

# The Legend of the Dread Pirate Richard Hide

## Lisa Hyde Roach

I have always been intrigued by the story of Richard Hide<sup>1</sup>the pirate since first reading about it many years ago. Many sources place him in my family line - so I started digging into the legend to find the original source data and to learn more about this Richard. This was no easy task given that some of the sources are out-of-print and not available online but here is what I found with the gracious help of others.

The legend of Richard Hide the pirate was popularized by an article entitled "James Logan Colbert of the Chickasaws: the Man and the Myth" by Richard A. Colbert.<sup>2</sup> This article has been quoted repeatedly, sometimes without attribution. Mr. Colbert mentioned Richard Hyde first in a list of "Licensed Indian Traders":

Using the names of "Licenced Indian traders," a list of Virginia, North and South Carolina traders was created. A partial list includes Robert LONG, Charles HICKS, John BROWN, William GILCHRIST, Abraham COLSON, James ANDERSON, William KEMP, James MOORE, Richard HYDE, John SIMS, William WILLIAMS, and John PETTIGREW.

Following the preceding paragraph, Mr. Colbert wrote:

### The Hydes of Northampton County

One of James COLBERT's "hirelings" was Richard HYDE, listed above. His father, also known as Richard HYDE, had also been employed by COLBERT as a packhorseman. The elder HYDE was a former pirate and member of Blackboard's gang. HYDE quit his life of piracy when Edward TEACH (Blackboard) was killed in 1718.<sup>20</sup>

While escorting the Superintendent of Indian Affairs through Creek territory, both the Superintendent and the elder HYDE were severely beaten and disfigured by some Creek warriors when they were caught in bed with the Indians' wives. According to ADAIR:

Among the Indians, the trading people's ears are often in danger, by the sharpness of the law, and their suborning false witnesses, or admitting foolish children as legal evidence; but generally either the tenderhearted females or friends, give them timely notice of their danger . . . The Muskogee lately dipt off the ears of two white men for supposed adultery. One had been a disciple of Black Beard, the pirate . . .<sup>21</sup>

Records show that Richard HYDE and his family lived along the Roanoke River in what is now Northampton County, North Carolina. Family members owned a ferry which crossed the Roanoke River at Hyde Island. This island is a few miles upstream from Plumbtree (Mush) Island and the Occoneechee Neck.

(clipped from Colber, R.A. "James Logan Colbert of the Chickasaws, the Man and the Myth" *The North Carolina Genealogical Society Journal*. Vol XX, No.2, May 1994, page 88.

<sup>1</sup>I have used the spelling "Hide" when describing the pirate as the two primary sources that included his name spelled it that way.

<sup>2</sup>Colbert, R.A. "James Logan Colbert of the Chickasaws, the Man and the Myth" *The North Carolina Genealogical Society Journal*. Vol XX, No.2, May 1994, pp 82-95, Part 2 Vol. XXI, No.1, Feb 1995, pp 25-48.

Mr. Colbert gave two sources for his claims - (1) Martini, D. *The Indian Chiefs of the Southeast: A Guide, 1750-1861, being a biographical-genealogical introduction to the leadership of the*

*Five Civilized Tribes, from the eighteenth century until their participation in the American Civil War in the Indian Territory, 1861*,<sup>3</sup> and (2) Adair, J. *The history of the American Indians: particularly those nations adjoining to the Mississippi [sic], East and West Florida, Georgia, South and North Carolina, and Virginia, containing an account of their origin, language, manners, religious and civil customs, laws, form of government, punishments, conduct in war and domestic life, their habits, diet, agriculture, manufactures, diseases and method of cure, and other particulars, sufficient to render it ... with a new map of the country referred to in the history.*<sup>4</sup>

In his book, Martini said only this about Richard: “Richard Hide, described as a former member of Blackbeard’s crew, died at Oldtown in the Chicasaw Nation about 1794.” Oldtown was near modern day Tupelo, Mississippi.<sup>5</sup> Martini included Adair among his sources and also included (1) the "List of Traders and Packhorsemen in the Chickasaw Nation January 22d, 1766" in the records of the Colonial Office in London (“The Colonial Office List”)<sup>6</sup> and (2) the journal of the Rev. Mr. Joseph Bullen, a missionary to the Chickasaw.<sup>7</sup> Mr. Martini did not link the erstwhile pirate Richard Hide to any particular family group.

Let’s examine the sources for these works in chronological order.

