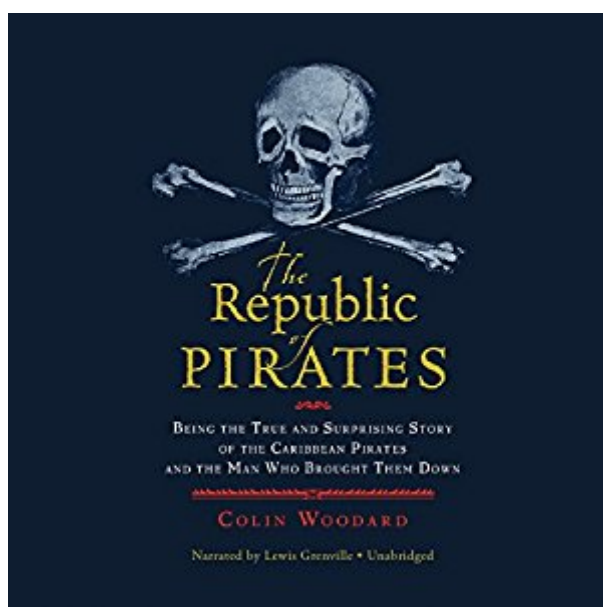


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The Republic Of Pirates: Being The True And Surprising Story Of The Caribbean Pirates And The Man Who Brought Them Down



Synopsis

The untold story of a heroic band of Caribbean pirates whose defiance of imperial rule inspired revolt in colonial outposts across the world. In the early 18th century, the Pirate Republic was home to some of the great pirate captains, including Blackbeard, "Black Sam" Bellamy, and Charles Vane. Along with their fellow pirates - former sailors, indentured servants, and runaway slaves - this "Flying Gang" established a crude but distinctive democracy in the Bahamas, carving out their own zone of freedom in which servants were free, blacks could be equal citizens, and leaders were chosen or deposed by a vote. They cut off trade routes, sacked slave ships, and severed Europe from its New World empires. And for a brief, glorious period, the Republic was a success.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Colin Woodard has authored a wonderful history of the pirates of the Caribbean in their heyday, with the prime years being 1715-1725. The lives of Jack Sparrow and Long John Silver fascinate us; the real pirates, as depicted by Woodard, are perhaps even more interesting. He tells the story of the "pirate republic," headquartered in the Bahamas. He uses the term "republic" purposefully. He contends that (and this appears to me to be hyperbole) the pirates fueled (page 1) ". . . the democratic sentiments that would later drive the American revolution." Some fascinating tidbits related to this thesis: pirates shared their spoils relatively equally; rank-and-file pirates elected and deposed ships' captains; decisions were often made in what Woodard calls "open councils"; runaway slaves sometimes came aboard as pirates and were often treated as equals by their fellow

pirates. As Woodard notes (page 4): "The pirate gangs of the Bahamas were enormously successful. At their zenith they succeeded in severing Britain, France, and Spain from their New World empires, cutting off trade routes. . . ."The primary figures covered in this book are three pirate leaders, Samuel ("Black Sam") Bellamy, Edward ("Blackbeard") Thatch, and Charles Vane. Of course, many others are mentioned as well, including "Calico Jack" Rackham, Benjamin Hornigold, Josiah Burgess, Henry Jennings, Anne Bonny, and Mary Read. The fourth primary character is the man who devoted himself to destroying the pirate republic--Woodes Rogers. The book tells the story of the pirates and their depredations. It also tells the story of Rogers, who made it his aim to destroy those pirates. All in all, a rip roaring volume.

You might think a person interested in pirates would get into the historical records to learn more about those rough wanderers. Colin Woodard came at it from the other direction: he has a fascination with history and "got into" pirates as a vehicle to bring U.S. colonial history to life. "The Republic of Pirates" is the fascinating product of his research. Woodard focuses on what he calls "the Golden Age of Piracy," a ten-year period from 1715 to 1725. The few thousand men -- and a few women -- who populate this story were a different breed from the government-sanctioned privateers of earlier times. As Woodard describes them, they were " ... engaged in more than simple crime and undertook nothing less than a social and political revolt. They were sailors, indentured servants, and runaway slaves rebelling against their oppressors: captains, ship owners, and the autocrats of the great slave plantations of America and the West Indies." Some of them were set up as a rebel navy by supporters of James Stuart, the half-brother of Queen Anne, exiled after her death in 1714. Woodard's three main pirate subjects -- Samuel Bellamy, Charles Vane, and Edward "Black Beard" Thatch, grew up in an England made harsh for the lower classes by the waning of feudalism, the enclosure of public grazing land, and the flight from rural regions to London. The fourth focus of the book is Woodes Rogers, a Bahamian governor and former privateer who would eventually be the downfall of the pirates' Golden Age. Funded in part by the wreck of a great Spanish treasure fleet off Florida in 1715, the pirate bands began to congregate in the Bahamas and to grow in strength and daring.

It is a subject that I had previously given very little thought to. Even as a kid I never found the subject of pirates to be all that interesting. I don't know why. However, over the past couple of years I have had occasion to read a pair of phenomenal books about the slave trade. I found both Ron Soodalter's "Hanging Captain Gordon" and Charles Rappleye's "Sons of Providence" to be

absolutely spellbinding. So when I recently came across Colin Woodward's new book "The Republic of Pirates" I simply could not resist. There is an old saying that counsels if you want to find out why things happen the way they do then simply "follow the money". This is essentially the route Colin Woodward takes in "The Republic of Pirates". After reading this book it is now clear to me why so many men made the fateful decision to turn away from "legitimate" authority and engage in the act of piracy. For many of these men had very legitimate economic and political issues with those in power in England in the early 18th century and most of these concerns were simply not being addressed. One by one and for very personal reasons men made the decision to rebel against the authorities who were holding them down. Before long a large group of like minded individuals would set up shop at an island known as New Providence in the Bahamas and would begin a period of plunder and terror that would last for nearly a decade. Operating all along the eastern coast of America and in the Caribbean these daring men succeeded in wreaking havoc and disrupting trade between the European powers and their various colonies in the New World as well as the very lucrative trade with the Far East.

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