britain and their king, George I, meaning that he was also anti-Jacobite. Consequently, it is unreasonable to think that the anti-Jacobite, Royal Navy captain would publicly visit the fervent and avowed Jacobite Tory publisher Nathaniel Mist who had been “found guilty of scandalous reflections on the government” of George I and confined at King’s Bench Prison. But there are more significant reasons for disconfirming Brook’s assertion that Vernon had most likely been one of Mist’s sources for Blackbeard’s Jamaican origins.

Besides the fact that there is absolutely no positive evidence that the publisher Nathaniel Mist was writing *General History of Pyrates* in 1721,

⁹ Brooks, 270-271.

the Jacobite publisher was not present at King's Bench Prison at the time Captain Vernon returned to London. Mist had been moved to Newgate Prison in June where he was deprived of any visits as well as "the use of pen, ink, or paper."¹⁰ At Newgate, Mist became dangerously ill and his condition worsened into the autumn of 1721 to the extent that affidavits by his physician and others claimed that "moving him from his bed might endanger his life." By the end of the year, however, Mist's health improved and the charges against him were dismissed due to lack of evidence. In January, 1722, the Jacobite publisher was reported to have left London for Dorset, where he remained for the next seven months. Furthermore, upon Vernon's return to England in August 1721, the captain was furloughed from the Royal Navy and put on half-pay, but within a few months he was elected to Parliament to represent Penryn in Cornwall County.¹¹ Once again, it defies logic that a Royal Navy captain, a Whig, and a member of Parliament would risk his reputation, career, and potentially his freedom, to confer with the seriously ill Tory and Jacobite publisher in prison or elsewhere.

Nine pages after Brooks first presents his supposition that Captain Vernon might have been Mist's source for Blackbeard's Jamaican connection, and after a lengthy discourse on the various misconceptions by historians of Blackbeard's character and possible identities, he returns to the subject of Vernon as the source of this evidence:

A substantial clue to Blackbeard's family there has been well known since 1740 but was largely regarded as an anomaly in the absence of detailed family records to confirm it. Capt. (later, vice admiral) Edward "Old Grog" Vernon served out of Jamaica as captain of the *Jersey* from September 1708 to March 1712, and later as commander of His Majesty's Navy there from 1719 to 1721. He wrote to his friend and fellow Royal Navy officer Charles Leslie, then living on Barbados,

¹⁰ *The Evening Post*, 30 May and 6 June 1721; *The Post-Boy*, 6 June 172.

¹¹ Pat Rogers, *Nathaniel Mist, Daniel Defoe, and the Perils of Publishing*, Oxford Journals, (2009).

a series of letters detailing the island's history. Leslie published the letters in 1740 as *A New History of Jamaica*.¹²

Unfortunately for Brooks's thesis, "Old Grog" Vernon did not write the letters that formed the content of the book, *A New History of Jamaica*. The letters were written by Charles Leslie, and the identity of Leslie's London "friend" to whom the letters were sent has never been confirmed. Perhaps Brooks was confused by the title of the book, *A New History of Jamaica, from the Earliest Accounts, to the Taking of Porto Bello by Vice-Admiral Vernon*. Clearly, the title refers to Vernon capturing the town of Porto Bello, not to Vernon being the author of the book. In fact, simply reading the first of the 13 letters of the book indicates that the author was not a captain at all:

Our Voyage was pleasant; fair weather and good Winds made every Hardship easy. The captain is a Man of Sense; a certain Frankness appears in his Temper, which never fails to gain esteem...a better Man I never saw; an easy Friend, an agreeable Companion, of a lively Wit, and penetrating Genius; good without Ostentation, and just without Severity.¹³

Had these letters been written by Captain Vernon of the Royal Navy's 60-gun warship *Mary*, it seems unlikely that he would have referred to the "captain" of his own ship transporting him on his voyage to the West Indies. Furthermore, there is no proof that Leslie was a "fellow Royal Navy officer" as stated by Brooks. More conclusively, a note preceding the title page of the edition published by the Cambridge Library Collection states:

Little is known about the anonymous author of this book, later identified as one Charles Leslie, whose family had strong Caribbean interests. In thirteen "letters," Leslie covers Jamaica's early colonial history, its laws, the lives of its governors and the exploits of famous

¹² Brooks, 279.

¹³ Charles Leslie, *A New History of Jamaica, from the Earliest Accounts, to the Taking of Porto Bello by Vice-Admiral Vernon. In thirteen letters from a gentleman to his friend*. Dublin edition, Printed by and for Oli. Nelson at Milton's Head, 1741.

