

The Port Ledger

THIS FALL AT HISTORIC BATH

Hello, and welcome to the first edition of The Port Ledger, a newsletter produced by the staff at Historic Bath State Historic Site! We aspire to provide this collection of information, updates, and exciting opportunities on a quarterly basis, and hope that you may find it of interest. In this issue you will learn about the Myths of Blackbeard, learn to make Peach Cream, and find out about our upcoming events and volunteer opportunities.

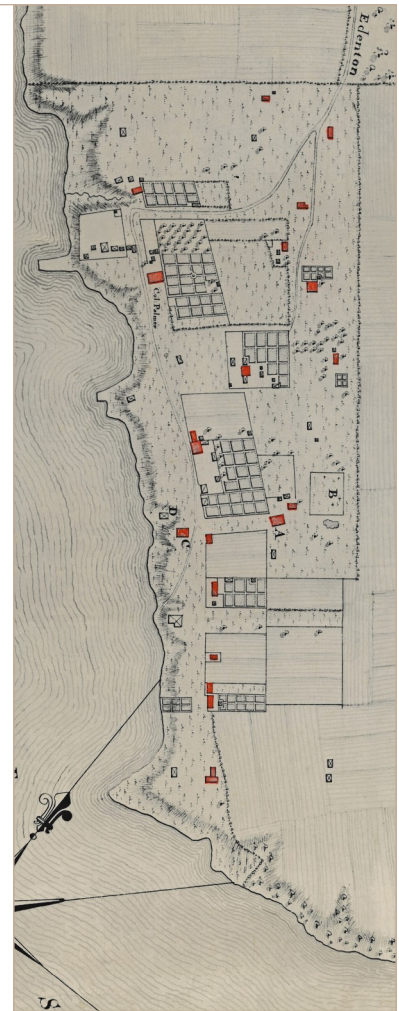
UPCOMING EVENTS

For more information and updates about these events, please visit our website or Facebook page.

Bath Towne After Dark

Come walk the grounds of Old Bath Towne and meet the wandering souls of historical figures important to Bath and the surrounding areas, chat with literary figures, hear the cry of a widowed teen, listen to the story of one of the most tragic ferry events of the early 20th century, discover Blackbeard's story of his own demise, and learn of the chilling legend of Jessie Elliott.

This event will be held on October 11th and 12th, with tours leaving regularly from the Visitor's Center from 6pm to 8pm. Tickets are \$12 for adults, \$6 for children ages 5-12. Call in advance to reserve your ticket. 252.923.3971

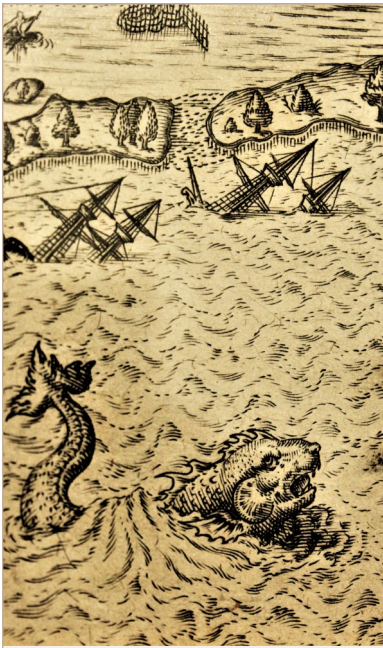


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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- Myths of Blackbeard
- Thomas Sully Portrait
- Peach Cream



MAPS FROM THE GENE ROBERTS COLLECTION

As many of you know, Historic Bath is privileged to host the Gene Roberts collection of Historical maps here at the site. We are now pleased to tell you that we will be putting some of the collection on display, rotating every three months. Stop by at our Exhibit Center and check them out!

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Historic Bath is recruiting Volunteers! If you have an interest in American History from the 18th and 19th Centuries, or if you are just looking for general volunteer opportunities please let us know. We encourage volunteers of all ages.

Our volunteers help with a number of different activities. Whether it's greeting visitors, working in the gift shop, giving tours of Historic Homes, demonstrating

18/19th century skills and trades, or costumed interpretation, we have something for you.

