



CAPTAIN PALSgrave WILLIAMS



"I read somewhere that everybody on this planet is separated by only six other people. Six degrees of separation. Between us and everybody else on this planet."

– Ouisa, in [John Guare's](#)
"[SIX DEGREES OF SEPARATION](#)"



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1692

The former [pirate](#) Captain [Thomas Paine](#) became Captain of the [Jamestown](#) militia.



By this year [Palsgrave Williams](#) was growing up in Boston, the son of John Williams, a merchant, and Ann Alcock Williams, the daughter of Dr. John Alcock and Sarah Palsgrave Alcock of Roxbury (so, presumably, this famous [Rhode Island pirate](#) is a remote relative of Bronson Alcott, who changed his name from Alcock). This family would relocate from Boston to [Rhode Island](#), and little Palsgrave would mature on [Block Island](#) and in [Newport](#).

1704

[Palsgrave Williams](#) became a freeman of [Newport](#), [Rhode Island](#).



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1715

[Rhode Island](#) land banks begin issuing bills of credit on loan. According to the historian John MacInnes, “The key to understanding Rhode Island’s currency policy up to 1750 is that it was in fact a parasitical device.”

It would have been in about this year that [Palsgrave Williams](#) got married with Damaris Carr Williams, a *Mayflower* descendant who was related to the [Rhode Island pirate](#) Thomas Paine (this [Newport](#) couple would have a son also named Palsgrave Williams — but no pirate stuff attaches to the namesake son).

1716

[Palsgrave Williams](#) was serving as quartermaster on Captain Samuel Bellamy’s expedition to recover gold and silver from Spanish wrecks in the Gulf of Florida. He would thus be involved when this expedition turned from its fruitless search for treasure to direct [piracy](#). Williams would be made captain aboard a sloop which they captured.

1717

February: Captain Samuel Bellamy and Captain [Palsgrave Williams](#) encountered the *Whydah* on its voyage from Jamaica bound for London. They chased her for three days in the Windward Passage, and finally she struck her colors. With the capture of the *Widow*, Captain Samuel Bellamy left his *Sultana* and took command of his new prize.

Early April: Off the coast of South Carolina, Captain [Palsgrave Williams](#) captured the Boston-owned sloop of Captain Beer of [Rhode Island](#), plundered it, and sank it. The [pirates](#) would drop Captain Beer off at [Block Island](#).



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April 26, Friday night: It was a dark and stormy night. Shipwreck of the pirate [Samuel Bellamy](#)'s prize ships *Whydah* and *Mary Anne* on Cape Cod.

CAPE COD: In the year 1717, a noted pirate named Bellamy was led on to the bar off Wellfleet by the captain of a snow which he had taken, to whom he had offered his vessel again if he would pilot him into Provincetown Harbor. Tradition says that the latter threw over a burning tar-barrel in the night, which drifted ashore, and the pirates followed it. A storm coming on, their whole fleet was wrecked, and more than a hundred dead bodies lay along the shore. Six who escaped shipwreck were executed. "At times to this day" (1793), says the historian of Wellfleet, "there are King William and Queen Mary's coppers picked up, and pieces of silver called cob-money. The violence of the seas moves the sands on the outer bar, so that at times the iron caboose of the ship [that is, Bellamy's] at low ebbs has been seen." Another tells us that, "For many years after this shipwreck, a man of a very singular and frightful aspect used every spring and autumn to be seen travelling on the Cape, who was supposed to have been one of Bellamy's crew. The presumption is that he went to some place where money had been secreted by the pirates, to get such a supply as his exigencies required. When he died, many pieces of gold were found in a girdle which he constantly wore."

As I was walking on the beach here in my last visit, looking for shells and pebbles, just after that storm which I have mentioned as moving the sand to a great depth, not knowing but I might find some cob-money, I did actually pick up a French crown piece, worth about a dollar and six cents, near high-water mark, on the still moist sand, just under the abrupt, caving base of the bank. It was of a dark slate color, and looked like a flat pebble, but still bore a very distinct and handsome head of Louis XV., and the usual legend on the reverse, *Sit Nomen Domini Benedictum* (Blessed be the Name of the Lord), a pleasing sentiment to read in the sands of the sea-shore, whatever it might be stamped on, and I also made out the date, 1741. Of course, I thought at first that it was that same old button which I have found so many times, but my knife soon showed the silver. Afterward, rambling on the bars at low tide, I cheated my companion by holding up round shells (*Scutellæ*) between my fingers, whereupon he quickly stripped and came off to me.

