

PROPRIETARIES, PRIVATEERS, AND PIRATES:

America's Forgotten Golden Age

by

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Scholars have usually treated all pirates as the same, regardless of class and education. Gentleman privateers and merchants from Jamaica, Bermuda, and other English cities of the West Indies, however, varied in cultivation, education, land-ownership, and wealth with respect to common, poor pirates in the Bahamas, the quintessential "pirate nest." A close study of the cultural landscape in early America reveals the basis for those differences. Early depositions of the events at the beginning of the Golden Age of Piracy (1715-1726) provide pertinent case studies illustrating that difference.

PROPRIETARIES, PRIVATEERS, AND PIRATES:

America's Forgotten Golden Age

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Master of Arts, Program in Maritime Studies

by

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Introduction

Marcus Rediker, in *Villains of all Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age*, sees two kinds of terror in the late part of the Golden Age of Piracy, which he defines as 1716-1726. "One was practiced by the likes of Cotton Mather, namely, ministers, royal officials, wealthy men; in short, rulers," he says. Elaborating from a Marxist perspective, he offers that "they sought to eliminate piracy as a crime against mercantile property."¹ Rediker sees this administrative class as consciously using terror to accomplish their goals to "protect property, to punish those who resisted its law, to take vengeance against those they considered their enemies, and to instill fear in sailors who might wish to become pirates," or threats to property.² For him, British society quickly changed; it underwent a major social upheaval that elevated one type of terrorist over another. Later, he contends that the word "terrorist" had acquired a new, evolved meaning. This type of terror, he defines as that of the bourgeoisie over the proletariat, or worker class. Yet, still today, a type of cognitive dissonance hides the old narrative. We do not think of pirates as terrorists, he says, "They have become, over the years, cultural heroes, even founding fathers of sorts."³

Illustrating the other kind of terror, as Rediker views it, stood a practice "by common seamen like William Fly who sailed beneath the Jolly Roger, the flag designed to terrify the captains of merchant ships and persuade them to surrender their cargo."⁴ Both types of terror were used consciously, and also to accomplish similar philosophical, if directly-opposing

¹ Marcus Rediker, *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), 5.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

goals. In 1726, when the Golden Age of Piracy had entered its philosophically restructured end phase, Rediker finds this anti-establishment behavior typically descriptive of pirates. For Rediker, pirates like William Fly, who defied oppressive ship captains and proudly resisted oppression, seem like revolutionaries. The poor and dejected, without resources, fought a brave battle against all odds, against the bourgeoisie, or upper classes of Anglo-American society.

Rediker makes a brilliant observation that a British “war on piracy” had changed American thought. That “war” turned pirates into “fierce and forbidding villains, described by ruling groups as a blood-lusting monster bent on disrupting the social order.”⁵ The British plan proved effective. Americans had moved from hero worship to recoiling from demons. Still, that nagging persistent American belief in pirates as cultural heroes did not just invent itself. It has been here all along; Americans still remember. Rediker sees the social change in perception, but insists that none occurred with pirates themselves. As he writes, “pirates had practiced terror from the beginning,” presuming the kind of bitter reactionary terror expressed by William Fly on the gallows in 1726.⁶ Rediker compares William Fly to the bold Samuel Adams in the Sons of Liberty. Fly, however, did not win his revolution.

Relatively speaking, pirates had not always been so terrifying. They were once romanticized. Britain waged a war to destroy an image, an image welcome to Americans. Why did they have a view that needed changing? Britain created the unchained terror of William Fly from an earlier expression of hero worship. Rediker forgot the earlier perception of fortune and affluence of earlier pirates – the original American heroes before the “war.” His view of Golden Age piracy’s actual social context is too restrictive.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

Most historians still ignore the numerous wealthy pirates and factors who lived and traded in “Sin City,” or Port Royal, Kingston, and Spanish Town, Jamaica – real lively people who engaged in the early lucrative trade of treasure, pleasure, spices, and slaves. They often miss the great Bermudan estates of Henry Jennings, the opulence, wealth, and political power of Jamaican merchants Thomas Barrow, John Augur, Edward Thache, Leigh Ashworth, or South Carolina’s Richard Tookerman. Like Rediker, many historians find it less complicated to view piracy through polarized lenses – to see only the poor proletarians like William Fly. They ignore the wealthier parts of the spectrum.

Admittedly, viewing persecution and struggle strikes patriotic chords in American democratic ideals. Still, the historical narrative is unrealistic. The grandeur and relative affluence of the privateer and wealthy merchant communities of Jamaica, Bermuda, New England, and the Carolinas are conveniently ignored in this narrow Marxist vision. No one writes their stories; thus, they become lost. The cultural memory still persists, though. This is why Americans still want to love their pirates.

Interestingly, pirate historians also generally ignore the significance of a major catastrophic event in 1715 that solidified provincial political regrets and actually created the necessity for the so-called Golden Age “war on piracy.” This event firmly committed Americans, at least temporarily, to rebel against new Whig ideals and the foreign king back home – or what once passed for home. Of course, the shine of silver may have been more alluring. This work endeavors to describe the origins, lives, and social context of these forgotten well-born pirates in more detail and distinguish them from the current, restrictive, and pervasive view of pirates that has lasted three centuries.

Vital records used primarily by genealogists contain the least bias of all when compared to records typically studied by classical historians. Christening, marriage, and burial records merely record an event – they make no claim in regard to profit or justice. They make no argument, just a statement of fact. Deed and will records transfer property. Will records also make certain wishes known for deceased. Few of these contain arguments of any kind. Genealogical records show family connections, vocation, and wealth which can provide insight to a person’s intent or even lead to other adversarial and traditional sources, albeit drowning in bias.

Recent recognition that West Indies archives contain more information than generally explored before and their recent accessibility through digitization may have exposed the true life of Edward Thache, or “Blackbeard.” His wealth and probable gentry position in Jamaican society do not agree well with traditional stories told about the “notorious” and “villainous” “Pirate King.” The obvious question becomes: how many other “notorious” pirates told about by pirate authors and historians are equally different in reality? The only way to answer this question is an in-depth exploration of these remote and heretofore unexplored resources.⁷

Capt. Charles Johnson, the pseudonym for Jacobite polemicist Nathaniel Mist, and especially those writers influenced by him, led the first attack against the true history of American pirates in the Golden Age. *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pyrates* in 1724 and its popularity conveyed and assisted the campaign to demonize pirates. It aided in the eradication of their general acceptance by Americans –

⁷ Baylus C. Brooks, “‘Born in Jamaica of Very Creditable Parents’ or ‘A Bristol Man Born’? Excavating the Real Edward Thache, ‘Blackbeard the Pirate’,” *North Carolina Historical Review*, Vol. XCII, No. 3 (July 2015); 262-304.

remaking them “evil” and “notorious” in provincial eyes. A focus on the detailed histories of early pirates demonstrates that they were quite different from the “notorious sea rovers” and “ne’er-do-wells,” the “villains” of whom Capt. Charles Johnson wrote and upon whom later writers elaborated. These “enemies of all mankind” expressed their alternate views of terror and created the narrative that would most conveniently survive: vicious, immoral, poor, dirty, stinking, foul-mouthed wretches of humanity, unfit for anything but stretching a rope.

Still, pirate leaders of 1715-1718 did not socially or politically reflect those of 1726, the oppressed, uncouth, and foul-mouthed William Flys who had forgotten their old heroes. Britain, of course, wrote the history of this Golden Age “rebellion,” just like they would if they had won the war of 1776. George Washington could simply have been a foul rebel in American eyes, rather than the great hero he became. Britain’s war against piracy changed the narrative – it changed written history. Britain won perhaps the first battle for American Independence.

Early pirates had American dreams of striking it rich and monopolizing trade. Sir Francis Drake and other “Sea Dogs” instilled these proud heroes with a notion of Manifest Destiny – by humiliating the Spanish devils who dared to invade England’s shores in 1588 and conquering their treasure-filled lands. They enjoyed a general acceptance, even active support, of the British and American colonial populace, even though they annoyed colonial officials appointed by Britain. For pirates themselves, “Golden Age” best defined the seventeenth century of Sir Henry Morgan.

Historiography

As legal historian Michael Kempe says, “Private maritime pillaging, licensed by governmental patents, thus became the main weapon to challenge Iberian hegemony in the Americas.”⁸ Moreover, “in almost all cases the violence was claimed to be just and lawful.”⁹ Zero-sum economics essentially drove piracy as the most important economic institution in the New World. In many respects, piracy was not only accepted; it was celebrated in the West Indies from where Spain’s primary wealth issued. Before the Golden Age of Piracy, Americans embraced piracy as a valuable resource and way of life – it had to make a cultural impact. Until the end of Queen Anne’s War in 1713, there persisted an American economic ideal based on hero worship of men like Sir Francis Drake and Sir John Hawkins. Ideological sons and daughters of these heroic Sea Dogs still resided and flourished all along the Eastern seaboard, in their urban gilt homes with wood floors – not dirt. They attended church and held God’s ear. They dipped fruit in sugar at lavish parties, spoke with assemblymen, governors, doctors, and attended dinners with their families. As England had long proscribed, they reveled in, and warred against, Spain’s gold and silver treasures that spilled from their mines in Mexico and Peru. Before the Golden Age, pirates grew rich on plunder and supplied their fellow colonials with much desired and greatly lacking European finery, cocoa, sugar, molasses, and all manner of exotic produce. Pirates were heroes to the

⁸ Michael Kempe, “Even in the Remotest Corners of the World’: Globalized Piracy and International Law, 1500-1900,” *Journal of Global History* 5.3 (Nov 2010): 353-372.

⁹ *Ibid.*

needy and starving masses of the wilderness – they were essentially the “1%” of the colonial economy.

Still, America and England had grown apart over the past century – both socially and economically. Changes took place across the whole of English society: religious, political, and economic. Not long before the end of the Stuart dynasty that created the private colonies of Carolina, the Bahamas, and much of America, Parliament rid Britain of the Stuart stain of papacy and declared James III (known later as the “Pretender”) unfit to rule. Great resentment resulted from these liberal changes. Edward T. Fox called Jacobitism “the most significant form of subversive dissent in British politics.”¹⁰ This study of early pirates of the Golden Age views Fox’s reflection on Jacobitism as standing for “the maintenance of traditional values and valued traditions,” but it also upheld the propertied rights of the individual in America.¹¹ America’s view was a little different from the British.

For many years since the Glorious Revolution of 1688, Jacobites, or supporters of James III, fought to restore him to the throne. Jacobites in America may have fought harder, but financial matters trumped dynastic so far from the political source of discontent. Sufficient reasons to oppose the government had not yet presented themselves to most American merchants. Still more changes affected conservative Anglo-Americans. By the end of the reign of Queen Anne (1702-1713), Parliament forced her family’s dynasty permanently from the line of succession. Instead, they hoisted a new, foreign monarch upon the empire and encouraged German refugees to pour into England. The Hanoverian dynasty began with the German-speaking George I of Brunswick-Lunenbourg. Jacobites wholly

¹⁰ Edward T. Fox, "Jacobitism and the 'Golden Age' of Piracy, 1715-1725," *International Journal of Maritime History*, XXII, No.2 (December 2010), 277.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 278.

resented this foreign intrusion and the protests began anew with the Jacobite Rebellion of 1715. Afterward, Jacobite rebels flooded the American shores, against their wills, yet found opportunities not available in Britain.¹²

New ideas, not just German refugees, flooded the empire. Older conservative ideals, epitomized by Stuart excess that created a piratical America, grew to contrast strongly the needs of the new, liberal, and foreign Hanoverian regime. This regime had been placed in power by a growing Whig Parliament who also championed a new economic paradigm of production over piracy. The needs of Parliament and the newly-formed Board of Trade and Plantations pushed against the needs of the past – the traditional values of proud English and American conservatives.

Under the Stuarts, wealth did not grow. It had to be taken from others – stolen or pirated and America formed from that model. The treasures of Spain and France: gold, silver, and jewels, defined wealth or trade. In the new economic paradigm, however, wealth sprang from seeds in the ground: sugar, indigo, and other agricultural commodities. Blood and sweat remained as essential nutrients, primary oils for the financial engines. In a modernizing West Indies, with properties and presence regularly falling to the British, piracy quickly became a danger to trade itself, or profit, and had to be eliminated if sugar fortunes were to be maintained. Former Anglo-American ideals had to be opposed.

Production replaced Britain's need for piracy. The old zero-sum, or fixed-wealth game of the old Stuart regime, faded. Sugar production, with its massive need for slave labor, had taught the British a new way to make America prosper and grow – it demanded a transition. Former pirates could leave behind the glorious vocation that brought them such

¹² *Ibid.*

wealth and power for a new kind – to become rich land owners, grow sugar and indigo, and trade slaves. It required more work and thought, but this new idea of wealth just might convince them to change.

“Few historians have noted that the great upsurge of piracy in 1716 and 1717,” says pirate historian Arne Bialuschewski, “followed the succession crisis and the Jacobite rising of 1715.”¹³ What caused it? Was another Jacobite Rebellion inevitable in America? Bialuschewski avers that the British government did not see a significant threat of Jacobitism in the New World. As with most political changes, society may have eventually learned to adapt – to avoid outright rebellion. There may have been no need to turn America against its heroes. Piracy may have slowly faded into the background without definitive governmental interference or violence. Bialuschewski did, however, feel more confident of another factor contributing to the Golden Age.¹⁴

On July 30, 1715, a particular event of monumental proportions occurred that thrust America into full-blown expression of unrepentant avarice and authoritative defiance. Literally with cyclonic force, the delicate balance between rebellion and acquiescence shattered in an early-season hurricane just off the Florida shores. Treasure-lust briefly focused American pain and ideological losses into a genuine tangible object that reinvigorated a positive vision of pirates’ futures - 14,000,000 pesos worth of silver scattered across the Florida shores. This sudden and fortuitous opportunity shone like golden rays of light from heaven. The treasure from eleven Spanish galleons, *Urca de Lima*, *El Ciervo*, *San Miguel*, *Nuestra Señora del Carmen*, *Nuestra Señora del Rosario*, *El Señor San Miguel*, *Nuestra Señora de la Concepcion*, *Santa Crista de San Roman*, *Nuestra Señora de*

¹³ Arne Bialuschewski, "Jacobite Pirates?," *Social History* 44: 87 (May 2011); 148.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 150.

la Regia, Nuestra Señora de las Nieves, and an unnamed tender afforded a confident restoration of Morgan's days of glory. It might restore American wealth, power, and position, negatively impacted upon by recent British anti-pirate policy.¹⁵

If not for this event that sparked the total expression of British political pain and discontent into the full-blown Golden Age of Piracy, Britain may never have forced an image of pirates as demons – perhaps not even notorious criminals. After all, Americans seldom refer to American founding father John Hancock as a “smuggler,” yet he cheated government, even threatened witnesses. Johnson's morbid and outrageous tales of the “robberies and murders of the most notorious” might never have been published. Marcus Rediker may have been forced to view piracy in more complex terms. “Blackbeard's” name might never have become “a Terror.”¹⁶ The effects of this rhetorical damage need be explored – to recover the lives and pecuniary intents of the earliest gentlemen – comparable in class to merchants like John Hancock.¹⁷

Rediker's British terrorism had won. Toward the close of this rebellion, Capt. Charles Johnson began his criminal biography. He ignored, however, the seeds planted only a few years earlier in the Golden Age of Piracy. Intent upon exploring specific criminal acts of pirates to enthrall his readers and perhaps because he was coerced financially to voice the new Whig narrative, he left the genesis of American piracy alone. “We shall not examine how it came to pass, that our Pyrates in the *West-Indies* have continually increased till of late,” he wrote, “this is an Enquiry which belongs to the Legislature, or Representatives of

¹⁵ Lowell W. Newton, “Juan Esteban de Ubilla and the Flota of 1715,” *The Americas*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Oct., 1976), pp. 267-268.

¹⁶ 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....* (London : printed for J. Hodges, at the Looking-Glass on London-Bridge, 1740), 275.

¹⁷ Lawrence Karson, *American Smuggling as White Collar Crime* (New York: Taylor & Frances, 2014), 29-30.

the People in Parliament, and to them we shall leave it.”¹⁸ Johnson’s task did not involve telling actual history – he intended a criminal biography to sell to passersby for much-needed profit.¹⁹

Pirate scholars have followed his example. One asserts that Johnson’s book “is the single most important primary source” for the study of piracy.²⁰ Another calls it “the prime source” for pirate’s lives and only questions its authorship.²¹ Essentially, however, this book created a strong bias against pirates in America, a bias that has been perpetuated and even enhanced by generations of pirate historians. Whether knowingly or not, Johnson helped turn pirate supporters into pirate condemners. “Although the *General History* has been understood to be giving pirates a voice,” says pirate scholar Mark G. Hanna, “it did the opposite.”²² It vilified pirates, creating vicious monsters of former heroes. Hanna, in *Pirate Nests and the Rise of the British Empire, 1570-1740*, regards *A General History*, “more than any other text,” as “documenting and transforming colonial pirate nests into pirate-hunting communities.”²³

Regarding *A General History* as a source for true “history” has recently attracted more negative attention. As pirate historian Arne Bialuschewski writes:

This book is not a reliable source. The chapter on Blackbeard is particularly riddled with exaggerations, misunderstandings, and factual errors. Thus it does not come as a surprise that readers often find the same misleading story retold. Consequently, all

¹⁸ Charles Johnson, *A General History of the Pyrates, from their first rise and settlement in the island of Providence, to the present time. With the remarkable actions and adventures of the two female pyrates Mary Read and Anne Bonny; contain'd in the following chapters, ... Chap. I. Of Capt. Avery. II. Of Capt. Martel. III. Of Capt. Teach. ... By Captain Charles Johnson*, 2nd edition (London: printed for, and sold by T. Warner, 1724), 18.

¹⁹ Arne Bialuschewski, “Daniel DeFoe, Nathaniel Mist, and *A General History of the Pyrates*,” *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 98: 1 (2004): 21-38.

²⁰ Carl E. Swanson, “‘The Unspeakable Calamity this poor Province Suffers from Pirates’: South Carolina and the Golden Age of Piracy,” *The Northern Mariner*, XXII No. 2, (April 2011), 120n7.

²¹ David Cordingly, *Under the Black Flag* (New York: Random House, 2006), xix-xx.

²² Mark G. Hanna, *Pirate Nests and the Rise of the British Empire, 1570-1740* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 406.

²³ *Ibid.*, 402.

surviving primary sources deserve special attention as correctives. In the last twenty years or so historians have made extensive use of the administrative correspondence of the British colonies, which is to be found in The National Archives at Kew near London.²⁴

Bialuschewski chastises modern historians' continued use of Johnson's creation.

Referring to Blackbeard's image specifically, Bialuschewski also states in a footnote in his article on "Jacobite Pirates?" this assessment:

The image of Blackbeard as a cruel and ruthless villain was largely created by newspaper accounts and *A General History of the Pyrates*, first published in 1724. This book has been plundered by generations of historians, despite the fact that it is riddled with errors, exaggerations, and misunderstandings.²⁵

Bialuschewski and others held this opinion years before the discovery of Thache's plantation-owning family on Jamaica. Many pirate historians have felt that they must still rely on Johnson's unreliable book to fill gaps in the record. The problem for the historian, desperately needing source material on piracy, is determining fact from fiction – a monumental task. Bialuschewski makes headway in this. Still, the artful blend of fact and fiction in Johnson makes this task extraordinarily difficult. Thanks to the efforts of meticulous researchers, however, reliance upon Johnson now fades.

About Edward "Blackbeard" Thache specifically, author and journalist Colin Woodard relates, "Blackbeard was remarkably judicious in his use of force. In the dozens of eyewitness accounts of his victims, there is not a single instance in which he killed anyone prior to his final, fatal battle with the Royal Navy."²⁶ Historian Angus Konstam, who obviously relied upon the popularity of Johnson's creation for his book *Blackbeard*:

²⁴ Arne Bialuschewski, "Blackbeard off Philadelphia: Documents Pertaining to the Campaign against the Pirates in 1717 and 1718," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 134, No. 2 (April 2010), 166.

²⁵ Bialuschewski, "Jacobite Pirates?," 155n33.

²⁶ Colin Woodard, "The Last Days of Blackbeard: An Exclusive Account of the Final Raid and Political Maneuvers of History's Most Notorious Pirate," *Smithsonian Magazine* (February 2014), 2, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/last-days-blackbeard-180949440/?no-ist=&page=2>, accessed December 21, 2014.

America's Most Notorious Pirate, also suggested that “the chances were higher than with most pirates, that his victims would live to tell the tale.”²⁷ Even the popularized graphic novel *Blackbeard: Legend of the Pirate King* asserts through contributor Steven W. Fussell that Blackbeard “was hardly the ‘murderous rogue’ officials claimed him to be.”²⁸ Arne Bialuschewski states that “I haven’t seen one single piece of evidence that Blackbeard ever used violence against anyone.”²⁹

A newly founded Board of Trade and Plantations (1696) focused on quelling piracy to preserve commerce. Its members knew that popular sentiment remained with the pirates, and in order to eradicate them, public perception across the Empire had to be altered. Johnson’s book may have been part of this effort; it stands best as a polemic of pirates and piracy – not as history. British efforts may have demonized America’s favorite economic practice – a practice that resulted in immense profit – as Americans eyed the gleaming treasure on the shores of La Florida in 1715. As to the growing reaction concerning the massive treasure spilled in America, Bialuschewski infers that:

In Jamaica news of the shipwreck was well received. Soon after the English conquest [of Jamaica] in 1655 piracy and privateering had become major sources of income for the seafaring population. Earnings from raids against Spanish shipping boosted the prosperity of Port Royal and proved an important source of capital formation.³⁰

Bialuschewski also elaborates on the purposeful demonization of pirates in his article “Pirates, Markets, and Imperial Authority: Economic Aspects of Maritime Depredations in the Atlantic World, 1716–1726” in the English journal *Global Crime*:

²⁷ Angus Konstam, *Blackbeard: America's Most Notorious Pirate* (Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley and Sons, 2006), 158.

²⁸ Robert Place Napton, Gregg Hale, Jamie Nash, and Eduardo Sanchez, eds., *Blackbeard: Legend of the Pirate King* (Runnemede, N.J.: Dynamite Entertainment, 2011), 107.

²⁹ Bialuschewski, quoted in Woodard, “Last Days of Blackbeard.”

³⁰ Arne Bialuschewski, “Between Newfoundland and the Malacca Strait: A Survey of the Golden Age of Piracy, 1695–1725,” *The Mariner's Mirror*, 90:2 (2004): 173.

The early colonial newspapers, led by The *Boston News-Letter*, as well as various pamphlets reported pirate attacks, followed their exploits and described their vicious behaviour, providing readers in the New World with horrific details of pirate life. This information revolution also played a role in the war against piracy by driving a deep wedge between colonial society and the pirate gangs. These publications certainly helped to mobilise the population against the outlaws and may have boosted the overall willingness to take up arms against them. By 1723 the campaign to exterminate piracy had reached its final stage.³¹

Mark Hanna writes, the British “war” on piracy constituted “one of the first unified imperial projects.”³² After this effort began, Royal Navy officers, he assures, once “vilified” in the colonies, became “lionized for their bravery.”³³ “Colonial antipathy toward pirates,” he argues, “was pivotal for their downfall.”³⁴ Toward that end, Hanna explains that ministers, novelists such as Johnson, and lawyers directed on the colonial population this new representation of piracy as “predators on society.”³⁵

The *Boston News-Letter* joined that effort. Almost immediately after a wealthy and tactically capable Blackbeard’s appearance on New Providence, Bialuschewski notes:

... soon after the publication of [the *Boston News-Letter* of August 5, 1717], the paper changed its tone and began to use less neutral language in its descriptions of Blackbeard so that he appeared as a pitiless, violent, and uncivilized character. The 4 November 1717 issue of the *Boston News-Letter* reported the seizure of seven vessels by Thatch and added that all the captured sailors were “met with most Barbarous inhumane Treatment” from the pirates.³⁶

Ultimately, Johnson’s book skewed actual historical pirates into stereotypical caricatures. The persistent anti-pirate British rhetoric, the literary demonization of American piracy, twisted modern perception of pirates from a normal American phenomenon into one

³¹ Arne Bialuschewski, “Pirates, Markets, and Imperial Authority: Economic Aspects of Maritime Depredations in the Atlantic World, 1716–1726,” *Global Crime* 9 (2008): 64.

³² Hanna, *Pirate Nests*, 371.

³³ *Ibid.*, 372.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 373.

³⁶ Arne Bialuschewski, “Blackbeard: The Creation of a Legend,” *Washington and Jefferson College Review* 58 (November 2012): 46.

of abnormal criminality. A more unbiased exploration of all classes of pirates in America is essential to fill the gaps.