The Colonial Office List included a Richard Hide as a packhorseman working for Colbert (spelled Calbert therein) and no other information about him, but the list is dated 1766, so we can assume that the referenced Richard Hide was alive and working for Colbert in 1766.

<sup>3</sup> Martini, D. *The Indian Chiefs of the Southeast: A Guide, 1750-1861, being a biographical-genealogical introduction to the leadership of the Five Civilized Tribes, from the eighteenth century until their participation in the American Civil War in the Indian Territory, 1861*. D. Martini, Ripley, Miss. 1991. p. 93, out of print, check Worldcat for library locations.

<sup>4</sup> Adair, J. *The history of the American Indians: particularly those nations adjoining to the Mississippi, East and West Florida, Georgia, South and North Carolina, and Virginia, containing an account of their origin, language, manners, religious and civil customs, laws, form of government, punishments, conduct in war and domestic life, their habits, diet, agriculture, manufactures, diseases and method of cure, and other particulars, sufficient to render it ... with a new map of the country referred to in the history*. Printed for Edward and Charles Dilly, London, 1775. p144. Available on HathiTrust #6 - The history of the American Indians particularly those nations ... - Full View | HathiTrust Digital Library and The Internet Archive at The history of the American Indians : Adair, James, approximately 1709-1783 : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive

<sup>5</sup> Cooke, Stephen R. "The Chickasaw Villages" [https://www.thechickasawvillages.com/decades1760\\_1770.html](https://www.thechickasawvillages.com/decades1760_1770.html). Accessed 14 July 2022.

<sup>6</sup> Public Record Office, Colonial Office, Class 5, Number 67 (on binding "Plantations General"). Digital image at <https://www.okhistory.org/research/digital/foremantrans/foreman.london1.pdf> original record pg 85, image 52 of the transcription, Oklahoma Historical Society website, accessed 17 Sept 2022.

<sup>7</sup> Bullen, Rev. Mr. Joseph. “Extracts from the Journal of the Rev. Mr. Bullen, Missionary to the Chickasaw Indians from the New York Missionary Society” *The New York Missionary Magazine and Repository of Religious Intelligence*, T & J Swords, New York, 1800, Vol 1, pg 366. Available free on Googlebooks.com at The New-York Missionary Magazine and Repository of Religious Intelligence - Google Play Books

GOVT./

A List of Traders and Postmen in the Chickasaw Nation January 22<sup>d</sup> 1766.

TRADERS	POSTMEN
John Sims	Woods Price
	Henry Duke
	Michael Cressle
James Colbert	Richard Hyde
	William Gilchrist
	James Creighton
Alex <sup>r</sup> M <sup>r</sup> Entosh	John Francis
	Benjamin Coaly
	Alex <sup>r</sup> Curtone
	John Gooding
	Anthony Darford
John Highrider	William Kemp
	John M <sup>r</sup> Sean
	William James
	Arthur Cruise
	John Burweon
Francis M <sup>r</sup> Carter	James Andrews
	George Scott

TRADERS

POSTMEN

Robert Hannah

Daniel Derice

George Wood

Richard Stuart

Elias Campbell

James Adair

By the above List it appears, that there are

P. 86

/ Thirty White Men in the Cherokee Nation, which does not contain more than 250 Men fit to bear Arms; for which Number of Hunters, three Traders would be fully sufficient.

J.S.

P. 88

Enclosed Copy of a List of Traders / and Postmen in the / Chickasaw Nation / January 22. 1766. / M<sup>r</sup> 49

The Adair work specifically cited by Mr. Colbert, and used as a source by Martini, does not name the supposed pirate. Adair wrote "The Muskohge\* lately clipt off the ears of two white

men for supposed adultery. One had been a disciple of Black Beard, the pirate; and the other ... was deputed by the whimsical war-governor of Georgia, to awe the traders of his despotic power" (the Muskogee are the same tribe as the Creek – hence Colbert writing that Hyde was escorting the superintendent through Creek territory).

The Adair work does give us clues to a timeline for the pirate. First, James Adair arrived in the colonies about 1735 and lived among the Indians for roughly 40 years. He lived chiefly among the Chickasaw from and after 1744. In 1763, he returned to England but came back to the colonies in 1765 and worked mostly out of Mobile until late 1768 when he was in New York looking for a publisher for his book.<sup>8</sup> He failed to find a publisher in New York and the work was not actually published until 1775 in London, but from this history we know that the episode of ear clipping occurred before 1768 as Adair had completed his manuscript by that time.

