Effects of Piracy on the Development of Colonial America

During The Golden Age of Piracy (1689-1718), numerous pirates preyed upon merchant ships throughout the New World. The British Parliament had passed laws making smuggling acceptable and desirable in North Carolina and the other American colonies. Pirates, such as Blackbeard attacked lightly armed merchant ships, seizing the contents and sometimes killing those who resisted. The shallow sounds and inlets of North Carolina’s Outer Banks became a haven for many of these outlaw pirates, including Blackbeard.

Perhaps Blackbeard’s Blockade of Charleston Harbor, South Carolina in 1718 is his most significant accomplishment as a pirate. In his ship, Queen Anne’s Revenge, Blackbeard entered Charleston Harbor, plundered five merchant ships, and took a number of hostages. He demanded not silver or gold, but a chest of full of medicine to treat his men. When the city delivered the chest of medicine, Blackbeard released his hostages and withdrew from the harbor.

Even though England later passed a law making it illegal for piracy to continue, Blackbeard paid no attention to the new laws and continued to carry on business as usual. As his violent raids increased, the governor of North Carolina sent troops to hunt him down. He was shot and stabbed more than 25 times before finally dying.

This multi-media exhibit mainly features information about Blackbeard -- his flag, his fleet, his photos, his legends.

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