If you are interested, please contact us! Call 252.923.3971 or email laura.rogers@ncdcr.gov.

We will also be holding training for all volunteers this winter.

Keep an eye out for our Winter Newsletter for more specific info and the dates of these trainings. We hope to see you there.

UPCOMING EVENTS, CONTINUED

Christmas Open House and Candlelight Tours

On Saturday, December 7th at Historic Bath State Historic Site, celebrate with us in a day-long event! From 10am to 2pm, tour the Palmer-Marsh House and Bonner House free of charge, enjoying the decorations and learning more about food in the 19th century with a cooking demonstration at the Bonner Kitchen.

Beginning at 6pm, step back in time and visit the Palmer-Marsh House by candlelight, where William Palmer is hosting his friends and acquaintances for an evening of festivities. Explore the changing political atmosphere on the eve of revolution, and William's inner conflict between his staunchly loyal family and his rebellious friends. After touring the house, stop by the Tavern and play a round of whist or other period games while sipping hot cider.

Tickets for the evening event are \$2 per person, children under 5 free. Please call ahead to reserve a spot on the tour: 252.923.3971.



A image of Blackbeard from 1724.

MYTHS OF BLACKBEARD

Blackbeard is one of the most famous Pirates to have ever existed, and stories about him, both truth and fiction are as numerous as the gold in legendary pirate treasure. As historians, our job is to try to sift the legends and find the truth. Most of what we know comes from the book *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pirates*, by Captain Charles Johnson, which may have been a pseudonym. The book was published 6 years after Blackbeard's death, so the author was at least a contemporary. Still, a great deal of artistic license may have been used.

Johnson's book describes Blackbeard living among the planters of Bath in the last year of his life, but where exactly his home was is more difficult to determine. There is a small house on Main Street in Bath that many believe was Blackbeard's house, mostly because a historical marker sign about Blackbeard was placed in front of it. That house is known as the Carrow House, and it dates to the late 1800's, well after Blackbeard's time. Local legend also places his house on Plum Point. (also known as Teach's Point) While this location is possible, we have no documented evidence that he lived there either.

There is also the legend of the secret tunnel to Governor Eden's house that Blackbeard used to smuggle goods. While there was a tunnel to the cellar of Eden's house, as noted by Bath local Joseph Bonner about 100 years after Blackbeard's death, it probably was not made for the smuggling of illicit goods. It certainly did not travel underneath the creek to connect to Blackbeard's house, as some of the more fanciful stories claimed.

Who Wrote *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pirates*?

The book *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pirates* was published in 1724 and included the stories of many of the famous pirates of the time period, including Blackbeard. The author gives his name as Captain Charles Johnson, however, most historians consider this to be a pseudonym.

This has led to speculation over the true identity of the author, with some believing he was one of the pirates of the time period, or a playwright who shared the name Charles Johnson. Even a few famous authors have been proposed as possible identities of the author.

Daniel Defoe, of *Robinson Crusoe* fame, is one of the famous authors that has been proposed as the real identity of Captain Charles Johnson. Another possibility is Nathaniel Mist, a former sailor, writer and publisher.

“Damnation seize my soul if I give you quarters, or take any from you!”

Quote attributed to Blackbeard in the book *A History of the Robberies and Murders of the most Notorious Pirates*

MYTHS OF BLACKBEARD (CONTINUED)

Blackbeard was also purported to have gotten married in Bath, despite, according to Johnson, being married thirteen other times. Blackbeard’s marriages may not have been marriages in the legal sense, perhaps just a sham ceremony conducted by one of his crewman. Johnson claims that Blackbeard married a 16 year old daughter of a plantation owner, in a ceremony conducted by the governor. The girl is not named in Johnson’s book, but tradition says that her name was Mary Ormond, based on a letter in the possession of the Ormond family. No marriage license issued by Gov. Eden for Blackbeard or any of his aliases has been found.