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The family of Cape Cod's [Samuel Bellamy](#) probably had originated in the Devonshire region of south-western England and may have been one of those families of peasants displaced by the enclosure of common lands. Possibly his family had been involved in Monmouth's failed rebellion of 1685 or had held sympathies for James II (VII of Scotland), overthrown in 1689. Whatever Bellamy's antecedents, he had been on Cape Cod in the summer of 1715 when a hurricane had sunk a dozen Spanish treasure galleons off the coast of Florida.



There had been a rush of adventurers headed for Florida to search out the remains and Bellamy had persuaded a local goldsmith, Palgrave Williams, to bear the cost of fitting out a vessel. Having failed to recover anything from any of the sunken treasure ships, Bellamy and Williams had gone “on the account” –had recourse to straightforward piracy– and in the course of 15 months had captured more than 50 ships including the recently commissioned *Whydah*, a 100-foot, 3-masted galley. The vessel's name, after a harbor on the Guinea coast of Africa, bespoke her involvement in the slave trade. Bellamy and Williams had taken the ship after it had disposed of its black cargo in the Caribbean, as it was heading out for England with a payload of ivory, indigo, sugar, and coins. Late April 1717 had found Bellamy and Williams back in northern waters with a fleet of five ships. Palgrave Williams, in one of the vessels, had put into port at [Block Island](#) to visit relatives,



while Bellamy aboard the *Whydah* continued towards Cape Cod with the other four. We have no idea what



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drew Bellamy back to the Cape of his origin but folklore tells us there was an attractive local maid, Maria Hallet, to be impressed by the dashing pirate and his new pelf. The pirate flotilla was struck by a ferocious storm, complete with blinding rain, 70-mph winds, and crashing waves rising as high as 40 feet, during which the *Whydah* rammed a sandbar and broke her back. Of the other ships, the *Mary Anne* was run aground while the *Fisher* and the *Anne* survived but were severely damaged. Only nine men of the *Whydah* and *Mary Anne* would be still alive by the next morning, two of those being from the crew of 146 that had served on the *Whydah*. Eight would be brought to trial on charges of piracy and six would [hang](#) in chains on the admiralty mudflats of Boston Harbor (these mudflats were on Charlestown side, since on Boston side the depth of the water was 17 feet even at the lowest of the low tides, ergo no convenient mudflats at all). The 7th, *Mary Anne* survivor Thomas South, and *Whydah* survivor Thomas Davis, a Welsh carpenter, were allowed to have been pressed — they were sailors with special skills whom the pirates had forced into service. John Julian, an American native boy survivor who had been impressed to pilot the *Whydah* through the local shoals, we suspect would have been sold into slavery. Almost immediately the Governor sent Captain Cyprian Southack to the wreck site to report on the potential for a salvage operation, “mooncussers,” the wreck scavengers of Cape Cod, had already been working around the clock and within a couple of weeks the constantly moving sands had buried the *Whydah*.

PIRACY

The more than 100,000 artifacts recovered from the rediscovered wreck of the *Whydah* since 1984 constitute the world’s only authenticated pirate treasure. This trove includes more than 2,000 coins, the majority of them Spanish silver Reales “pieces of eight.” The hoard includes denominations which date from the 1670s to 1715. There are nine Spanish gold Escudos, better known as “Doubloons,” which date from 1688 to 1712 and include denominations of 1, 2 and 8 Escudos. Some of the gold coins were minted in Mexico, others perhaps in Lima. A smattering of British and Scottish coins indicate capture of English and Scottish vessels. The British coins include a Charles II crown dated 1667 and a couple of William III half crowns dated 1697. There is a solitary Scottish bawbee coin but none of the coins recovered were French. Other precious materials include fine examples of Akan gold jewelry and a number of gold bars and ingots. The pieces of African jewelry recovered from the *Whydah* amount to the earliest known collection of this art but much of it had been broken up, and the gold bars and ingots bear score marks testifying to the manner in which the plunder had been apportioned among the members of the pirate band. The weapons recovered include elegant pistols. There are nautical instruments which probably had been seized from law-abiding master mariners. Leather goods also survived in the sands of the seabed and include a pouch, and a shoe and stocking last worn almost 300 years ago. The discovery of a teapot with a human shoulder bone wedged into it testifies to the terror of the storm.