The Bullen journal entry is the most interesting and enlightening of the three sources for the pirate tale. On July 6, 1800, Rev. Bullen wrote:

"Retired to Christopher Oxbury's, wishing to engage him as interpreter. The house is on an ancient mound. The field, where was an encampment of about twelve acres, very rich. Here is an eminence of about 1000 acres, which appears to have been an island, and these works a garrison to secure from invasion. From these works it is apparent they were a people more industrious than the present Indians. This was considered by Richard Hide, one of Blackbeard's men, who lived in this nation, and died about six years ago, the finest place in the nation."

It is the Bullen work that gives us a date of death for Richard, the pirate - c. 1794. Even though Mr. Colbert did not cite Bullen's journal or note the death date of c. 1794, he may have been aware of it. Perhaps in an attempt to bridge the long time period from the death of Blackbeard in 1718 and the known death of Richard the pirate in 1794, Mr. Colbert claimed that two different Hydes – a father and son both named Richard Hyde – were traders and packhorsemen. He wrote that the elder was the pirate and the younger was also a packhorseman. But he also wrote that it was the elder Hyde who had his ear clipped off. Mr. Colbert did not give any sources for his claims that any of the Hydes of Northampton or Anson Counties were Indian Traders - he made that assertion based on their geographic proximity to others who were traders and the marriage of a Hyde to a Colson. But the Hydes of Northampton County did not arrive there until the mid 1750s.

After reading the primary sources and putting them into the context of the known dates for my family line, I came to the realization that Mr. Colbert had erred in tying the pirate Richard Hide to the Hydes of Northampton County. Unfortunately, Mr. Colbert did not include in his work the death date and location for Richard the pirate as Mr. Martini did and his linking of Richard the

<sup>8</sup> Adair, James Robert | NCpedia

pirate to the Hydes of Northampton County has led others to make claims that are not supported by evidence. If Colbert had sources other than Martini and Adair he did not cite them.

The Hydes of Northampton County are my ancestors and while this article is not intended to be a discussion of this Hyde line in general - a brief version is in order given Mr. Colbert's article. For more information on this line, please see the link to Richard Hyde (b. 1611-c.1658) Surry County, VA, under the Hyde Family Lines section of the Hyde Genealogy Association website. Sources for the information below are included in that work.

Richard Hyde I was born in 1611 and immigrated to Virginia in 1635. Richard Hyde I worked out his indenture and then worked for himself long enough to save up and purchase 450 acres of land along Upper Chippokes Creek in Surry County. He had one son who appears in the historical record.

Richard Hyde II was the son of Richard Hyde I. He was born about 1642 and died in Surry County in 1710. This Richard served as a guardian for several orphans, on petit juries and in the Surry County militia. If he was a pirate - he was not a very good one, as he and his wife Mary found it necessary to sell off over ½ of the land he had inherited from his father. Richard left a Will in which he named his children as Richard, Elizabeth, and Jean.

Richard Hyde III, the son of Richard Hyde II, was born between 1661 and 1678 and died in 1719 in Surry County, Virginia. Many people have picked up on Colbert's claim that Richard the pirate gave up his life of piracy after Blackbeard died to make the claim that Richard Hyde III was the pirate. But this Richard could not have been the Richard working as a packhorseman in 1766 nor the pirate named in Bullen's journal and there are no other sources to suggest a link. About 1712, Richard III married Mary Evans, the daughter of Benjamin Evans who had significant land holdings in Charles City County and Prince George County. Richard and Mary owned a plantation that Richard had inherited from his father lying along Upper Chippokes Creek in Surry County across the James River from Jamestown. They also owned land across the creek in Prince George County that Mary had inherited from her father. In 1717, Richard and Mary sued the executor of her father's estate. In February of 1719, Richard received a bequest of a horse from his step-father Thomas Cotton.<sup>9</sup> And between their marriage c. 1712 and Richard's death, Richard and Mary had three children. Richard wrote his Will on May 2, 1719,<sup>10</sup> and died before June 17, 1719, when the Will was proven in court. He named all three of his children - eldest son David, son Richard (IV), and son Benjamin. Richard Hyde III lived and died in Southwark Parish of Surry County, Virginia, before the Hydes moved south into Brunswick County, Virginia, and Northampton County, North Carolina. It seems improbable that this