Caribbean pirates. He provides important evidence for the conditions in which slaves were traded and kept, and describes the slaves' beliefs and customs. Leslie's book was highly topical: it first appeared as "A new and exact account of Jamaica" in Edinburgh in 1739, following years of growing hostility between Spain and Britain over trade in the Caribbean. That summer, Vice-Admiral Vernon was sent there to destroy as many Spanish ships and settlements as possible, and in November he captured Portobello.¹⁴

The final nail in the coffin of Brooks's supposition that Vernon was the author of the "Thirteen Letters" is that Vernon's biographer for the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Richard Harding, never mentions the Vice-Admiral's relationship with Charles Leslie purported by Brooks's article. This source is easily accessible and it seems odd that Brooks would not have used it in his research considering the importance of Vernon's activities to the support of his thesis.¹⁵

A careful reading of what was actually published about Blackbeard in the "Thirteen Letters" leads to the conclusion that, rather than Nathaniel Mist being influenced by Charles Leslie, Leslie was influenced by Mist. In letter nine of *A New History of Jamaica*, Leslie writes:

At this time, the famous Edward Teach, commonly known by the Name of Blackbeard, infested the American Seas. He was one of a most bloody Disposition, and cruel to Brutality. His Name became a Terror, and some Governors being remiss in pursuing him, he almost put a stop to the Trade of several of the Northern Colonies. He was born in Jamaica, of very creditable Parents; his Mother is alive in Spanish-Town to this Day, and his Brother is at present Captain of the Train of Artillery. He was attacked by a Lieutenant of a Man of War, and was killed, after a very obstinate and bloody Fight. He took a

¹⁴ Charles Leslie, *A New History of Jamaica...*, Cambridge Library Collection edition, May 2015.

¹⁵ Vernon, Edward, 1684–1757, naval officer, Richard Harding, author. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004–15.

Glass, and drank Damnation to them that gave or asked Quarter. His Head was carried to Virginia, and there fixed to a Pole.

Because the preceding words (which were definitely not written by Vice-Admiral Vernon) were first published in 1739, the author, Charles Leslie, could easily have derived his information from the first edition of *General History of Pyrates* since *A New History of Jamaica* essentially contained the same information that was published in Mist's 1724 best-selling book. By the time *A New History of Jamaica* was published, copies of *General History of Pyrates* had long since arrived in the American colonies, including North Carolina—a copy of the book was listed in the estate inventory of Jeremiah Vail, believed to be the grandson of one of the participants in the effort to capture Blackbeard at Bath in 1718, although when the book was acquired is not known.¹⁶

In his “Thirteen letters from a gentleman to his friend,” Leslie used the spelling “Teach”—not “Theache” or “Thache” as the Jamaican records identify the family Brooks claims was Blackbeard's. The phrase, “He took a Glass, and drank Damnation to them that gave or asked Quarter,” is nearly identical to language used in *General History of Pyrates* and also published reports in the *Boston News-Letter* of Blackbeard's last stand at Ocracoke. These examples provide compelling reasons to believe that Leslie's writing was inspired by Mist's. Furthermore, Leslie's characterization of Blackbeard as a man “of a most bloody Disposition, and cruel to Brutality” is very similar to Mist's sensational descriptions of the notorious pirate, but it presents a stark contrast to Brooks's rehabilitated incarnation of the pirate who he described as a caring family man and “an upstanding community member.” If one presumes that Charles Leslie knew the Jamaican Thache family well enough to suggest somewhat obliquely that Blackbeard came from this upstanding family, why did he describe the pirate as brutal and bloody?

¹⁶ J. Bryan Grimes, *North Carolina Wills and Inventories*, (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton, 1912), p. 561-563, “Inventory of ye Sundrie Goods & Chattels of the Esta of Jeremiah Vail Esqr Deceased Late of Newbern in the County of Craven in No Carolina taken ye 17th day June 1760 by Jno. Starkey Admr.

Not being a primary source, the information contained in *A New History of Jamaica* cannot be considered entirely reliable. Even the editor of the book writing in the preface recognized the possibility that some of the information, much of it based on hearsay, might not be factual: “It is needless for presenting an Apology for presenting the Publick with the following Letters: If the Facts contained in them are faithfully related, they need none; and if they can’t stand the Test, the best Excuse would be insufficient.”

As it has been shown, two of the three pillars of evidence supporting Brooks’s argument of Blackbeard’s Jamaican origins appear to be fallacious. The short-lived statement published in the first edition of *General History of Pyrates*, “Edward Thatch (commonly called Blackbeard) was born in Jamaica,” cannot be accepted as positive evidence by objective historians. Neither was it likely that Captain Vernon was Mist’s source of information suggesting a Jamaican connection, and Vernon was definitely not the author of the thirteen letters in *A New History of Jamaica*.

What about the third pillar of evidence: the historian who suggested in a 2012 academic article that the pirate’s piratical journey commenced from Kingston, Jamaica, “early in 1716,” in the company of the pirate Benjamin Hornigold? If this were true, it would be a compelling clue supporting Brooks’s thesis.

