

## NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

### *Blackbeard off Philadelphia: Documents Pertaining to the Campaign against the Pirates in 1717 and 1718*

THE HISTORY OF PIRACY HAS ATTRACTED a very wide audience in recent years. Not only historians but also professional writers, moviemakers, TV-documentary producers, and museum curators have fed the public's appetite for gripping adventure stories from the past. Probably the most famous character of the so-called Golden Age of Piracy in the early eighteenth century was Edward Thatch, or Teach, better known as Blackbeard. Between the summer of 1717 and November 1718—interrupted only by a brief spell in the Caribbean—he was active off the North American coast, causing much stir, even though the booty he seized was comparatively meager.<sup>1</sup> After his death in a skirmish with a naval force, Blackbeard's reputation grew and evolved, incorporating a multitude of legends and folklore so that it is now difficult to distinguish between historical reality and fantasy.

Most modern accounts are based at least in part on *A General History of the Pyrates*, first published in 1724.<sup>2</sup> However, this book is not a reli-

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<sup>1</sup> Joel Baer, *Pirates of the British Isles* (Stroud, 2005), 168–83; Colin Woodard, *The Republic of Pirates: Being the True Account and Surprising Story of the Caribbean Pirates and the Man Who Brought Them Down* (Orlando, FL, 2007), 202–25; Tim Travers, *Pirates: A History* (Stroud, 2008), 181–88. Blackbeard is characterized as successful by Marcus Rediker, *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age* (Boston, 2004), 33; Peter T. Leeson, *The Invisible Hook: The Hidden Economics of Pirates* (Princeton, NJ, 2009), 120–23. However, the only significant prize appears to have been a French vessel captured in November 1717. See David D. Moore and Mike Daniel, “Blackbeard's Capture of the Nantaise Slave Ship *La Concorde*: A Brief Analysis of the Documentary Evidence,” *Tributaries* 11 (2001): 15–31.

<sup>2</sup> In addition to the literature in the previous note, see David Cordingly, *Under the Black Flag: The Romance and the Reality of Life among the Pirates* (New York, 1996), 13–14; Lindley S. Butler, *Pirates, Privateers, and Rebel Raiders of the Carolina Coast* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2000), 29–32; Angus Konstam, *Blackbeard: America's Most Notorious Pirate* (Hoboken, NJ, 2006), 1–5; Dan Perry, *Blackbeard: The Real Pirate of the Caribbean* (New York, 2006), 12.

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able source. The chapter on Blackbeard is particularly riddled with exaggerations, misunderstandings, and factual errors.<sup>3</sup> Thus it does not come as a surprise that readers often find the same misleading story retold. Consequently, all 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. Less known, however, are additional sources among the collections of merchants' correspondence in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. A few of these manuscripts have been published already in three rare editions of John Watson's *Annals of Philadelphia*, but most reprints are abridged versions that omit these texts.<sup>4</sup> Given the surge in interest in early modern piracy, it seems appropriate to allow the readership of the *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* to have access to a verbatim edition of these documents as well as some related material that sheds further light on their contents.

It is not entirely clear when and where Blackbeard was born, but a few sources indicate that he was from Jamaica.<sup>5</sup> In the spring of 1716 he joined an expedition led by Benjamin Hornigold to loot a Spanish silver fleet that had wrecked on the east coast of Florida. At that time hundreds of treasure hunters from Jamaica and elsewhere made their way to the site in hopes of making a quick fortune. A few months later, when Hornigold and Thatch were on their way back to Jamaica, several crewmembers took off with the looted Spanish treasures.<sup>6</sup> The remaining men decided to make up for their loss elsewhere. Indeed, most of the freebooters turned to piracy after their dreams of instant riches did not materialize, and they

<sup>3</sup> David D. Moore, "Blackbeard the Pirate: Historical Background and the Beaufort Inlet Shipwrecks," *Tributaries* 7 (1997): 31–34; Michael T. Smith, "Blackbeard and the Meaning of Pirate Captaincy," *American Neptune* 61 (2002): 400–405. It should be noted that these important articles have been overlooked by nearly all subsequent authors.