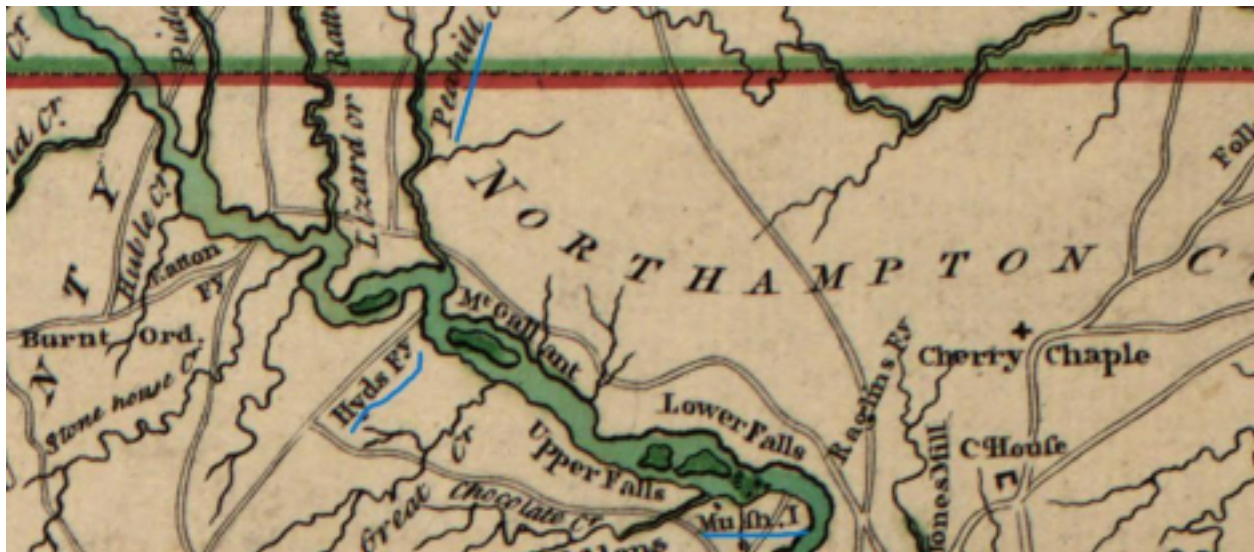
<sup>9</sup> Will of Thomas Cotton dated February 26, 1718 (1719). Surry County Wills and Deeds, 1715-1730, Book 7, pg 168. [www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C9PX-29XH-F?i=193&cat=366316](http://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C9PX-29XH-F?i=193&cat=366316)

<sup>10</sup> Will of Richard Hide, Virginia Wills and Probate Records, Surry County, Wills and Deeds, Book 7, 1715-1730, pp 191-192. [www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C9PX-29X9-9?i=216&cat=366316](http://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-C9PX-29X9-9?i=216&cat=366316)



Richard could have been one of Blackbeard's men given his presence in Surry County over the years that Blackbeard was active.

David Hyde, the son of Richard Hyde III, was born about 1712 in Surry County, Virginia, and died in Northampton County, North Carolina, between February 1784 and June 1785. He moved from Prince George County, Virginia, to Brunswick County about 1742 and then into Northampton County in 1759. David was the Hyde who owned an island in the Roanoke River - from which he and his son John operated a ferry. David and John purchased the roughly 98 acre island in 1762 which was called Jourdan Island at the time (later known as Hyde's Island) and additional land along Peahill Creek and south of the river in Halifax County. David left his "island plantation" to his daughter Mary in his Will but through later litigation this island wound up in the ownership of two of David's grandchildren - the daughters of David's son John. This litigation has provided a wealth of information about David's descendants. In this map, you can also see the location of Mush Island which was mentioned in Mr Colbert's article. David's son Stephen Hyde married Susannah Colson Fanning, the daughter of John Colson the Tory. They lived in Anson County, North Carolina, along the PeeDee River.



Excerpted from Collet, John, J Bayly, and S Hooper. A complete map of North-Carolina from an actual survey. London: S. Hooper, 1770. Map. Retrieved from the Library of Congress..

Richard Hyde IV, the son of Richard Hyde III, was born about 1714 in Surry County, Virginia, and died in 1762 in Northampton County, North Carolina. Richard moved into Brunswick County, Virginia, before 1742 and first purchased land in Northampton County, North Carolina, in 1753. He signed his Will and died there in 1762 so he was too young to have been part of Blackbeard's crew and died before the 1766 Colonial Office List. There is no evidence that Richard Hyde IV had a son named Richard.