Once more, Brooks, quoted below, relies on the scholarship of the German historian Arne Bialuschewski :

In “Blackbeard: The Creation of a Legend,” Arne Bialuschewski confirms their consortship early in 1716. Thache, then living in Kingston, had joined with Hornigold to fish Spanish wrecks off the coast of Florida. Bialuschewski also located the deposition of Henry Timberlake in the Jamaican Archives, which notes that in late 1716, Hornigold and Thache worked together in two sloops of eight guns each, commanding a total of ninety men. Mist had probably seen this deposition or spoke with someone on Jamaica (likely Capt. Edward

Vernon) who knew about these events. This would then be a confirmation of some of Mist's detail from the second edition, as opposed to Mist's first that did not contain this information.

In the preceding paragraph, Brooks makes a few assumptions and statements of fact that are unproven. "Thache, then living in Kingston" has no basis in fact, and Brooks cites no source to confirm this statement. There is no evidence or extant official record to support the notion that Thache and Hornigold salvaged the Spanish wrecks together.¹⁷ The statement, "Mist had probably seen this deposition or spoke with someone on Jamaica (likely Capt. Edward Vernon) who knew about these events" is conjecture based on a fallacy.

What Bialuschewski wrote was this:

Once we attempt to discern his origins as a pirate, there is further evidence to connect Blackbeard with Jamaica. A first-hand account reveals that, early in 1716, Thatch was in Kingston, where he joined an expedition led by Benjamin Hornigold to loot silver-laden Spanish wrecks that had sunk off the east coast of Florida. At that time, hundreds of freebooters from Jamaica and elsewhere sailed to the site in hopes of retrieving a quick fortune. A few months later, when Hornigold and Thatch were on their way back home, several members of the crew took off "with their own Canoa and carried forty Thousand pieces of eight with them."¹⁸

Upon close scrutiny, Bialuschewski's paragraph, crucial to Brooks's case for connecting Blackbeard to the Jamaican Theaches or Thaches, is both misleading and inaccurate. While Bialuschewski claims that a "first-hand account reveals" that Thatch (or Blackbeard) joined Hornigold at Kingston

¹⁷ see "The Firsts of Blackbeard: Exploring Edward Thatch's Early Days as a Pirate" written by historian David Fictum featured in the blog, "Colonies, Ships, and Pirates—Concerning History in the Atlantic World, 1680-1740," posted October 18, 2015. <http://csp Historical.com/2015/10/18/the-firsts-of-blackbeard-exploring-edward-thatches-early-days-as-a-pirate/>

¹⁸ Bialuschewski, "Blackbeard: The Creation of a Legend," *Washington and Jefferson College Review* 58 (November 2012): 42.

early in 1716, the source cited for this statement by Bialuschewski in “Blackbeard: The Creation of a Legend” contains no such information. The only source cited by Bialuschewski for this pivotal historical statement is a deposition by Henry Timberlake, a merchant captain of the brigantine *Lamb* bound from Boston to Jamaica, who was detained by two pirate vessels in the Windward Passage off Cape Donna Maria, Hispaniola, on the night of December 13, 1716. Timberlake’s deposition mentions by name both Benjamin Hornigold and Edward “Thach,” but nothing in the deposition supports Bialuschewski’s statement that the future Blackbeard had joined Hornigold’s expedition at Kingston:

...this Deponent further Saith that in about an hour after Hornigole Boarded him Edward Thach Comander of another Sloop, the name whereof this Deponent knows not mounted with Eight Guns & manned with about ninety men came along Side the Said Brigantine and lent their Canoa with Several hands on board her and plundered her.¹⁹

A narrow interpretation of the Timberlake deposition produces significant doubt that Hornigold and Thatch, aka Blackbeard, were even operating in consort. Because the Windward Passage was a heavily-traveled merchant route, the two pirate captains could have just as likely been preying on passing ships at the same place and at the same time. There is no way to know for certain. But even the most liberal interpretation of the Timberlake deposition will not lead most historians to the conclusion that Thatch had joined Hornigold’s expedition at Kingston.

Bialuschewski deserves credit for finding the Timberlake deposition in the archives of Jamaica, as it is the earliest reference found to date of the pirate named Edward Thatch who was, a year later, more commonly known by his nom de guerre as Blackbeard. However, the date of the piratical incident described by Captain Timberlake was the 13th of December, 1716. In his article, Bialuschewski referred to a “first-hand account [revealing] that, early in 1716, Thatch was in Kingston,” yet the document he cited to

¹⁹ Deposition of Henry Timberlake, 17 December 1716, 1B/5/3/8, 212–3, Jamaica Archives, Spanish Town.

support his statement fails to do so. Did the German historian Bialuschewski make a semantic error by writing, “early in 1716?” Did he mean, “earlier, in 1716?” Or, much more likely, did Bialuschewski confuse Hornigold with the well-documented privateer/pirate captain Henry Jennings, who did sail from Kingston, Jamaica, early in 1716, and who did loot the silver-laden Spanish wrecks on the coast of Florida? Bialuschewski was contacted for clarification and for information pertaining to the source of the early-1716 “first-hand account” indicating that Thatch was in Kingston at that time. He could not offer one. In the absence of any other explanation, it is likely that Bialuschewski misinterpreted the Timberlake deposition and confused Hornigold and Jennings, which subsequently mislead the author of “Born in Jamaica, of Very Creditable Parents...”