Americans, determined to control their own domains, initially fought back at this “war on piracy” and quickly claimed Admiralty jurisdiction in America and the West Indies. They often hand-picked their admiralty judges to pronounce a decidedly American view toward their favorite economic institution. Historian Douglas R. Burgess Jr. also sees Rediker’s “war on piracy.” He asserts that most English authorities began to view all of America, not just the Bahamas as “pirate nests.” How could such uncivilized persons claim the right to convene courts over themselves? Pirates could not try pirates...

... an English administrator [Surveyor-General for the Colonies Edward Randolph] described the colonies as nests of "vice and lawlessness," and an American colonial governor warned his fellow colonists not to fall within the bonds of slavery... an open breach had appeared between Crown and colonies, and some observers predicted incipient rebellion... [the Crown recognized] that its American colonies had developed a system of laws startlingly different, and contradictory, to those communicated by the King, his ministers, and Parliament. More specifically, the colonies had appropriated admiralty jurisdiction—the law of all things related to the sea—and used this prerogative to adopt a definition of piracy that was both eminently suited to their own commercial purposes and anathema to those of the Crown.³⁷

Burgess studied in depth Rhode Island’s attempts to preserve their uniquely American trade practices and how this effort presaged American Independence. “Acting to protect trade practices they had come to regard as essential to their survival,” he wrote, “Rhode Island and other colonies began to erect a legal firewall around piracy and other forms of 'illegal' commerce” to protect their unique traditions. America protected its pirates, long viewed as essential to profit.³⁸

³⁷ Douglas R. Burgess Jr., "A Crisis of Charter and Right: Piracy and Colonial Resistance in Seventeenth-Century Rhode Island," *Journal of Social History* vol. 45 no. 3 (2012), 605.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 606; Hanna, “Pirate Nests,” p. 123.

Modern scholars are finding this American agency much more appealing than the old arguments for piracy. “The swashbuckling activities of deep-sea pirates,” Hanna writes, “were integral to the political and social development of the colonial maritime communities that depended upon these adventurers' goods and services.”³⁹ His words match an Anglican Church Record analysis and the cultural observations of Donny Hamilton in the *Port Royal Project*, which reveal a turbulent, yet immensely profitable port town.⁴⁰

Understanding their own capabilities, Americans may have been surprised by the recent anti-pirate rhetoric. Hanna tells of a local merchant mariner’s discussion with a South Carolinian about pirates. “Mr. Gale’s” letter was written November 4, 1718, a few weeks before Edward Thache died and before Britain’s coordinated “war on piracy” fully began. Gale, who may have been Edmund Gale, brother of Christopher Gale, North Carolina and Bahamian chief justice, married the daughter of Bahamian merchant Richard Peterson. Gale had frequently conducted a Caribbean trade and had often been in regular communication with pirates. He told Col. Thomas Pitt:

The pirates yet accounted to be out are near 2000 men and of those Vain *als*. Vaughn Thaitch and others promise themselves to be repossessed of Providence in a short time... the pirates themselves have often told me that if they had not been supported by traders from [mainland colonies] with ammunition and provisions according to their directions, they could never have become so formidable.⁴¹

Kevin P. McDonald makes the same argument for New York in his doctoral thesis “Pirates, Merchants, Settlers, and Slaves: Making an Indo-Atlantic Trade World, 1640-

³⁹ Hanna, *Pirate Nests*, 4.

⁴⁰ Donny L. Hamilton, *Port Royal Project* (2000), <http://nautarch.tamu.edu/portroyal/PRhist.htm> (accessed 15 July 2015 – 7 Feb 2016), Nautical Archaeology Program, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

⁴¹ “Mr. [Edmund?] Gale to Col. Thomas Pitt, junr. So. Carolina” (4 Nov 1718), “America and West Indies: January 1719,” in *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies*, Volume 31, 1719-1720, ed. Cecil Headlam (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1933), 1-21, part of quote appearing in Mark G. Hanna, “The Pirate Nest: The Impact of Piracy on Newport, Rhode Island and Charles Town, South Carolina” (PhD dissertation, History of American Civilization Program, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., 2008), 3.

1730.”⁴² He uses typically genealogical sources to show that a New York-born pirate named Samuel Burgess, with a gentleman’s education, served first as a privateer in Jamaica and New York. When his commissions ran out, he easily slipped into piracy. But, he was not a desperate man. He chose to be a pirate. Afterward, he and his fellow pirates easily and comfortably settled in St. Mary’s by 1694:

In a clear instance demonstrating that pirates not only maintained connections with the colonies and their families – but also, in many ways, lived within early modern social norms – Burgess was named executor in trust for the widow and child of pirate companion, Edward Halsey, as well as power of attorney for Richard Lawrence, as signed and witnessed by two other New York pirate/traders, Adam Baldrige and Thomas Mostyn.⁴³

McDonald also regarded Lord Bellomont, the governor of New York at that time, who was specifically sent to New York to reduce piracy, as instead facilitating it by clearing pirates’ vessels to trade in Madagascar.⁴⁴

Piracy was a lucrative business for all of America. As Hanna said “Far from a hindrance to trade, these fledgling maritime communities thrived from the active support of piracy and unregulated privateering.”⁴⁵ Piracy was not only acceptable, it was encouraged by American port tradesmen who bought cheap and hiked their prices to take advantage of recently-wealthy and transient brigands. Meanwhile, Britain’s Board of Trade and Admiralty had lately grown squeamish of similar harsh practices in their own social orbit. The Board of Trade’s colonial appointees, governors, court and other trade officials, fought against substantial local pressures in their attempts to eradicate the age-old tradition.

⁴² Kevin P. McDonald, “Pirates, Merchants, Settlers, and Slaves: Making an Indo-Atlantic Trade World, 1640-1730,” Doctoral Thesis in History, University of California at Santa Cruz (June 2008).

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Hanna, “The Pirate Nest,” 3.

For Hanna, Burgess, McDonald and others, America collectively felt that it had long grown autonomous and had quickly come to begrudge London's interference. "Historians," Hanna says, "have traditionally attributed the support of piracy in English ports to the basic greed, self-interest, and corruption inherent in fledgling communities," the usual "greed is natural" narrative that supports today's corporate motives.⁴⁶ Still, these older arguments were too simplistic and utilized a now disproven assumption that humans were inherently greedy. "The support of piracy," he continues, "almost always masked far more complicated struggles over political power, the rule of law, and oppressive market regulations."⁴⁷

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER I: Jamaica's Buccaneers and Privateers: A Social Study of America's First Founding Fathers

Piracy answered the needs of Elizabeth to establish her economic dominance in the late sixteenth century, but it eventually grew beyond any monarch's reach and control in America. Historian Claire Jowitt declared "Braver than merchants, more financially astute than gentlemen... pirates created and controlled a vast trading network which outperformed England in the global economy."¹ As long as it was directed away from England, as in America, the queen could appreciate the values inherent in piracy. Spain's West Indian gold and silver mines were essential sources of wealth or "trade" to Englishmen of that time. Thus, the "Virgin" Queen Elizabeth especially learned to appreciate a pirate's value under *nouveau-riche* gentlemen like Sir Francis Drake, who focused faithfully upon Spain's lucrative American empire for his plunder. The wealthy Drake became a great hero to his countrymen. Of course, Spain regarded Drake as a pirate, "dragon" or "devil" and the actions of Queen Elizabeth's "Sea Dogs" upon Spanish property encouraged the unsuccessful attack of the Spanish Armada in 1588. This failed effort, however, exposed Spain's naked underbelly of overtly aristocratic weakness. Queen Elizabeth then released her youthful, growling "Sea Dogs" to feed upon Spain's West Indian golden treasures – to steal the New World trade. Piracy created a world empire, but also split that empire down the Atlantic Ocean. Far from English oversight, piracy formed an ideological pattern for development of a unique and violent American trade. Wars were continuously fought to bring legitimacy to outright theft.

¹ Claire Jowitt, *The Culture of Piracy 1580-1630: English Literature and Seaborne Crime* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010), 47.

The Stuart King James I succeeded Elizabeth upon her death and he resisted Elizabeth's imperialist policies. James' son, King Charles I, however, rekindled England's imperialism with great relish. In April 1629, he granted the Caribbee Islands to his favorite, Sir James Hay, first earl of Carlisle. The Caribbees controlled traffic entering the Caribbean east to west from Europe and thus was a strategic location. The Florida Straits, another important strategic location, allowed maritime traffic from the Caribbean to reach Europe by the northern trade winds that traveled west to east in higher latitudes. Spanish treasure galleons depended upon this channel to sail their bullion home to Seville from the New World. It was essentially the only way back to Spain and the only reasonable route for their *flota* and *galeónes* fleets to leave the Caribbean, brimming with treasure and greatly coveted by the English Crown.²

Jamaica, from an outside perspective, had administrative control and hegemony over English piracy before 1682. That control largely evolved from a general acceptance of buccaneers or early pirates and their actions. For almost three decades after the English capture of the island in 1655, the island had become infamous as the abode of buccaneers and earned its unscrupulous reputation, as observed from faraway England. It should be said that Americans worshipped and became wholly enamored with these daring descendants of their infamous heroes, the "Sea Dogs."

Contemporary author John Oldmixon gave a good description of piratical revelry expected in West Indian port towns like Port Royal or Kingston:

In his first Voyage he took a great Ship, bound home with Plate [gold or silver], and other Treasure from *New Spain*, which he carried to *Jamaica*, and as soon as these *Buccaneers* landed, they fled to the Stews and Gaming-Houses, to ease themselves

² "America and West Indies: April 1629," in *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies*, Volume 1, 1574-1660, ed. W Noel Sainsbury (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1860), 97-98, accessed 7 Feb 2016, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/colonial/america-west-indies/vol1/pp97-98>.

of the Load that they had scrap'd together with so much Hazard. They have given 5,000 pieces of eight for a favor from a Strumpet.³

Such extravagant spending of pirates suggests that few pirates ever buried their treasure, a fairy tale invented by authors like Robert Louis Stevenson. They appeared to prefer, rather, to waste their treasure in short order on women and booze, especially in the brothels and taverns of Port Royal. Before exploring the history of these boozing buccaneers, it would be prudent to describe the cultured, yet inherently dangerous, society of the frontier West Indian island of Jamaica.

Records from the three towns of Port Royal, Kingston, and Spanish Town provide a fair sampling of Jamaican society and the dangers faced by its residents. Anglican Church records demonstrate the demography of Jamaica in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. They best illustrate Jamaican society during the Golden Age. Donny L. Hamilton's *Port Royal Project* tells of the quintessential West Indian pirate mecca, described by him as the “wickedest city in the world.”⁴ Hamilton explains that, although Port Royal was designed as a fortification (when Jamaica was captured from the Spanish in 1655), with “its flat topography, and deep water close to shore, large ships could easily be serviced, loaded, and unloaded.”⁵ Ships' captains, merchants, and craftsmen moved to Port Royal to take advantage of the trading opportunities. As Jamaica's economy evolved until 1692, “Port Royal grew faster than any town founded by the English in the New World, and it became the most economically important English port in the Americas.”⁶

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Hamilton, *Port Royal Project* (2000).

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

As Hamilton finds, the port's early development sanctioned privateering as a common practice, and "nearly half of the 4000 inhabitants were involved in this trade in 1689."⁷ Port Royal greatly flourished in the short-lived and colorful buccaneer era that greatly enriched the port, but the 1670 Treaty of Madrid called for an end to the violence. "Privateering and/or piracy, however," asserts Hamilton, "continued in one form or another into the 18th century."⁸ After 1670, Spanish money, from trade and plunder, slaves, sugar, and raw materials, literally made Port Royal one of the most important English ports in America. "It became the mercantile center of the Caribbean," asserts Hamilton, "with vast amounts of goods flowing in and out of its harbor as part of an expansive trade network, which included trading and/or looting of coastal Spanish towns throughout Spanish America."⁹ As a wealthy city of merchants, artisans, ships' captains, slaves, and, of course, notorious pirates, all essential to its economy, it became, as Hamilton calls it, the "wickedest city in the world."¹⁰

Unlike the Bahamas, "Port Royal should be considered a mercantile center first and a pirate port second."¹¹ Slavery was essential to that end. Late eighteenth-century historian Patrick Browne called Port Royal the "seat of the moneyed men," and he regarded slavery, or the "*Asiento* contract," as one of the most important contributions to the trade.¹² Hamilton describes the *Asiento* as "the system whereby a Spanish representative was stationed in Port

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Donny L. Hamilton, "Pirates and Merchants: Port Royal, Jamaica," *X Marks the Spot* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006), 15.

¹² Patrick Browne, *The Civil and Natural History of Jamaica. Illustrated with forty-nine copper plates, by George Dionysius Ehret. There are now added complete Linnaean indexes, and a large and accurate map of the island* (London: Sold by B. White and Son, 1789), 6.

Royal to purchase slaves and ship them where they were needed in the Spanish Colonies.”¹³ According to Hamilton, only Boston, Massachusetts rivaled Port Royal in size and importance. Boston had a population of approximately 6000 in 1690, while population estimates for Port Royal in 1692 range from 6500 to 10,000. “Many of the city's 2000 buildings, densely packed into 51 acres, were made of brick (a sign of wealth),” says Hamilton, “and some were four stories tall.”¹⁴ In 1688, 213 ships visited Port Royal, compared to 226 ships in all of New England. Probate inventories reveal great prosperity. Unlike the other English colonies, Jamaica used coins for currency instead of commodity exchange. Unfortunately, the earthquake of 1692 destroyed St. Peter’s basilica and it sank beneath Port Royal Harbor, taking Port Royal’s records with it, as the important port town was located on a long unstable sand bar. Those records began once again in 1725 and studying them helps to reflect Port Royal’s maritime society, assuming little change from the last few decades.¹⁵

Births and deaths describe the basic activities of Port Royal’s residents – sex and danger, like most modern American entertainment. Anglican Church records from 1725-1835 are available for study. Baptisms of infants and adults, including primarily slaves and offspring of slaves, comprised 114 pages of 363, or 31.4 percent of the church’s civil duties. Deaths reflected by burial records occupy 230 pages, or 63.3 percent, while marriages, the remaining 5.3 percent. Burials best illustrate the community and activity. On the first page of burials, 36 people appear between September 27, 1725 and February 14, 1726. There are

¹³ Hamilton, “Pirates and Merchants,” 14-15.

¹⁴ Hamilton, *Port Royal Project*.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*; James Anthony Froude, *The English in the West Indies: Or, The Bow of Ulysses* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1888), 196; Froude pondered the lack of a source of water for the port and ascertained, in the absence of cisterns to catch rainwater, that the only source of water was ten miles away, upon the mainland.

three Dutchmen, probably from a Dutch slave-trading vessel in the harbor, five men from Fort Charles, one child, two shipwrights, a bricklayer, and six identified as “mariners” or from ships in the harbor. Two doctors appear on this page, one being buried. Interestingly, an “Elizabeth Gufies” drowned and was “taken up in the Sea.”¹⁶

The port of Kingston, after 1692, reflected Port Royal’s social structure, but also with inland trade ties that facilitated intra-colonial trade. Colin G. Clarke regards the economic development of the British West Indies as the “sugar bowl” of Britain as “dictated by the imperial policy of mercantilism.”¹⁷ Mercantilism assured the growth of Kingston as a focus of the triangular trade that linked Britain, West Africa, and the West Indies. As a result, Kingston became the quintessential slave trading town. It was founded on the coast of the Liguanea Plain in 1692, thirty-seven years after Jamaica was captured from Spain. Jamaicans desired to resettle refugees after the earthquake at nearby Port Royal, across Kingston Harbor. Planners also thought to provide a secure link between Britain and the island’s nascent plantation system.¹⁸

The entrepôt trade with the Spanish colonies in Latin America, initiated by Port Royal buccaneers and sustained by the Sephardic Jews in Kingston, contributed to Kingston’s allure for pirates after 1692. This trade ran counter to mercantile philosophy, or focused trade with Britain. It often oscillated between legality and illegality, and but was given legal support by the *Asiento* in 1713. Kingston functioned as a legal, yet illegal, frontier port town that quickly boomed during the Golden Age.¹⁹

¹⁶ "Jamaica, Church of England Parish Register Transcripts, 1664-1880," <https://familysearch.org/> (accessed 7 Feb 2016), *Port Royal: Baptisms, marriages, burials 1725-1835*, Vol. 1; image 68 of 186; Registrar General's Department, Spanish Town.

¹⁷ Colin G. Clarke, *Decolonizing the Colonial City: Urbanization and Stratification in Kingston, Jamaica* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 4-7.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*; Robertson, “Giving Directions in Spanish Town, Jamaica,” 727.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

By far, the frontier British port of Kingston, directly across the harbor on the mainland, saw more death than Port Royal. From 1722-1774, 479 pages, containing an average of 40 persons appear in their burial records for an approximate total of 19,160 of 24,625 total records, or 77.8 percent. Kingston showed just over 4,000 births, or 16.4 percent, and 1,430 marriages, or 5.8 percent, in the same period. Higher death totals and fewer births in both port towns illustrate a seriously declining population without constant replenishment.

The earliest pages of Kingston's burial records show nothing other than names. No occupations are listed. The content of the baptism records, however, reveal that the majority of Jamaicans of African descent that appear are mixed-race, sons and daughters of the European townspeople or visitors. Open sexuality might have been more the norm than atypical for many maritime locales. Kingston baptisms include a 1747 record for Jonathan Teach, the son of Lucretia Teach, slave of William "Tindall, deceased." She was a child of Cox "Teach" or "Thache," named for his mother. The record gives Jonathan's father as "John Parkinson." Tyndall's slave, Lucretia, the mother, received her christening at the age of twenty-four only the year before. Tyndall, himself, fathered three illegitimate children by Mary Augier, possibly a mixed-race woman, but not necessarily in a servile position. These records also reveal other Augier women in Kingston having similar tendencies. The Augiers appear to be proprietors of the "oldest profession," or prostitutes. Conversely, these Augiers may also have been related to a "mulatto" slave named William Augier, who belonged to Edmund Hyde, Esq. and was baptized in 1738. Hyde or Tyndall may have been their manager. All of these Augiers probably also descend from the pirate John "Augur" mentioned by Johnson, who may have been the John "Auger" who married Margaret

Cowdell in St. Catherine's Parish in 1678. Another, most likely a son, died in November 1722 at Kingston. A "John Augier" appeared in the *Jamaica Courant* of August 5, 1718, owning a plantation in St. Andrews Parish (home parish of Kingston), adjacent John Webb and Andrew Blanchard's 300 acres. The pirate "John Augur" also surrendered to Capt. Pearce in February 1718 on New Providence Island. Jamaicans demonstrated robust sexual habits. They were free-holding merchants of every kind, dealing in opiates, rum, wine, and every exotic taste imaginable that thrived in Jamaica's ports.²⁰

Col. Charles Dawes of Kingston, brother of Customs Collector George Dawes who overlooked the frequent illegal shipment of pirate goods, fathered a child "Ann" by "Amey Neaves, a free Mulatto" in Kingston on October 18, 1727. He later fathered a son "Charles" by "Susannah, a free Negro woman" on November 26, 1736. Finally, as he began to realize prosperity, he had married a woman by the name of "Mary" and had his first legitimate child named "George" on November 21, 1737. His second son "Charles" from his wife arrived on September 9, 1740. His brother George never married, but Charles saw to it that he had plenty of namesakes, nevertheless.²¹

²⁰ "Jamaica Church of England Parish Register Transcripts, 1664-1880," *FamilySearch*, Mary Augier in entry for Jenny Tyndall, 16 Jul 1729, Jenny Augier in entry for Sharlott Blichandon, 16 Jul 1729, Susanna Augier in entry for Frances Dalzell, 18 Jul 1729, Christening; citing p. 19, Susan Augier in entry for Robert Dalzell, 08 Nov 1742, Christening; citing p. 70, Mary Augier in entry for Mary Tyndell, 06 Aug 1724, Christening; citing p. 5, Frances Augier in entry for John Muir, 13 Apr 1732, Christening; citing p. 29, Frances Augier in entry for Hannah Spencer, 05 Mar 1736, Christening; citing p. 45, Jane Augier in entry for Edward James Decumming, 13 Nov 1733, Christening; citing p. 34, Jane Augier in entry for Dorothy Decumming, 07 Nov 1737, Christening; citing p. 48, Jane Augier in entry for Peter Ducommun, 05 Apr 1747, Christening; citing p. 91, Elizabeth Augier Or Tyndall in entry for Sarah Charlotte Morse, 07 Mar 1748, Christening; citing p. 99, Abigal Augier in entry for Mary Mahony, 27 Jan 1748, Christening; citing p. 98, Lucretia Teach, 02 Jan 1746, Christening; citing p. 90, Lucretia Teach in entry for Jonathan Parkinson, 30 Dec 1748, Christening; citing p. 98, Kingston, Jamaica, Registrar General's Department, Spanish Town; FHL microfilm 1291763; "Jamaica Church of England Parish Register Transcripts, 1664-1880," *Kingston > Burials 1722-1774*, Vol. 1 > image 3 of 245; *St Catherine; Baptisms, marriages, burials 1669-1764*, Vol. 1; image 50 of 173, Registrar General's Department, Spanish Town; *Weekly Jamaica Courant*, published as *Jamaica Courant* (Kingston, Jamaica), August 5, 1718, 3.

²¹ "Jamaica, Church of England Parish Register Transcripts, 1664-1880," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.3.1/TH-1-13845-16108-11?cc=1827268> : accessed 12 February 2016), Kingston; Baptisms 1722-1792, Vol. 1; images 9, 25, 27, and 36 of 238; Burials 1722-1774, Vol. 1; image 41 of 245; Registrar General's Department, Spanish Town.

Barbadian writer Charles Leslie, grandson of Scottish Rev. William Leslie, first rector (1653 - 1676) of St John's Parish Church, recorded a series of letters detailing Jamaica's history. Leslie published the letters as *A New and Exact Account of Jamaica* in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1739, retitled *A History of Jamaica* in 1740.²² Leslie had little to say about the many privateers who then sailed from Jamaica, extolling his highest praise on the past buccaneers. In his letters, he obviously showed a general biased opinion of Edward Thache. This, however, probably resulted because of the recent publication of *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pyrates* and newspaper reports that came his way by merchants of Boston and other ports. These reports told of Blackbeard's recent capture and death at the hands of Lt. Robert Maynard. Still, the introduction of Leslie's narrative on Blackbeard included a surprised reference to his probable family – an odd reference considering the derogatory material surrounding it. Leslie wrote:

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 [probably Charles Eden of North Carolina, denigrated by Johnson-Mist] being remiss in pursuing him, he almost put a Stop to the Trade of several of the Northern Colonies.²³

Leslie then mentioned Blackbeard's good family. He stated that, in the time of Blackbeard, the three major towns on Jamaica were Spanish Town or *St. Jago de la Vega*, the old Spanish capital, Kingston, and Port Royal. Kingston developed after the major earthquake of 1692 had mostly destroyed Port Royal, including its parish church. The only

²² 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....* (London : printed for J. Hodges, at the Looking-Glass on London-Bridge, 1740).

²³ *Ibid.*, 275.

town relatively unaffected by nature was Spanish Town. Herman Moll's map of 1717, a portion of which is shown in figure 1, illustrates St. Catherine's Parish on Jamaica's south side. The *Rio Cobre* can be seen flowing northwestward from the bay with settler's estates along the river.

Leslie called Spanish Town the "chief City."²⁴ "'Tis there the Governor resides," he said, "and there the Assembly and the Grand Courts of Justice are kept."²⁵ Vernon regarded its situation inland to be its greatest advantage. "Several wealthy Merchants reside there," he further elaborated, "and most Gentlemen of estates have houses in it."²⁶ He spoke flatteringly of the many carriages, affluence of its many residents, the elaborate balls, and that the residents live as "happily as if they were within the Verge of the *British Court*."²⁷

The surgeon and staunch abolitionist, Dr. John Atkins (1685-1757) agreed and gave a similar description of *St. Jago de la Vega* on the *Rio Cobre* upon his visit prior to 1735:

Here the Governor resides, Courts are held, and the Assembly meet to enact Laws... [it] is irregular, and low built, to secure it against Storms; even the Governor's, or what they call the King's House, is but a Ground Floor... with a Parade, where all Gentlemen meet to transact their Business; the Merchants and Factors for distant Planters, and the Officers civil and military, do together make a considerable Number.²⁸

As a Navy surgeon, Dr. Atkins visited Jamaica twice, in *Swallow* and *Weymouth*. He later wrote *A Voyage to Guinea, Brazil, and the West Indies*, full of interesting information

²⁴ Leslie, *History*, 26.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ John Atkins, *A Voyage to Guinea, Brasil, and the West-Indies; in His Majesty's Ships, the Swallow and Weymouth. Describing the several Islands and Settlements, Viz-Madeira, the Canaries, Cape de Verd, Sierraleon, Sesthos, Cape Apollonia, Cabo Corso, and others on the Guinea Coast; Barbadoes, Jamaica, &c. in the West-Indies. The Colour, Diet, Languages, Habits, Manners, Customs, and Religions of the respective Natives, and Inhabitants. With Remarks on the Gold, Ivory, and Slave-Trade; and on the Winds, Tides and Currents of the several Coasts. By John Atkins, Surgeon in the Royal Navy* (London : printed for Caesar Ward and Richard Chandler, at the Ship, between the Temple-Gates in Fleet-Street; [London] and Sold at their Shop in Scarborough, M.DCC.XXXV [1735]). 234.