David Hyde, the eldest son of Richard Hyde III, had a son named Richard Hyde whose birthdate is unknown but was likely in the 1740s or 1750s. This Richard Hyde died in 1784 in Northampton County, North Carolina. Richard owned land in Halifax County but apparently lived on his father's plantation in Northampton County. He died there in 1784. While it is possible that he was the 1766 packhorseman, he did not live and die at Oldtown in 1794 nor could he have been a member of Blackbeard's crew. From his Will and litigation concerning David's Island Plantation, it is known that Richard left only a widow and two daughters surviving him and so he was not the father of the man who died at Oldtown.

The other Richard Hydes in the line of Richard Hyde of Northampton County were his two grandsons - both of whom were born in the 1780s and were living in middle Tennessee in the 1830s and so were not the man who died at Oldtown in 1794.

All three of the primary sources for Richard Hide the pirate (Adair, Bullen and the Colonial Office List) would seem to describe the same man. Adair and Bullen are "reminiscences" and do not describe claims made directly by Richard. As Mr. Martini has been known to say - if this Richard truly sailed with Blackbeard then he was a very old man when he died (given that Blackbeard was executed in 1718). Perhaps Richard was a cabin boy or powder monkey on Blackbeard's crew - boys as young as 12 were known to serve in those roles. That would still have meant he was almost 90 at the time of his death - highly unusual for a man who had lived such a life.

Now that we know which Hydes and Richards WERE NOT the pirate, perhaps the identity of the Richard Hide who would have been living in the right time or right place to be the Richard named in Rev. Bullen's journal can be identified.

Interestingly, the other two men from the Colonial Office List who worked as packhorsemen for James Colbert (William Gilchrist and James Congleton) bear the same names as men who were banished to America and transported in the 1700s. Packhorsemen for several other traders bear the names of runaway servants, convicts, or Jacobites who were transported to America. Outside of the family line of Richard Hyde I, there were other men named Richard Hyde in the southern colonies in the 18th century:

Richard Hyde - baptized 1705 in England, son of James Hyde, barber surgeon, admitted to Christ's Hospital London (an orphanage of sorts) and apprenticed by his uncle Henry Hyde in 1721 to serve Capt Francis Willis, merchant of Virginia.<sup>11</sup>

Richard Hyde - sentenced to transportation to the colonies and arrived in Virginia or Maryland in 1731.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Ancestry.com - Child Apprentices in America from Christ's Hospital, London, 1617-1778<sup>12</sup> Coldham, Peter Wilson, *The Complete Book of Emigrants in Bondage 1614-1775*, Genealogical Publishing Company, Baltimore, page 425, Emigrants in Bondage, 1614-1775 - Ancestry.com

Richard Hyde - the schoolmaster in Warwick County, Virginia, in 1727.

If Richard the pirate was not born in the colonies - perhaps he was one of those men. Regardless, after reading lots of pirate tales and the primary sources for this story, I can now confidently say that Richard Hide the pirate does not belong to the line of Hydys that begins with Richard Hyde I, the immigrant to America in 1635.

\*\*\*\*\*

READ MORE ABOUT IT - There were other Hyde men convicted and executed for piracy:

Adam Hyde was hanged at execution dock London March 28, 1759.

Richard Hyde, a member of the Ruxley (sometimes spelled Huxley) crew was hanged at execution dock in London on November 27, 1769).<sup>13</sup>

Daniel Hyde (described in the historical records as being born circa 1700 on the eastern shore of Virginia) was hanged at Goat Island, Newport, Rhode Island in 1723.<sup>14</sup> No family of Hydys on the eastern shore prior to 1750 has been identified - so it is likely that Daniel was from Eastern Virginia, perhaps James City County or elsewhere and not from the Delmarva peninsula.

Acknowledgments - Thank you to Ann Sterling of the Hyde Genealogy Association for tracking down Don Martini and providing a link to the Bullen reference. Thank you also to the librarians at the Texas State Library and Archives and the Eastern Oklahoma Library System for help locating out-of-print materials that are not available online.

<sup>13</sup> Banks, John. *Reminiscences of Smugglers and Smuggling: Being the Substance of a Lecture Delivered at the Music Hall Hastings*. John Camden Hotten, London. Available on Googleplay at *Reminiscences of Smugglers and Smuggling: Being the Substance of a Lecture Delivered at ... Hastings*. [With Special Reference to Hastings and the Neighbourhood.] - Google Play Books.

<sup>14</sup> Dow, G. Francis., Edmonds, J. Henry. *The Pirates of the New England Coast 1630-1730*. Marine Research Society, Salem, Mass. 1923. Avail. on HathiTrust.  
<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015032860093&view=1up&seq=1&skin=2021&q1=hyde>.