In the thoroughly-researched analysis of Edward Thatch’s early days as a pirate in his online blog, “Colonies, Ships, and Pirates—Concerning History in the Atlantic World, 1680-1740,” historian David Fictum could find no credible record (other than the secondary source, *General History of Pyrates*) that directly connected Thatch and Hornigold beyond the Timberlake deposition.²⁰ There exists to this day no known extant documentary evidence supporting Bialuschewski’s claim that Thatch (or Blackbeard) joined Hornigold at Kingston early in 1716, or that Thatch (or Blackbeard) was ever present in Jamaica. Furthermore, in light of this lack of direct or corroborating evidence, the statement by Mist in *General History of Pyrates* that Hornigold gave Thatch his first command and that they had sailed in consort ought not to be accepted as historical fact. Quoting a letter from Jamaican governor Peter Heywood, David Fictum effectively disproves Brooks’s statement that, “Apart from Timberlake’s deposition, the November 11 report confirms that Thache (with Bonnet on board) served in consort with Hornigold again briefly off the Virginia coast in mid-October 1717.” Heywood’s letter confirms that Hornigold was sailing on the southern coast of Cuba in mid-October 1717, not off the Virginia coast.²¹

²⁰ Fictum, “The Firsts of Blackbeard...”

²¹ Peter Heywood to Captain Thomas Jacobs, 14 Oct 1717, ADM 1/1982, TNA.

In “Blackbeard: The Creation of a Legend,” Bialuschewski, like Brooks, strived to connect the genealogical records of the Theache/Thache family living in Jamaica in the early-18th century to the pirate Blackbeard, but the fleeting words of Nathaniel Mist in 1724, and Charles Leslie in 1739 who likely parroted Mist, are insufficient to make the connection. Bialuschewski’s claim that Thatch joined Hornigold at Kingston in early 1716 is unfounded and likely a careless mistake. Thus, the third and remaining pillar of evidence supporting Brooks’s thesis of Blackbeard’s Jamaican origins no longer stands. What remains of his argument is nothing more than the appearance of a Jamaican surname that is similar to the name most popularly associated with the pirate’s “Blackbeard” alias, Edward Teach. The rest is merely conjecture.

However, Bialuschewski offered one other source, slightly more credible than secondary published accounts, that suggests that the man who became notorious as the pirate Blackbeard, had once sailed from Jamaica. Strangely, this source was ignored by Brooks. On the 24th of October, 1717, the Pennsylvanian statesman and bibliophile James Logan wrote a letter to the colonial governor of New York, complaining that the destructive activities of pirates off the Delaware Bay were becoming a severe detriment to the commerce and trade of Philadelphia. The only pirate named by Logan was none other than Teach, otherwise known as Blackbeard. This episode of piratical activity was during a brief period of his two-year career when Blackbeard’s crew became uncharacteristically violent, at least with regard to property, as they wantonly destroyed ships and cargoes, possibly in retribution for the capture and incarceration at Boston of nine crew members of the late pirate captain “Black” Sam Bellamy, whose ship *Whydah* wrecked in a storm at Cape Cod the previous April. Logan wrote: “Some of our masters say they know most every man aboard, most of them having lately been in the river. Their commander is one Teach who was here a mate from Jamaica about 2 yrs. ago.”²²

²² James Logan to Robert Hunter, 24 October 1717, Logan Papers, Misc. vol. 2, 167, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Had Logan's statement been made in a court of law, it would have been inadmissible as evidence because it was based on hearsay, but this is as close to primary source information as there is with regard to a Jamaican connection for the pirate Blackbeard. Even though Logan's reference to a ship's mate named Teach who had arrived at Philadelphia from Jamaica sometime in 1715 has specificity, it is not clear to whom the information can be attributed. Because the information was passed down by word of mouth, a strict interpretation of the Logan reference by an objective historian means that its explanatory power in rendering a historical judgement as to Blackbeard's Jamaican origins is insufficient. It bears repeating: Logan only wrote that he had been told that Teach had previously been to the port of Philadelphia as a mate from Jamaica; Logan did not state that Teach was born in Jamaica, or had family there, or "owned a large estate with slaves," or who "rode in their personal carriage to church in the capital of Spanish Town," or who "conversed with assemblymen and their families in the palace square." No document, outside of Brooks's article, says those things.