Cotton Works, Indico Works and Cacao Works. There is a small but decorative title block.
Source: <http://prestwidge.com/river/jamaica1717moll.html> (public domain).

Spanish Town, the old Spanish capital of *St. Jago de la Vega*, and then capital of English Jamaica, stood in stark contrast to the usual maritime activity of the port towns of Port Royal and Kingston. Browne regarded Spanish Town as a place where “people live more at their ease, or in greater luxury.”³⁰ Spanish Town’s Anglican church of St. Catherine’s Cathedral recorded its baptisms, marriages, and burials from 1669-1764 in its first volume. Capt. Edward Thache and his family resided here and their records appear first in January 1699 with the burial of Elizabeth “Theach,” presumably his first wife since a subsequent marriage appears for him only six months later to Lucretia Poquet Maverly Axtell. Here, Capt. Thache added three more children – Cox, Rachel, and Thomas – to his older children, Edward and Elizabeth before his death in 1706. Approximately 2,900 baptisms, 4,500 marriages, and 8,050 burials, representing 18.8 percent, 29.1 percent, and 52.1 percent respectively. Death, by far, occupied the majority of the church’s time; however, Spanish Town had historically been the safer locale, with a lower percentage of deaths. The greatest difference appears to be more marriages, and yet, fewer births. This may reflect a more affluent society, expected from the capital city.³¹

Spanish Town historian James Robertson tells that the earthquake of 1692 had leveled the brick English buildings, but not the wattle and daub Spanish remnants “with their wall posts dug deep into the ground.”³² Thus Spanish Town returned to a more Spanish appearance

³⁰ Browne, *The Civil and Natural History of Jamaica*, 7.

³¹ "Jamaica, Church of England Parish Register Transcripts, 1664-1880," <https://familysearch.org/> (accessed 7 Feb 2016), *St Catherine; Baptisms, marriages, burials 1669-1764*, Vol. 1; images 1-173; Registrar General's Department, Spanish Town.

³² James Robertson, *Gone is the Ancient Glory: Spanish Town, Jamaica 1534-2000* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, Ltd., 2005), 60-61.

after the disaster in 1692, contrasting the then leveled English appearance of port towns. Another contemporary author, Charles Leslie, called Spanish Town the “chief City.”³³ “’Tis there the Governor resides,” he said, “and there the Assembly and the Grand Courts of Justice are kept.”³⁴ Leslie regarded its situation inland to be its greatest advantage. “Several wealthy Merchants reside there,” he further elaborated, “and most Gentlemen of estates have houses in it.”³⁵ He spoke flatteringly of the many carriages, affluence of its many residents, the elaborate balls, and that the residents live as “happily as if they were within the Verge of the *British* Court.”³⁶ The staunch abolitionist, Dr. John Atkins, agreed and gave a similar description of *St. Jago de la Vega* on the *Rio Cobre* upon his visit prior to 1735:

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James Robertson said Spanish Town’s “permanent residents were split between free and un-free... ‘a medley of Christians, Jews, Pagans, Negroes, and Mulattoes.’”³⁸ Christian and Jews represented the free, with the Jews being a rather large group that, by the 1750s, grew to a third of the town’s population. Of the less than free, Robertson stated:

³³ Leslie, *History*, 26.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ John Atkins, *A Voyage to Guinea, Brasil, and the West-Indies; in His Majesty's Ships, the Swallow and Weymouth. Describing the several Islands and Settlements, Viz-Madeira, the Canaries, Cape de Verd, Sierraleon, Sesthos, Cape Apollonia, Cabo Corso, and others on the Guinea Coast; Barbadoes, Jamaica, &c. in the West-Indies. The Colour, Diet, Languages, Habits, Manners, Customs, and Religions of the respective Natives, and Inhabitants. With Remarks on the Gold, Ivory, and Slave-Trade; and on the Winds, Tides and Currents of the several Coasts. By John Atkins, Surgeon in the Royal Navy* (London : printed for Caesar Ward and Richard Chandler, at the Ship, between the Temple-Gates in Fleet-Street; [London] and Sold at their Shop in Scarborough, M.DCC.XXXV [1735]), 234.

³⁸ James Robertson, "Giving Directions in Spanish Town, Jamaica: Comprehending a Tropical Townscape," *Journal of Urban History* 35: 5 (July 2009): 721.

The enslaved African and, later, the free African Jamaican residents had their own residential yards, their itineraries were orientated towards the river side, where laundry was washed, horses watered, and water jars filled every morning, or else incorporated the town's markets and some chapels, combining with tales and tag lines to help comprehend these urban spaces.³⁹

Robertson regarded Spanish Town as a “key hub for the island’s road network and a regional marketing center.”⁴⁰ Still, the island’s central law courts, the meetings of the Assembly and government business, created also a partial seasonal economy, unlike the port towns of Kingston and Port Royal. Passage Fort, near Kingston Harbor, a quay with a few houses and taverns, served passengers from Spanish Town who waited for passage on the ferries across to Port Royal, or who returned from Port Royal and needed to rent a coach or horse.⁴¹ Young mariners like Edward Thache Jr. found the port towns much more accessible to their trade, even if more disease-ridden and dangerous. Young Thache may have entered Jamaica as a mariner-turned-planter’s son, but he probably returned to the sea nevertheless.

That Spanish Town remarkably differed from the port towns is best illustrated by Robertson’s research. He added:

Spanish Town’s mid-eighteenth-century streets also appeared in striking contrast with Port Royal (established in 1655) and then Kingston (founded in 1692), both towns laid out by English military engineers, where newly disembarked visitors observed that “the houses are all of brick and the same height and design; all have glass windows just as in Europe.” Furthermore, as a visiting ship’s surgeon recalled, Kingston’s “Streets are wide, and more regular, to face the Sea-Breezes, [with] the cross Streets at right Angles, that the Air may have as little Interruption as possible.” The older inland town might be laid out on a grid too, but Spanish Town’s streets were narrower and did not catch the same breezes.⁴²

Noel B. Livingston, in writing *Sketch Pedigrees of Some of the Earliest Settlers in Jamaica* in 1909, lists several older papers found on the island in an effort to preserve them.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 724.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 727.

⁴² *Ibid.*

He records a survey of the island about 1680 in which he shows 11,898 total residents, of which 2,500 “able lusty men” comprise the “Privateers Hunters Sloop and Boatmen.”⁴³ Of the island’s commodities, the survey showed fifty-seven sugar works producing 1,710 thousand weight each year. Also, forty-seven cocoa walks “which may yield 188000 pound weight of nuts in seasonable years,” and forty-nine indigo works of 49,000 weight each year.⁴⁴ These quickly increased. By 1672, one reference gave seventy sugar works, sixty cocoa walks, and sixty indigo works. It increased every year and, by 1682, when pirate activity was severely hampered, it would dramatically flourish, even over Barbados.⁴⁵

Three salt ponds of about 4,000 acres yield 10,000 bushels per year. Mountain provinces yield 50,000 weight of Pimento and Jamaican pepper, as well as Fustick, Brasiletto, Lignum Votae, Ebony, sweet smelling and other curious woods. Medicinal plants provide “Vanillious, China Roots, Cassia Fistula, and Tamarinds.”⁴⁶ The soil, states Livingston, appears good for cotton and tobacco, but that planters find more profit in sugar, cocoa, and indigo and generally do not bother with it. The large savannahs support 6,000 head of cattle, sheep, goats, and tame hogs. Thomas Tohill, the receiver general who collected this survey, had declared Jamaica not only able to adequately provide for its own population, but its surplus capable of provisioning homeward (toward England) bound ships.⁴⁷

Nicholas Salvatore Scolaro, in his master’s thesis, “The Rise and Fall of Markets Along Bluefields Bay, Jamaica,” stated that “Jamaica became England’s leading sugar

⁴³ Noel B. Livingston, *Sketch Pedigrees of Some of the Earliest Settlers in Jamaica* (Kingston: Educational Supply Company, 1909), 130-131.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Nicholas Salvatore Scolaro, “The Rise and Fall of Markets Along Bluefields Bay, Jamaica,” Masters Thesis, Master of Science, Applied Anthropology, Missouri State University (December 2013), 44.

⁴⁶ Livingston, *Sketch Pedigrees*, 132.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

producing colony during the 1700s and, by the 1770s, had surpassed that of all the other English islands combined.”⁴⁸ He added “The expansion of the sugar industry paralleled a rise in sugar estates, imports of enslaved people, commodity exports, population, patented lands, cultivated acres, and property values.”⁴⁹

Centrally located in the Caribbean, Jamaica’s economic growth in the Golden Age came primarily through privateering. As Noel Livingston recorded, a full 21 percent of the population served the maritime interests. A large part of those were privateers who made Port Royal such a lucrative port; these became iconic heroes to future privateers and pirates. They made Jamaica an island of wealthy mariners who used piracy as a primary economic tool.⁵⁰

The tall tales of Sir Francis Drake, John Hawkins, Brasiliano, Lewis Scot, Sir Henry Morgan and the like were romances of legend to whom all young boys looked with starry-eyed reverence. Edward Thache likely arrived in Jamaica as a young boy of six or eight. He and others, like Bermudan Henry Jennings, listened to these stories and probably imagined himself sailing to Panama with Morgan, sacking and burning it, then grabbing all that gold. They learned to do this not for queen and country, but for Jamaica and themselves.

⁴⁸ Scolaro, “The Rise and Fall of Markets Along Bluefields Bay, Jamaica,” 44.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Livingston, *Sketches*, 132.

CHAPTER 2. Proprietaries: Gathering of the Forgotten

An exposition of the development of proprietary or private colonies and “pirate nests” quickly exposes Marcus Rediker’s proletarian pirates – the William Flys of the late Golden Age of Piracy. Contrasting sharply with the wealthy privateers and pirates of Jamaica and Bermuda, these common pirates of the Bahamas became molds for the Board of Trade’s new vision for pirates in America. Understanding the dissimilar development of the Bahamas as a pirate nest aids in comprehension of the subtle effect of the “war on piracy.” They had served as a stark example to convince pirate-loving Americans – a model for the new view of pirates as destitute, worthless and “notorious” criminals.

The prosperous Jamaican ports of Kingston and Port Royal stand in complete antithesis to Nassau, ironically belonging to the wealthy Lords Proprietors of Carolina. The Bahamas had devolved into an administrative wasteland because of proprietary negligence. Old families of mixed political and religious leanings who settled or were forced to settle there, continuously beset by Spanish raiders, became a loose assortment of dissenters, malcontents, pirates, and wreckers. Again, like their sister colony of North Carolina, discontent became the norm and, as historian Noeleen McIlvenna mentioned, they were quite “mutinous.”¹ They had little wealth. They pirated and worked wrecks to maintain subsistence-level existence. They literally stood as outcasts in Anglo-American society. Inhabitants of the Bahamas emerged as the “Flying Gang” of the impending Golden Age of Piracy.²

¹ Noeleen McIlvenna, *Very Mutinous People: The Struggle for North Carolina, 1660-1713* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

² Marcus Rediker, *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2011), 30.

The Bahamas have long been tied to the development of Carolina, as early as 1629. That year, Charles I granted Sir Robert Heath all the land in mainland America between the latitudes of 31° and 36° in the same year, land claimed at that time by his most Catholic Majesty, Phillip III of Spain. The king hoped to prevent Spain's expansion northward as well as to gain a foothold on their territory. This grant of "Carolana," then including the Bahamas, straddled the Florida Straits and gave England full control of traffic leaving the Caribbean. England then controlled both the entrance and the exit to Spain's New World treasures.³

Monsieur de Belavene, the Huguenot refugee who had initially proposed Carolana to provide a colony for protestant refugees, also proposed that the colony could serve as a base against Spain. Belavene clearly understood the strategic importance of Carolana which sat astride the Spanish path to home with their treasure. He said "if the Spaniard can hinder it, he will do it."⁴ "Within four years," as historian Paul E. Kopperman writes, "the fleets based in the proposed plantation would be capable of sealing off the passage of the Spanish treasure convoys, a state of affairs that would promote England's prosperity and Spain's ruin."⁵ The economic disparity between England and Spain had always been a matter of indirect zero-sum proportionality. Where one might prosper, the other would certainly fail.

Salutary neglect defined the private colonies from their inception until resumption. The ambitiously touted Carolana venture failed to bear fruit; Heath's grant remained

³ Paul E. Kopperman, "Profile of Failure: The Carolana Project, 1629-1640," *The North Carolina Historical Review*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (January, 1982), pp. 1-23; "America and West Indies: Addenda 1629," in *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies, Volume 9, 1675-1676 and Addenda 1574-1674*, ed. W Noel Sainsbury (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1893), 70-72, accessed April 14, 2015, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/colonial/america-west-indies/vol9/pp70-72>.

⁴ The National Archives, CO 1/5/30, quoted in Kopperman, "Profile of Failure," p. 4.

⁵ Kopperman, "Profile of Failure," p. 3; Lowell W. Newton, "Juan Esteban de Ubilla and the Flota of 1715," *The Americas*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Oct., 1976), pp. 267-268.

unplanted after many failed attempts. The mainland of Carolana was virtually ignored; Virginia, at first, a company venture, and then, a Crown colony, having already been established.

Finally, and similar to Virginia, wealthy businessmen of the Somers Islands Company received a charter to settle the neglected Bahamas in 1647.⁶ Historian Michael Craton tells that, according to the *Articles and Orders of the Company of Eleutherian Adventurers*, for a £100 investment, each member received 300 acres and membership in a republican government. Not quite as democratic as its sister venture of Rhode Island, each member would receive a seat on the Senate in a decided departure from the English norm. “Eleuthera” meant “freedom” in Greek and these Puritans founded the first ideologically-modern American government in the southern Atlantic. The first president, or “governor” was to be chosen by the Crown, but all subsequent governors elected.⁷

With no charter yet in hand, William Sayles gathered seventy Puritan settlers and left Bermuda for Eleuthera, a long thin island just east of New Providence in the Bahamas. Almost from the start, a “Capt. Butler” factionalized the Puritans and Sayles moved to another island. Second, Sayles’ ship wrecked with only one fatality and he used a shallop to sail to Virginia to seek relief for the lost ship and supplies. Many of these early settlers were stranded and subsequently neglected by their company.⁸

Sudden political turmoil also added a Puritan exile population in the Bahamas, contrasting the stronger and wealthier Anglican presence in Jamaica. Amidst Sayles’ settlement troubles, “Roundheads,” or Parliamentarians, beheaded King Charles I, beginning

⁶ Michael Craton, *A History of the Bahamas* (1962), revised ed. (London: Collins, 1968), pp. 58-59.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *The Shaftesbury Papers* (1897), ed. by Langdon Cheves (Charleston: South Carolina Historical Society, 2010), pp. 3-4.

the Interregnum, or Puritan rule. In revolt, Royalists on Bermuda began a forced expulsion of other Puritans to Eleuthera. Some came from New England as well. Later, a few returned when the political climate grew less hostile. Still, democracy failed and “a hard core of settlers remained at Eleuthera, eking out a miserable existence based upon the export of brasetto [wood] and ambergris, the gleanings from wrecks [common here] and the sporadic generosity of other colonies.”⁹

Eleuthera also became an exile for many Bermudians, and not merely because of Tory leanings during the Interregnum. Seven “Negroes” in the *Blessing* were sent against their will for revolting in 1656. Neptuna Downham was exiled there for having a child in her husband’s absence. Other men, for example, Thomas Wilson and Francis Wood, had divorced and left their wives for Eleuthera for similar reasons. The Bahamas became a home to malcontents and those in despair, somewhat less than the ideal originally proposed by King Charles I. Furthermore, the privately-owned islands had never developed the administrative stability that the Crown had hoped would serve as a bastion against Spain’s Caribbean fiscal interests.¹⁰

Attempting to preserve their New England Puritan roots, Sayles’ abandoned faction renamed the more western “Sayle’s Island” to “New Providence” by 1666 and established a capital there. The island then consisted of 900 residents and 1,100 in all of the Bahamas, including slaves. Still, they existed without “government, protection, or law,” often relying upon Bermudan courts and military support.¹¹

⁹ Craton, *History of the Bahamas*, pp. 58-59.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

Another bold imperialist attempt to secure Carolina and the Bahamas came at the end of the Interregnum, or non-monarchical rule, in a resurgence of Tory imperative. It resulted in a massive seizure of Spanish territory, some already occupied by Spanish citizens. In 1660, the restored King Charles II, the beheaded king's son, returned from exile in France and honored those noblemen who restored his throne with a new grant and deed, exactly as stated in Heath's charter, excepting the Bahamas. In 1663, Carolina extended nearly 325 miles north to south and over 2,500 miles from the Atlantic Ocean to the "South Seas," or the Pacific.¹² Of course, neither the Lords Proprietors, nor the king could have imagined the sheer immensity of that grant. Charles II bequeathed his royal approbation in 1663 as "*Magnum Sigillum Carolinæ Dominorum.*" The proprietors' primary instructions read as *Domitus cultoribus orbis*, "to dominate and conquer the world," to piratically take all.¹³ Again, the primary intent was to dominate Spain's possessions, eventually even Spain's silver and gold mines, the source of their wealth. King Charles II proudly styled his noble pirates as the "Corporation of the Barbadoes Adventurers."¹⁴ Proudly, Barbadians-turned-Carolinians established their own pirate base.

Dated June 30, 1665, while this new charter clarified the boundary with Carolina's northern neighbor of Virginia and added another 69 miles north of the former boundary, it also added another 125 miles south, as illustrated in figure 2. This land sliced into the already well-established Spanish territory of La Florida, enveloping the city of St. Augustine, founded a full century before by Pedro Menéndez de Avilés and occupied continuously since then. This intrusion invited numerous battles between Carolinians and

¹² Google Earth, measured 24 Jun 2013.

¹³ "America and West Indies: August 1663," *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies, Volume 5: 1661-1668* (1880), 151-158.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

the Spanish military forces of St. Augustine, on water and land. America’s future imperialist doctrine of “Manifest Destiny” had its primary root and piratical beginning in English Carolina.¹⁵



Figure 2: A Map or Chart of the West Indies, drawn from the best Spanish Maps, and regulated by Astronomical Observations – “X” marks Ubilla’s wrecked flotilla of July 30, 1715 – Open Copyright.

Illustrating the Spaniard's desire to “cut off” the English in Carolina, historian Verner Crane in *The Southern Frontier 1670-1732*, wrote:

A Barbadian sloop, separated by a storm from the fleet, put in by mistake at Santa Catalina de Guale [in May 1670]. A landing-party, hunting wood and water, was attacked by the Indians, several men were killed, and two others, including John Rivers, a kinsman of Lord Ashley, sent away prisoners to St. Augustine. Governor Sayle despatched a peremptory demand for their release, but his messengers were also seized at Santa Catalina. The arrest of these colonists and their detention for several years in Florida became a subject of diplomatic remonstrance.¹⁶

This reaction was mild by comparison to the decades of warfare, attacks on English garrisons in Carolina, and counter-attacks by Carolinians that ensued from this Carolina charter. As Crane noted, “the exit of the Spanish fleets through the Bahama Channel

¹⁵ Walter B. Edgar, *South Carolina: A History* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 93-94.

¹⁶ Verner Crane, *The Southern Frontier 1670-1732* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 10.

[Florida Straits] was threatened.”¹⁷ All of this trouble was designed to obtain Spanish riches. In fact, the mainland colonies, at least in the South, were established not only as bases to raid their treasure shipments, but also to grow food for privateer forces in the Caribbean.

Even more annoying to Spain, King Charles II again granted the Bahamas to six of the eight Carolina Lords Proprietors. Just prior to the founding of Charles Town on the Ashley and Cooper Rivers and immediately following the Spanish capture of Lord Proprietor Anthony Ashley Cooper’s cousin, John Rivers, the king gave to his favorites on November 1, 1670 at Westminster,:

... all those islands called Bahama, Eleutheria, Ucanis, Providence, Inagua, and all other those islands lying in the degrees of 22 to 27 north lat., commonly known by the name of the Bahama Islands, or the Islands of the Lucayos.¹⁸

This renewed bastion against Spain was to be an expensive affair: £633,000 for transport of 1,000 persons, 600 slaves, with 8,000 more slaves within two years, and subsistence for these people, plus fortifications and their own sloop. At nearly that same moment, Barbadians had planted a similar contingent upon the Ashley River at the newly-named Charles Town in the southern part of Carolina. Capt. Henry Braine had returned to Barbados in the *Carolina* and reported his success only three days after the new Bahamas charter. Essentially, by late 1670, proprietary colonies straddled both sides of the Florida Straits, much to the Crown’s satisfaction and Spain’s discontent. This action undoubtedly made negotiations for the return of the English prisoners ever more complicated. The Bahamas, combined with the mainland Florida coast, ensured complete English control of everything that left the Caribbean, whatever nation transported it.¹⁹

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁸ “America and West Indies: November 1670,” *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies, Volume 7: 1669-1674* (1889), 122-140.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Many ancestors of future pirates, however, either already lived in or came with these “Adventurers” to the Bahamas a few decades before the Golden Age. Among those found on the 1671 census, there were William and Mary Carey and their family, John and Richard Carey, and Mark Carey. Another family, the Kemps, included Benjamin, Jane, Mary and children; also included were Anthony and his sons, John, Anthony and their families. Perhaps most importantly for the purposes of pirate history were the Lows. Gideon and Martha and their daughters were listed, as well as Matthew and Sarah, son Thomas and daughters, and John and Elizabeth Low. Car(e)ys and Low(e)s were known families of Quakers that married into the future Carolina Lord Proprietor John Archdale’s family. Some of them, like Emanuel, his wife Mary Archdale, and his son, Neville, settled in North Carolina. Members of these same families were later identified in the Bahamas as pirates by Bahamian Admiralty judge Thomas Walker.²⁰

Despite their importance as a strategic anti-Spanish location, Bahamian residents were never highly regarded in the maritime community. By the 1670s, they had already become the dregs of the Atlantic because of the sheer negligence of their private owners. Historian Michael Craton assures that “In fact,” of the needed £633,000, “there is positive record that the Proprietors spent in the first few years the grand total of £495: 2s,” merely

²⁰ A. Talbot Bethell, *Early Settlers of the Bahamas and Colonists of North America*, Third Edition (Westminster, MD: Heritage Books, Inc., 1937), 85-87; “America and West Indies: March 1715, 1-15,” *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies, Volume 28: 1714-1715* (1928), 110-122, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=73958&strquery=hornigold> (accessed: 23 August 2014); Johnson, *General History*, 2nd ed., 366-367; *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 7.2, 26 April 2015), *Ordinary of Newgate’s Account*, December 1707 (OA17071217); *The Shaftesbury Papers* (Columbia: South Carolina Historical Society, 2010), 433-444; In 1681, John Archdale obtained Sir William Berkeley’s share for his son Thomas. In the early eighteenth century, Admiralty judge Thomas Walker wrote to the Council of Trade and Plantations about pirates “John Kemp, Mathew Lowe, James Bourne, John Cary (all married).” Capt. Charles Johnson identified Edward Low as one of the more notorious pirates, though Johnson claims him to be from Westminster, Middlesex, England. Johnson also claims this Edward Low to be the brother of Richard Low, tried and executed at Tyburn in 1707, but with possible family in Boston, Massachusetts with Puritan roots.

0.07 percent of the required sum to maintain the colony.²¹ Craton asserts that the proprietors' "chief activity was to engage in a stream of correspondence and to send a succession of incompetent, corrupt or ineffectual Governors... [to preside] 'over a few barefooted people.'"²² One Jamaican administrator inferred that these lack-lustered Bahamian governors "get into those places to avoid their debts."²³ Jamaican Gov. Thomas Lynch perceived a disaster from the start:

Ambergris and brazilletto were failing. Wrecks could not be relied upon, especially as the islands [, although near the strategically-important Florida Straits,] were off the favoured shipping routes. The climate was not really hot enough... to produce the crops which were helping Jamaica to thrive; cotton, indigo, ginger, cocoa and sugar. And with its poor soil, the Bahamas could not compete with Virginia in the tobacco trade.²⁴

No profit could be found in the Bahamas and, so, the proprietors ignored the colony, the needs of its inhabitants, and their own government's imperialist ambitions. Their personal objectives largely handicapped every attempt that England made to secure a much-desired and necessary privateer base. Essentially, while the Bahamas had become "a receptacle for all rogues," it was not firmly under the home government's control. The government simply would not interfere in the proprietors' rights to their property. After the Glorious Revolution of 1688 establishing a constitutional monarchy and progressive changes that came over England at the end of the century, this lack of control became even more apparent by way of liberal contrast.²⁵

²¹ Craton, *History of the Bahamas*, 70.