<sup>4</sup> John F. Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania, in the Olden Time: Being a Collection of Memoirs, Anecdotes, and Incidents . . .* (Philadelphia, 1844), 2:216–19. Only the three-volume editions of 1844, 1887, and 1891 have abridged reprints of these documents.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Leslie, *A New History of Jamaica* (London, 1740), 275. Several wills of people with the family name Thache or Thachs from the eighteenth century survive in the Island Record Office in Spanish Town. See the genealogical records compiled by Hazel Hall in the National Library of Jamaica, Kingston, Ms. 300, vol. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Deposition of Henry Timberlake, Dec. 17, 1716, 1B/5/3/8, fols. 212–13, Jamaica Archives, Spanish Town; examination of Jeremiah Higgins, July 12, 1717, Records of the Vice-Admiralty Court of the Province of New York, entry 3, The National Archives at New York City.

began to prey on Spanish, French, and eventually British merchant shipping. In the spring of 1717 cohorts of marauders were reported to be sailing northward “in order to intercept some Vessells from Philadelphia and New York, bound with provisions to the West Indies.”<sup>7</sup>

In the summer of 1717 Blackbeard appeared off the mid-Atlantic coast, where he met Stede Bonnet, a plantation owner from Barbados who had fitted out a sloop to join the freebooters. Information pertaining to their activities can be found in letters written by Jonathan Dickinson and James Logan, prominent merchants, council members, and mayors of Philadelphia, then a modest town of some four thousand inhabitants.<sup>8</sup> Logan’s and Dickinson’s letterbooks survive and are housed at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. On October 21 Dickinson wrote:

My Son Jos[eph] went out of our Capes [the] 29th last mo[nth] at w[hi]ch time they where 3 Ships in Compa[ny] J[oh]n Annis for London Capt[ain] Wells for N[ew] York & Capt[ain] Torver for Maryland. The Latter was taken by a Pyratt before [the] others was out of Sight & Since have acco[oun]t of Six more of our Vessells by s[ai]d pyratt taken who is yet at our Capes Plundering all that Comes Cuting away their maist and Leting them Dive a Shoar. Save a Ship w[i]th Passeng[er]s he Spared & thus and thus is our River Blocked Up Untill he goes hence.<sup>9</sup>

Two days later Dickinson wrote to Joshua Crosby, a Quaker merchant from Kingston, Jamaica:

Thou mentons [the] pyrating trade w[i]th you, from the begining of this Mo[nth] untill w[i]thin this Week one Cap[tai]n Tatch all[ia]s Bla[ck]beard in a Sloope wh[i]ch they call [the] Revengers Revenge Aboute 130 Men, 12 or 14 Guns having layne of o[u]r Capes & taken six or seven Vessells Inw[ar]d & outw[ar]d bound  
My Son Joseph w[e]nt w[i]th J[oh]n Annis out of o[u]r Capes [the]

<sup>7</sup> Information of Andrew Turbett, Apr. 17, 1717, CO 5/1318, fol. 63, The National Archives, London.

<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Dickinson was born in Jamaica in 1663 and came to Philadelphia in 1697, where he soon established himself as a member of the business elite. He twice served as mayor of Philadelphia, in 1712–13 and 1717–19. James Logan was born in Ireland in 1674 and arrived in Philadelphia in 1699, where he worked as William Penn’s chief steward. He became mayor of Philadelphia in 1723 and was chief justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court from 1731 to 1739.

<sup>9</sup> Jonathan Dickinson to [unknown], Oct. 21, 1717, LCP Jonathan Dickinson letterbook, pp. 158–59, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

29th [Septem]bri and [that] Day [the] pyratt tooke a Sloope to Southward of our Capes.<sup>10</sup>

To the pirates who were active in 1717 and 1718 Delaware Bay was a prime hunting ground. The swampy area with many deep inlets offered numerous places to hide and ambush shipping going to and from Philadelphia. One of the most influential local merchants was James Logan. On October 24, 1717, he noted this problem in his letter to Robert Hunter, governor of New York and New Jersey:

We have been very much disturbed this last week by the Pirates they have taken and plundered Six or Seven Vessels bound out or into this river Some they have destroyed Some they have taken to their own use & Some they have dismissed after Plunder. Is[aac] Flower will I believe be more particular.