Further clouding these waters of Blackbeard's pre-piratical career as a mariner on the Delaware River, a report appearing in the November 1717, issue of the *Boston News-Letter*—a secondary source—said this: "Philadelphia, October 24th. Arrives Linsey from Antigua, Codd from Liverpool and Dublin with 150 Passengers, many whereof are Servants. He was taken about 12 days since Off our Capes by a Pirate Sloop called the Revenge, of 12 Guns 150 Men, Commanded by one Teach, who formerly Sail'd Mate out of this Port."²³

Even though the November 1717 *Boston News-Letter* report is a published secondary source, it contains facts that can be verified by other records therefore making it credible. Captain Codd was detained by Blackbeard while the latter was in command of Barbadian pirate Stede Bonnet's sloop *Revenge* on or about the 12th of October. But another record, a letter written by the Pennsylvanian Quaker merchant Jonathan Dickinson, which confirms some of the facts published in the *Boston News-*

²³ "Philadelphia, October 24th," *Boston News-Letter*, Nov. 4-11, 1717.

Letter, reveals the presence of the sloop *Revenge* south of Delaware Bay (off Cape Charles) commanded by “one Cap’n Thatch alias Blackbeard” two weeks earlier, on the 29th of September.²⁴

A careful analysis of the three aforementioned sources—the Logan letter, the Dickinson letter, and the published account in the *Boston News-Letter*, yields the following conclusions. Most significantly, the Dickinson letter provides the earliest known record identifying Captain Thatch by his nom de guerre, Blackbeard. The letter also proves that the pirate often referred to by the surname Thatch, and sometimes Teach, operating off the Delaware capes in October 1717, was the infamous Blackbeard.²⁵ The Dickinson letter also shows that the pirate had been lurking off the American coast between the entrances to the Delaware Bay and the Chesapeake Bay for as long as three and a half weeks prior to the writing of Logan’s letter and the dispatch sent to the *Boston News-Letter*.

It cannot be ignored that both the Logan letter and the report from Philadelphia published in the *Boston News-Letter* were written on the same day—the 24th of October—suggesting that Logan and the writer of the *Boston News-Letter* report were influenced by the same sources of sensational information, perhaps even a single source. The Front Street quays and piers at Philadelphia, no doubt, were buzzing with rumors of pirates ravaging the port’s inbound and outbound traffic and the news spread quickly throughout the city.

With regard to Blackbeard’s pre-piratical travels, the two sources initially seem at odds. The *Boston News-Letter* reported that Teach, or Blackbeard, had “formerly Sail’d Mate out of this Port,” or Philadelphia. Logan wrote that Teach “was here [Philadelphia] a mate from Jamaica about 2 yrs. ago.” Considering that both sources were repeating information told to them by someone else, they both possess equal

²⁴ Jonathan Dickinson to Joshua Crosby, Oct. 23, 1717, LCP Jonathan Dickinson letterbook, 159, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

²⁵ Until the Dickinson letter was found, the earliest known reference to the alias “Blackbeard” was by South Carolina Governor Robert Johnson in a June 18, 1718 letter to the Council of Trade and Plantations.

explanatory power with regard to Blackbeard's port of record while serving as a mate, and before he became a pirate. One statement could be more accurate than the other, or both could be incorrect. Theoretically, however, both statements could be correct, as mates and common sailors often served aboard various merchant vessels under various captains sailing out of various ports over the length of their careers. Teach, or Thatch was not the only pirate off the Delaware capes familiar to the Philadelphia maritime community. Logan reported that "Some of our people having been several days on board them they had a great deal of free discourse with them... [and] know almost every man aboard..." which intimates that many of the pirates were sailors hailing from colonial American ports. Unfortunately, without any further direct, positive evidence, none of this confirms anything about Blackbeard's true origins.

In the article "Born in Jamaica, of Very Creditable Parents..." and practically hidden beneath a plethora of genealogical data of Theaches in Jamaica and their "assumed" Thache relations in Gloucestershire, England,²⁶ is the fact that there is no specific statement regarding the location of the birth of Edward Thache, Jr., who is purported by the author to be the pirate Blackbeard. Why would an article, researched, written, and titled with the purpose of revealing the origins and birth of one of the world's best known pirates, not include a single statement, much less proof, as to where that birth occurred?

As it has been shown, Brooks initially relied on Charles Leslie's *A New History of Jamaica* to imply that Edward Thache, Jr., the future Blackbeard, was born in Jamaica. He then sought additional genealogical records of Jamaica to support his adoption of Leslie's claim. These records, Brooks contends, are authoritatively sufficient to "reveal [Blackbeard's] entire family in St. Catherine's Parish, Jamaica," adding that the records of "christenings, marriages, and burials are remarkably complete, even on Jamaica, amid repeated earthquakes and tropical storms." Edward Thache,

²⁶ The article presents no evidence that the Jamaican Theache/Thaches are related to the Gloucestershire Thatches except for the compelling circumstantial evidence of naming patterns of children.