²² John Oldmixon, *The British Empire in America: Containing the History of the Discovery, Settlement, Progress and State of the British Colonies on the Continent and Islands of America*, 2nd ed. (London: Printed for J. Brotherton et al., 1741), 424; Craton, *History of the Bahamas*, 70.

²³ *Ibid.*, 71.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 89.

Craton describes the arrival in 1694 of energetic Nicholas Trott, son of Perient and brother of Samuel Trott of Bermuda and later a merchant in London with his brother John. According to Craton, Trott received this governorship from the proprietors as a consolation for a ruined tobacco shipment in Bermuda. He received a hundred acres of land in a rare proprietary surge of effort to repopulate the Bahamas by March 1695. He redesigned Charles Town and renamed it "Nassau," a hereditary title of William III, to flatter the new Protestant Dutch sovereign of England. He also expressed a surge of effort and built Fort Nassau of twenty-eight guns to protect the harbor, now on the site of the present British Colonial Hotel. Briefly, the proprietors "ploughed back into the Bahamas the small profit of £800" to pay for the fort.²⁶

Then arrived pirate Henry Avery in his heavily armed "merchant" ship, the *Fancy*, under the assumed name of "Bridgeman." He used an assumed name, probably since he had just pirated an English ship, not Spanish, French, Dutch, or otherwise. The self-interested Trott, knowing full well who the pirate was, made a deal with him for the entire ship, including its cargo of "fifty tons of elephant tusks, 100 barrels of gunpowder, [and] several chests filled with guns and muskets, and a remarkable collection of ship's anchors."²⁷ These articles, Avery stole from Sir James Houblon's ship, the *Charles*. Trott had ivory tusks, pieces of eight, and bags of coins delivered to "Bridgeman's" private quarters. Afterwards, Avery's men scattered, some stayed in the Bahamas and married, some went to Carolina, and some to New England. Few went home to England where they might be tried for their crimes.²⁸

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 84.

²⁷ Colin Woodard, *Republic of Pirates* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2008), 13.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

England discouraged piracy's former abuses, especially when these abuses fell upon themselves. Henry Avery's piracies in the Red Sea and his relative freedom afterward in the Bahamas illuminated a serious problem: pirates began feeding on England's own trade, not just the Spanish. This went against former English policy in the West Indies. England made further policy changes in colonial law following these troubling events.

The Board of Trade and Plantations, previously the purview of the king's Privy Council, was made a separate body independent of the executive in May 1696. Part of their function included examination of colonial legislation to determine which of those laws conflicted with imperial trade policies. The then current statute on piracy, The Offences at Sea Act 1536 in the 28th year of King Henry VIII, was archaic and demanded that pirates be tried in England. On 13 October 1696, Sir Charles Hedges, judge of the Admiralty Court under William III, changed piracy, at least from England's point-of-view. It was no longer seen by England, or needed as, the heroic efforts used by "Sea Dogs" to deprive Spain of her wealth. The old "zero-sum" or "fixed wealth" concept of economics became dangerous. By contrast, the "white gold" of sugar, produced with heavy slave labor, had begun to replace an uncertain and erratic dependence upon stealing Spanish gold and silver. Official objectives became less one of theft and more one of protecting ones products *from* theft. Thus, the labeling of pirates as "*Hostis Humani Generi*," or "enemy of all mankind," in the modernized Act for the More Effectual Suppression of Piracy of 1698.²⁹ In a motion of the pen, America's heroes had become "notorious" criminals. West Indians and other American colonists, however, may not have agreed.

²⁹ Robert E. Lee, *Blackbeard the Pirate* (Raleigh: John F. Blair, 1974), 239; Bruce A. Elleman, Andrew Forbes, and David Rosenberg, Ed., *Piracy and Maritime Crime: Historical and Modern Case Studies*, Newport Paper Thirty-five (Newport: Naval War College, Center for Naval Warfare Studies, 2010), vi.

Hedges revised Admiralty law so that “Now piracy is only a sea term for robbery, piracy being a robbery committed within the jurisdiction of the Admiralty.”³⁰ “If any man be assaulted within that jurisdiction,” he wrote, as if chastising Americans, “and his ship or goods violently taken away without legal authority, this is robbery and piracy.”³¹ “It hath been found by experience” that the courts met with “great trouble and charges in sending them into England” to be tried for their crimes or cannot easily “be questioned for such their piracies and robberies.”³²

Edward Randolph argued to the Board that King Charles II’s haughty favoritism expressed in private charters was the height of corruptive influence. Randolph argued that proprietary officials “enjoy[ed] an extraordinary liberty in a generall Trade and constant benefitt by pirates and the Scotch Trade in the proprietries and private Charters.”³³ The proprietors, he said, ignored regulation and they...

... omitt to nominate fitt persons to be allowed and approved by his Majesty in Councill, before their entrance on their respective Governments, from whence it follows that whilst the principles omitt their obligations at home, it cannot be expected their Deputies will do their Duties in the plantations.³⁴

Crown-appointed colonial officials, sent by the Board, often found themselves at odds with proprietors’ deputies, landed colonial *cassiques* of great power and position. Facing powerful opposition both in England and in America, Edward Randolph made a final

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² “William III, 1698-9: An Act for the more effectuall Suppressions of Piracy. [Chapter VII. Rot. Parl. 11 Gul. III. p. 2. n. 5.]” in *Statutes of the Realm: Volume 7, 1695-1701*, ed. John Raithby (s.l: Great Britain Record Commission, 1820), 590-594.

³³ Edward Randolph, “Report by Edward Randolph concerning illegal trade in proprietary colonies, including a related petition from the proprietors” (10 November 1696), *NCCR*, 1: 466.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 1: 465.

failed effort to have Board-appointed attorney-generals and Admiralty judges in all colonies in March 1697.³⁵

Ignoring a handicapped royal government, the Lords Proprietors appointed Gov. Trott's nephew and namesake, Nicholas Trott to be "Attorney General, and Advocate General of South Carolina, and Naval Officer of Carolina," on February 5, 1697.³⁶ That same year, John Graves was appointed by the Board to the position of customs collector for the Bahamas, following the elder Nicholas Trott's collaboration with the known pirate Avery. Board secretary William Popple elaborated on his orders, stating that he would "enquire diligently into all matters of piracy, as well past as that may occur in the future. Enquire particularly into the late scandalous reception of [Henry] Every and his associates," for Trott's trial.³⁷ John Graves traveled to New Providence after Trott's removal and reported to the Board:

On our arrival on 19 July, 1697, there were not above seven [of Avery's 96 men] in the Island and mostly married. They had scattered themselves to several parts. Some had a trial, some none. The late Governor Trott got considerable out of them (*sic*); particulars I cannot certify, but it is reported at least £7,000. This Governor has fleeced those he found here and gives them another instrument of writing for a pardon.³⁸

Gov. Trott's proprietary-appointed successor was no better. Indeed, a remark by Gov. William Beeston of Jamaica about "Mr. Webb," the new proprietary governor of the Bahamas seems much like his predecessor Trott. Webb "seized [a vessel], and will not let

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ "America and West Indies: April 1702, 6-10," in *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies, Volume 20, 1702*, ed. Cecil Headlam (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1912), 196-216.

³⁷ "America and West Indies: February 1697, 22-25," *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies, Volume 15: 1696-1697* (1904), 380-386.

³⁸ "America and West Indies: May 1698, 11-14," *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies, Volume 16: 1697-1698* (1905), 207-217.

her go till they have paid him 1/3 of the whole value.”³⁹ Capt. Webb later allegedly defended himself to the Board against “insinuations already mentioned and to one Thomas Walker, a pretender to the law here.”⁴⁰ Beeston “railed against the ‘private colonies’ in a letter to the Board of Trade in 1696, accusing them of being places where ‘privateers and Red Sea pirates [are] entertained... while the King's own colonies dwindle to nothing.”⁴¹ Beeston’s further comments reflect those made by Virginia governors about the Albemarle of North Carolina:

... those [proprietary governors of the Bahamas] over a few barefooted people that get into those places to avoid their debts, take on them the title of Excellency and Captain General, which to support they squeeze and prejudice His Majesty’s subjects and authority. Whether they have the authority for those characters I know not, but sure I am it’s a great diminution to those honourable titles.⁴²

Approaching the Golden Age, Vice Admiralty Judge and Chief Justice of the Bahamas Thomas Walker became famous for his opposition to piracy. He began his career under Read Elding, governor of the Bahamas from 1699 to 1701. Elding, of African and European mixed blood, hailed from Boston, Massachusetts where he married Hannah Pemberton in 1695.⁴³ Elding had been the deputy-governor under Gov. Nicholas Webb and succeeded to that office by virtue of Webb’s “decamping [New Providence] without warning.”⁴⁴ Under Elding, Walker became Judge of the High Court of Admiralty for the Bahamas on November 4, 1700. He was appointed to that position by the Hon. Perient Trott,

³⁹ “America and West Indies: June 1699, 21-30,” *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies, Volume 17: 1699 and Addenda 1621-1698* (1908), 291-308.

⁴⁰ “America and West Indies: May 1698, 11-14,” *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies, Volume 16: 1697-1698* (1905), 207-217.

⁴¹ Burgess, “A Crisis of Charter and Right,” 607.

⁴² Craton, *History of the Bahamas*, 71.

⁴³ Ancestry.com, *Massachusetts, Town and Vital Records, 1620-1988* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

⁴⁴ Michael Garibaldi Hall, *Edward Randolph and the American Colonies 1676-1703* (New York: Norton Company, 1960), 168-169.

father of former Bahamas governor, Nicholas Trott. Walker noted that part of his duties were “to pay unto the King the tenths of all wrecks and other matters arising to the King by virtue” of his commission as Admiralty judge.⁴⁵ Wrecking soon became a profitable venture in the Bahamas, with increased traffic from many nations and over 700 islands enmeshed in shallow and dangerous shoal waters beside the Florida straits. Still, the king rarely received his cut or one-tenth portion.

Thomas Walker’s relationship with Gov. Read Elding, the “assumed Deputy Governor of the Bahamies,” as he referred to him, was tenuous.⁴⁶ Part of the problem was that England competed with the proprietors over the loyalty of their colonies. Elding corruptly opted for that tenth of all wrecks to go to the proprietors and not the king. Walker, like his friend, customs collector John Graves, both not fans of proprietaries, disagreed. As he warned in summer 1701, “the Deputy Governor is resolved to take and receive for the Lords Proprietors, and he being too strong and potent will overcome us, [unless] we have further direction and protection from England.”⁴⁷

Walker’s fiery situation with Elding had grown worse. He related that his attempts to collect revenues for the king had angered Elding. He avowed that “The Dep. Governor has lately attempted to murder me.”⁴⁸ Furthermore, the Spanish, annoyed with English pirates in the Bahamas, had threatened to attack Nassau and tear down the fort. A precarious situation presented Walker with little choice, as he saw it. “I have imbarqued upon a vessel of my own well victualled and manned for the King's service,” he wrote, “and am in my

⁴⁵ “America and West Indies: July 1701, 26-31,” *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies, Volume 19: 1701* (1910), 378-386.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

passage to Virginia to Governor Nicholson, there to crave the aid and assistance of a man of war.”⁴⁹ Walker landed in the Albemarle of North Carolina and sent his request from there, through the backroads of the Dismal Swamp, to Nicholson on April 24. He later related that Elding “privately supplied known pirates about those Islands with liquors and refreshment, and underhand hath taken their ill gotten money for the same, and enriched himself thereby.”⁵⁰ Walker also considered the strong possibility of a coming Spanish war and reiterated the reason that Spain disliked English control of the Bahamas so much. He repeated that “The port of Providence may be used for H.M. ships not over 17 foot draught, whence they may run to the edge of the Gulf, to attack the Spanish Plate Fleet.”⁵¹ This was important to the empire and Walker saw that the Bahamas failed that effort.

Gov. Read Elding had been removed from his office and arrested; Walker then returned. Still, in October 1701, nothing short of a revolution occurred in the Bahamas, led by Elding and many of his supporters, apparently a growing majority in the islands. A new governor, Elias Haskett, 33-year-old son of Stephen and Elizabeth Haskett of Salem, Massachusetts, had been appointed, and subsequently deposed in six months. Haskett’s politics ostensibly favored the king, though he vacillated somewhat and eventually revealed his proprietary favoritism. He surprisingly charged many Bahamians with treason, including John Graves. Still, Haskett’s later favor of the proprietors did not protect him; the island had broken out in rebellion.⁵²

⁴⁹ “America and West Indies: October 1701, 21-23,” *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies, Volume 19: 1701* (1910), 591-593.

⁵⁰ “America and West Indies: December 1701, 2-5,” *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies, Volume 19: 1701* (1910), 630-659.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*; Harriet Ruth Cooke, *The Driver family : a Genealogical Memoir of the Descendants of Robert and Phebe Driver of Lynn, Mass.: with an Appendix containing Twenty-Three Allied Families, 1592-1887* (New York: unknown, 1889), 280.

There were also allegations of the tyrannical activities of Bahamas' six-month governor Haskett. Supposedly, he had ordered Capt. John Warren, a privateer of New Providence, to capture *Seaflower*, a sloop intending to take in salt at Turk's Island. Allegedly, Haskett wanted to know whether the master of *Seaflower* had been doing so under commission from the Lords Proprietors and he "threatning withall that if they did not agree in their answers he would cut off their ears."⁵³ Other accusations made that day against Haskett included one complaint from Seaman John Caverly. Caverly said that Haskett accused him of trying to illegally rake salt and cut wood. Caverly angrily alleged that Haskett "commanded a Negroe to put a halter about the said Caverly's neck."⁵⁴

Back in England, Haskett's creditors related that he had "absconded to the Bahamas" to escape them in the first place. Michael Craton tells that "Having fixed a rendezvous at the Rummer Tavern, Graceschurch Street, he had gone to Portsmouth instead."⁵⁵ A bailiff sent in pursuit was repelled with firearms and Haskett fled England again. Still, having settled later in St. Margaret Westminster, Middlesex in 1720, he became embroiled in further legal matters concerning former Bahamian governor, then London merchant Nicholas Trott.⁵⁶

Unlike prosperous Jamaica, the Bahamas' government had never taken root and, by the early 1700's, disintegrated even further. Private control had clearly been identified as the problem. Resumption became a clear necessity for Whigs; private charters allowed for little to no oversight and widespread corruption and violence, including the continued support of piracy – whether on land or sea. The worse cases came from Carolina and the Bahamas, but

⁵³ "America and West Indies: February 1702, 2-5," *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies, Volume 20: 1702* (1912), 57-69.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Crayton, *History of the Bahamas*, 92-93.

⁵⁶ National Archives (London), "Haskett v Trott" (1720), C 11/36/24, *Pleadings, Sewell Division, Court of Chancery: Six Clerks Office: Pleadings: 1714-1758*.

private misrule had become evident in all proprietary possessions. The Board began investigations into “requiring information relating to the conduct of Proprietary Governments,” particularly the Jerseys in 1702.⁵⁷ It became the second private colony to be absorbed by the royal government after Maryland. As the Haskett affair played out in New York in February of that year, the Board prepared a draft proposal for a Resumption Bill for the surrendering of all private colony charters, including East and West New Jersey, to the Crown.⁵⁸

Despite the inherent corruption, the Resumption Bill of 1702, except for the Jerseys, mostly failed. It may have been partly due to the building hostilities between England, France, and Spain. Charles II of Spain had recently died without an heir and the political turmoil of the War of the Spanish Succession gave support to war-hawks in Whitehall. On March 2, 1702, Anne, daughter of James II, succeeded William III of Orange, who had died from pneumonia complications after falling from his horse and breaking his collarbone. Anne announced her intention to maintain the Protestant succession and reduce the growing power of France, who encroached upon Carolina through the Mississippi River, when she took the throne. Queen Anne’s War was about to commence. Pirates and privateers would be needed by England – heroes again!⁵⁹

One of those future pirates appears to have been Edward Thache Jr. of *St. Jago de la Vega* or Spanish Town, Jamaica, later known as “Blackbeard the Pirate.” He joined the

⁵⁷ “America and West Indies: March 1702, 16-20,” *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies, Volume 20: 1702* (1912), 132-153.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*; King Charles II had originally given the Jerseys to his brother James after the English Civil War and the subsequent Dutch wars. He, in turn gave them to two of the Lords Proprietors of Carolina, Sir George Carteret and Lord Berkeley of Stratton.

⁵⁹ Edward Gregg, *Queen Anne* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 152.

Royal Navy, possibly as early as the beginning, and fought in Queen Anne's War. He served aboard Adm. William Whetstone's flagship, the HMS *Windsor*, stationed at Port Royal.⁶⁰

The Bahama Islands provided no known heroes for the war. They were almost immediately devastated, which, by this time, required little effort. September 17, 1703, John Moore of Carolina, in Pennsylvania with Robert Quarry, sent a letter to the Board informing them of New Providence's final destruction. "Spaniards and French... had lately attacked the Bahama Islands, destroyed Providence, putting all the men to the sword, and designing to burn the women had not the humanity of one of the French officers interposed."⁶¹ Rescuers "brought off about 80 of the people (most women) with them, and in their passage took a Spanish ship about 150 tuns laden with cocoa and other valuable goods."⁶² Acting-governor Ellis Lightwood abandoned his post as well. Moore clearly blamed the proprietors' private rule for the destruction and mayhem on the Bahamas. He said "[Spain and France] had this notion that those Islands were out of the Queen's protection and independent from ye Crown (one of the ill effects of [private] Charters)."⁶³

Edward Birch of Carolina deserves little mention as the next governor of the Bahamas, appointed in 1702, brought over by John Graves from Charles Town on January 1, 1704. The final destruction of the government seat of Nassau, however, occurred before his arrival. He was to replace the acting, if not absent, "proprietary president" Lightwood. Birch, not impressed, had returned to Carolina by June.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ "Edward Thache to Lucretia Thache" (10 December 1706), LOS Deeds Liber 40 Folio 67, Registrar General's Department, Spanish Town, Jamaica; also, in Brooks, "Born in Jamaica of Very Creditable Parents," 281.

⁶¹ "America and West Indies: September 1703, 11-20," *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies, Volume 21: 1702-1703* (1913), 681-697.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Craton, *History of the Bahamas*, 93.

Capt. Robert Holden, ex-secretary and collector of the Albemarle, had originally been commissioned by the Lords Proprietors to explore beyond the Appalachian Mountains. Later, as master of the *Granville*, he sailed for the Bahamas with a patent from the Proprietors to look after the “whale fishings and wrecks in those parts.”⁶⁵ Disappointed in that search, he was raking salt on Exuma in early May 1704. There, he was chased by a French ship and privateer, both running English colors to fool their intended targets. The ship had sixteen guns and fifty men, the privateer had but four guns and sixty men, and Holden was taken. He later visited several of the islands in that chain, but never landed on New Providence, as it was destroyed and the fort in ruin.⁶⁶

Like Walker, Collector John Graves chose to defend his adopted home in a final fruitless effort. He addressed the Board in December 1706, saying in “December last there was about 27 families remaining on the Island of Providence and about 4 or 500 inhabitants scattered in the other islands.”⁶⁷ Graves wanted the Crown to provide a hundred soldiers with officers and provisions. With those, “he did not doubt but that in a little time, with the assistance of the inhabitants who may be all summoned to Providence, they would be able to defend themselves against the Spaniards,” and repair the fort.⁶⁸ This suggestion of Graves, through the Board, the proprietors totally ignored.

The proprietors were enamored, however, with the heroic Capt. Robert Holden, a two-decade veteran of the troublesome Albemarle in North Carolina. North Carolina’s ex-collector of customs was their personal choice for the Bahamas’ next governor. No evidence

⁶⁵ “Journal, June 1707: Journal Book L,” *Journals of the Board of Trade and Plantations, Volume 1: April 1704 - January 1709* (1920), 370-397.

⁶⁶ “America and West Indies: June 1704, 1-10,” *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies, Volume 22: 1704-1705* (1916), 157-164.

⁶⁷ “Journal, June 1706: Journal Book K,” *Journals of the Board of Trade and Plantations, Volume 1: April 1704 - January 1709* (1920), 263-269.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

exists, however, that he ever assumed that post. John Graves, in an effort to undercut the proprietors' choice, told the Board that he "had heard that Mr. Archdale, one of the proprietors of Carolina, had given a bad character of Mr. Holden."⁶⁹ Archdale later informed them that he found Holden in jail when he first arrived in Carolina, but realized that he had been placed there by John Culpeper's rebels in the 1670s. He and other proprietors, therefore, had no problem with Holden. In fact, most of the wealthy blasé proprietors were smitten with their old wreck-fishing semi-pirate friend. Archdale also agreed with Graves that the Bahamas needed a great deal of repairs for which he doubted that he and his fellow proprietors would be willing to pay.

Capt. Samuel Chadwell, master of *Flying-Horse* sloop, understanding that the proprietors still considered Holden as their next governor for the Bahamas, thought to acquaint him with the colony's current situation as of October 1707. The inhabitants there were "about 600 (300 freemen)," he said, dwelling upon Eleuthera, Cat Island, Little and Great Exuma, New Providence Island (shown in figure 3), and others.⁷⁰ They lived scattered, in little huts and, like guerilla warriors, ready to secure themselves in the woods when attacked.

Their trade consisted chiefly of braziletta-wood, tortoise-shell, hunting for wrecks, raking salt, and staying alive. Their meager resources were supplemented by Jamaica, some from Curaçao, St. Thomas, Carolina, and Bermuda for liquor and dry goods. About twenty vessels trade with the Bahamas in a year, Chadwell said, "generally of abt. 40 tons burthen,

⁶⁹ "Journal, July 1707: Journal Book L," *Journals of the Board of Trade and Plantations, Volume 1: April 1704 - January 1709* (1920), 397-407.

⁷⁰ "America and West Indies: October 1707," *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies, Volume 23: 1706-1708* (1916), 555-579.

which load with salt and wood.”⁷¹ Exuma and Eleuthera are the main places for trade since Nassau was burnt. Only about three houses remained there. He assured Holden that the fort was strong, but the houses within it were gone. Only about twenty men were left on the whole island. Woodwork and iron would be the greatest expense to secure the Fort, he said. The people survived by using guerrilla tactics against their attackers, using the natural cover of the woods.⁷²

Chadwell described the harbors, illustrated in figure 3. Vessels of about 300 tons could trade at New Providence. Ryall Harbor could accommodate 100 tons. Harbor Island had about three fathom of water and could allow 200 tons, although somewhat shoal-ridden within the harbor. Hockin Island could accommodate 70 tons. There were about a dozen small vessels there, some about 16 tons. They fitted out a privateer of about 20 tons the past January. Capt. Thomas Walker, as commander, went upon the coast of Cuba with thirty-five men, took about five small vessels, and made about £50 per man, or £1,750. The people of the Bahamas held out the best that they could, living on the front line in a war zone, without aid.⁷³

Chadwell supplicated and practically begged. He assured Holden that the people would flourish if a government were settled there; but, at present, the proprietors declined. “[The people] are very desirous of a Governor, and wonders ye Lds. Propriators sends [them] not one,” he said, “they seem devoted to ye Lds. Propriators and loves [them], for their great priviledges.”⁷⁴ These poor people waited in vain upon unsympathetic “gentlemen” of London, 3,000 miles away and safe from diseases rampant in the West Indies. There was

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

no profit in the Bahamas. The proprietors would help neither the people nor their nation's efforts in the war.