Some of our people having been Several dayes on board them they had a great deal of free discourse w[i]th them, they say they are about 800 Strong at Providence & I know not how many at Cape near Carolina, where they are also making a Settlem[en]t Capt[ain] Jennings they Say is their Gov[ernor] in chiefe & heads them in their Settlem[en]t The Sloop that came on our Coast had about 130 Men all Stout Fellows all English without any mixture & double armed they waited they Said for their Consort a Ship of 26 Guns w[i]th whom when joined they designed to Visit Philad[elph]ia, Some of our Mast[e]r Say they knew almost every man aboard most of them having been lately in this River, their Comand[e]r is one Teach who was here a Mate from Jam[ai]ca about 2 y[ear]s agoe.<sup>11</sup>

A few days later the *Boston News-Letter*, the first newspaper in North America, published a brief report from Philadelphia, dated October 24, which contained further information about Blackbeard:

We are informed that a Pirate Sloop of 12 Guns 150 Men, Capt[ain] Teach Commander took one Capt[ain] Codd from Liverpool, two Snows outward Bound Soford for Ireland, and Budger for Oporto, and Peters

<sup>10</sup> Jonathan Dickinson to Joshua Crosby, Oct. 23, 1717, LCP Jonathan Dickinson letterbook, p. 159. Like most of his correspondents Dickinson was a Quaker who drew on a far-reaching religious network. There is a partial transcript of this letter made in the mid-nineteenth century in Norris of Fairhill Ms. 3, p. 151, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

<sup>11</sup> James Logan to Robert Hunter, Oct. 24, 1717, James Logan Papers, misc. vol. 2, p. 167, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

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To Col<sup>d</sup> Hunter at N York 167

May it please the Govern<sup>r</sup>

I have just now through many interruptions run over a few lines here inclosed in answer to the first part of thy favour My writing in that Language require, an Apology & thaps but the chief reason I would advance for it is its simplicity.

This is I only, Lucas I have before that in y<sup>e</sup> Corpus Delictum I design to send for a letter. Dr Goldson also sends what he promised if I did any thing else pray be pleased to hint it again to me.

We have been very much disturbed this last week by the Pirates they have taken and plundered six or seven Vessels bound out or into this river some they have destroyed some they have taken to their own use & some they have dismissed after plunder. Keffner will I believe be more particular.

Some of our people having been several days on board them they had a great deal of free discourse to them, they say they are about 200 strong at Broadwons & I know not how many at and near Carolina, where they are also making a little settlement they say is their Gov in chief & leads them in their sailment The sloop that came on our Coast had about 130 Men all stout fellows all English without any mixture I doubt not they waited they said for their consort a ship of 26 Guns to whom when joined they design to visit Chilledia, Some of our Mast say they know almost every man aboard most of them having been lately in this River their command is one Teach who was here a while from Jam<sup>a</sup> about 24 ago. Pray be pleased to think of this tho I hope so this season the danger may be over and what may ensue in behalf of thy friends here among whom give me leave to acknowledge may all

Philad 24 8 1717 Thy most Res<sup>d</sup> & faithful G<sup>t</sup>

James Logan to Robert Hunter, Oct. 24, 1717, in James Logan Papers, misc. vol. 2, p. 167.

from Madera, George from London, Farmer for New-York, a Sloop from Mader[a] for Virginia, all of which met with most Barbarous inhumane Treatment from them.<sup>12</sup>

It is interesting to note that the brutal treatment of victims is only mentioned—in similar words—in the newspaper accounts of Blackbeard. In fact, the image of Blackbeard as a fearsome and ruthless villain was created by the media of the day.<sup>13</sup> Another article published in the *Boston News-Letter*, based on an account from Philadelphia of October 24, gives more details about the seizures:

