

*Adventures on the American Frontier*

# PIRATES AND PRIVATEERS

Part Four  
Blackbeard's Greatest Battle



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In the early 1700s, there were pirates all along the east coast of America. In fact, there were more pirates in that part of the world than there had ever been before.

When England had been at war with France, many British and American sea captains had become privateersmen, taking enemy ships for England. But when the war ended, many of the privateersmen became pirates instead, taking enemy ships without the consent of England. And they began taking English and American ships as well.



The city of Charles Town, South Carolina, (now known as Charleston) was the most important city in the southern colonies. But pirates had made it a regular stopping place on their way north from the West Indies, and the people who lived there didn't feel safe.

Some people, however, didn't mind having the pirates around. Some of the merchants in Carolina even invited pirates to their homes, for they could make good money selling stolen goods.



Lately, the king had given governors the right to pardon pirates if they agreed to give up piracy. Some of the pirates took this offer because they were afraid of being hanged if they were caught. Under the king's pardon, many of them were leaving the sea. But the worst of the pirates went right on with their robbing and killing.

One of the most feared pirates of all was a man named Blackbeard. In May of 1718, Blackbeard's four ships were in the Charles Town harbor, and no ship was safe.

Blackbeard's gang had just captured two ships that had tried to leave the harbor and three that were about to enter it. Now, no ship dared to use the harbor, for the news had spread that pirates held the port.

Blackbeard was terrible to look at. He had a thick beard, black as night, which he twisted into curls, and long black hair that hung down so his face hardly showed. People said it was because his face was so ugly that he wanted to hide it.

But Blackbeard had a way of making



himself look even more fearsome to the sea captains he attacked. He stuck long strings under his hat brim and around his ears. The strings were slow-burning matches that he had soaked in something so that they burned a greenish light. In the dark, he looked like a horrible beast.