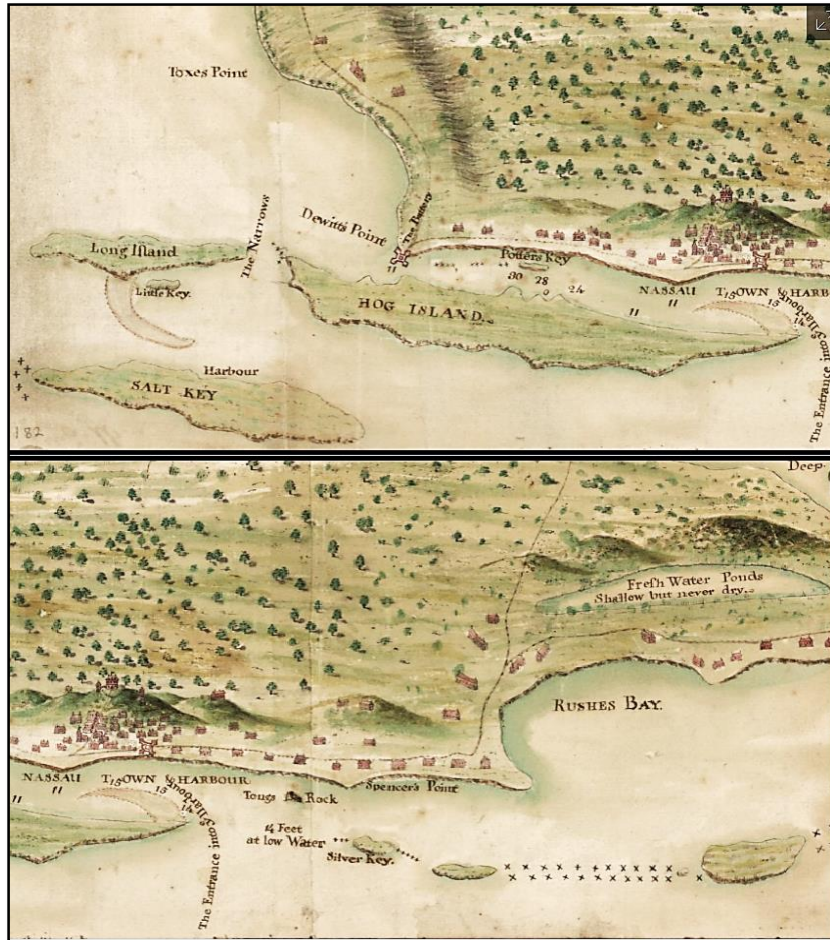


Figure 3: “An exact draught of the island of New Providence one of the Bahama Islands in the West Indies (c1700) – Library of Congress # 74692182. Open Copyright.

For whatever reason, probably money and the sad state of the islands' present condition as told him by Chadwell, Robert Holden never arrived in the Bahamas. He appeared in London by the end of 1707 when he wrote a description of Carolina, flattering the Proprietors.⁷⁵ Afterwards, however, he was only briefly heard from again. He did not attend the meeting of the Bahama residents with their council, Mr. Ayloff, and the

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*; Craton, *History of the Bahamas*, 96.

proprietors with theirs, Mr. Phipps, in London at the Board in Whitehall in December 1708. The Board sarcastically offered that “they need not unnecessarily take up time in setting forth the advantage of the Bahama Islands to this kingdom, or the ill consequence it might be were they in the possession of the enemy, their lordships being fully apprized thereof.”⁷⁶

At that meeting, Mr. Phipps defended the proprietors by saying that “the revenue of the said islands was about 800*l.* a year, which their lordships have wholly applied to the defence thereof.”⁷⁷ Lord Anthony Ashley Cooper spoke for the proprietors at the accusation that they did not support the Bahamas. He only referred to the profit of the colony being no benefit to them. Robert Holden, Phipps said, told him that the “Lords Proprietors did not intend to send over any stores of war; but that he intended to carry over a small quantity himself for sale.”⁷⁸ Obviously, proprietors and their appointees could think of nothing but personal profit. The Board easily recommended, again, the resumption of the proprietors’ charter and, still, the proprietors argued to keep it, despite the danger that their private profiteering posed for Britain’s wartime affairs in the West Indies. Human lives seldom figured into the proprietary economic equation.

Even by 1708, according to John Oldmixon, Bahamian inhabitants were “living a lewd licentious Sort of Life.”⁷⁹ Oldmixon also commented on their subsistence activity of “wrecking,” or a “Scandal, but it is most notorious, that the inhabitants looked upon every

⁷⁶ “Journal, January 1709: Journal Book M,” *Journals of the Board of Trade and Plantations, Volume 1: April 1704 - January 1709* (1920), 571-585.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ John Oldmixon, *The British Empire in America: Containing the History of the Discovery, Settlement, Progress and State of the British Colonies on the Continent and Islands of America*, 2nd ed. (London: Printed for J. Brotherton et al., 1741), 350.

Thing they could get out of a Cast-away Ship as their own.’⁸⁰ This activity they also share with the North Carolina Outer Banks’ early residents.⁸¹

In 1708, Graves deliberately challenged the colony’s private owners when he wrote *A Short Account of the Bahama Islands* to the Lords Proprietors and also presented a copy to Parliament, for maximum effect. In it, he again mentioned that the Bahamas were conveniently situated between Cuba, Havana, Carolina, and Jamaica. He assured the Proprietors and Parliament that the Bahamas could protect the West Indies salt trade, protect shipping through the Florida Straits, hinder the Dutch trade, and encourage the British woolen trade. He argued that it demanded defense with at least one sixth-rate man-of-war. He ended with a direct plea:

With submission to Your Lordships, we have now been near Twenty Years in War, and to my Knowledge, Your Lordships, tho’ often Solicited and Requested, never did send us the least Assistance either in Arms, Ammunition, or any Warlike Stores: So I must say, your poor Tenants having been so Dishearten’d, and then Harrass’d by ill Governors you have sent, may be imputed to be the main Reason that Place has so often suffer’d by the common Enemy; and now lately, three times Plunder’d and lay’d in Ashes.⁸²

The sheer neglect of such a valuable resource and location appalled Graves. He then faced another time of upheaval and followed Edward Randolph’s lead. He took yet another opportunity to repeat his ten-year-old argument for the revocation of lax private charters like the Bahamas, Barbados, Carolina, and Pennsylvania. Having pleaded with the proprietors, he again petitioned the Board to establish a stable government through the Crown:

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 423.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² John Graves, *A memorial: or, A short account of the Bahama-Islands; Of their situation, product, conveniency of trading with the Spaniards: the benefit that ariseth by the great quantities of salt that is made by the sun; and the safety all ships that are in distress near those ports do find, by having so good a harbour as Providence to bear away to for succour. Deliver'd to the Lords, proprietors of the said islands, and the Honourable Commissioners of Her Majesty's Customs. By John Graves, collector of Her Majesty's Customs in those islands. And now humbly presented to both Houses of Parliament* (London: 1708), *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, Gale, East Carolina University (accessed 19 Nov 2014).

Petitioner has been tenn years endeavouring to gett the said Islands established under the protection of the Crown... having fresh information come to my hands but yesterday of their deplorable condition by reason that pirates have lately been amongst the said Islands... And having no form of Government, it is impossible for that handfull of poore people to detect and bring them to Justice. Your Lordships will see... what jeopardy all their lives are in. Therefore Petitioner desires the Board to represent their case to H.M. in order to have immediate releif by sending a Governor and Garrison, and what warlike stores shall be thought fit to New Providence, wch. is the Island where all the Governours reside at, so that the notorious villany of piracy be restrain'd, and the offenders be brought to Justice.⁸³

The old fort at Nassau, however, built and supplied by Gov. Nicholas Trott, had crumbled to ruin during Queen Anne's War. Contrary to the home government's wishes, the Bahamas never mounted a significant defense or offense during that war or even before. By the end of that war, the sea had undermined the wall of Fort Nassau and it had partly plunged into the water. No cannon remained that were not spiked by French or Spanish forces. Only twelve families persisted out of 150 that used to reside there. The Bahamas, the would-be sentinel of the British West Indies, was in tatters. The government had all but vanished. The few residents that still lived on, including the former Admiralty Judge and Chief Justice Thomas Walker and his family, Customs Collector John Graves, and other older residents resisted the urge to leave their home. They refused to abandon the colony for England's sake, possessing more patriotism than the proprietors were willing to express. The wealthy and powerful Lords Proprietors of Carolina neglected their less profitable yet strategically important American property, its inhabitants, and even their own nation's needs. Resumption finally came to the Bahamas, but only when the "war on piracy" began and Gov. Woodes Rogers was appointed as the first royal governor, handing out pardons to pirates and encouraging them to go home.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 3. Wealthy Pirates and Privateers versus Common Pirates: Case Studies

Wholly contrasting the Bahamas, Jamaica, a royal colony, governed not by negligent private owners, but by Crown representatives, and still a successful pirate base in the Caribbean, possessed Port Royal, one of the most important ports in the English New World. Port Royal, with its thriving and lucrative economic mass of merchants, factors, and privateers, was often compared to the port of Boston. Thus, privateers in Jamaican and Bermuda generally occupied the upper and middle classes of colonial society.

Separating wealthy privateers from common pirates has always been difficult to determine in light of their actions at the wrecks. Most authors group them as “pirates,” and indeed, their actions throughout the Golden Age seem to warrant that appellation. However, early “pirates” consisted of wealthy men of estates as well as lowly and poor wreckers from the Bahamas, Carolinas, and elsewhere in the maritime world. A detailed analysis can separate some of these men so that a social profile of the Golden Age of Piracy can be partly successful.

Of the Jamaican privateers who fished the Spanish wrecks from 1715-1716, little has become known of them before now. It has always been assumed that they had served as privateers during Queen Anne’s War, but that is not a certainty. By contrast, the inhabitants of the Bahamas had been viewed with disdain by other, more productive colonies. Examinations of three important pirates follow.

Edward Thache of Spanish Town, Jamaica

A genealogical analysis has opened a new book on a certain Capt. Edward Thache in Jamaica. This gentleman's son, in the Royal Navy in 1706, may actually be the long-sought "Blackbeard the Pirate." The analysis has exposed perhaps the only instance of his confirmed service in Queen Anne's War – on HMS *Windsor*. In what capacity he served is not known, but a genealogical study shows him likely to be of a substantial Jamaican family of *St. Jago de la Vega*, or Spanish Town. His father, Capt. Edward Thache Sr., possessed an estate with slaves, probably to work sugar cane or indigo. At the father's death, his son, Edward Jr., deeded his inheritance, including land and slaves, to his step-mother, Lucretia Poquet Maverly Axtell Thache, married to his father in July 1699. He probably did this so that she could continue raising his much younger half-brothers and half-sisters, including his own daughter.¹

Edward Thache had wealth, slaves, and a plantation in Spanish Town, Jamaica. He served in the Royal Navy on the flagship of Sir William Whetstone's West Indian fleet and sailed against the Spanish and French, both at Cartagena and Hispaniola in Queen Anne's War. His Anglican minister grandfather attended Oxford and served two parishes of Gloucestershire, England. Thache appears to have been a gentleman well-regarded by his family and friends, doctors and assemblymen of Jamaica's government.²

Capt. Charles Johnson's *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the most Notorious Pyrates* provided almost everything that historians desired to know 290

¹ Baylus C. Brooks, "'Born in Jamaica of Very Creditable Parents' or 'A Bristol Man Born'?" Excavating the Real Edward Thache, 'Blackbeard the Pirate'," *North Carolina Historical Review*, Vol. XCII, No. 3 (July 2015); Edward Thache to Lucretia Thache, December 10, 1706, LOS Deeds Liber 40, Folio 67, Registrar General's Department.

² Brooks, "Born in Jamaica of Very Creditable"; Josiah Burchett, *A Complete History of the Most Remarkable Transactions at Sea from the Earliest Accounts of Time to the Conclusion of the Last War with France* (London: Printed by W.B. for J. Wathor in the Temple Cloysers, 1720), 698-699.

years ago; little has changed until now. Previously, Edward Thache's family – even the veracity of his surname – has been a matter of wild speculation. Further study reveals much more.

Furthermore, primary records, previously hidden from casual inspection, are daily being digitized by Ancestry.com, Google, and the Church of Latter Day Saints and placed on the internet for easy access. Records not easily available to the historian just years ago are being digitized and placed on internet databases for easy access. This includes the efforts to digitize and make available the Church of England's records from Jamaica. Chronologically, the first record of this collection on the Thache family notes the burial of Elizabeth "Theach," Edward's first wife, in January 1699. It was followed by a marriage for "Edward Theach" to "Lucretia Ethell [Axtell]" in July 1699. Edward and Elizabeth Thache probably had two children of their own, Edward Jr. and Elizabeth, but they were most likely born elsewhere. No records of children born to Edward and Elizabeth appear in baptism records in Jamaica. Three children, Cox, Rachel, and Thomas, were born to Edward and Lucretia, from 1700 to 1705. Edward "Theach" died in November 1706. The most intriguing records are those for the marriages of "Elizabeth Theach" to a man known only as "Volixcure" in 1705 and another to Dr. Henry Barham in 1720. While these marriages could indicate another family's presence, they more likely indicate a daughter and granddaughter of the earlier "Elizabeth," buried in 1699. A genealogical chart for this family has been published and is shown in figure 4. It asserts that Blackbeard belongs to this family.³

³ Elizabeth Theach, burial, January 13, 1699, p. 187; Rachel Theach, christening, February 6, 1704, p. 47; Thomas Theach, christening, November 17, 1705, p. 49; Cox Thatch, christening, July 8, 1700, p. 43; Edward Theach and Lucretia Ethell [Axtell], marriage, June 11, 1699, p. 121, all in Jamaica Church of England Parish Register Transcripts, 1664–1880 (FHL microfilm 1291724), Registrar General's Department, Spanish Town, St. Catherine's Parish, Jamaica, FamilySearch, <https://familysearch.org/pal:MM9.1.1/VHDB-87B>, accessed October 27, 2014. These entries and others from Family Search were compiled from the index and images in the register transcripts.

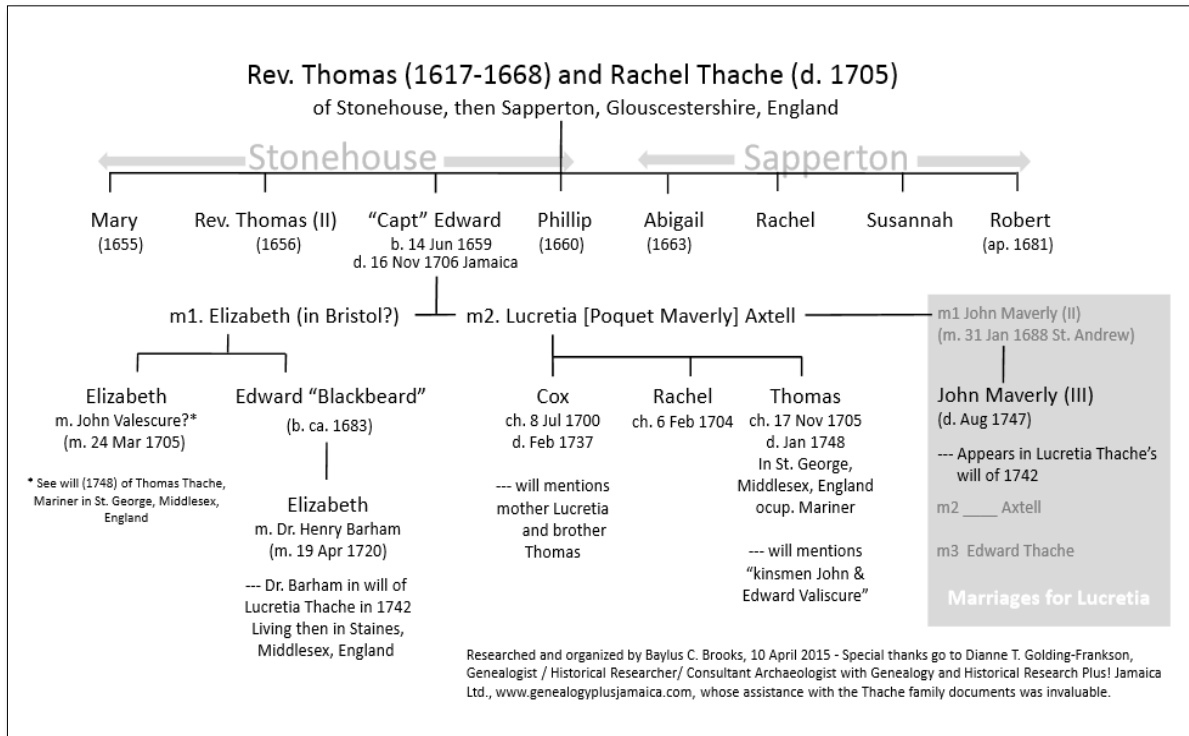


Figure 4: Genealogical Chart of the Descendants of Rev. Thomas and Rachel Thache of Gloucestershire, England – Created by Baylus C. Brooks. Source: Baylus C. Brooks, “‘Born in Jamaica, of Very Creditable Parents’ or ‘A Bristol Man Born’”? Excavating the Real Edward Thache, “Blackbeard the Pirate,” *North Carolina Historical Review* 92: 3 (July 2015), 289.

Other records discovered in the Register General’s Department in Spanish Town, specifically three deed records, connect the dots in this family mystery and tell about Edward Jr. specifically, with added surprises. The earlier deeds from 1705 and illustrated in figure 5 are for the young girl Rachel Thache and indicate that she was the daughter of “Capt. Edward Thache of St. Jago de la Vega [Spanish Town]” and his wife Lucretia. They indicate that her father was probably a mariner as well as a plantation owner; some records show that the family owned several slaves. The deeds also show the family’s connection to substantial citizens in the capital city: future Jamaican assemblyman Noah Delanmay and Rachel’s godfather, Dr. Thomas Stuart. The third deed, also in figure 5, from “Edward Thache [Jr.] on board Her Majesties Ship *Windsor*” to his step-mother Lucretia, indicates a

great deal more. Thache gave his inheritance from his deceased father's estate to his step-mother, Lucretia, for the "Love and [a]ffection I have for and bear towards my Brother and Sister Thomas Theache and Rachel Theache."⁴ These were Lucretia's youngest children by his deceased father Capt. Edward Thache of Spanish Town.

Will records indicate a marriage for an Elizabeth "Theach" in 1720 to Dr. Henry Barham. This may regard the younger Elizabeth in Capt. Edward Thache's household in 1705 being raised with his five-year-old son Cox and infants Thomas and Rachel. The only male old enough to have been her legitimate father at that time was Edward Thache Jr., then of the HMS *Windsor*, and later assumed to be "Blackbeard the Pirate."⁵

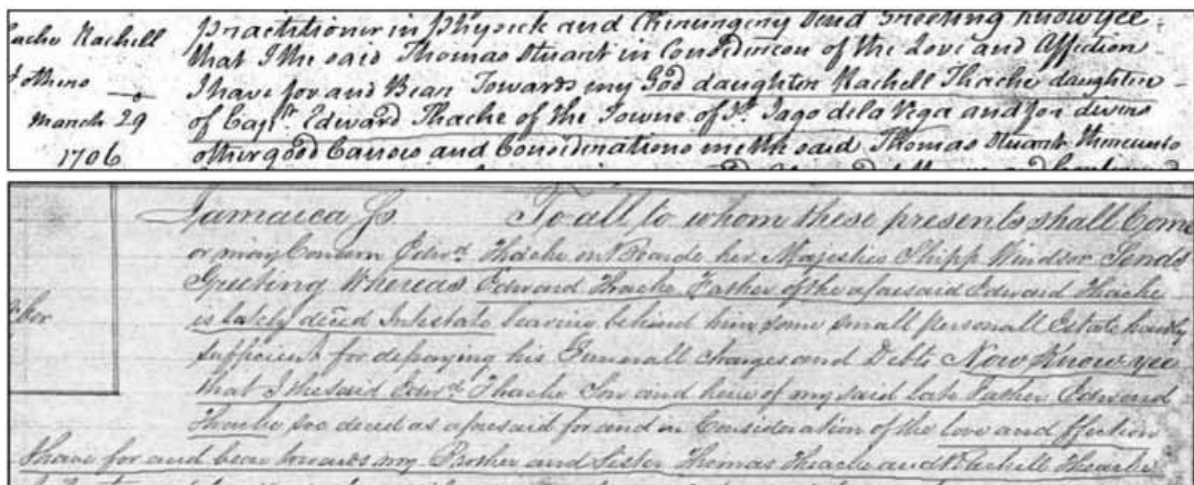


Figure 5: Records from the Registrar General's Department provide additional information on the Thache family relationships: Dr. Thomas Stuart to goddaughter Rachel Thache, March 29, 1706, LOS Deeds Liber 39, Folio 71, Registrar General's Department, Spanish Town, Jamaica (top). This deed refers to "daughter of Capt. Edward Thache." Edward Thache Jr. to Lucretia Thache, December 10, 1706, LOS Deeds Liber 40, Folio 67, Registrar General's Department, Spanish Town, Jamaica (bottom). This deed refers to Edward's serving aboard the HMS *Windsor* and his relationship to Lucretia, Rachel, and Thomas Thache.

The Axtell association with the Thaches on Jamaica further aids the pirate connection. The well-born Axtells of Port Royal and Spanish Town demonstrated similar

⁴ "Edward Thache to Lucretia Thache" (10 December 1706), LOS Deeds Liber 40, Folio 67, Registrar General's Department, Spanish Town, Jamaica.

⁵ *Ibid.*

duplicitous traits to proprietary officials like those of Governor Charles Eden, Elias Haskett, Nicholas Trott, and Tobias Knight. Dr. Axtell's younger son and probable in-law of Lucretia Thache, Daniel Axtell, intimately appears in depositions concerning piracy and allegedly dealt in pirated goods, a presumably common activity for gentlemanly Jamaicans in Kingston, Port Royal, and the western remote port of Bluefields.

One important facet of the church records show that this Spanish Town Thache family did not originate on Jamaica – they may have come from Bristol and left there to take advantage of the new economic trend of sugar production. As a cautious mariner in Bristol, Capt. Edward Thache might have been deterred from settling in the West Indies because of pirate activity. He may have waited and met Elizabeth and married her during this time. There, she gave birth to their children: Edward and Elizabeth.

Then, came good news for slave merchants and for those dreaming of a lucrative sugar plantation in the West Indies. An early March 1681 issue of the *Smith's Protestant Intelligence Domestick and Foreign* appeared. Page two read:

Whereas, for the advancing and improving the African Trade, and maintaining our Forts and Castles in those parts, and better supplying our Collonies and Plantations with Negroes... We have thought fit, with the Advice of our Privy Council... to incorporate our Royal *African Company of England*... granting them the full and sole Trade into, and from those Parts... we are credibly informed that several evil disposed persons [Interlopers]... do frequently presume to Trade into those parts, and do from thence import into this our island of *Jamaica*, several Negroes and other commodities.⁶

The RAC monopoly provided fantastic news for any future West Indian planter who needed slaves, although not for a mariner interested in entering the slave trade. It was especially good news for slave merchants in Bristol. The RAC held the monopoly and

⁶ *Smith's Protestant Intelligence Domestick and Foreign* (London, England), March 7, 1681 - March 10, 1681; Issue 12.

prevented other carriers from entering the trade until it was annulled in 1688. King Charles II gave full support to the African slave trade. He and his brother, the duke of York, as well, contributed personal funds to the venture. The National Archives in London states in *Black Presence*:

[Their] charter stated that the Company “had the whole, entire and only trade for buying and selling bartering and exchanging of for or with any Negroes, slaves, goods, wares, merchandise whatsoever.” The king therefore gave full support to this system of trading.

The first Royal African Company ships sailed from Liverpool and Bristol to develop their commercial activity along the West African coast. Over the next two centuries, these two cities grew from the profits of the slave trade.⁷

The primary tools that any planter needed to capitalize on West Indian sugar markets were slaves, and lots of them. The “Triangular Trade” is so named for the cycle of military supplies and finished goods from England, then to Africa for slaves, and finally to America for rum, tobacco, molasses and sugar, processed by slave labor in the West Indies. The mercantilist cycle was complete when these raw materials returned to England from America. The profits were immense. Business interests centered upon the African Slave Trade, especially in sugar-producing America, where rules seldom applied.

The danger from Caribbean pirates, though, still handicapped hopeful future Caribbean immigrants. In 1680, however, new Acts of Parliament forbade sailing under foreign flags (used by pirates to fool their prey). This was a major legal blow to piracy. Afterward, governments commissioned privateers to hunt the then illegal buccaneers. Moreover, in four years, the Truce of Ratisbon concluded the War of the Reunions between Spain and France, which effectively put an end to piracy. The old buccaneers were no longer

⁷ National Archives, London, “Africa and the Caribbean,” *Black Presence* (online exhibition), <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/blackhistory/index.htm> (accessed 7 Mar 2015).

welcome on Jamaica, even the privateers that hunted them could find little to support them. Furthermore, on September 25, came news from Jamaica in 1685 that “privateers were in distress” in the “South Seas [Caribbean].”⁸ They had become sickly, their ships needing repair, and their prizes trivial. The French had even called for the “Return of their Privateers” that preyed on the Spanish.⁹ Some stragglers remained. In answer to the new truce, the trusted privateer ship *Ruby*, under Capt. Mitchell sailed out of port in “cruise of [non-English] Pyrates.”¹⁰ The West Indies “beyond the line” mellowed a bit – assuming you were not a slave. In July 1687, the *London Gazette* even reported that the first post office had opened in Jamaica with “Mr. James Wale [former privateer ship owner] as Post-Master.”¹¹

Just as the Caribbean became a mecca of capitalist sugar barons with the necessary RAC and *Asiento* contracts needed to bring in slave labor, Edward and Elizabeth Thache and their family may have left Bristol to take full advantage of these economic tools. Blackbeard was most likely not born as a mere proletarian, but into a family of *nouveau-riche* slave merchants and/or pioneer American sugar planters. At any rate, the son of Capt. Edward Thache of Spanish Town was a member of a gentleman’s family. He had served in the Royal Navy and become a veteran when Queen Anne’s War ended in 1713.¹²

⁸ *London Gazette* (London, England), December 10, 1685 - December 14, 1685; Issue 2094.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *London Gazette* (London, England), July 14, 1687 - July 18, 1687; Issue 2260; “America and West Indies: November 1684, 17-30,” in *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies*, Volume 11, 1681-1685, ed. J W Fortescue (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1898), 726-740, accessed December 25, 2014, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/colonial/america-west-indies/vol11/pp726-740>.