Many believe that Blackbeard buried treasure near his home in Bath, or perhaps in another one of his hideaways. This is unlikely, for Pirates, when they had money, were supposed

to split it evenly with the crew, and they frequently spent it all quite quickly in port. Moreover, much of the plunder pirates took from other ships was frequently trade goods and not treasure. The idea of pirates burying treasure seems to have been invented for Robert Louis Stevenson’s book *Treasure Island*.

Blackbeard’s flag, with the horned skeleton stabbing a bleeding heart while holding an hourglass is also questionable. While the basic iconic imagery of skulls and crossbones on pirate flags, known as “Jolly Rogers” dates back to Johnson’s book, the flag attributed to Blackbeard does not. It actually seems to be an early 20th century design, first appearing as a general pirate flag a 1912 *The Mariner’s Mirror* magazine article, and was only later attributed to Blackbeard.

ARTIFACTS OF INTEREST: SULLY PORTRAIT

Acquired in 1961, the portrait painted by Thomas Sully, adds a great deal of history and beauty to our collection here in Bath. According to the papers given to the Historic Bath Site when the portrait was donated, the subject is believed to be Nancy Johnson, daughter of Governor Samuel Johnson of North Carolina. The mystery of the woman in the portrait, is that there is no evidence that backs the claim that the woman is the Governor’s daughter, therefore, she is still unidentified.



Thomas Sully painting

Thomas Sully was known for painting prominent political leaders including Thomas Jefferson, John Quincy Adams, General Marquis de Lafayette, & Queen Victoria, as well as many leading musicians and composers. It is quite possible that the Governor of North Carolina commissioned Sully to paint his daughter Nancy, but there is no way for historians to know for sure.

The portrait hangs in the dining room of the Bonner House, and serves as an example of a piece that perhaps the Bonner family hung up during their time. During their prime, the Bonner family was prosperous and wealthy, with many prominent guests often passing through the home, so it is quite likely they would have had a similar painting on display in their home. Given Thomas Sully's history of painting famous subjects and being such a prominent painter of his time, the Sully portrait is a true gem of a painting & we are fortunate to have it in our collection at Bath.

Credit

Content written by site staff Laura Rogers and A.J. Drake. Special thanks to summer intern Charlotte Williams for her contributions.

“Get fine soft peaches, perfectly ripe, peel them, take out the stones, and put them in a China bowl...”

THE ART OF COOKERY

This quarter we're sharing a recipe (or receipt in 18th century terms) for a favorite dessert dish - peach cream. This particular receipt is taken from Mary Randolph's *The Virginia House-wife*, published 1824:

Peach Cream.

Get fine soft peaches, perfectly ripe, peel them, take out the stones, and put them in a China bowl; sprinkle some sugar on and chop them very small, with a silver spoon; if the peaches be sufficiently ripe, they will become a smooth pulp; add as much cream or rich milk as you have peaches; put more sugar and freeze it.

Notes for the modern kitchen:

Blenders are wonderful inventions. Feel free to substitute the use of a spoon for the delights of a quick spin in a blender.

Add equal parts cream to peach puree, and sugar to taste.

An ice cream maker is helpful if a soft-serve consistency is desired, but not required; once frozen, the cream may be thawed to the desired softness. Alternately, a popsicle mold may be used with great effect.

Of course, a China bowl is not required.



HISTORIC BATH STATE HISTORIC SITE

European settlement near the Pamlico River in the 1690s led to the founding of Bath, North Carolina's first town, in 1705. By 1708, Bath had 50 people and 12 houses, and soon became North Carolina's first port. Its original town limits encompass a historic district today.

At Historic Bath, you can visit three historic homes, the Exhibit Center, a 1-mile walking tour, and a 15-minute orientation film in our Visitor's Center. St. Thomas's Church is also open to the public.

FIND US ON THE WEB

Visit our website and social media for up-to-date information on events and exhibits, as well as tour information, resources for educators, and further history of the site.

Website: historicsites.nc.gov/bath

Facebook: www.facebook.com/HistoricBath

Instagram: [@historicbathsite](https://www.instagram.com/historicbathsite)

Twitter: twitter.com/HistBathSiteNC



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Hours:
9 a.m.-5 p.m.
Tuesday-Saturday
Closed Sunday, Monday, and
most major holidays

