

Live free on the high seas

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A voyager along the salty, high seas, looking for challenges and longing to be free. A woman so unusual she was known for her triumphs and legacies so heavy they desired to be unveiled. Stories so mystifying and tales so death-defying, the mischief entailed in her victories has secured her place in history.

Anne Bonny, also referred to as Bonney, is one of the few recorded female pirates in history. An individual who learned her morals through experience. In her early beginning, Bonny was an illegitimate birth in Kinsale, County Cork, Ireland circa 1697, as result of an affair between her wealthy Irish father, William Cormac and his maid, Mary Brennan. To escape the spreading rumors, Carmac forced his family to relocate to a plantation in South Carolina. It's also speculated that Cormac's wife promptly left him shortly after the news of the affair spread; however, whether she died instead is also in question.

While living in America, Bonny posed as a young man working as her father's law clerk, a disguise due to her skeptical parentage. As she grew, her father would push her into attempted betrothals, one being a local townsman, against her wishes. These events led to the beginning of Bonny's fierce behavior where she reportedly beat a suitor half to death who tried to rape her and stabbing a servant girl. In another form of rebellion, Bonny would round taverns and sleep with various fishermen and drunks, whereas townsfolk would discuss her mannerism as a tarnish to her father's reputation.

Around 1718, Cormac decided to disown Bonny, refusing her welcome back into his estate after vividly opposing her marriage to James Bonny, a pirate at the time. The two, James and Anne Bonny embarked on a new life in New Providence - now Nassau - in the Bahamas.

Governor Woodes Rodgers provided James the option of pardoning his crimes in piracy to become an informant, collect bounties, and turn pirates into Rodgers. Woodes, a former pirate as well, vowed to ensure trials to the outlaws on his compiled “most wanted” list containing ten notorious criminals.

In the midst of James working in partnership with Rodgers, Anne grew tired of her now mundane lifestyle of following her husband into trailing criminals. So, while the Mediterranean flourished with pirates, privateers, and seamen, Bonny met John “Jack Calico.” Bonny quickly became infatuated with him due to his abrasive behavior and affinity for embellished clothes.

Anne Bonny decided then around 1720, she would leave her husband and join Calico with his crew, the Rackhams. Although it is unclear as to why Calico permitted her on his ship, as it was rare for women to be a part of crew, it’s theorized that due to Bonny’s wittiness, willingness, and spirit, he was inclined.

An old superstition controlled the life of piracy, and those who were involved. An adage revolving around women aboard ship bids bad luck to the voyage and those partaking; however, Bonney tested this delusion, becoming a renowned figure for ruthlessness as for gender, and challenging male crew’s ego, pride and dignity as she pacified ship after ship in her pathway.

Until one ship she participated in capturing, the *William*. This interested privateer Captain Johnathan Barnet, who hunted and apprehended Calico and his crew, including Anne Bonny and another female pirate named Mary Read. Both women, along with the crew, were found guilty of theft and murder and sentenced to death. Due to the discovery of both Bonny and Read being pregnant, their sentences was terminated. Read died in prison a year later, while Bonny was released, due to her father’s influence and disappeared.

As legend praised, Bonny held true to her character, never faltering despite hardship. Bonny never disguised herself nor her abilities once she was faced with a “man’s world” of crime and scorn. She defied gender normality and persisted with her courage and strength. She traveled and explored, she experienced and lived, Bonny formed herself into an example of empowerment in history.

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