¹² “The city of Gloucester: Introduction,” *A History of the County of Gloucester: Volume 4: The City of Gloucester* (1988), pp. 1-4. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=42267&strquery=gloucester-maritime> (accessed: 12 September 2014).

Edward Thache, son of Rev. Thomas and Rachel Thache, most likely sailed from Bristol for Jamaica with his wife Elizabeth and their children (Edward and Elizabeth) during the period of relative calm, 1682-1695. In 1686, particularly,

... 275 ships entered English ports from the West Indies, and 219 left for the islands. The tonnage of ships involved in the American trade doubled between 1663 and 1686; in the 1680s, historians estimate that some 10,000 men were employed directly in transoceanic trade.¹³

This would have been after the birth of their children, which is why no christening records are found for them in Jamaica (other children may have been born after they arrived, but no record of them survives on Jamaica).¹⁴

Thus, Capt. Edward Thache's son, the man who might have become the legendary pirate Blackbeard, could indeed have been "Bristol born," as Capt. Charles Johnson alleged in his second and subsequent editions. Again, Capt. Thache's family represents the only Thache (or any variant spelling) family to live on Jamaica. Blackbeard perhaps was once a foreman on his father's sugar plantation who listened to his conservative father's Jacobite ramblings and grew to share his distrust of foreign kings and government in general. He may have supervised the transport of hogsheads of sugar and molasses from Passage Fort to ships in Port Royal Harbor. He would have experienced the earthquake, the fire in 1703, the hurricane of 1712, and the financial devastation that followed on Jamaica, encouraging other

¹³ Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges*, 41.

¹⁴ Ancestry.com. *Jamaica, Church of England Parish Register Transcripts, 1664-1879* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2014; Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Baptisms, marriages, burials 1669-1764, Vols. 1 & 2," *Jamaica Church of England Parish Register Transcripts, 1664-1880* (Intellectual Reserve, Inc., 2014), <https://familysearch.org/> (accessed 16 August 2014); Note: only the baptism records are digitally searchable, thus available on Ancestry.com. The marriage and burial records have to be searched manually using familysearch.org; Ralph and Williams, *Inhabitants of Bristol in 1696*, ix; Cox Theach was possibly named for the Thomas and Mary Cox family from St. Catherine whose twins, William and John, were born in 1669 at "Dry River." Cox and Dr. William Axtell, possibly the step-father of Lucretia Axtell Theach, served together on the Port Royal Assembly in 1703, during the decision to abandon Port Royal in favor of Kingston.

avenues of income. He may have found another source of income with the Royal Navy under the last Stuart monarch, Queen Anne.

As to the slaves owned by the Thache family of St. Catherine's Parish, the number comes to at least three that appear in the church and deed records, not including Caesar, mentioned by Johnson as the "Negroe whom [Blackbeard] had bred up."¹⁵ Cox Thache declares in his will the manumission of "a Negro Man slave Joe" after the "decease of [his] mother Lucretia."¹⁶ Still, the extended family appears to have all owned slaves, indicative of their wealth and position in Jamaican society. Moreover, does the Axtell association with Edward's wife, Lucretia Thache and Dr. William Axtell's wife, Sarah Pratt have any relationship to the 5-year-old mulatto girl, Lucretia Pratt christened in 1749? She may have belonged to Sarah Pratt Axtell's family. There was also a "negro woman aged att 45 yrs," not "mulatto" and thus, probably not the daughter of a white person, named "Lucretia Teach," probably a slave named after Edward's wife, christened in 1753 in St. Catherine's Parish. She was born about 1708. Including the mulatto "Lucretia Teach" born to Edward's eldest half-brother, Cox Thache and Jane (slave of William Tindale) in 1722, that makes four namesakes, at least three probably enslaved, of the woman that Charles Leslie identified as the "mother" of Blackbeard. Edward's wife Lucretia apparently functioned as a matriarch of sorts after his death, perhaps the reason that she did not escape notice by writer Charles Leslie.¹⁷

¹⁵ Johnson, *A General History*, 2nd ed., 85.

¹⁶ Will of Cox Thache" (7 Nov 1736 – 26 Feb 1737), LOS Wills Liber 21 Folio 121, Registrar General's Department, Spanish Town, Jamaica.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*; "Jamaica Church of England Parish Register Transcripts, 1664-1880," *FamilySearch*, Edward Theach, 16 Nov 1706, burial, citing p. 198, St. Catherines, Jamaica, Registrar General's Department, Spanish Town; FHL microfilm 1291763; "Edward Thache to Lucretia Thache" (10 December 1706), LOS Deeds Liber 40 Folio 67, Registrar General's Department, Spanish Town, Jamaica; James Robertson, *Gone is the Ancient Glory: Spanish Town, Jamaica, 1534-2000* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2005), 68; An "Ann Smith [wife of Richard Smith]" appears to have a "table in the hallway... her own purchase" of the Thache family home, according to

In December 1716, an “Edward Thach” appears in the deposition of Henry Timberlake (portion shown in figure 6), definitively as a pirate working in consort with Benjamin Hornigold. Both owned sloops of equal size and power. Both consisted of eight guns and ninety crew each. No record yet known tells of Thache as subordinate to Hornigold, except for that of Capt. Charles Johnson’s questionable book. Interestingly, Hornigold, in the *Delight*, had captured Timberlake’s *Lamb* off the coast of Hispaniola, a location quite familiar to Edward Thache of HMS *Windsor* during Queen Anne’s War.¹⁸

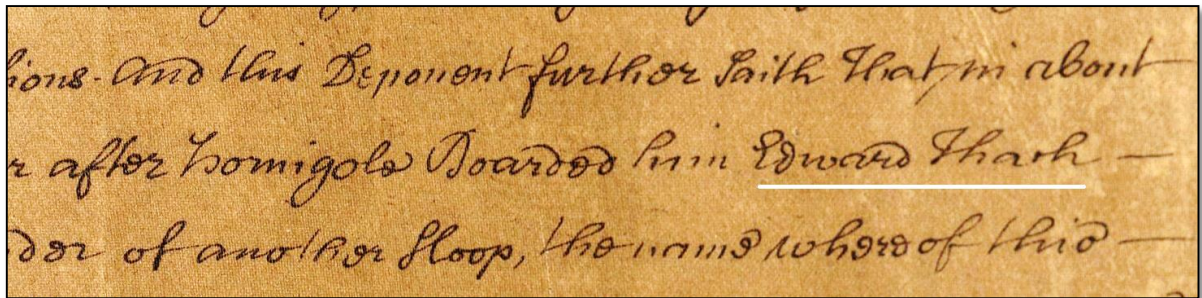


Figure 6: Portion of Henry Timberlake deposition showing “Hornigole” and “Edward Thach” together in December 1716. Source: Deposition of Henry Timberlake, 17 December 1716, 1B/5/3/8, 212–3, Registrar General’s Department, Spanish Town, Jamaica.

Edward “Blackbeard” Thache entered the pages of recorded history a year before his demise on November 22, 1718. From his capture near Martinique of the French slaver *La Concorde* or *Queen Anne’s Revenge*, to the blockade of Charles Town, to the wreck of his 40-gun ship in the shoal waters of North Carolina, his life burned brightly, but quickly. The pirate nest of North Carolina finally claimed his ship, him, and his career.

Cox Thache’s will of 1737. He also bequeathed her “one Desk and Glass & such Six Chairs and Bed.” Her relationship to Capt. Edward Thache remains uncertain, but this may be his daughter Rachel. Lucretia, also listed as a slave of William Tindale, later gave birth to “Jonathan,” son of John Parkinson on January 18, 1747.

¹⁸ Deposition of Henry Timberlake, 17 December 1716, 1B/5/3/8, 212–3, Registrar General’s Department, Spanish Town, Jamaica; Burchett, *A Complete History of the Most Remarkable Transactions at Sea*, 698-699.

Henry Jennings of Bermuda and Jamaica

In order to justify their greed, colonial officials routinely whitewashed their actions in their reports. Soon after Henry Jennings and other privateers committed robberies against the Spanish and French in late 1715 and early 1716, Lt. Gov. Benjamin Bennet of Bermuda reacted to a suggestion that his privateers might behave similarly. Undoubtedly wishing to distance himself from Gov. Archibald Hamilton of Jamaica, he said “It is not true that the Bermuda men go partners with the Jamaica men in the Spanish galleons.”¹⁹ Bennet made sure that the Board understood that Bermudian men had nothing to do with arrogant Jamaicans; but, of course, he never denied an interest in the treasure. To this effect, he added, “The Jamaica men forced the Bermuda men from the wreck. They returned when the others had quitted.”²⁰ A later newspaper report suggested twenty-five ships total worked the wrecks at the same time, thirteen Jamaicans and twelve of them from Bermuda. Of course, the smaller craft from the Bahamas and elsewhere were neglected in this report.²¹

It should be noted, moreover, that Capt. Henry Jennings, the first of Hamilton’s privateers to illegally sack the Spanish salvage operation on the Florida shore, was already rich. His family owned large estates on Bermuda. He later accepted his royal pardon there, intentionally sailing from the Bahamas with several others. Jennings may have received his commission from Jamaica’s governor Hamilton, even owned property in Jamaica, but he claimed to be Bermudan. The Jennings had lived for generations on Bermuda and had arrived as some of its first settlers in the Somers Island Company.

¹⁹ “America and West Indies: August 1716,” *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies, Volume 29: 1716-1717* (1930), 159-177, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=73995> (accessed: 18 November 2014).

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Boston News-Letter*, Monday May 21, to Monday May 28, 1716, 2.

A Rev. Henry Jennings came to Bermuda in 1635 with other original immigrants of the Somers Company following Richard Jennings, his wife Sarah, and brother Thomas. Capt. Henry Jennings, the Jamaican privateer, probably descends from this family. There may also be a connection to Sir John Jennings who sailed as a privateer from Jamaica with Admiral William Whetstone's fleet in Queen Anne's War. Perhaps this is the subtle association which Bennet rhetorically attempted to escape.²²

The Jennings were one of the oldest families on Bermuda, found there as early as 1622 and related by marriage to Perient Trott, the grandfather of Bahamas governor Nicholas Trott. In *Slaves and Slaveholders in Bermuda*, Virginia Bernhard's research primarily concerned slave owners like early Bermuda settlers Capt. Thomas and Richard Jennings. These men paid little attention to their slaves' needs. They were some of those fined heavily to induce slave owners to provide better nourishment and thus, prevent petty theft of foodstuffs and hogs. Capt. Richard Jennings, born about 1600, deserved special treatment by Bernhard, who appeared first as a salvager of Spanish shipwrecks. Capt. Jennings and surveyor Richard Norwood were ordered in 1642 to examine a Spanish wreck and make report of the treasure available. Jennings never made that report and the silver was never accounted for. Some years later, Richard Jennings may have plotted to take over the government of Bermuda, yet in three years had become a member of the Bermudan Council. He also sold land in Bermuda to a "Mr. Carter" in England that, in 1656, belonged to Lawrence Washington, great-grandfather of George Washington. The survey of 1663 showed that he possessed 250 acres of land (the most allowed) in ten properties on the tiny

²² Johnson, *General History*, 2nd ed., 35; Michawel Tepper, ed., *Passengers to America: A Consolidation of Ship Passenger Lists from "The New England Historical and Genealogical Register"* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1977), 67; National Archives, London, HL/PO/JO/10/6/129, Privateers in the West Indies, 6 Jan 1707.

island. Most of those properties, stretched from shore to shore and lay in Smith's Tribe bordering the Flatts, as shown in figure 7, containing also the Jennings family mansion. It seems smuggling may have been a large part of the Jennings family business:

The secluded harbor Of the Flatts was ideally suited for a smugglers' haven... Vessels riding at anchor in the calm waters at the Flatts were not visible from the open sea to the north or from the capital, St. George's, to the west. Smugglers could thus load or unload contraband goods without fear of discovery by customs officials. At the Flatts, and at other secluded inlets, a considerable and largely undocumented amount of illegal trade took place. As one governor noted in the 1720s, "Pirates in former days, were made very welcome, and Governors have gain'd estates by them."²³

Bernhard wrote that Richard Jennings died in 1669, "clearly a wealthy man, and by the end of the seventeenth century his sons had become even wealthier."²⁴ Jennings, Whites, and Trotts all probably made the bulk of their fortunes by smuggling from these shores.

Capt. Richard Jennings II, son of the Bermudan immigrant, charged that the colony of the Bahamas was "wholly defenceless."²⁵ Being acquainted with the proprietors' newly appointed governor of the Bahamas, Col. Robert Holden, and his plans in 1707, he attested that Holden had no intention of going there. Holden had, however, taken an opportunity of making a profit. He planned to sell the destitute inhabitants there "half a tun of swan and other shot, and some powder."²⁶ Even Jennings pondered upon the right thing to do: to give the shot and powder to these helpless Bahamians who needed it for their defense, but Holden later told a lawyer for the proprietors that he intended it only for sale. Although the proprietors asked Capt. Richard Jennings to report upon the needs of the Bahamas to defend

²³ Virginia Bernhard, *Slaves and Slaveholders in Bermuda, 1616-1782* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999), 164-165; Julia E. Mercer, *Bermuda Settlers of the 17th Century: Genealogical Notes from Bermuda* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company), 107.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 165.

²⁵ "Journal, June 1707: Journal Book L," in *Journals of the Board of Trade and Plantations*, Volume 1, April 1704 - January 1709, ed. K H Ledward (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1920), 370-397.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

it, Lord Ashley testified that he and the other proprietors nevertheless regarded it a worthless and unprofitable venture. Holden regarded the inhabitants as “licentious” and unworthy of their aid and reported this to the proprietors.²⁷ The Lords Proprietors, as private owners of the Bahamas, chose to let the people fend for themselves, defenseless in a war zone.

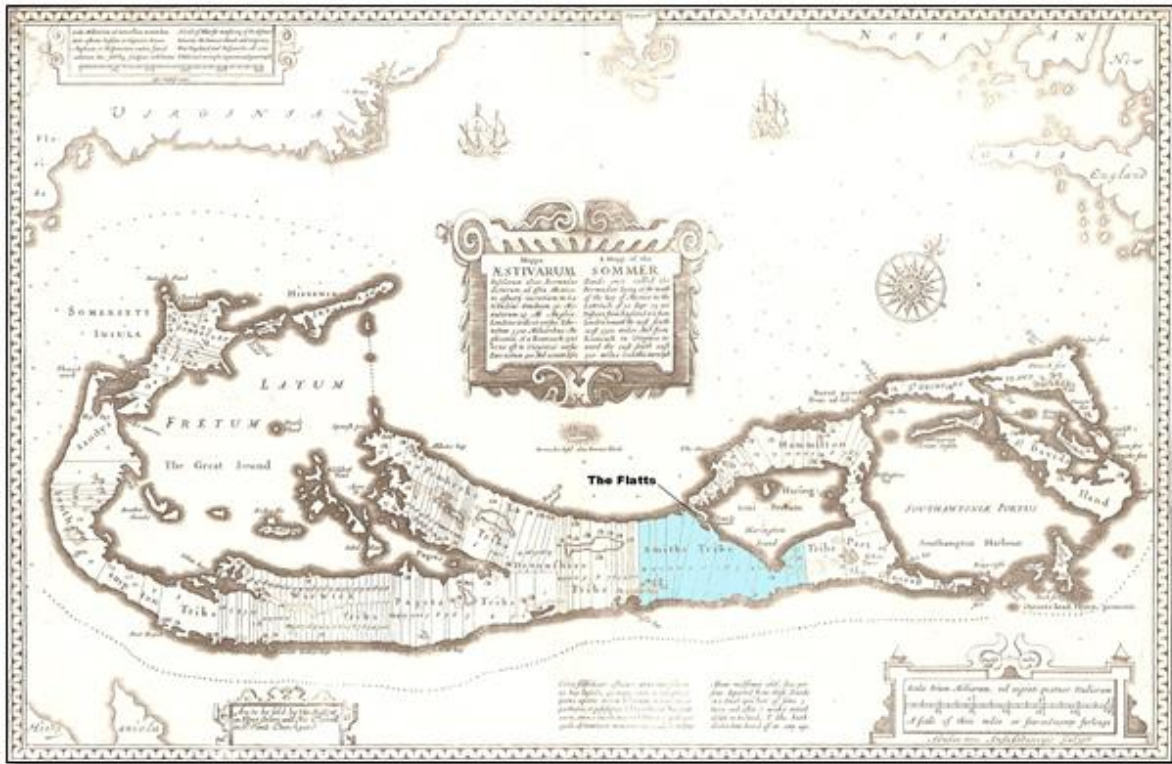


Figure 7: A 1676 map of the Somers Isles (alias Bermuda), by John Speed (based on the map of surveyor Richard Norwood). Clearly shown are the tribe roads cut parallel through the forest between the North and South Shores (except in St. Georges, the eastern-most subdivision, comprising the islands of St. George's and St. David's, the South-Eastern tip of the Main Island, and the various smaller islands between. This was general land, and not commercial. The Jennings family property was located in “Smith’s Tribe,” highlighted above. Source: Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Somers_Isles_Map_-_John_Speed_1676.jpg (accessed January 17, 2016).

Henry Jennings, a Bermudian also reputed to own a large estate on Jamaica, was a mariner involved in “trade.” British engineer Christian Lilly made a plan of the new town of

²⁷ “Journal, January 1709: Journal Book M,” *Journals of the Board of Trade and Plantations, Volume 1: April 1704 - January 1709* (1920), 571-585.

Kingston which included names of subscribers for town lots. “H Jennings” appears twice: one lot on the east side of Orange Street and another on the lower part of King’s. He was one of many “sugar drovers” who had been recorded losing the sloop *Diamond*, of four guns, in Jamaica in January 1712.²⁸ He then attained status as a privateer of that island. Captain Balchen, of HMS *Diamond*, wrote to Admiralty Secretary Burchet from Jamaica on May, 13, 1716, describing Henry Jennings’ official commission from “Lord Hamilton... for suppressing of piracys.”²⁹ Balchen said Jennings sought to capitalize upon the spilled treasure, not take pirates. Jennings and three other English captains, guided also by greed, held little regard for the Spanish even in peacetime. They had stolen recovered treasure directly from their salvage base camp on the Florida shore, rather than simply fishing the wrecks in the water.³⁰

Probably a son or nephew of Richard Jennings II, Henry returned to his home place in Bermuda after his short, blatantly illegal run as a pirate. There, he may have contented himself with the family’s smuggling and slave business in Smith’s Tribe by the Flatts. He left for Bermuda before Capt. Vincent Pearse arrived in HMS *Phoenix* at New Providence in February 1718 to enforce the king’s wishes and accept the surrender of hundreds of pirates. Gov. Bennett, who may have been glad to have him back in local business, wrote to the Board, specifically mentioning him, that “Capt. Henry Jennings one of them (who left off that way of liveing some months since) has arrived here who with seven others have surrendred themselves.”³¹

²⁸ Boston News-Letter (Boston, Massachusetts), January 19, 1712, 1.

²⁹ “America and West Indies: May 1716, 16-31,” in *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies*, Volume 29, 1716-1717, ed. Cecil Headlam (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1930), 76-101.

³⁰ *Ibid.*; Christian Lilly, “Plan of Kingston” (1702), in Clarke, *Decolonizing the Colonial City*, 10; This map shows the two residences of “H. Jennings.”

³¹ “America and West Indies: February 1718, 1-15,” in *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies*, Volume 30, 1717-1718, ed. Cecil Headlam (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1930), 168-186

Afterward, a Henry Jennings sailed in March 1719 from Jamaica to Philadelphia. The next year, he operated again as a privateer from Bermuda in the next war with Spain, carrying three prize vessels into New York with cargos of “Snuff, Sugar, Oyle Soap, and *European Goods*.”³² In 1723, he was captured by another pirate named “Evans” and held prisoner until a quarrel broke out among the pirate crew. Jennings and other “forced men” retook the ship and sailed it back to Bermuda. Henry Jennings operated as both a merchant and privateer, making his usual runs to Philadelphia and New York, yet he faded from the shipping records in the 1730s. Capt. Richard Jennings of the *Somers Islands* and a few other captains named Jennings operated out of Bermuda for the following decades. In 1742, as the aging owner of Henry Jennings & Company of Bermuda, Henry dabbled in the earliest family business, transporting slaves from Africa to the West Indies in the ironically-named *Friendship*. A younger “Capt. Henry Jennings” of sloop *Ranger*, a vessel owned by “Richard Downing Jennings and Henry Jennings of Bermuda” also traded to Philadelphia in 1767.³³ The Jennings’ family businesses of smuggling and slavery in America probably continued right up to the American Revolution and beyond. They may even have shared runs with the smuggling Hancocks of Boston.³⁴

Benjamin Hornigold of Ipswich, England and the Bahamas

Colin Woodard in *Republic of Pirates* explored detailed records in the National Archives of London for previously unknown facts about Hornigold and the early Bahamas

³² *American Weekly Mercury* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), August 18, 1720, 2.

³³ *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (1903), 495; *Boston News-Letter* (Boston, Massachusetts), April 6, 1719, 4; *American Weekly Mercury* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), August 18, 1720, 2; *American Weekly Mercury* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), June 6th, 1723, 2; *Boston Gazette* (Boston, Massachusetts), July 1, 1728, 2.

³⁴ Bernhard, *Slaves and Slaveholders in Bermuda*, 32.

pirates. He describes one Jonathan Darvell, “an old salt who as a young sailor had joined a mutiny, seized a slave ship, and sold her living cargo to Dutch merchants on Curaçoa.” Darvell owned the sloop *Happy Return*, sailed by Hornigold and manned with some Jamaicans, his son-in-law Daniel Stillwell, and his own 17-year-old son Zacheus. They raided the Spanish shores of Florida and Cuba in summer 1714, bringing home plunder worth £11,500. Note that Darvells and Stillwells also settled the early colony of Massachusetts Bay.³⁵

Many ancestors of future pirates came with these “Adventurers” to the Bahamas more than half a century before the Golden Age; many had a New England connection. Among those that remained there were William and Mary Carey and their family, John and Richard Carey, and Mark Carey. Another family, the Kemps, included Benjamin, Jane, Mary and children; they also had Anthony and his sons, John and Anthony, and their families. Perhaps most importantly for the purposes of pirate history were the Lows. Gideon and Martha and their daughters were listed, as well as Matthew and Sarah, son Thomas and daughters, and John and Elizabeth Low. Car(e)ys and Low(e)s were known families of Quakers that married into the Carolina Lord Proprietor John Archdale’s family.³⁶ *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies* (March 1715) shows:

List of men that sailed from Ileatheria and committed piraceys upon the Spaniards, on the coast of Cuba, since the Proclamation of Peace [summer 1714]. Danl. Stillwell, marryd to Jno. Darvill's daughter. John Kemp, Mathew Lowe, James Bourne, John Cary (all married). John Darvill sent his yong son of 17 yeares old, a piratting and was part owner of the vessell that committed the piraceys. Strangers that sailed from Ileatheria a piratting:—Benja. Hornigold, Thomas Terrill, Ralph Blankershire, Benja. Linn.³⁷

³⁵ Woodard, *Republic of Pirates*, 97-101.

³⁶ A. Talbot Bethell, *Early Settlers of the Bahamas and Colonists of North America*, Third Edition (Westminster, MD: Heritage Books, Inc., 1937), 85-87.

³⁷ “America and West Indies: March 1715, 1-15,” *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies, Volume 28: 1714-1715* (1928), pp. 110-122.

