



# THE LAST DAYS OF BLACK BEARD THE PIRATE

*How much of what we learned  
about the pirate is really true?*

**"The Last Days of Black Beard the Pirate"** is 240 pages with more than 75 photographs, maps and illustrations. Kevin P. Duffus, a filmmaker and investigative journalist of historical events, also wrote "Shipwrecks of the Outer Banks, An Illustrated Guide." The book sells for \$30 in bookstores and signed copies are available from Looking Glass Productions, P.O. Box 98985, Raleigh, NC 27624. Phone (800) 647-3536. Web: [www.thelostlight.com](http://www.thelostlight.com)


**W**e have a pretty good idea what the famous pirate Black Beard was doing in this month of August 290 years ago. He was in the busy port of Philadelphia planning to give up piracy on the high seas and return to the life of a respectable colonial American citizen. Most likely, he also drank a few ales at the Blue Anchor tavern and visited a blonde Swedish lady friend he knew named Margaret. And he probably sought medical attention for the syphilis that lately had contributed to his rages and overall confusion.

Anchored out on the Delaware River in August 1718, his sloop "Adventure" held about 25 of Black Beard's crew. Even though all of them had recently been granted a pardon forgiving them of their piratical crimes during the previous two years, their captain forbade them to disembark and attract attention to themselves in the city. Philadelphians knew that only two months earlier, these men were among about 300 in four armed ships under Black Beard's command who for four days had blockaded the port of Charleston, S.C., raiding nine vessels and holding prominent citizens hostage, while demanding nothing more than a chest of medicines that their captain insisted on having. And two days later, the pirate captain chose this crew to help deliberately run aground and sink two of their own sailing fleet, including their 40-gun flagship "Queen Anne's Revenge," at Old Topsail Inlet near Cape Lookout, leaving hundreds of their fellow pirates high and dry.

We know all this—and much more about Black Beard that has never before been told—thanks to a new book about the pirate who most of us know was beheaded while holing up at Ocracoke Island. Author Kevin Duffus, a member of Haywood EMC who works in Raleigh, took years researching and writing "The Last Days of Black Beard the Pirate" and has published a work that examines and sets straight virtually all the legends associated with the man called "the boldest and most ruthless corsair of them all." The inaccurate, mythical stories of the pirate, Duffus says, are "not nearly as interesting as the truth."

Widely considered the most feared of pirates during the Golden Age of Piracy (about 1660s–1720s), Black Beard's supposed adventures, behavior and appearance have thrilled people of all ages and enhanced lots of marketing schemes since they first were told in the early 1800s. Beginning then and growing wildly for nearly 200 years, many of the stories are exaggerated or wrong. Did he have 13 or 14 wives? Did he board ships brandishing a cutlass and pistol while sticks in his beard flamed and smoked? Did he shoot crew members occasionally just to remind his men who's boss?

Duffus addresses all this and more. We come to understand, for example, why he was known as Edward Teach and Edward Thatch. We learn exactly why he was so familiar with the sloughs, channels and shoals of Pamlico Sound. We get to know his closest allies, all respectable eastern North Carolina men, many of whom remained so even after their pirate days had ended. We find out that he was not some poor, uneducated chap who went to sea as a common sailor, and that he had a sister Susie.

Most of all we can read what actually happened during the final six months of Black Beard's two-year career as a pirate, what he and his cohorts did in and around Beaufort, Bath and Ocracoke before the bloody battle of Nov. 22, 1718, at what is known as Teach's Hole. 

—Michael E.C. Gery