While walking the sand cliffs of Wellfleet on or about October 11, 1849, [Henry Thoreau](#) would find a silver French coin in the sand and then, impishly, exercise his walking companion [Ellery Channing](#) with delusions of pirate treasure. The date on Thoreau’s coin was, however, 1741, indicating that it had not even been minted until a generation after this pirate was already drowned.

TIMELINE OF ACCIDENTS

April 29, Monday: Learning of the wreck of Captain [Samuel Bellamy](#)’s *Whydah* on the shoals off Cape Cod, Captain [Palsgrave Williams](#) sailed from [Block Island](#) to the Cape Cod waters to see whether he could be of any assistance to his fellow [pirates](#). He could not, as those of Bellamy’s crew who had not drowned during the storm had been captured at Eastham Tavern by Deputy Sheriff Doane and a posse, and would be [hanged](#) in Boston.

TIMELINE OF ACCIDENTS

September 5, Sunday: An “Act of Grace” was proclaimed, under which [pirates](#) could come in from the seas and not be prosecuted. One of the seamen who “came in” during this amnesty was the [Newport, Rhode Island](#) pirate Captain [Palsgrave Williams](#). Other pirates fled from their base in the Bahamas to Madagascar.



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A List of such Pirates as Surrenderd themselves at Providence to Captain Vincent Pearse Commander of His Majesty's Ship Phenix and accepted of his Majesties most Gracious Pardon and had Certificates from the said Commander to carry them to some Government

Note those that are marked with a cross X before their names are gone out Pirating againe.

Packer ADAMS	Thomas LAMB	Richard TAYLOR
Arthur ALLEN	John ALLEN	Martin TOWNSEND
James COATES	Martin CARRILL	[x]Michael SWEMSTONE
Jno DALRIMPLE	Thomas CLIES	Samuel RICHARDSON
Benjamin HORNOGOLD	Jno HIPPERSON	Robert BROWN
Josiah BURGESS	Jno CHARLTON	Henry CHICK
Francis LESLEY	Francis CHARNOCK	Robert HUNTER
Thomas NICHOLS	[x]David MERREDITH	James MOODEY
Palsgrave WILLIAMS	[x]Edward NORLAND	Richard KAINÉ
John LEWIS	[x]James GOODSIR	Thomas BIRDSELL
Richard NOWLAND	Dennis MCCARTHY	Robert DRYBRO
John MARTIN	Rowland HARBIN	[x]Daniel CARMAN
William CONNER	George GATER	[x]John DUNKIN
Thomas GRAHAME	George MANN	George FEVERSHAM
Thomas TERRILL	Richard RICHARDS	John BARKER
John EALLING	Anthony JACOBS	Thomas CODD
Robert WISHART	Nabel CLARKE	William ROBERTS
James GATRICKS	Henry HAWKINS	John WATERS
Edward STACEY	Daniel WHITE	William AUSTIN
John TENNET	Edward SAVORY	Francis ROPER
John HUNT	Peter MARSHALL	Griffith WILLIAMS
John PEARSE	[x]Archibald MURRY	Edward GORMAN
James BRYAN	Daniel HILL	John CLARKE
Henry BERRY	William SAVOY	[x]Richard BISHOP

[Palsgrave Williams](#) was “cast away,” which is to say, he drowned.



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"It's all now you see. Yesterday won't be over until tomorrow and tomorrow began ten thousand years ago."

- Remark by character "Garin Stevens"
in William Faulkner's INTRUDER IN THE DUST



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ARRGH AUTOMATED RESearch REPORT

GENERATION HOTLINE



This stuff presumably looks to you as if it were generated by a human. Such is not the case. Instead, upon someone's request we have pulled it out of the hat of a pirate that has grown out of the shoulder of our pet parrot "Laura" (depicted above). What these chronological lists are: they are research reports compiled by ARRGH algorithms out of a database of data modules which we term the Kouroo Contexture. This is data mining. To respond to such a request for information, we merely push a button.



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Commonly, the first output of the program has obvious deficiencies and so we need to go back into the data modules stored in the contexture and do a minor amount of tweaking, and then we need to punch that button again and do a recompile of the chronology – but there is nothing here that remotely resembles the ordinary “writerly” process which you know and love. As the contents of this originating contexture improve, and as the programming improves, and as funding becomes available (to date no funding whatever has been needed in the creation of this facility, the entire operation being run out of pocket change) we expect a diminished need to do such tweaking and recompiling, and we fully expect to achieve a simulation of a generous and untiring robotic research librarian. Onward and upward in this brave new world.

First come first serve. There is no charge.
Place your requests with <Kouroo@kouroo.info>.
Arrgh.