



Dead Men Tell No Tales: The Life and Legends of the Pirate Charles Gibbs (Studies in Maritime History)

Joseph Gibbs

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Dead men tell no tales, or so the pirate maxim goes. But when facing execution in 1831 for mutiny and murder, the previously enigmatic pirate Charles Gibbs recounted the infamous crimes of his harrowing life at sea in a self-aggrandizing series of "confessions." Wildly popular reading among nineteenth-century audiences, such criminal confessions were peppered with the romanticized mythology that informs pirate lore to this day. Joseph Gibbs takes up the task of separating fact from fiction to explicate the true story of Charles Gibbs - an alias for James Jeffers (1798-1831) of Newport, Rhode Island - in an investigation that reveals a life as riveting as the legend it replaces. Jeffers was the child of a Revolutionary War privateer captain with his own history in the "rough work." After a heroic career in the U.S. Navy during the War of 1812, Jeffers eschewed military life and took to the privateer trade himself. As Charles Gibbs, pirate, he sailed from the ports of Charleston and New Orleans to wreak havoc in the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico. Stripping away 170 years of embellishment, Joseph Gibbs maps the still-shockingly violent career of Charles Gibbs across the seas and, in the process, challenges and discredits much of his self-made mythology. Gibbs recounts Jeffers' well-documented role in the infamous mutiny and murders in 1830 aboard the brig *Vineyard* while the vessel was carrying a load of Mexican silver. The pirate was captured the following year and brought to New York. The case against Jeffers and accomplice Thomas Wansley culminated in a sensational trial, which led to their subsequent executions by hanging on Ellis Island. In addition to recounting the exploits of a ruthless cutthroat, "The Confessions of "Charles Gibbs"" tells the larger story of American piracy and privateering in the early nineteenth century and illustrates the role of American and European adventurers in the Latin American wars of liberation. Carefully researched, engagingly written, and enhanced by twenty illustrations, this is pirate history at its most credible and readable.

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