Jr., the article contends, was the son of Edward Thache, Sr. and his wife Elizabeth. Then, seemingly contradicting the title of his own article, Brooks admits that “No records of children born to Edward and Elizabeth appear in baptism records in Jamaica.” What could this mean—that Edward Thache, Jr. was not born on Jamaica?

The genealogical chart created by the author that accompanies the article indicates that “Edward ‘Blackbeard’ Jr.” was born circa 1683 but the place of birth is not revealed.²⁷ A graphic title hints, rather vaguely, that Edward Thache, Sr. and his wife Elizabeth were in Spanish Town, Jamaica, between 1683 to 1695, yet no sources or facts are provided within the article to support the notion of their Jamaican residency between those dates. Was this omission an innocent one, or was it cleverly conceived to disguise the fact that there is nothing to support the purported birth of “Edward ‘Blackbeard’ Jr.” on Jamaica?

Also unreconciled is that Charles Leslie, upon whom Brooks has relied, wrote that Edward Teach’s “Mother is alive in Spanish-Town to this Day [1739],” yet according to Brooks’s research, Edward Blackbeard Jr.’s mother, Elizabeth Thache, died in 1699. More questions are raised by the author’s lack of an explanation of Charles Leslie’s reference to Blackbeard’s brother who was said to be “Captain of the Train of Artillery” on Jamaica. One purported half-brother of Blackbeard’s, Cox Thache, was dead two years before Leslie’s “13 Letters” were published, and Brooks indicates that the only other brother was a mariner who died a few years later in England. These transparent omissions and inconsistencies must have been overlooked by those who have rushed to accept the validity of the article’s thesis.

As another example of the article’s more elastic interpretations of the most meager of genealogical sources, and how precipitously the research was endorsed by others, Brooks writes:

²⁷ A similar chart produced by Brooks and sold by him on the self-manufacturer online retail website “Zazzle.com” indicates that Edward ‘Blackbeard’ Jr. was born at Bristol, England.

“Thache family records, especially the deed of Edward Thache’s inheritance to his younger brother and sister, demonstrate his kindness and concern for his family, but also that he was an upstanding community member. As a crewman in the Royal Navy, he probably did not need the plantation, but it would help his family to survive.”²⁸

Similarly, based on the same genealogical source, the promotional endorsement for the reprinting of the article by the Office of Historical Publications described the future Blackbeard as “a respected resident of Spanish Town.” As a result of the December 2015 press release promoting Brooks’s findings, the *London Daily Mail*’s online edition headline enthusiastically elevated Blackbeard’s standing in his community even higher: “Historical records show feared pirate was actually an aristocratic family man who gave up his wealth to help his brother and sister.” But here is the text of the genealogical record upon which the preceding accolades are based:

Whereas Edward Thache Father of the aforesaid Edward Thache is lately [deceased] Intestate leaving behind him some small estate hereby sufficient for defraying his several charges and debts. Now Know that I the said Edward Thache Son and heir of my late Father Edward Thache [deceased] as aforesaid for and in consideration for the love and affection I have for and bear towards my Brother and Sister Thomas Thache and Rachel Thache...

It is difficult to comprehend how Edward Thache’s bequeathing “some small estate” can be interpreted as a “plantation” that the Royal Navy sailor Edward Thache, Jr., did not need, nor how this common gesture on the part of the future pirate Blackbeard made him “a respected resident of Spanish Town.” Perhaps Edward Thache *was* a respected resident of Spanish Town, and perhaps he gave his inherited plantation to his family (if he had one), but the article shares no direct evidence—not even a single deed or estate inventory describing the metes and bounds of the Thache

²⁸ Brooks, 303.

“plantation” on Jamaica—to effectively argue these statements as historical truth. Unfortunately, the news media relies on the veracity of press releases of government agencies and the public relies on the veracity of the media—consequently, there are now untold numbers of unwitting people who believe that Blackbeard, “the aristocratic family man,” gave up his wealth to help his brother and sister on Jamaica.

In light of the preceding presentation of counter evidence refuting Brooks’s new historical interpretation of Blackbeard’s origins, it might seem unnecessary to highlight additional fallacies in his article “Born in Jamaica, of Very Creditable Parents’ or ‘A Bristol Man Born?’” However, in addition to the article’s claims that Edward Thache, Jr., of Jamaica, was Blackbeard the pirate, a few other historical statements were made that require additional scrutiny.