This early record from March 1715 tells of Benajamin Hornigold as a “stranger,” or a new arrival to Eleuthera. He settled on Harbor Island at Eleuthera’s northern tip. The alleged association of him with Edward Thache has caused most to regard him as an elderly man. This may be true, for there is a marriage record from Saint Matthew’s Parish, Ipswich, Suffolk County, England dated January 8, 1679 for “Ben Hornigold” to “Sarah Mosse” that gives this man a birthdate of about 1655-1660 at the latest. He would be about fifty-five to sixty years old in 1715. Could this be the alleged elderly pirate Capt. Benjamin Hornigold from Eleuthera? Does he also descend from the Hornigolds of West Yorkshire, who have Benjamins in their line as early as 1620?³⁸

There are several records, ironically, in Ipswich, Massachusetts for this same Benjamin Hornigold - only his wife’s maiden name is listed as “Morse.” The Morse family of New England is an old one, dating back to the original Puritan migration, primarily from Ipswich, a port town just northeast of London. Some of the family, however, remained in England and, being a maritime family, they moved back and forth occasionally. Family history tells that Samuel Morse was the original immigrant to New England, but that he left brothers behind. The family historian told that he traveled to England to compare the records because of his family’s nomadic tendency, which left only gaps and confusion – essentially, a one-sided tale. One record in Massachusetts tells that Mary, Robert, and Sarah Morse Hornigold are siblings and it gives the full name of her husband, Benjamin Hornigold, still in England (Robert also, a “Tobacconist” in London). The most informative record is the copy of a will of another sibling named Nathaniel Morse, mariner of Ipswich, county Suffolk, England. He bequeaths 20s for a ring to “loving Brother in Law Benjamin Hornigold of Ipswich aforesaid

³⁸ Ancestry.com, *England, Select Marriages, 1538–1973* and *West Yorkshire, England, Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1512-1812* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2014 and 2011.

Marrinner.”³⁹ This Massachusetts connection may have influenced Benjamin Hornigold’s later association (1715-1716) with Samuel Bellamy of Boston.

Benjamin and Henry Hornigold, as well as a “Widow Hornigold,” all appear in the Hearth Tax lists for 1674, five years before Benjamin married Sarah Mosse/Morse. Henry appears in the Wapping district of London, another mariner, married to Elizabeth with a daughter Mary in 1700. There are no children listed or burial records remaining for Benjamin and Sarah Hornigold in Ipswich, England. Speculation might be that Sarah Morse Hornigold may have died after 1689, when her name appeared in her brother’s will, driving Benjamin to emigrate to Eleuthera by 1714 and become a “stranger” there. His choice of the Bahamas may have had to do with the nominal Puritan presence there already, especially since the Anglican Church’s reassertion of authority after 1703. There is no evidence for children, which is not surprising at this early date. The only christenings found are for the children of James and Ann Hornigold. They have three children, born from 1709-1714. James Hornigold apparently was also a mariner, master of the brigantine *Wintringham*, “a prime Sailor, Pink Stern, Ipswich built,” of 80 tons, “built for the Coasting Trade.”⁴⁰

³⁹ Frederick Arthur Crisp, *Marriage License Bonds in the Suffolk Archdeaconry Registry at Ipswich, 1663-1750* (Ipswich: Private, 1900), 20 and 124; *English Origins of New England Families* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1983), 268; National Archives, KEW, PROB 11/382/51, Will of Robert Hornigold, Tobacconist of London (15 Jan 1686) and PROB 11/399/237, Will of Nathaniel Morse, Mariner of Ipswich, Suffolk (16 May 1690) and PROB 11/480/50, Will of Benjamin Morse, mariner of Ipswich, Suffolk (8 Jan 1704).

⁴⁰ "England Births and Christenings, 1538-1975," database, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:JM6K-BL7>: accessed 16 February 2016), Eliz. Hornigold, 26 Dec 1714; citing SAINT PETER, IPSWICH, SUFFOLK, ENGLAND, reference ; FHL microfilm 0496890 IT 3, 1426139 IT 3; *Public Advertiser* (London, England), Tuesday, June 6, 1758; Issue 7368; *Suffolk in 1674 Being the Hearth Tax Returns* (Woodbridge: George Booth, 1905), 160, 164, 175.

CHAPTER 4: Beginning the Golden Age: Class Distinction in Early America

Edward Thache, Henry Jennings, and even Benjamin Hornigold all had the skills necessary to choose any life they desired. They simply chose the one they knew best – the same chosen by their heroes. Fishing for wrecked Spanish treasure left in the water was not in itself illegal, but taking the treasure from those who already fished it from the water was a different matter. Ironically, the wealthy privateer Jennings began this approach and not the common pirate from the Bahamas, Hornigold. Even more illegal, Jennings stormed the sovereign Florida mainland camp of Spanish salvagers, taking the treasure from them by force, spiking their cannon, and leaving them helpless against the local natives. This could have been viewed by the Spanish as an act of war – it might disrupt the Treaty of Utrecht that ended Queen Anne's War. Why did Jennings do this?

Gentlemen privateers in America cared for their own politics, their own money, and their own freedom. They had little reason to worry about British needs in America, especially those of the new Whig administration. Still, little opposition to these desires may have occurred if not for a major event that tipped the balance. The Golden Age of Piracy truly began when eleven Spanish treasure galleons wrecked in an early season hurricane on July 30, 1715. This catastrophe merely echoed the already looming end of Spanish domination in the West Indies and promised greater fortunes for these gentlemen.

Furthermore, the well-born Jennings viewed Hornigold, other wreckers, and common pirates of the ungoverned, unofficial, and barren Bahamas as unworthy. Indeed, there occurred certain events that demonstrated Hornigold's possible sense of inadequacy,

perhaps because of his financial and even religious position. Other events also demonstrated Jennings' distaste for Hornigold.

Spanish decline in the West Indies could not have been more striking after Queen Anne's War. The war had not gone well for them. Pirates had long preyed on their shipping and had become more powerful in recent years. Illustrating the hesitancy of the Spanish treasure fleets, General of the Windward Squadron Pedro de Ribera vacillated constantly on his fleet's time of departure. Ribera first prepared his fleet to sail in late 1712 from Havana, Cuba, but it could not sail until three years later. Meanwhile, a second fleet, in mid-1712, under Juan Estaban de Ubilla arrived in Veracruz, Mexico with eight more vessels, ordered to load with bullion, passengers, and merchandize and return to Spain as soon as possible. Neither of these fleets left on schedule. The dangers of both weather and anti-Spanish pirates figured prominently in their vacillation.¹

Ubilla set a new departure date for March 1715. One *urca*, or cargo ship, under Miguel de Lima had to be remasted and Ubilla did not leave until that May to rendezvous in Havana with the *galleones* fleet. The entire squadron of Ubilla and Echeverz totaled eleven vessels plus one Frenchman. They transported "merchandise, 14,000,000 pesos in silver, and significant quantities of gold; much-needed bullion for merchants whose trade had been victimized by the war and the long delay since the 1713 Peace of Utrecht, and by a monarchy overwhelmed with war debts."² Only one of the vessels, the French ship *La Grifon*, ever reached home.

¹ *Ibid.*, 269.

² *Ibid.*, 279.

Ship	Cargo	Gold	Silver
Galeones de Tierra Firma - General Don Antonio de Escheverz y Zubiza - made rendezvous with Ubilla's Flota fleet and set sail July 24, 1715 for Spain			
<i>El Ciervo (La Galeria)</i> - captured French smuggler			
<i>San Miguel (La Holendesa)</i> - captured Dutch smuggler			
<i>Nuestra Señora del Carmen (Capitana)</i> - flagship) - 713 tons	7766 Cacao, 33600 Brazilwood, 1500000 tobacco	79967 pesos 22 reals in bars and doubloons, 309 castellanos, 7 tomines, 6 grains gold dust, 18 marks, 3 chains worth 380 pesos 14 reals	5.5 oz silver dust, 1175 pesos
<i>Nuestra Señora del Rosario</i> (Almiranta) - 312 tons	gifts, brazilwood, cacao, dry good and hides	15515 pesos 13.5 reals in bars and doubloons, 175 pesos in plata doble	
<i>El Señor San Miguel</i> (patache)			
<i>Nuestra Señora de la Concepcion</i> (patache)		8503 pesos 3 reals bars doubloons	
Flota - General Juan Esteban de Ubilla - departed May 4, 1715 from Vera Cruz for Havana to rendezvous with General Echeverz' Galleones fleet			
<i>Santa Crista de San Roman</i> (Admiral Salmon's Almiranta) - 450 tons	684 chests and sacks of gifts, Chinese porcelain, worked silver, and misc.		2076004 pesos private stock
<i>Nuestra Señora de la Regia</i> - (Capitana or flagship) - 471 tons	worked silver, cochineal, indigo, vanilla, chocolate, copper, Chinese porcelain, brazilwood, balsam, and misc.	1 small chest of bars, doubloons and pearls	1222824 pesos 3 tomines 4 grains in coin and bullion - 8076 small chest and sacks of coins
<i>Urca de Lima - Santissima Trinidad</i> (resfuerzo or supply ship)			252171 pesos of private stock
<i>Nuestra Señora de las Nieves</i> (patache)			44000 pesos coins and bullion
unnamed tender			
<i>La Grifon</i> (French)			
Table 1: Twelve ships of the 1715 fleet - French ship <i>La Grifon</i> is the only one that did not wreck - 14,000,000 pesos worth of treasure and cargo in the whole fleet - this table was compiled by Baylus C. Brooks from data presented in Robert F. Burgess, <i>Florida's Golden Galleons</i> (2014).			

Four days out of Havana, on July 30, 1715, the fleet met with an early-season hurricane near Cape Canaveral, at latitude of 28⁰ north. Two ships sank in deep water, one went down in the shoals near shore, another ran ashore (*Urca de Lima*, now one of Florida's

Underwater Archaeological Preserves), two ships destroyed, and the flagship got off a single boat before drowning 225 people, including Don Juan Esteban de Ubilla. In all, eleven treasure galleons went down, most in shallow water.³

This massive wreck event became the quintessential birth of the Golden Age. American piracy, as western culture has come to understand it ever since, began with the hurricane's passage through the Florida Straits and destruction of the massive treasure fleet of Ubilla and Echeverez on July 30, 1715, outlined in table 1. As Newton also infers, the English were "particularly successful in their attempts to seize Indies bullion," essentially making the most effective wreckers and pirates.⁴ A massive treasure then lay just below the surface a few days sail from the Bahamas, long known as a pirate nest.

News of the Spanish wrecks spread like wildfire. Merchants in the Bahamas, Bermuda, Jamaica, New England, indeed the whole Atlantic community, heard about these wrecks and postponed their usual runs after sugar, cocoa, and calico to fish for the Spanish gold and silver. Teeming with treasure lust, many attacked ships already loaded with bullion rather than risk diving for it themselves.

The most infamous efforts of Jamaican privateers occurred by the following winter. Captain John Balchen of HMS *Diamond* testified that, in November 1715, two sloops fitted out of Jamaica, under authority of six-month commissions by Gov. Lord Archibald Hamilton. One was under command of Capt. Edward James and another under Capt. Henry Jennings. Three other vessels accompanied them. Balchen stated that they had declared to hunt for pirates, but had instead pilfered the Spanish wrecks and their ships. He told the secretary of the Admiralty that Jennings and James "went to sea and in a shorter time than

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, 280.

could be expected, return'd again with a considerable sum of mony.”⁵ Wreckers from the Bahamas and privateers from the entire Atlantic community, inebriated with the virtual worship of Henry Morgan, had reportedly fallen upon the Spanish wrecks and were picking at the treasure like vultures. Still, a Jamaican privateer felt validation enough to steal it directly from Spanish salvors on the Florida shore.⁶

The new German king in London may not have supported this practice, but Americans had flourished upon it for generations. As archaeologist Donny Hamilton found in his material culture study, the economics of Port Royal depended exclusively on providing the needs of privateers. Its primary trade involved prize commodities, which they had been lacking in recent years. Furthermore, these activities made Port Royal “the richest merchant community in English North America.”⁷ All British in America wanted a piece of the action that would revive their ailing income streams.

By contrast with Jamaica, the Bahamas had long ago filled with desperate people without government. Older residents were joined by smugglers, escaped slaves, and displaced logwood cutters. They stole anything they could for supplies. After the wrecks, however, prostitutes, professional wreckers, con-men, and adventure-seekers swarmed Nassau, the capital village of New Providence Island. Treasure seekers from across the Atlantic maritime community crowded the main island of the 700-plus and mostly worthless Bahama Island chain. It lay closest to the treasure to be had on the Florida coast, less than a hundred leagues or three hundred miles distant. At most, ships from the Bahamas required only two or three days to sail to the wrecks, a week’s round trip.

⁵ “America and West Indies: May 1716, 16-31,” in *Calendar*.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Hamilton, “Pirates and Merchants,” 14.

Benjamin Hornigold may or may not have been officially commissioned as a privateer. Furthermore, his supposed leadership extended only from the captured island of New Providence and his importance was probably exaggerated by Capt. Charles Johnson. Moreover, he lived in the Bahamas, from Eleuthera, not in Jamaica, and no evidence exists to prove any connection to that island. Furthermore, there is no evidence that Thache was ever subordinate to Hornigold, or even accompanied him prior to December 1716. They all likely fished the Spanish wrecks for silver and gold, while Thache worked as an independent pirate when first found in the Henry Timberlake deposition of that date. Pirate history has often been an isolated field of study, usually separated from the Atlantic World context and highly popularized. It literally thrives on a lack of certain information.⁸

Spain reacted strongly. Don Juan de Acuña, Marques del Valle, Deputy of the Governor in Havana and Council of Commerce, wrote on March 18, 1716 to the Marquis de Monteleon, attaché in Jamaica. Del Valle informed de Monteleon that he was charged by the governor of Cuba and La Florida, Laureano Torres y Ayala, Marquis de Casa Torres, to complain to Gov. Archibald Hamilton that Spain “suffered ships to be fitted out in [Jamaica], under pretext of cruising upon pirates.”⁹ Instead, “they committed many hostilities on the ships and dominions of the King of Spain.”¹⁰ As Del Valle reported, *Barsheba* returned to Jamaica in January 1716, dropping anchor at Port Royal. The quick return meant that they probably planned the entire trip before leaving Port Royal. Their commissions stated “to take pirates,” but Jennings probably neither intended to do that, nor

⁸ Deposition of Henry Timberlake, master of the *Lamb*, 17 December 1716, 1B/5/3/8, 212–3 [426-7], Jamaican Archives, Kingston.

⁹ “America and West Indies: May 1716, 16-31,” *Calendar*.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

did he look for other opportunities while he was there. This had essentially been a mission for his owners.¹¹

Jennings enjoyed his autonomy; he walked free both in Port Royal and in Kingston where he lived. The governor did not have him arrested for his illegal raid of La Florida and plunder of Spanish property. Jennings would leave for another grab at the treasure, again, not fishing it himself, but this time pirating two French vessels and chasing Benjamin Hornigold back to Nassau to recover one of them. By late April of 1716, Henry Jennings arrived in Nassau with £87,000 more to add to his total net worth – another successful mission. The details of this second sortie reveal Jennings' utter contempt for Benjamin Hornigold.¹²

Capt. Benjamin Hornigold, originally from the island of Eleuthera in the Bahamas, had long fished wrecks and raided Spanish shipping from that location. Still, he operated from a proprietary colony with no government. Hungry sea rovers from Eleuthera, Harbor Island, and New Providence all banded together, joined by other outcasts from other parts of the Caribbean, including the exiled inhabitants of Veracruz, Tabasco and other parts of the Bay of Campeche, recently scattered by the Spanish. Anxious maritime refugees made the Bahamas, a chain of 700 rocky, barren islands their home. By far, the greatest amount of activity on the Spanish wrecks came from the ungoverned Bahamas. Still, there seems no reliable account of the number of transients that crowded Nassau. The usual residents probably became known as the desperate men of long-time notoriety. Their vessels were probably smaller at first, but more numerous.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

Benjamin Hornigold most likely was involved in fishing the Spanish wrecks for spilled Spanish treasure as well, or pirating vessels that had already recovered goods. He declared himself England's savior, at first resisting peer pressure to attack British vessels. It seems doubtful that the king took him at his word. His choice of residence could have been more respectable in British eyes. Still, no evidence exists for him having violated Spanish sovereignty to steal salvaged treasure, as did Jennings.

Hornigold's capture or recapture from the Spanish of *Mary* occurred before January 1716. In a gesture of goodwill, he returned this ship to its Jamaican owner. John Vickers originally made his deposition to Lt. Gov. Spotswood of Virginia. Spotswood presented Vickers to the Board of Trade, who relayed these events from New Providence to him after he left the island:

In January [1716] Hornigold sailed from Providence in the said sloop *Mary* [of Jamaica, belonging to Augustine Golding], which Hornigold took upon the Spanish Coast, having on board 140 men, 6 guns and 8 pattararas, and soon after returned with another Spanish sloop, which he took on the coast of Florida. After he had fitted the said sloop [*Benjamin?*] at Providence, he sent Golding's sloop back to Jamaica to be returned to the owners.¹³

Hornigold sailed *Mary* back to the Bahamas – not to Harbor Island (northern part of Eleuthera), but to New Providence Island, and its capital of Nassau. In a direct affront and in retaliation against Thomas Walker's arrest of his friends, he proposed to all pirates at New Providence that he would lead them; they would be under his protection. Hornigold began on one small island of the Bahamas, organized slightly, and usurped the capital, then filled with mariners from all over the Atlantic. Taking over a non-existent government should have been easy. Hornigold declared his outlaw band the "Flying Gang."¹⁴ Care must be

¹³ "Deposition of John Vickers; late of the Island of Providence" (3 Jul 1716) in *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Woodard, *Republic of Pirates*, 112-113.

taken in assuming that all residents, transients especially, desired to be pirates. Fishing wrecks in the water for abandoned treasure was a legal occupation and many likely came just for that. Still, the question remains of how Jamaicans and Bermudans viewed them.

As Konstam writes, Hornigold's return of the *Mary* "less than three months later suggests that he was already trying to impress upon Gov. Hamilton [of Jamaica] that he was no pirate, only a privateer who hadn't stopped fighting."¹⁵ Still, no evidence exists for Hornigold's supposed service as a privateer – only as an unwanted nuisance in the Bahamas. The Bahamian pirate Hornigold may simply have been appealing for legitimacy and recognition of his outlaw band from the most valid authority in the West Indies. Past authors, affected by Johnson desired to enhance the importance of Benjamin Hornigold, the self-styled king of the common pirate gang of Nassau.

Johnson wrote in 1724, well after the "war on piracy" had begun. He blended wealthy privateers and common pirates in his narrative. Still, even he probably did not see them as similar classes of criminal. Johnson referred to the haughty "Captain *Jennings*, who was their Commadore, and who always bore a great Sway among them, being a Man of good Understanding, and good Estate, before this Whim took him of going a Pyrating."¹⁶

Colin Woodard intuitively feels that Jennings, "an educated ship captain with a comfortable estate" on Bermuda, looked down on Hornigold, likely a mere "wrecker," or "notorious" individual by comparison.¹⁷ He may have viewed any maritime rover without an official commission as merely a "pirate." Jamaican privateers probably presumed greater authority because of their wealth, social status, and official commissions.

¹⁵ Konstam, *Blackbeard*, 99.

¹⁶ Johnson, *General History*, 2nd ed., 35.

¹⁷ Woodard, *Republic of Pirates*, 122.

“Indeed, the number of pirates in this [early] generation who could be considered propertied,” assures Rediker, “was exceptionally small by any standard.”¹⁸ He uses this assumption to basically ignore their contribution. Using genealogical sources helps to prove this assumption not absolutely wrong, but greatly skewed. Class differentials should not be ignored, by any means. Rediker elaborates:

Among them were two "gentlemen" - Stede Bonnet, who was considered by many to be insane, and Christopher Moody, whose "gentleman-like" demeanor caused his crew to remove him from his command. Two other captains, Edward England and Henry Jennings, were said to be educated, and the same would have been true of the handful of surgeons who sailed with the pirates. A few skilled workers—mates, carpenters, and coopers — who turned pirate might have had modest comforts in life, but the overwhelming majority of pirates were common seamen, men like Walter Kennedy who had much to gain and little to lose by turning pirate.¹⁹

Rediker’s words, like a “handful” of surgeons, a “few” skilled workers, and “overwhelming” majority of common seamen makes his point. For him, gentlemen pirates were simply ghosts, hardly significant in the overall analysis. Still, Rediker mostly reviewed records from the 1720s for clues to democratic agency. He must train a stronger spyglass on the earlier years.

The tale that demonstrates the class differences between Benjamin Hornigold and Henry Jennings can be reconstructed from three depositions taken by Peter Heywood, acting governor of Jamaica after removal of Gov. Lord Archibald Hamilton in late 1716. Henry Jennings had planned yet another sortie on the wrecks that diverted into further murky legal waters over his capture of two French vessels, *Mary* and *Marianne*. The French on the northern coast of Cuba were simply in the wrong place at the wrong time. This legal quandary, combined with unfettered greed of men of estates, led to massive confusion, even

¹⁸ Rediker, *Villains of All Nations*, 50.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

defection among Jennings' crew. These crews seldom experienced any sort of organized democracy – votes for quartermaster, or voting out captains, for example. The highly democratic Marxist argument of the early Golden Age comes up short.

The incident told by these depositions resulted in the now famous confrontation of Jennings with Hornigold at New Providence Island. It places these men of varying class in context, juxtaposed directly against each other for contrast. The difference between them becomes immediately apparent.

John Vickers deposed that Henry Jennings came to New Providence Island and took a sloop away from Benjamin Hornigold. Angus Konstam interpreted these events to mean that Jennings “was the de facto pirate chief in New Providence.”²⁰ All that mattered, he said, was the plunder and Jennings had it. Still, at the time, Jennings chased Hornigold to Nassau because the common pirate took his loot. Jennings actually appeared to care little for the islands, despite his family's earlier concerns with its status. He cared even less for being Hornigold's chief. By contrast, Hornigold lorded over destitute residents, then surrounded by masses of transients in Nassau.²¹

Jamaica Gov. Hamilton later said that he did not take his part of Jennings' prize money from the November 1715 raid, but still signed another commission and departure papers for his next foray. This time, Jasper's brother, Leigh Ashworth, took command of *Mary* and James Carnegie, of *Discovery*. Samuel Liddell of *Cocoa Nut* had joined them at Cape Corrientes, on the western tip of Cuba and Benjamin Hornigold, in consort with Samuel Bellamy or Olivier Levasseur (La Buse or “Buzzard”), joined them at the Bay of

²⁰ Konstam, *Blackbeard*, 99.

²¹ Three ships named *Mary* are involved in these incidents: the ship commanded by Ashworth, the ship originally belonging to Augustine Golding that Hornigold renamed the *Benjamin*, and the *Mary* of Rochelle. Understandably, these vessels, all involved in the same incident of April 1716, have confused the narrative.

Hondo a few days into their plunder of French vessel *Marianne*. This meeting had not gone well.

Illustrating this sortie are the depositions of Allen Bernard, Joseph Eels, and Samuel Liddell, one of the privateer captains who may have drawn the line at outright piracy. Vickers' noted that Hornigold had "in March last sailed from Providence in the said Spanish sloop, having on board near 200 men, but whither bound deponent knoweth not.²² Apparently, Hornigold's destination was the "Bay of Hounds" or Bahia Honda, where he had his fateful meeting with Jennings and other wealthy privateers. Vickers' deposition gave a fair synopsis to these events, from the perspective in Nassau:

About 22nd April last, Capt. Jenings arrived at Providence and brought in as prize a French ship [*Marianne*] mounted with 32 guns which he had taken at the Bay of Hounds, and there shared the cargo (which was very rich consisting of European goods for the Spanish trade) amongst his men, and then went in the said ship to the wrecks where he served as Comodore and guardship.²³

The deposition of Allen Bernard of Jamaica, quarter-master for Henry Jennings' *Barsheba* provides eyewitness detail from on board Jenning's own ship. This initial venture of Jennings and company began around the beginning of April 1716 at Bluefield's Bay. Bernard said that he "was advised to go to Sea for his health and applyed himself to Captn. Henry Jennings who told him he should be his Quarter Master which would be an easy Post for him."²⁴ With this statement, Bernard mentions nothing about the crew electing him as quartermaster – the choice was Jennings' alone, according to Bernard's deposition. Bernard went aboard Jenning's vessel, the sloop *Bersheba* and they sailed "in Company with ye Man of Warr and a Man of Warr Sloop and severall other Sailes" for the western-most port of

²² "Deposition of John Vickers; late of the Island of Providence" (3 Jul 1716) in *Ibid.*

²³ "America and West Indies: July 1716;" *Calendar.*

²⁴ Deposition of Allen Bernard, Quarter-master of Bersheba, 10 August 1716, Jamaican Council Minutes, ff. 63-68, Jamaican Archives, Kingston.