Arrived Linsey from Antigua, Codd from Liverpool and Dublin with 150 Passengers, many whereof are Servants. He was taken about 12 days since off our Capes by a Pirate Sloop called the Revenge, of 12 Guns 150 Men, Commanded by one Teach, who formerly Sail'd Mate out of this Port: They have Arms to fire five rounds before load again. They threw all Codd's Cargo over board, excepting some small matters they fancied. One Merchant had a thousand Pounds Cargo on board, of which the greatest part went over board, he begg'd for Cloth to make him but one Suit of Cloth's, which they refus'd to grant him. The Pirate took Two Snows outward bound, Spofford loaden with Staves for Ireland and Budger of Bristol in the Sea Nymph loaden with Wheat for Oporto, which they threw over-board, and made a Pirate of the said Snow; And put all the Prisoners on board of Spofford, out of which they threw overboard about a Thousand Staves, and they very barbarously used Mr. Richardson Merchant of the Sea Nymph. They also took a Sloop Inwards Bound from Madera, Peter Peters Master out of which they took 27 Pipes of Wine, cut his Masts by the Board, after which She drove ashore and Stranded. They also took an other Sloop one Grigg Master, bound hither from London, with above 30 Servants, they took all out of her, cut away her Mast and left her at Anchor on the Sea. They also took another Sloop from Madera, bound to Virginia, out of which they took two Pipes of Wine, then Sunk her. It's also said they took a Sloop from Antigua, belonging to New-York, and put some of the London Servants and other things on board her. The Pirates told the Prisoners that th[e]y expected a Consort Ship of 30 Guns, and then they would go up into Philadelphia, others of them said they

<sup>12</sup> *Boston News-Letter*, Nov. 4, 1717. Captain Codd's seizure was also reported in the *Weekly Journal: or, British Gazetteer*, Dec. 21, 1717. It seems possible that this report and the previous letter were sent on the same ship to London.

<sup>13</sup> Arne Bialuschewski, "Blackbeard: The Creation of a Legend," *Topic: The Washington and Jefferson College Review* 58 (2010), forthcoming.

were bound to the Capes of Virginia in hopes to meet with a good Ship there, which they much wanted. On board the Pirate Sloop is Major Bennet, but has no Command, he walks about in his Morning Gown, and then to the Books, of which he has a good Library on Board, he was not well of his wounds that he received by attacking a Spanish Man of War, who kill'd and wounded him 30 or 40 Men. After which putting into Providence, the place of Rendevouze for the Pirates, they put the aforesaid Capt[ain] Teach on board for this Cruise.<sup>14</sup>

Meanwhile, the disruption of overseas trade prompted the British government to launch a campaign against piracy. As a first step, the crown issued a proclamation offering a general amnesty for all pirates who surrendered to the colonial authorities and agreed to take an oath of allegiance.<sup>15</sup> On November 12, 1717, shortly after news of the proclamation had reached Philadelphia, Governor William Keith proposed to supplement this measure by offering a "Suitable reward" for the discovery of any pirates who did not surrender to the authorities or those who "had any Intercourse by way of Concealing or Giving Assistance to the Pirates who have Lately Infested our Coast & Interrupted our Trade."<sup>16</sup> Keith probably understood that pirates needed access to markets if they wanted to trade their loot for supplies or portable forms of wealth. However, the fact that Blackbeard's crew destroyed most bulky cargo found on the captured vessels seems to indicate that this was not the case when they ravaged shipping at the entrance of Delaware Bay.

A few days later James Logan wrote to John Ayscough, a prominent Quaker merchant in Jamaica.<sup>17</sup> He stated:

I hope Annis is with you by this time the Pirates left [the] Capes just before he came on them, & between Virg[in]ia & our Capes took a Sloop the Same day he went out w[hi]ch was [the] first of their return we are told from New York he was chased but we know not the truth of it, We

<sup>14</sup> *Boston News-Letter*, Nov. 11, 1717. Providence refers to New Providence in the Bahamas.

<sup>15</sup> A Proclamation for Suppressing of Pyrates, Sept. 5, 1717, PC 2/86, fol. 21, The National Archives; *London Gazette*, Sept. 17, 1717.

<sup>16</sup> Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania, Nov. 17, 1717, Record Group 21, book E, pp. 29–30, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg. It is not clear whether Keith's additional provision ever came into effect.

