



History's Famous Women Pirates: Grace O'Malley, Anne Bonny and Mary Read

Charles River Editors

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*Includes historic illustrations depicting the three women and important people and places in their lives.

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

*Discusses common legends about the three women, separating fact from fiction.

*Includes Bibliographies for further reading.

The people who have lived outside the boundaries of normal societies and refused to play by the rules have long fascinated the world, and nowhere is this more evident than the continuing interest in the pirates of centuries past. As the subjects of books, movies, and even theme park rides, people continue to let their imaginations go when it comes to pirates, with buried treasure, parrots, and walking the plank all ingrained in pop culture's perception of them.

While that explains some of the reasons Grace O'Malley's life and legacy continue to resonate, she was clearly a different kind of woman altogether. Far from being a member of an unprivileged class seeking to steal booty from any ship she could, she was both a queen and a rebel who defiantly fought to protect her home and way of life against the English. Naturally, while foreigners might remember her as a pirate and one of many famous rebels opposing the English over the centuries, Ireland has remembered her as a folk hero, and she has become the subject of all the poetry, songs, plays, and movies that come along with such a standing. 19th century writer James Hardiman may have summed up her legacy the best when he wrote, "Her name has been frequently used by our Bards, to designate Ireland. Hence our Countrymen have been often called 'Sons of old Grana Weal.'"

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.

In 1720, Mary's ship 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 died of illness before giving birth anyway.

History's Famous Women Pirates chronicles the lives and legacies of the three famous women. Along with bibliographies and pictures, you will learn about Grace O'Malley, Anne Bonny and Mary Read like never

before.

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