



Anne Bonny & Mary Read: The Golden Age of Piracy's Most Famous Women

Charles River Editors

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*Includes historic illustrations depicting Anne Bonny, Mary Read, and important people in their lives.

*Includes a profile of Anne and Mary from the famous English pirate history "A General History of the Pyrates".

*Discusses common legends about Anne and Mary, separating fact from fiction.

*Includes a Bibliography for further reading.

“NOW we are to begin a History full of surprizing Turns and Adventures; I mean, that of Mary Read and Anne Bonny, alias Bonn, which were the true Names of these two Pyrates; the odd Incidents of their rambling Lives are such, that some may be tempted to think the whole Story no better than a Novel or Romance; but since it is supported by many thousand Witnesses, I mean the People of Jamaica, who were present at their Tryals, and heard the Story of their Lives, upon the first discovery of their Sex; the Truth of it can be no more contested, than that there were such Men in the World, as Roberts and Black-beard...” - Captain Charles Johnson, A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the most notorious Pyrates One of the most famous pirates of all time, and possibly the most famous woman to ever become one, was Anne Bonny. The Irish-born girl moved with her family to the Bahamas at a young age in the early 18th century, which at that time was a hotbed for piracy by the likes of Blackbeard, but the redhead with a fiery temper would go on to forge her own reputation. After marrying a poor sailor who accepted clemency to give up piracy, Anne began a legendary affair with Calico Jack Rackam and became pregnant with his child, but that did not stop them from plundering the high seas aboard his pirate ship Revenge, at least until they were captured by British authorities. Anne avoided execution by “pleading her belly”, getting a temporary stay of execution due to her pregnancy.

Among all the pirates of the “Golden Age of Piracy”, none were as unique as Mary Read, who was one of just two known women to be tried as a pirate during the Golden Age, alongside her own crewmate (and possible lover) Anne Bonny. Like Anne, Mary Read was an illegitimate child who spent some of her childhood dressed up as and disguised as a little boy through incredibly strange circumstances. But unlike her future shipmate, Mary ultimately took a liking to it, and she continued to disguise her gender to take on roles reserved for men, including in the British army. During that time, she fell in love with a Flemish soldier and eventually married him.

Mary Read might have been content to live out her life with her husband in Holland, but after his death, she headed for the West Indies, only to have her ship commandeered by pirates. But Read, who had worked on a ship before, was only too happy to join the pirate crew and play the role of privateer. And in 1720, that crew was captured by Calico Jack, who already had his lover Anne Bonny as part of his crew and now unwittingly added a second female when Mary opted to join.

Together the three played a legendary role as shipmates and possible lovers while continuing their piracy around the Bahamas, only to eventually be captured by authorities in October 1720. Most of the crew was executed, but Mary was able to successfully “plead the belly” and thereby receiving a stay of execution. This spared her the noose, but Mary would die of illness while still imprisoned in 1721.

Anne Bonny & Mary Read chronicles the mysterious lives and legends of the two famous female pirates, attempting to separate fact from fiction while analyzing her lasting legacy. Along with pictures depicting Anne Bonny, Mary Read, and other important people, you will learn about the famous pirates like you never have before, in no time at all.

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