<sup>17</sup> John Ayscough, sometimes spelled Askew, was a merchant and Jamaica council member. Early in 1723 he became chief justice, and after the Duke of Portland's death in July 1726 he served as acting governor until the arrival of Robert Hunter in January 1728.

have been intolerably pestered w[i]th them Since. I am now from home and uncertain what Ord[er]s were given for Insuring on [the] Adventure Capt[ain] Crawford Mast[e]r from Holland hither. If thou hast ord[er]s about it observe them if not then fail not to Insure for me 500~~H~~ on my ¼ of Ship and Cargo.<sup>18</sup> She will be here I hope in Feb[rua]ry before any of those Rogues return they are all English and the Men of War about it (it Seems) think it not their business to concern themselves there is one at N[ew] York & 3 or 4 in Virg[in]ia. If no other measures are taken we Shall be in great danger next Sum[me]r even in our 'tis hoped some application will be made at home. they encrease daily in their Numbers & fortify themselves in Providence & near Cape Feare they are now busy about us to lay in their stores of Provisions for [the] Winter.<sup>19</sup>

Less than two weeks later, on November 27, Logan wrote to Henry Goldney, a Pennsylvania merchant, who presumably had been in London at that time:

We have of late been extremely Pester'd w[i]th Pirates who now Swarm in America and increase their numbers by almost every Vessel they take if speedy care be not taken they will become formidable being now at least 1500 Strong, they have very particularly talked of visiting this place many of them being well acquainted with it & some lived in it (for they are generally all English) & therefore know our Governm[en]t can make no defence.<sup>20</sup>

On December 4 Captain Ellis Brand, commander of the guardship HMS *Lyme*, which was stationed in the Chesapeake to protect the tobacco shipments, wrote to the Admiralty in London:

Since my Arrivall in Virginia I have heard but of one pyrot sloop, that was run away with, from Barbadoes commanded by Maj[o]r Bonnett, but now is commanded by one Teach, Bonnet being suspended from his command, but is still on board, they have most infested the Capes of delaware and sometimes of Bermudas, never continuing forty eight hours in one place, he is now gone to the So[uth]ward.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> ~~H~~ later became £. It is uncertain whether Logan insured his share in the vessel and merchandise in Jamaica or London.

<sup>19</sup> James Logan to John Ayscough, Nov. 14, 1717, James Logan Papers, misc. vol. 4, pp. 70–71.

<sup>20</sup> James Logan to Henry Goldney, Nov. 27, 1717, James Logan Papers, misc. vol. 4, pp. 76–78.

<sup>21</sup> Ellis Brand to Admiralty, Dec. 4, 1717, ADM 1/1472, no. 11, The National Archives. The *Lyme* had arrived in Virginia in September 1717.



During the winter pirates generally avoided the coastal waters of the continental colonies. At the approach of fall, when storms endangered shipping in the North Atlantic, they sailed to the Caribbean. Blackbeard cruised off the Leeward Islands, Hispaniola, and the Yucatan Peninsula hoping to seize richly laden vessels that left Veracruz on their way to Spain.<sup>22</sup> It is not known exactly how many vessels were plundered during this period, but it seems that there was no spectacular seizure. By the spring of 1718 Blackbeard's crew had returned to the North American coast.

In May 1718 Thatch and Bonnet appeared off Charleston, South Carolina, and blockaded the entrance of the port demanding a chest of medicines as ransom, presumably to treat some crew members for syphilis. They then sailed to Beaufort Inlet in North Carolina where Blackbeard grounded the *Queen Anne's Revenge* and abandoned most of his crew of about 140 men.<sup>23</sup> Thatch went with around twenty companions and a large part of the spoils to Bath Town, the chief port and capital of North Carolina, where he accepted the terms of the royal amnesty. However, it appears that Blackbeard never intended to give up his roving life. He soon returned to sea with a smaller crew, which probably consisted largely of locals.<sup>24</sup> North Carolina was likely the last of the mainland colonies where pirates and their loot were welcomed because it lacked a staple crop, a costly war against hostile natives had ruined the economy, and part of the administration was corrupt.<sup>25</sup> In the following weeks Blackbeard operated out of the shallow waters near Bath Town and continued to seize vessels off the American coast. On August 7, 1718, Logan wrote:

<sup>22</sup> Deposition of Henry Bostock, Dec. 19, 1717, CO 152/12, fols. 219–20, and deposition of William Wade, May 15, 1718, ADM 1/1982, no. 4, The National Archives; *Weekly Journal: or, British Gazetteer*, Sept. 27, 1718. There are few surviving sources that contain information about pirate raids during this period.

