

# SOUTHERN BAYWATCH

Story and Photo by Gina Godfrey

## BLACKBEARD FESTIVAL *ARRGH!*



Spring is finally here. We're wrapping up boat chores making ready to cruise our Bay for another season, which also means that the festivals are about to begin. The most anticipated spring fest on the Southern Bay is downtown Hampton's Blackbeard Festival, May 30 to June 1. This weekend-long event hosts all manner of pirates, wenches, and loyal colonists and invites them to reenact that period during our colonial history when pirates ruled the seas from the Spanish Main to New England.

and Lieutenant Robert Maynard of the Royal Navy staged in the harbor. Sent by Governor Spotswood on an expedition to rid the colony of pirate threats and funded by local merchants, Lt. Maynard and his crew sailed to the neighboring colony of North Carolina aboard the small swift ship *Serenity*. Legend has it, that in hand-to-hand combat, Lt. Maynard and his crew prevailed, and as proof of their victory, Lt. Maynard cut Blackbeard's head off and placed it on his bowsprit for the return journey. Upon arriving in Hampton,

**W**hy is it that we are so intrigued and actually celebrate pirating? After all, they were just a bunch of thieving, hornswoggling, sailing terrorists. One thought is that in a world full of rules and regulations, the freedom and simple democratic principles under which they sailed harks to simpler times. Another is the pure raw adventure, where you make it up as you go along. There are a number of great books on the history of piracy in and around the Chesapeake. But for the pirate in all of us, a great book to learn all the true pirate lingo is Well Blow Me Down: a Guy's Guide to Talking Like a Pirate, by John "O' Chumbucket" Baur and Mark "Cap'n Slappy" Summers.

Please e-mail [gssailors@aol.com](mailto:gssailors@aol.com) with reasons why you are either intrigued or disgusted with pirates for a future article on the subject.

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With a hearty *ARRGH* serving as the word du jour, people from all walks of life gather at this festival dressed in full pirate regalia and period colonial costumes.

There were many pirates terrorizing the Atlantic and Caribbean in the early 1700s, but to the people of Hampton, and particularly in the mind of Virginia's then Governor Spotswood, Blackbeard was the most feared. Serving as the doorway to Virginia's commerce at the time, the port of Hampton led the colonies in the export of tobacco and other local commodities to England and in the import of manufactured goods, thus making the port a prime target for Blackbeard.

The festival celebrates the demise of this fearsome pirate with daily re-enactments of the bloody battle between Blackbeard

and Blackbeard's head was placed on a spike at the entrance to Hampton Harbor (now known as Blackbeard's Point) as a warning and reminder to other pirates that piracy would not be tolerated in Virginia.

For enthusiasts, this is the best pirate party ever with the booming of cannons, the smell of gunpowder, and Grog to be enjoyed by all. If you don't have a costume for the festival, you can walk all along the harbor and beyond and find whatever you need to become a pirate for the weekend. In addition to a costume, all you need is pirate attitude, which you'll be greeted by at every turn. There are realistic encampments, "Yo-ho-ho" music, storytellers for the children, a pirate ball for the adults, and, of course, the harbor is full of wannabe pirates and anchored boats flying the

ever-present skull and crossbones.

The Blackbeard Festival is the only one of its kind on the Chesapeake and attracts thousands of seafarers. So, put on your pirate or colonist garb, get into the right "pirattitude," practice up on your best *ARRGH*, and come on down.

For schedules, dockage, and more information about the festival, go to [www.blackbeardfestival.com](http://www.blackbeardfestival.com) or [www.hamptoncobb.com](http://www.hamptoncobb.com).

**About the Author:** A cruiser for more than 30 years and a veteran liveaboard, Gina grew up on the Chesapeake Bay. Her Pearson 385 *Gina Marie* has been on the hook in just about every gunkhole from Chesapeake City to Pungo. Her cookbook, *The Galley Queen*, was published in 2003. *Latitudes & Attitudes* and others have published her stories.