

Black Beard the Pirate, Goose Creek, Berkeley County Born and Bred ~

Black Beard (born 1690, in St. James, Goose Creek Parish, Berkeley County, South Carolina, and died November 22, 1718, Ocracoke Island, North Carolina) is one of history's most famous pirates, who became an imposing figure in American folklore. But much of written history would not tell you of his Goose Creek, South Carolina birthplace, rather it has been told, Bristol, England. Were it not for our illustrious Goose Creek historian, Michael J. Heitzler, PhD, we would not know the real history of Black Beard [also called and named Blackbeard].

Little is known of Blackbeard's early life, and his origins have been left to speculation. He has been widely identified as Edward Teach (or several variations thereof, including Thatch, Thack, and Edward Beard), though pirate custom at the time was to use a pseudonym when engaging in acts of piracy, and this true name, Edward Beard, will now be known. Edward Beard's father was a privateer during the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1713). Blackbeard was first heard of as a pirate in late 1716. The following year he converted a captured French merchantman into a 40gun warship, *Queen Anne's Revenge*, and soon became notorious for outrages along the Virginia and Carolina coasts and in the Caribbean Sea. In 1718, Blackbeard, Edward Beard, established his base in a North Carolina inlet, forcibly collected tolls from Shipping in Pamlico Sound, and made a prize-sharing agreement with Charles Eden, Governor of North Carolina colony. At the request of Carolina planters, the Lieutenant Governor of Virginia, Alexander Spotswood, dispatched a British naval force under Lieutenant Robert Maynard, who, after a hard fight, succeeded in killing Blackbeard. The pirate's body was decapitated, and his head was affixed to the end of the bowsprit of his ship.*

Apart from the luxuriant black beard (Beard was his surname), the most prominent aspect of the Blackbeard legend is his great buried treasure, which has never been found, and probably never existed. The wreck of the *Queen Anne's Revenge*, however, was discovered off the coast of North Carolina by divers in the mid-1990's. Hundreds of artifacts were recovered from the site in the following decades, including navigational devices, cannons, and a sword hilt.*

**This, an Encyclopedia Britannica article with corrections by Michael J. Heitzler.*

We learn from Heitzler's book, *Black Beard the Pirate*, Edward Beard was born and reared with his father, James Beard, Sr. and his mother, Margaret, on a promising plantation in the Back River watershed of St. James, Goose Creek Parish section of Berkeley County, South Carolina. On the cover page of the book, young

Edward Beard is depicted holding reins for packhorses that carried his father's plantation products to the Back River boat landing.

Edward Beard, as "*Blackbeard the Pirate*," adopted his "Edward Teach" alias to insulate his family from the criminal reprisals, as he terrorized his victims, forcing their submission, and appropriating their treasures. Previous Heitzler publications unveil to us personalities in Goose Creek who significantly impacted Black Beard's behaviors, such as Native Commissioner, George Chicken (who lived aside the Beard homestead), as well as Native American Wateree Jack, Anglican Minister Francis Lejau, and Carolina Governor James Moore, all impacting Black Beard's ascension from infancy to piracy. From these personalities many incidents and events motivated Edward Beard, the youngest of his family to behave in abhorrent ways and implanted the outlaw's notoriety among world-wide villains with the "Edward Teach" alias that he invented to protect his family from his criminal indebtedness.

Heitzler tells the *Beard* family story in the St. James, Goose Creek Parish section of Berkeley County, South Carolina, where they reared a dynamic household including "Black Beard," the pugnacious baby of the brood. His work explores twenty-six years of Black Beard's life before he became a swashbuckler. Edward Beard pirated for a mere twenty-two months before he died at the young age of twenty-eight but left a three hundred year-long heritage of immoral angst.

An interesting side-note Heitzler points out in his *Black Beard the Pirate* book comes from Alfred Adler (1870-1937), who developed the "Birth Order Theory" that purports that the order of birth significantly influences a child's personality. Accordingly, the youngest is more free-spirited and risk-taking. Adler also professed that family, community, and social aspects play major roles in shaping personalities. Edward [Black] Beard, the youngest of a pioneer clan, models the principles of Adler's theory in many ways.

Blackbeard's existence was indeed a vivid reality. He won his name because of a heavy black beard, about which he was exceedingly vain. It is said of him that he twisted this mane into small balls and tied them with ribbons and fastened lighted tapers under his hat to illuminate his repulsive features and wild eyes, thus striking terror to the hearts of his victims. This hirsute adornment, of which he was very proud, was cultivated with sedulous care, braided and twisted about his ears until standing forth like projecting horns.

Found in an old 1892 newspaper article from upstate was an interesting vision of Black Beard by comparison, that stated, “. . . he seemed to be the impersonation of a mystic monster. Perhaps a greater demon never prowled the seas or walked the earth in human form.” Further he is illuded to as “hideous and repulsive, both a physical and moral monster” his naturally dark and forbidding face was covered almost to his fierce, sensuous eyes with a shaggy black beard, reaching below his waist.

Not wanting to take away from Heitzler’s book, *Black Beard the Pirate*, no more of this exciting story will be told by me. You must go to the *Nisbett House*, home of Berkeley County’s Parks, Recreation, and Tourism, in Moncks Corner, and pick up your own copy. You will find that this book is filled with pages of resources (and the Beard family Chronology) for history’s true story of Edward [Black] Beard’s life in these early years of our colony. All of Mike Heitzler’s books are tremendously interesting and readable history, and this book, *Black Beard the Pirate*, is certainly no exception. He is certainly to be praised for making all this local history available; we are very thankful!

Keith Gourdin