<sup>23</sup> *The Tryals of Major Stede Bonnet, and Other Pirates* (London, 1719), 46. It appears that Blackbeard had learned his lesson from earlier experiences with the crew members that took off with the booty. There is some controversy that a wreck discovered in 1996 is the *Queen Anne's Revenge*. See Bradley A. Rodgers, Nathan Richards, and Wayne R. Lusardi, "Ruling Theories Linger: Questioning the Identity of the Beaufort Inlet Shipwreck," *International Journal of Nautical Archaeology* 34 (2005): 34–37.

<sup>24</sup> Jane S. Bailey, Allen H. Norris, and John H. Oden III, "Legends of Black Beard and His Ties to Bath Town: A Study of Historical Events Using Genealogical Methodology," *North Carolina Genealogical Society Journal* 28 (2002): 273–85.

<sup>25</sup> Milton Ready, *The Tar Heel State: A History of North Carolina* (Columbia, SC, 2005), 44–47.

Two Pirate Sloops some say three have done us great Mischief within these 14 dayes having plundered 2 Ships bound for Bristol & destroyed all [that] Left by them carried off two Sloops loaden w[i]th flour plunderd another inward bound of her Money & several H[ogsheads] of Rum and as we believe have carried off Some other Sloops loaden with Provisions w[i]th whom they were Seen to fall in at Sea, but we have as yet no further Acco[un]t of them.<sup>26</sup>

On the same day Logan sent a letter to John Falconer, a Quaker merchant based in London who mainly traded to Maryland and Virginia.<sup>27</sup> Logan wrote:

About 14 dayes agoe I wrote to thee by a Ship bound to Bristol w[hi]ch w[i]th a Consort for [the] same Port & divers others of our own Craft have lately faln in the Pirates hands who beleaguer our Capes and thereby lost all their Letters with some hund[red]s of pounds in Money & what also could easily be taken that was valuable This is the occasion of rep[e]ating this by a very doubtful opportunity, but we must use of all I would be more particular about [the] Pirates but I Doubt not but those Bristol Ships if they arrive safe will tell their story more fully in the publick News papers.<sup>28</sup>

It did not take long until rumors of Blackbeard's assumed activities circulated in the colonies. On August 11, 1718, Governor Keith spoke to the Board:

Upon an Informacon that one Teach a Noted Pirate, who has Done the Greatest Mischeif of any to this Place, has been Lurking for some Days in & about this Town I have Granted a Provincial warrant for his being apprehended, if possible to be found, & Several other petty Informacons of Late gives me Cause to Suspect that many of the Pirates that have Lately Surrendered themselves & Obtained Certificates from this & the neighbouring Governments, do still keep a Correspondence with their Old Companions abroad. To Prevent the Evil Consequences, whereof I am of Opinion it will be Convenient on the Sixth Day of the Next Month

<sup>26</sup> James Logan to [Robert Hunter], Aug. 7, 1718, James Logan Papers, misc. vol. 2, p. 181. For a similar account see the *Whitehall Evening-Post*, Dec. 30, 1718.

<sup>27</sup> See the obituaries in the *Daily Post*, Jan. 9, 1730; *Universal Spectator*, and *Weekly Journal*, Jan. 10, 1730.

<sup>28</sup> James Logan to John Falconer, Aug. 7, 1718, James Logan Papers, misc. vol. 7, p. 33.

When his Majesties Act of Grace to the Pirates doth Expire, to publish a Proclamation here, Certifying a fresh the Encouragements which his Majesty has been pleased, by his Royal Proclamation, to Offer to Such as Shall Seize & apprehend any of the Pirates So as that they may be brought to Justice, & also the Rewards promised to Such of themselves as Shall bring in Any of their Captains or Leaders with a Clause Certifying also the penalties which the Law does Inflict upon Such persons as Shall presume to Lodge, harbour and Conceall any of these Robbers, whereby they will become Accessory to their Crimes.<sup>29</sup>

There seems to be no evidence that Blackbeard really visited Philadelphia during this period. However, it is quite likely that the remainder of his original crew, now led by Stede Bonnet, operated for some time off Cape May.<sup>30</sup> Reports of a number of seizures worried the merchants, who demanded protection from the Royal Navy. On October 7, 1718, Logan wrote:

We are now sending down a small Vessel Sufficient we Suppose to Seize these Rogues if not Strengthned by [the] Addition of a greater Force from Sea But tho we should be able to give a good Acco[un]t of these, few fellows yet unless [the] Kings Ships take some Notice of us, we shall, if these Coasts Continue to be infested be exposed to manifest danger even at Phil[del]ph[ia] for 'tis certain a couple of their Vessels well mann'd might doe with us what they pleased.

