

# Golden age of piracy



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**For as long as people have transported goods with ships, there have been others waiting to steal from them. These people are known as pirates. 1650 to 1720 is known as the Golden Age of Piracy due to the number of well-known pirates during this time. Three main Pirates from this time include; ‘ Calico’ Jack Rackham, Edward Teach, also known as Blackbeard, and AnneBonny. Together, along with these three, pirates scowered the seas in search of gold, riches and other ships.**

Jack Rackham, better known as Calico Jack, was a notorious pirate in the Caribbean. Calico Jack was born in England on December 26, 1682, and he and his family moved to the new world prior to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. (Famous Pirate: Calico Rackham Jack, 1) During his time in the new world, he became a pirate under Captain Charles Vane on a ship named “ The Ranger.” While on this ship Calico Jack and his other crew members mainly attacked smaller merchant and passenger ships. One day, a French Warship was spotted advancing on The Ranger, but Captain Charles Vane decided to flee instead of fight the larger ship. Captain Vane’s decision to flee was seen as cowardice and Calico Jack and the other crew members decided Charles Vane was no longer a suitable captain. Calico Jack was now promoted to Captain of The Ranger and Charles Vane and his remaining followers were sent off on a smaller ship with limited supplies and ammunition. Now in a position of power Calico Jack again set out attacking smaller merchant and passenger ships until he set his sights on the much larger Jamaican ship, the Kingston. Calico Jack and his crew attacked the Kingston just off the coast from the Port Royal Harbor. Attacking this close to a harbor was a huge mistake, as the people at the harbor were able to see the attack and decided to finally punish Calico Jack for his actions. The people of Port Royal built a pirate-hunting ship specifically to hunt down Calico Jack. Calico Jack managed to escape the pirate-hunters, and returned to port to speak with the governor. The Governor gave Calico Jack and his crew a royal pardon on the notion that they would never turn to a life of piracy again. After some

time, Calico Jack and his crew could no longer resist the urge to plunder other ships, and went back on the seas. Because he returned to a life of crime, he was sentenced to death by the governor and was executed on November 18, 1720. (Famous Pirate: Calico Rackham Jack, 7)

One of the most notorious pirates of the Golden Age of Piracy was Edward Teach, better known as Blackbeard. Edward Teach was born in England around 1660 and began his life on the sea as a privateer in Queen Anne's war. After the war, he turned to a life of piracy around 1713. (Blackbeard (Aka Edward Teach), 1) He started his pirate career under the leadership of Benjamin Hornigold who eventually gave Blackbeard his own ship.

Blackbeard, after obtaining the ship, named it Queen Anne's Revenge and ventured out on his own with a crew of 300. They mostly patrolled the Caribbean, but travelled up the east coast of the North America as well. Blackbeard attacked merchant and passenger ships, often holding hostages and torturing those on the captured ships. Blackbeard found prime piracy waters off the coast of North Carolina and bribed the governor so that he could continue in the area. Eventually, the people who lived in North Carolina were ready to take down Blackbeard. The Governor planned a secret attack on Blackbeard and on November 22, 1718 he was found with his crew.

(Blackbeard (Aka Edward Teach), 2) A battle ensued, and the governor's ships took heavy damage. The crew of the governor's ships hid in the hull of the ship to convince Blackbeard that they had abandoned ship. Blackbeard believed the ship was abandoned and attempted to board. While Blackbeard and his crew boarded, the governor's crew stormed out taking them by surprise. Blackbeard fought hard, but eventually died from his twenty-five

stab wounds and five bullet holes. The death of Blackbeard marked a turning point towards the end of the Golden Age of Piracy.

Anne Bonny, one of very few female pirates from this time, started life in Ireland around 1697. (Famous Pirate: Anne Bonny, 1) She was the illegitimate daughter of a wealthy lawyer and because of this her father lost his reputation in Ireland. Anne Bonny and her parents decided to leave Ireland and move to the New World to start over. After settling in Charleston, South Carolina, Anne's mother died and she was left to take care of the home. Around the age of sixteen she met James Bonny, a pirate who she eventually fell in love with and married. After marrying James, she turned to a life of piracy and was removed from her home by her father. James later stopped being a pirate and turned to government work but Anne wanted to stay a pirate. That's when she met Calico Jack. Anne and Calico Jack left and headed south plundering smaller merchant and passenger ships ending up in Cuba where they found out Anne was pregnant. Calico Jack left Anne in Cuba to have the child and returned once the baby was born. "The love relationship between Anne and Calico was not public, but on the ship, everybody knew that Anne was "the captain's woman." (Famous Pirate: Anne Bonny, 4) Anne's life of piracy was coming to an end sooner than she had expected. On October 20, 1720 while the crew was celebrating a successful day of plundering, they were attacked by Captain Barnet of the British Navy. (Famous Pirate: Anne Bonny, 5) The entire crew including Anne were taken prisoner and sentenced to death by hanging. Anne managed to escape this certain death by saying she was pregnant. Following the execution of her crew and friends, it is unknown where Anne ended up. Some

say Anne's father payed her ransom and she returned to Charleston where she lived out the rest of her life.

The Golden Age of Piracy left an everlasting impact on the safety measures used on ships even today. Pirates flooded the seas looking for their next chance at someone else's riches, while over time ships became harder and harder to raid. Calico Jack, Blackbeard, and Anne Bonny all had similar traits, and all met a quick end to their lives as a pirate. These three pirates along with many others spread piracy around the world, and became household names for their actions. The most notorious of the three, Blackbeard, will forever be known as the image of piracy.

## Works Cited

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