Bluefields, in Westmoreland Parish, Jamaica.²⁵ They fitted out the *Bersheba* and sailed for the Isle of Pines, Cuba on the south-western shore, there anchoring at Cape Corrientes. While there, they entered into consortship with Capt. Samuel Liddell in the *Cocoa Nut*, Capt. Leigh Ashworth in the *Mary*, and Capt. James Carnegie in the *Discovery*. Bernard said their intention was to fish the Spanish wrecks and they proceeded toward the “Bay of Florida,” presumably moving around the western tip of Cuba toward Bahia Honda on the north coast before they could veer northward for the wrecks.²⁶

Of special note, Samuel Liddell, master of *Cocoa Nut*, apparently was a merchant trading in Carolina. He had been ordered by his ship owners, James Knight and John Lewis of Clarendon Parish, Jamaica, to ignore the Carolina produce and search the wrecks for Spanish silver. After sailing from Jamaica, he cruised northward for that purpose and met “Capt. Jennings in the Barsheba and Capt. Ashworth in the Mary near the west end of [The Isle of] Pines.”²⁷ Rounding Cape Corrientes a few days later, the trio met with Carnegie’s sloop. From there, they sailed for “the wrecks” when they came to the Bay of Hondo (Bahia Honda - a secluded bay in Northwestern Cuba shown in detail in figure 8) and found a French merchant ship that Jennings wanted to take. This prompted Liddell’s harsh reaction to part from Jennings and his accomplices.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ "Jamaica, Church of England Parish Register Transcripts, 1664-1880," database with images, FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:VHD6-FT8> : accessed 11 January 2016), John Lewis, 29 Dec 1715, Christening; citing p. 36, Clarendon, Jamaica, Registrar General's Department, Spanish Town; FHL microfilm 1,291,704; "Deposition of Samuel Liddell," Jamaica, August 7, 1716, Jamaican Council Minutes, ff.49-50; John and Judith Lewis of Clarendon Parish christened their son John on 29 Dec 1715.

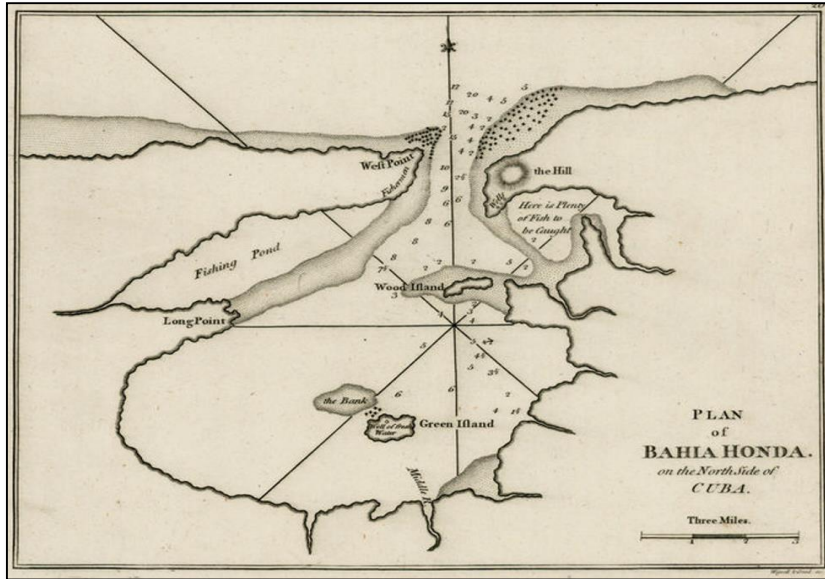


Figure 8: “Plan of Bahia Honda” by Sayer and Bennett (1794) – Scarce harbor plan, showing Bahia Honda, on the north coast of Cuba, west of Havanna. The map includes soundings, anchorages, sand bars, fishing areas and a fresh water well on Green Island. The Bay was a favorite rendezvous for English forces to obtain fresh fish and careen their vessels between Jamaica and points northward. It later became the location of an American Naval Base under the Platt Amendment, but was abandoned in 1912 in favor of an expansion of Guantanamo Bay. This was the location of the French *Marianne* in April 1716 when it was captured by Henry Jennings *et al.* The other French sloop *Mary* was in the location of San Mariel, approximately 26 miles to the east of Bahia Honda. Image in public domain.

The deposition of Joseph Eels, quartermaster of sloop *Mary*, Capt. Leigh Ashworth, gave the details coincident with Bernard’s. Eels testified that, about six leagues (18 miles) from Bahia Honda, they spied the merchant Capt. Young’s sloop with two periaguas preparing to leave. The men on Young’s sloop told Ashworth “they were two maroon periaguas,” that they found in the Bay of Honduras. At Bahia Honda, they were engaging a French vessel, ostensibly, the *Marianne*.²⁸

Samuel Liddell also testified that the French ship had “about fourteen or Sixteen Guns and forty five Men or thereabouts.”²⁹ He tried to caution against following suit with Young’s men and told Jennings “Not to Attack the said french Ship till next Morning

²⁸ Joseph Eels deposition in “America and West Indies: December 1716, 1-15,” Calendar.

²⁹ Deposition of Samuel Liddell, Jamaica, August 7, 1716, Jamaican Council Minutes, ff. 49-50, Jamaican Archives, Kingston.

alleging he would go on board with him to see if they could make a lawful prize of her.”³⁰ Jennings did not heed the warning. Liddell continued that “about ten a clock that night Capt. Jennings of the *Barsheba*, and Capt Ashworth of the *Mary* were towed in by two peraguas that came from the Bay and” Liddell in *Cocoa Nut*.³¹ Liddell further “declared that about thirty small arms were fired by the assailants upon the French ship and one great gun which was said to be fired by Capt. Jennings himself, and the French fired not so much as a pistol.”³² Jennings clearly figured as the aggressor.

As Joseph Eels testified, a peragua commanded by a Spaniard informed them that there was another French ship in Porto Mariel just east of Bahia Honda and currently trading there. Capt. James Carnegie in *Discovery* went to seek the French ship, but next morning the peragua which had followed him reported that Hornigold, in *Benjamin*, had already taken the French ship *Mary*. While thus engaged near Bahia Honda (annotated expanded view shown in figure 9), Allen Bernard testified that “in two or three days after returned again, at which time we saw two sails off the bar who was said to be Capt. Hornegole [in the *Benjamin*] and a French sloop [*Mary* of Rochelle].”³³ These two tried to join the plunder of *Marianne*. Jennings and Ashworth weighed anchor to go after Hornigold, but not being able to overtake him, they returned to Bahia Honda. They again anchored and proceeded in their boats for *Marianne*. “The [French] ship being in the offing,” said Eels, one of Young’s peraguas and several of her men hauled her alongside and threw the money, “about 28,500

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Deposition of Allen Bernard, Quarter-master of *Bersheba*, 10 August 1716, Jamaican Council Minutes, ff.63-68, Jamaican Archives; Bernard indicates a “French sloop” that traveled with Benjamin Hornigold. This sloop may have been the unnamed 8-gun vessel captained by Edward Thache with 90 crew, mentioned by Henry Timberlake in the taking of his vessel *Lamb* in late summer 1716. At the time, Hornigold captained a vessel of equal size and power called the *Delight*.

odd pieces of eight into the periagua and immediately went away with it.”³⁴ The men aboard Young’s sloop were pirates: Samuel Bellamy and John Williams, both of Massachusetts. They apparently tried to take *Marianne*’s hard currency for themselves before determining their chances with Jennings and his group. They rowed away in the periagua and rejoined Hornigold’s *Benjamin* and *Mary*.³⁵ Jennings treated Hornigold and others in the Bahamas with sheer disdain and he would not have the “common pirate” taking his supposedly “legitimate” prize.³⁶



Figure 9: Map of Henry Jennings 2nd foray with Leigh Ashworth and James Carnegie (Spring 1716) financed by Daniel Axtell and Jasper Ashworth – Base map: L’Isle, Guillaume de, *Carte de la Louisiane et du Cours du Mississipi* (1718), from William P. Cumming, *The Southeast in Early Maps*, Third Edition. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998. Map 170; annotated by Baylus C. Brooks.

³⁴ “Deposition of Joseph Eels of Port Royall, Carpenter, Dec. 20, 1716,” in “America and West Indies: December 1716, 1-15,” in *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies*, Volume 29, 1716-1717, ed. Cecil Headlam (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1930), 211-232.

³⁵ Woodard, *Republic of Pirates*, 96.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

In June 1716, the government of the French settlements on Hispaniola (modern Haiti), complained to Gov. Hamilton on Jamaica about the loss of their vessels, *Mary* and *Marianne*. Monsieur Michon wrote to Gov. Hamilton:

We are not surprized to see the Spaniards under ye pretext of defending their coast from all forreign commerce to take vessels att sea going on their lawfull occasions; they are rogues by profession, but these are English fitted out at Jamaica, who without your privity, and without doubt contrary to your express commands, plunder indifferently both French and Spaniards, they have four sloops commanded by Henry Jennings, Legs Ashworth, James Carnique, Saml. Liddell, and acknowledge Jennings for their chief, 'tis these that have taken the *Mary* of Rochell, Capt. Escoubes, and ye *Marianne*, Capt. le Gardew, at ye Bay of Hondo, worth abt. 50,000 crowns.³⁷

Jennings, Ashworth, and Carnegie all plundered the illegal French prize *Marianne*. Liddell, who disagreed with taking the French ship and later testified against Jennings, apparently had parted their company. Yet, he was accused as guilty by association.

Capt. Carnegie took command of *Marianne* the next morning, giving his old sloop *Discovery* to the French crew. Jennings, Ashworth and Carnegie weighed anchor for New Providence, the Bahamas. The inveterate privateer Jennings chased Hornigold to take back the *Mary* and the money. Because he still intended to fish the wrecks to the northward on the Florida coast, he made the best of the situation and used New Providence to divide the spoils from both French vessels. There, they shared the goods in three parts: one for the owners of the three sloops, Daniel Axtell and Jasper Ashworth, and the other two for the men.³⁸

Allen Bernard's deposition was the most detailed of the three, both on the events that transpired at New Providence and afterward on Jamaica. It offers an excellent first-hand

³⁷ "America and West Indies: August 1716," in *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies*, Volume 29, 1716-1717, ed. Cecil Headlam (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1930), 159-177; Note that three vessels are involved in this story that are all named *Mary*. The first is Augustine Golding's vessel, captured by the Spanish and recaptured by Benjamin Hornigold. The second is the vessel French vessel mentioned here and captured also by Hornigold. The third is the French vessel *Marianne*, captured and taken over by James Carnegie and renamed *Mary*.

³⁸ "America and West Indies: May 1716, 16-31," *Calendar*.

account, from the point-of-view of privateer crews themselves, of the island made notorious for pirate activity. Of special note, Bernard, quartermaster for Henry Jennings, referred to Benjamin Hornigold directly as “Hornigole ye Pirate.”³⁹ This reference made by a privateer quartermaster, after having most likely illegally taken a French prize, speaks volumes in regards to the differences between privateers and pirates. Jennings’ behavior toward Hornigold spoke even louder. Wealthy privateers from Jamaica disdained poor, lowly “pirates,” living in the Bahamas. Unlike Jamaica, New Providence was an island without a governor and devoid of administration. Residents who remained probably had no viable resources to leave. Even worse, many of them may not have wanted to leave. Jamaicans, much more wealthy by comparison, felt more refined, privileged, and more self-deserving than Bahamians. These records effectively communicate this important class distinction.

Jennings might have held strong bias against Hornigold and, indeed, against most Bahamians. The common wrecker or pirate Hornigold had interfered with a privateer operation that Jennings regarded as legitimate. A well-respected writer of the times, John Oldmixon, seven years earlier, wrote that the inhabitants of the Bahamas “living a lewd licentious Sort of Life... by the Character we have had of the people of *Providence*, we cannot think that Pyrate [Henry Avery], who was very rich, was unwelcome to them.”⁴⁰ Furthermore, a landed gentleman like Henry Jennings, with estates on both Bermuda and Jamaica, may well have possessed a library – being a desirable indication of wealth in his day. A recent popular biography of the British Empire like Oldmixon’s had likely found a spot on every gentleman’s bookshelf. His book remains a popular reference today. Lt. Gov.

³⁹ "Deposition of Allen Bernard" Jamaica. August 10, 1716, Jamaican Council Minutes ff.63-68.

⁴⁰ John Oldmixon, *The British Empire in America: Containing the History of the Discovery, Settlement, Progress and State of the British Colonies on the Continent and Islands of America*, Vol. II (London: Printed for J. Brotherton et al., 1708), 350, 356.

Alexander Spotswood in Virginia also had probably seen this reference by the time he launched his literary attack upon pirates in the Bahamas. This growing general bias toward pirates may also have affected his final attack on Edward Thache in North Carolina.

A full year after Henry Jennings' assault on Benjamin Hornigold, Capt. Matthew Musson found the "Flying gang" finally consisted of pirate captains "Hornigold, Jennings, Burgiss, White, and Thatch," with 5 ships, 34 guns, and 360 men – just those on the island.⁴¹ Henry Jennings was well known by then as the initiator of the illegal raid of late 1715 on the Florida shore. He, too, was outcast by his government. Both gentlemen Thache and Jennings had finally joined with the known pirate Hornigold. These were the most dangerous ring leaders and experienced warriors, a privateer and an ex-Royal Navy officer who left Jamaica for the Bahamas and joined Hornigold's men in the pirate "Flying Gang." There were likely many pirates in other crews not then at the island and unseen by Musson, judging by the popularity of fishing nearby on Ubilla's Spanish wrecks and the recent reports all along the American coast to the West Indies. Musson's report probably convinced the Board of the necessity of stopping these men and initiating the "war on piracy," with all of the implications of a media and military campaign.

Angus Konstam writes that the pirates at New Providence could hardly see the end of their days in early 1717; but a few months later, "Blackbeard [and others] left the islands... never to return."⁴² The important thing to remember is that these wealthy pirates had just arrived on a not-so-wealthy depleted and tiny island. Another important aspect of the depositions concerning the Bahamas under the Flying Gang is that the "leader" seemed in dispute, either Hornigold, Jennings, Barrow, or as many as five at a time. At this point, in

⁴¹ "America and West Indies: July 1717, 17-31," *Calendar*.

⁴² Konstam, *Blackbeard*, 100-102.

summer of 1717, all but Hornigold were Jamaicans, most ex-privateers. Still, these recent arrivals had just been cast from their homes and essentially, their nation. Most accepted pardons when Capt. Vincent Pearse arriving in the HMS *Phoenix*, offered them. Jennings, Barrow, Parr, Ashworth, Carnegie, and other likely gentlemen pirates faded from the pirate scene; only Thache, Bonnet, and a few others remained on the account. Still, Thache and Bonnet died by the end of 1718. Only the dregs remained and were recast as the *Most Notorious Pyrates* by Charles Johnson.

Conclusion: “Sticks and Stones”

Developed under the Stuarts, the colonies of northern Carolina and the Bahamas especially encountered grave corruption. They became the classic “pirate nests” in the New World. As Marcus Rediker found, these proletarians struggled for their own survival under wilderness conditions. The Bahamas also faced a belligerent enemy on their doorstep without protection – protection that could have been provided for them if not for the needs of profit. These desperate individuals became pirates of the lower class, who survived by picking the scraps out of wrecked merchant vessels and using guerilla tactics against invaders intent on driving them out. By 1726, when William Fly had left Jamaica and mutinied, piracy had precipitated into just such a guerilla war on the waters of the Atlantic maritime community, continuing the fight against the oppressive British regime. These late Golden Age end-game pirates most resembled the desperate pirates of the Bahamas.

This latter image contrasts strongly with the earlier America of the buccaneers, many of whom were wealthy, Spartan, even feudal gentleman pirates who once became icons of piratical trade “beyond the line.” A “war on piracy” had successfully reduced pirates to their lower class representatives – the “Flying Gang” spoken of by pirate historians today. Many gentlemen merchants and privateers saw the silver disappearing by late 1717. So did they, for when Gov. Woodes Rogers arrived in Nassau, many saw the writing on the wall and took a gracious pardon. Many also kept their ill-gained profits.

Marcus Rediker believes that most men became pirates out of a desire for revenge upon former ship masters. That may have been true for common crewmen and their captains in the later periods. The proletarians to whom Rediker refers operated sails, scrubbed decks,

or lived in diseased camps. They wandered the squalid backstreets of Kingston, Port Royal, Boston, Bath Town, or the razed barren islands of the Bahamas, awaiting the meager residuals of commodities that might briefly trickle down to them through simpler eighteenth-century economic means.

Still, at the beginning of Rediker's first stage in 1716, the primary motivation for privateer captains centered upon wealth derived from Spanish shipping. Gold and silver once shone above all other American treasures, especially in the account books of Jamaican, Bermudan, or Carolina port collectors. The money concerns vaulted over patriotism, made even less robust because of fading conservative political ideas under Whig reforms. The hurricane of July 1715 sparked the last attempt to regain their wealth and glory. Eleven Spanish wrecks resulting from that hurricane created the treasure-lust among American colonists that encouraged Britain to forcefully end piracy.

Many gentlemen, such as Henry Jennings from Bermuda, Edward Thache of Spanish Town, Richard Tookerman of South Carolina, Thomas Barrow of Jamaica, and even the "Peter Parr" mentioned by Vickers' deposition, sought that treasure. They followed the traditions of their earlier "Sea Dog" heroes. With few exceptions, they quickly collected their fortunes, faded quietly into the background, and cut their ties with the William Flys of the latter Golden Age. The gentlemen quietly accepted British rule once again when Gov. Woodes Rogers arrived in the Bahamas to establish royal control there for the first time. Some of these men even turned and later worked for Britain as pirate-killing hunters. Like the proprietors' lack of concern for the Bahamas, these gentlemen cared little for the Frankenstein's their greed had created – the William Flys left to hang from the gallows in Boston, Charles Town, Spanish Town, and Nassau. As they understood, men make their

own ill-considered decisions. Survival of the fittest ensured a merchant's prosperity over a common seaman.

Words can be powerful. The British wrote the final narrative of the Golden Age. Observing real American pirates has always been difficult because of the cloudy and boisterous corpus of pirate legend surrounding them. Capt. Charles Johnson, whoever he happens to truly be, created a book of half-fiction that hid the possible origins of these merchant pirates. Writers who followed Johnson have made it even worse with horrid visions like that expressed in the woodcut shown in figure 10. Assuredly, this image did not refer to these early Golden Age merchants and gentlemen.



Figure 10: Eighteenth-century woodcut labeled “Horrid Piracy and Murder” reprinted in Harold T. Wilkins article for the *San Antonio Light*, February 11, 1940.

Authors’ words, for almost three centuries, have continuously damned Benjamin Hornigold and other so-called “notorious” pirates. Angus Konstam writes “by the start of

1716, Benjamin Hornigold was no longer a smalltime privateersman turned cutthroat.”¹

Konstam merely followed the tradition of Johnson in *A General History*, who used words such as “notorious” twelve times, “villain” seventeen times, “rogue,” or a variation thereof, thirty-five times. This usage, of course, helped him sell more books. Interestingly, Johnson-Mist never used “cut-throat,” more emotionally-evocative, as did Konstam. Still, Dr. Hugh Rankin, professor of colonial America and the American Revolution at Tulane University and North Carolina expert on pirates, used the strongest expressions. About Blackbeard, Dr. Rankin harshly asserts “this piece of trash, however, could not be considered a credit to any community.”² Emotionally-evocative words, like “cut-throat” and “trash,” most often found in polemical rhetoric, are, at best, distractions. About Blackbeard, specifically, however, with the recent genealogical analysis proving otherwise, Rankin truly missed the mark.

Words like “cutthroat,” or a murderer who slits the throats of their victims, used in lieu of descriptive terms like “pirate,” “mariner,” or “privateer” elicit certain emotional qualities that solidify iconic images over real personalities. These words compare easily with images seen in late-eighteenth-century woodcuts like that shown in figure 10. These words have been used through time not to refer to heroes, but to notoriety and criminals in England. In 2015, Fiona Rule, in *Streets of Sin: A Dark Biography of Notting Hill*, writes “By the 1820s, the little cart track on the lower slopes of Notting Hill has become so notorious that it had officially been renamed ‘Cut-throat Lane.’”³

¹ Konstam, *Blackbeard*, 99.

² Hugh F. Rankin, *The Pirates of Colonial North Carolina* (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1960), 43.

³ Fiona Hill, *Streets of Sin: A Dark Biography of Notting Hill* (New York: The History Press, 2015), ; “America and West Indies: May 1698, 16-20,” in *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies*, Volume 16, 1697-1698, ed. J W Fortescue (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1905), 217-234.

Still, like Johnson in *A General History*, these words began to be used in this fashion by Hornigold's British contemporaries to rhetoricize against "ne'er-do-wells" as well as substantial Americans who had turned against British goals. The early eighteenth-century view of "notorious" "villainous" pirates like those in figure 10 contrasts strongly the earlier contemporary views of "Admiral Henry Morgan." During 1670-1688, the English saw Morgan as a great hero to the people. Piracy was official English policy in America. It made America's great cities like Port Royal, Charles Town, and Boston. England easily utilized piracy when it suited them, then just as easily discarded American pirates as "enemies of all mankind" when it did not.

Edward Thache, Henry Jennings, Leigh Ashworth, Thomas Barrow, Richard Tookerman, and most of these "discarded" gentlemen are now exposed as higher class by genealogical analysis; Thache, even as a navy war veteran! Furthermore, they had rarely killed or tortured their victims. Unlike Charles Vane and Edward Low, they often showed their victims greater respect, even giving them vessels in trade, food and provisions, and receipts for merchandise. Do they deserve relative recognition as "notorious" and "villainous" "rogues" – even "criminals?" The official policy overturned official policy. The goal had become polemical – to disdain the former ways of the empire – to "trash" *all* so-called "notorious" pirates. Johnson, Rankin, Lee, and many other writers followed this example.

For pirates, they were no longer a part of Great Britain – not really traitors, just no longer the same people or culture, with the same goals. The Golden Age of Piracy can easily be viewed as the earliest contractions in the birth of the American War for Independence. America's true Independence Day may not be July 4, 1776, but July 30, 1715. This event

began in the waters of the Caribbean and the Florida Straits, just off the Bahamas – with ex-privateers and pirates like Edward “Blackbeard” Thache as the earliest, if unconcerned, admirals and generals. If the Board of Trade had indeed viewed this event in a similar light, it might explain their heated reaction to Blackbeard and other pirates after the reports of John Vickers, Matthew Musson, and others.

No official Declaration of Independence had been written – no coordinated resistance organized. Still, these men appeared to reject the Treaty of Utrecht and continued the fight after Queen Anne’s War had ended for the British. They did not see themselves as pirates, but rather as patriots. The Flying Gang grew in number and fanned out from New Providence, raiding French and Spanish gold and silver shipments as far north as St. Augustine. Eventually, they raided English vessels as easily as foreign and expanded their reach to the entire Atlantic Ocean. Now out of control, privateers and pirates alike were officially rebels. The king branded them “common enemies of mankind” and there would be no return, especially after a voluminous effusion of books, television, and movies.

Although the Golden Age appeared to be an early American Revolution, it would resemble an unending Valley Forge; there would arrive no help for their troops in the harsh winters to come. The infrastructure necessary to rule the vast American colonial segment of the British Empire had not yet been established. Control of large parts of Carolina territory still essentially belonged to the Spanish and diverted colonial attention. Both the Spanish and French encroached on the vast Carolina territory from the west. Resources were not yet available to begin anew. The “Flying Gang’s” revolution quickly ended in rebellion. Their once heroic leaders became “notorious traitors” and criminals of the empire. “Terror” now gripped the narrative. With apologies to Marcus Rediker, their enemy was not the oppressive

ship captain, but rather the oppressive British government and their media campaign. Still, their day had not yet come.⁴

Marcus Rediker spoke of the peak years for piracy, with 70 percent of captures occurring between 1718 and 1722. Blackbeard, alleged to have purposely scuttled the *QAR* and alleged to have marooned his crew in North Carolina, continued trading stolen goods with Bath residents, and flirted with the two more imposing governments of South Carolina and Virginia. Blackbeard had entered the pages of recorded history just over a year before Lt. Robert Maynard, sent by Spotswood, killed him at Ocracoke. His was a short career, much maligned after his death. Afterward, Rediker's "Golden Age" began to end in 1722 and finally did by 1726. The new age of the debasement of pirates like Blackbeard would continue for the next three hundred years, providing our current narrative of the quintessential American pirate. The accepted and brief narratives of these men need to be re-examined, reanalyzed, and enhanced with more genealogical study. Planting sugar on a Jamaican plantation, for instance, Dr. Henry Barham's *Mesopotamia* in Westmoreland Parish, would have been safer to posterity than becoming the stuff of legend, the stuff of mere words.

Centuries of writing about the "war on piracy" have since reduced America's view of their own earliest founding fathers. The gentlemen pirates of the early Golden Age have been forgotten in a storm of fantastic fiction blended with barely considered fact. Pirates have since generally become wraithlike characters wearing a red satin sash and swinging from the yardarm of dime-store popularity while billowing cannon smoke joyously obscured their true pasts. Their stories have never really been told. Rediker's "war on piracy" in

⁴ Rediker, *Villains*, 36; Brooks, "Born in Jamaica of Very Creditable Parents," 262-304.

America, the ruling class terrorism of the British, won the Golden Age. “Sticks and stones” and words actually *can* hurt.

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