I have been Surprized to hear some sort of people alledge that as we are a Proprietary Gov[ern]m[en]t & not so immediately as some others under [the] Crown, we are not to expect [the] same Protection from the Kings Ships or that an equal regard will be had to us But as those Ships are Sent abroad in a great measure for [the] Protection of Trade from w[hi]ch Britain receives Such great Advantages, And our Trade is now [the] same our Consumption of British Commodities w[hi]ch is very considerable and [the] honest pay we make for them yields just [the] same Benefit to Britain that they would if we were under any other Administration, And as these Ships are at present design'd for [the] Suppression of Pyrates not only in New York Bay or Sandyhook but in his Majesties Plantations in America Considering all this I say it will be difficult I believe to Assign a reason why they should not visit us in a Cruize,

<sup>29</sup> Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania, Aug. 11, 1718, pp. 57–59.

<sup>30</sup> *Tryals of Major Stede Bonnet*, 46–47. It seems possible that there were also other pirates present, but the movements of Josiah Burgess, Olivier La Buse, Charles Vane, Palsgrave Williams, and others are poorly documented.

unless we should be expected in their Instructions w[hi]ch we are certainly not.<sup>31</sup>

The colonial merchants realized that they had to organize defenses against the pirate menace because the navy lacked the resources to effectively police the North American coastal waters.<sup>32</sup> On October 16, 1718, Logan noted:

There went out no less than four Vessels in pursuit of these Rogues but all returned ne infecta the first from Kent County on [the] Bay saw them and pursued them till night gave them an opportunity of escaping [the] other three viz. one from Newcastle and two from this town Spent near a Week in quest of them to no purpose.<sup>33</sup>

In a letter to John Ayscough, dated December 13, 1718, Logan criticized the employment of the few naval vessels stationed in North American ports to suppress piracy:

We have divers times last Summer as well as [the] former had our Coasts invested with Pirates The Kings Pardon giving them Opportunities of being more mischievous than before for [the] greater part of them having Accepted of that Pardon they accordingly obtained Certificates came in & disposed of their Effects amongst us, Settled a Correspondence every where, by leaving some of their Gangs & [the] rest took opportunities of Setting out again on various pretences, So that we became more exposed than ever. 'Tis true the Gov[ern]m[en]t here has Sent Ships enough to discourage them at least, if not to Suppress them, and we could not doubt but after [the] 5th of [Septemb]er last of [the] last of [the] term allowed them for Surrendering themselves, and when [the] Kings Ships were to receive no less than 20<sup>l</sup> for every common Sailor taken 100<sup>l</sup> for every Commander of [the] Pirates and for other Officers proportionably this would be a Strong Incitement to those Ships to exert themselves and do their Duty, but we are wholly disappointed, Not one of them Stirring out of their harbours that we have heard of Some of the Commanders of these Ships (the Men of War I mean) have been Strongly Solicited to it, but all in vain One of them in a Neighbouring Station being discoursed with on [the] Subject only bestowed some Curses on

<sup>31</sup> James Logan to [Robert Hunter], Oct. 7, 1718, James Logan Papers, misc. vol. 2, pp. 192–93.

<sup>32</sup> Peter Earle, *The Pirate Wars* (London, 2003), 183–94.

<sup>33</sup> James Logan to [Robert Hunter], Oct. 16, 1718, James Logan Papers, misc. vol. 2, p. 194. An abstract of this letter was published in the *Weekly Journal: or, Saturday's Post*, Dec. 17, 1718.