The article’s interpretation of the intrigues leading to the wrecking of the *Queen Anne’s Revenge* and its aftermath must also be singled out. The author disregards the eyewitness testimony given under oath in a Charleston courtroom just six weeks after the incident by pirate David Herriot who said that Blackbeard had “run his vessel aground on purpose to break up the companies.” Brooks’s opinion is that, “Herriot probably lied to avoid incriminating himself.” Yet this opinion, made 297 years after the event, hardly carries the explanatory weight of the words of someone who was present in 1718. Furthermore, Brooks does not explain how Herriot would have incriminated himself had he instead testified that the wreck had been an accident, and no counter-evidence is known to exist to contradict Herriot.

The article also relies on faulty geographic references to support its interpretation of where Blackbeard marooned 16 of the more troublesome men of the hundreds of pirates he chose to leave behind at Topsail Inlet. He claims that the wreck of the *Queen Anne’s Revenge* was just a mile from the fishing village at the site of present day Beaufort, but the distance is closer to three miles. While most historians have agreed that the “small sandy hill or bank, a league distance from the main” where Blackbeard sent the 16

men was likely the eastern end of Bogue Banks, Brooks disagrees, relying on Maine author Colin Woodard's statement that the island was just a mile from the mainland, not a league or three miles distant (Woodard also described Bath Creek area as being so swampy that it was difficult to tell where the water ended and land began, even though the banks of the creek average 10- to 12-ft. above the water in many places). Both Brooks and Woodard are wrong about Bogue Banks, as the mainland in 1718 was as much as three miles away depending on which part of the mainland one was looking at and taking into account eroding and subsiding shorelines.

Instead, Brooks identified an island 37 miles away in the north end of Core Sound as the place where Blackbeard chose to maroon Herriot and the other pirates. This inland passage along the western shore of Core Banks taken by Stede Bonnet traveling in a shoal-draft ship's boat to seek a Royal pardon from Governor Charles Eden at Bath was entirely inaccessible to Blackbeard, who, by then, was in command of a sloop of about 60-70 tons with a draft of at least nine feet or more and loaded with 100 men, provisions, and at least half a dozen six-pound guns. The navigable depth in Core Sound at the time was only three to four feet.²⁹ It would have been impossible for Blackbeard to have marooned the men at Brooks's choice of Harbor Island, and it would have made no practical sense to do so. There can be little doubt that after depositing the marooners on Bogue Banks (the closest point of land to either the wreck of the *Queen Anne's Revenge* or the anchorage of Bonnet's sloop *Revenge* inside the inlet), Blackbeard's route to Bath from Topsail Inlet took him seaward around Cape Lookout Shoals, northeast across Raleigh Bay, and through Ocracoke Inlet into Pamlico Sound, especially considering that he would not have wanted to encounter Stede Bonnet and his men whom he had just deceived and robbed of their "treasure" of 55 slaves.

The Cambridge-educated philosopher of historical method, Dr. Behan McCullagh, wrote: "For a new historical interpretation to be acceptable, it

²⁹ James Wimble, Chart of His Majesties province of North Carolina. Taken from William P. Cummings, 'Wimble's Maps and the Colonial Cartography of the North Carolina Coast,' *North Carolina Historical Review*, v.46, no.2 (April 1969).

must synthesize more facts about the subject than those which preceded it, make more facts about the subject intelligible, as well as be so supported by available evidence as to be rationally accepted as true. An interpretation is objectively good if it satisfies these conditions.”³⁰ How well does Brooks’s new theory of the notorious pirate’s origins, his Anglican, aristocratic upbringing, his wealthy, privileged life on Jamaica, his service in the Royal Navy, synthesize the large number of well-documented facts of Blackbeard’s last days in North Carolina? How objectively good is Brooks’s “excavation” of the real Blackbeard the pirate? Did he dig up the wrong person?

As quoted in the beginning of this review, Brooks wrote: “Early pirate leaders were most often not the struggling property-less proletarians that some writers would have us believe. Many, like Edward Thache [Theache] of Spanish Town, Jamaica, were wealthy planters and mariners on an island where piracy was simply a way of life for the aristocracy. They were the upper class of the population, with resources at their command.” However, when one contrasts the facts to Brooks’s new pirate paradigm, stark contradictions and improbabilities readily emerge, and important questions remain unanswered.

Brooks’s theory (and his article) fails to discuss or explain why the aristocratic, pro-establishment, gentleman Edward Blackbeard Thache, Jr., of Jamaica, grandson of an Oxford-educated Anglican rector, and a Royal Navy veteran of Queen Anne’s War, would chose a decidedly uncouth, uncivilized, unseemly, thuggish profession as a pirate and name his flagship, *Queen Anne’s Revenge*—unmistakably a Jacobite, anti-Anglican, anti-establishment reference?

At the Charleston pirate trials of 1718, testimony given under oath by former members of Blackbeard’s crew revealed that while under his command, at least once they attempted to salvage treasure lost in the Spanish treasure fleet disaster of 1715 off the central coast of Florida.