[the] Merch[an]ts as deserving no regard from them hinted as if it were not yet time, the Rogues would make themselves Fat and then they would be worth looking after, so that when [the] Rogues have sufficiently fatten'd themselves by [the] Spoils of [the] Merch[an]ts who are the only Support of [the] Trade and therefore of [the] Riches of [the] Nation, the honest Command[e]r in [the] Kings Pay, are next to enrich themselves by [the] Same Spoils at [the] Second hand. However we see no remedy, there are absolute here not being made Subject to [the] Ord[er]s of any Govern[o]r whatsoever tho their Instructions as 'tis Said is to advise to[war]d them. This is a matter of Such Importance that Sure some people there must think it worth while to Stir in it.<sup>34</sup>

However, as early as November a naval force had killed Blackbeard in North Carolina, and a militia from South Carolina had chased down Stede Bonnet. Events had rendered all plans and provisions irrelevant, but communication in the colonies, particularly in the harsh winter of 1718–19, was slow.<sup>35</sup> On March 5 Dickinson sent a letter to Ezekiel Gomersall in Jamaica.<sup>36</sup> He wrote:

Wee have the Acco[un]t from Virginia, of two Small Sloops fitted out Thence and Maned by the Men of Warrs Men against Capt[ain] Teach alias Blackbeard. After a Bloody Battle the Men of Warrs Men Conquered the Pyratts and Carried Teachs head into Virginia. We have heard of Major Bonett and his Crew w[i]th another Crew [that] were hanged in South Carolina and of one Taylor and his Crew at Providence. But this Latter Whants Confermation. how these sort of Men have faired in other parts wee Waite to heare. For these two Summers past have Been Greatly disappointing to Trade in America.<sup>37</sup>

Four days later Dickinson wrote to Joshua Crosby: “w[ha]t I have to Remark is [the] papers & Letters Taken in Bla[ck]beards posession will

<sup>34</sup> James Logan to John Ayscough, Dec. 13, 1718, James Logan Papers, misc. vol. 7, pp. 55–56.

<sup>35</sup> John Urmstone to David Humphreys, Dec. 18, 1718, Records of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, ser. A, vol. 13, pp. 194–96, Rhodes House Library, Oxford. On November 25, 1718, Governor Spotswood of Virginia issued a Proclamation Publishing the Rewards given for Apprehending or Killing of Pirates. On December 24, 1718, Governor Keith ordered that this proclamation be published in Pennsylvania as well. See the *Boston News-Letter*, Feb. 16, 1719.

<sup>36</sup> Gomersall was a merchant and a Jamaica council member from July 1717 to July 1728.

<sup>37</sup> Jonathan Dickinson to Ezekiel Gomersall, Mar. 5, 1719, LCP Jonathan Dickinson letterbook, pp. 234–35. For more detailed reports see the *Post-Boy*, Apr. 9, 1719; *Weekly Journal: or, Saturday's Post*, Apr. 11, 1719; *Weekly Journal: or, British Gazetteer*, Apr. 11 and 25, 1719.

Strongly Effect Some persons in [the] Govern[en]t of North Carolina.”<sup>38</sup> At the same time when the waters off the Carolinas were cleansed of pirates, the British government reestablished royal authority in the Bahamas, which had previously also served as base of operations for pirates. In a larger context, the events of the latter half of 1718 represent a turning point in the history of piracy in the New World. Without access to colonial markets and in the face of growing pressure from the naval forces, the pirates were marginalized and the hunters gradually became the hunted.<sup>39</sup>

During the peak years of pirate activity off the North American coast in the summer and fall of 1717 and 1718, several vessels from Philadelphia were captured by Blackbeard and Bonnet’s marauding gang. However, the surviving evidence makes it easy to overestimate the losses. The number of vessels lost to pirate attacks, either through theft or destruction of a prize, appears rather small. More important was the fact that local shipowners were frightened by Blackbeard and his fellow pirates. It seems quite likely that the merchants grew increasingly cautious in their trading ventures, and it is certainly no coincidence that an Office of Publick Insurance on Vessels, Goods and Merchandizes was established in Philadelphia around this time.<sup>40</sup> Naval protection was only provided to strategic locations in the colonies such as the tobacco-exporting Chesapeake. The Philadelphia merchants realized that they had to protect themselves from the depredations of the robbers.

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<sup>38</sup> Jonathan Dickinson to Joshua Crosby, Mar. 9, 1719, LCP Jonathan Dickinson letterbook, pp. 237–39. See also Thomas Pollock to [unknown], Dec. 8, 1718, Thomas Pollock letterbook, p. 23, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh.

<sup>39</sup> Arne Bialuschewski, “Between Newfoundland and the Malacca Strait: A Survey of the Golden Age of Piracy, 1695–1725,” *Mariner’s Mirror* 90 (2004): 175–76.

<sup>40</sup> *American Weekly Mercury*, May 25, 1721.