³⁰ McCullagh, C. Behan, PhD., *The Truth of History*, Routledge, London, 1998, 130.

Consequently, would Edward Blackbeard Thache, Jr., of Jamaica, a wealthy sugar plantation owner and former Royal Navy man, travel to the central coast of Florida to scavenge the beaches and shallow waters for Spanish treasure?

Why would Edward Thache, Jr., of Jamaica, who Brooks has claimed had sisters, brothers, and a probable daughter who married a local physician in Spanish Town, and who was “burdened by concerns for his family’s welfare,” sail for two years as a pirate, north and south, east and west, throughout the West Indies, frequently passing Jamaica, and not once put into port there to visit his family according to the records?

Why would this new Blackbeard, Edward Thache, Jr., of Jamaica, whose family purportedly owned a large sugar plantation with slaves, then go to great trouble to capture slaves east of the Windward Islands in November 1717 from the French slave ship *Concorde*? And then why, at great risk, and by avoiding numerous opportunities to safely surrender to various colonial governors—including South Carolina’s Governor Johnson who sent him an invitation to accept the Royal Pardon— did Edward Thache, Jr., of Jamaica, deliver those slaves to Bath, North Carolina, which is quite a far distance from the sea requiring navigation around dangerous shoals and serpentine sand reefs. And why did Brooks’s Jamaican Blackbeard take those slaves to what was then a colonial backwater community well-documented to be economically depressed and with residents possessing little or no hard currency to purchase those slaves, especially when the pirates passed up other ports where those slaves would have fetched much higher prices?

How and why would this new Blackbeard, Edward Thache, Jr., of Jamaica, leave his entire crew at Ocracoke Island on Sep. 14, 1718, and sail with his four personal slaves in an open boat and travel 50 miles across the often dangerous Pamlico Sound in hurricane season to Tobias Knight’s house at the mouth of Bath Creek where the purported Jamaican pirate was welcomed at midnight and counseled for hours until nearly dawn by an official of the government who presumably—according to the traditional story—he had only met once or twice in the preceding two months?

Why would this same official, the acting Chief Justice, His Majesty's Customs Collector, and Secretary of the Governor's ruling council, Tobias Knight, address this stranger, Edward Thache, Jr., of Jamaica (or Bristol, England, for that matter), whom Knight had only met once or twice in the preceding two months in a letter as "my friend," and write that "the governor would be very glad to see you before you go?"

Why would North Carolina Governor Charles Eden present His Majesty's Royal Pardon to this stranger, Edward Thache, Jr., of Jamaica, for which Blackbeard was ineligible,³¹ when the issuance of that pardon put Eden's life at great peril—in fact, potentially subjecting the governor to removal from office and a conviction and execution by hanging for acting as an accessory to acts of piracy, according to English law?³²

Brooks's thesis fails to navigate these significant historical waypoints in the Blackbeard chronology and it makes no attempt to consider whether alternative historical interpretations might carry greater explanatory power.

Some historians have been known to formulate subjective historical interpretations that reflect their personal interests, values, and political, economic or social beliefs. Their illusion of knowledge is often based on the tendency to draw conclusions based on what they want to believe. They delude themselves by failing to challenge their own historical assumptions. As McCullagh has explained, "biased historians may not make sound judgements about the truth, fairness or goodness of their interpretations."³³ Their strong desire to imprint their point of view on the past makes them unable to resist the temptation to leap across that perilous chasm that separates historical fact from fancy. Few statements by Brooks in his article illustrates this point more:

³¹ Blackbeard and his men had committed a number of acts of piracy including the blockade of Charleston and the burning of the Boston ship *Protestant Caesar* off the coast of Honduras well after the date specified in the pardon for the King's forgiveness.

³² An Act for the more effectual Suppression of Piracy. 11 & 12 William III c 7.

³³ McCullagh, 131.

“The Board of Trade likely believed the wealthy and ex-Royal Navy man Thache and his fellow privateers threatened their efforts to eradicate piracy in America. Its members would have sought to prevent Thache from gaining even more popularity and support from his well-born community as a pirate. They used every available measure to diminish his reputation. Nathaniel Mist, suffering from repeated arrests and fines, may have caved to royal pressure and described “Blackbeard” as the more “villainous” character in order to accomplish this purpose. As long as few knew of his family and his service, he could be portrayed as wicked and dangerous.”

That is quite a leap, and with the publication of the peer-reviewed article, “Born in Jamaica, of Very Creditable Parents...” and the booklet, *Blackbeard Reconsidered: Mist's Piracy, Thache's Genealogy*, many credulous people seem to have followed the historian over a very wide and bottomless chasm. To this day, notwithstanding claims made in these publications, the identity and origins of the notorious pirate Blackbeard remains one of the most enduring mysteries of colonial American history, as it may be forevermore.

