

His reputation survives him! (W.A. "Bully" Hayes)

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Warning....Warning...What you are about to read has all been indignantly denied by the person in question!

It is thought that he was born William Henry Hayes in 1829 in Cleveland, Ohio, the son of a saloon keeper in a busy trading post on the Guyahoga River. It has been said that many of the tendencies and characteristics of his later life were formed early.

Apparently, he sailed the Great Lakes by age 20. As captain of a schooner he was able to subdue, carouse, and commensurate with the predominantly Irish stock sailors of these lakes. But he also had a shrewd eye for business. He knew how to make money. He was a gambler, a fighter, a schemer, a wanderer and a womanizer. He knew the law, how to skirt it and how to break it!

It is rumored that around the time he became a captain he was married in Cleveland. Closely following this wedding he was alleged to be involved in a

horse-stealing scheme. From this episode, he fled to San Francisco with a new woman who would also be his wife. Thus were formed two more elements of William's life- elements often cited. You see, many in later life would consider him both an infamous fugitive from the law and a bigamist.

Once in San Francisco, William and his new wife found the area to their liking. Gold was discovered and a sense of lawlessness prevailed. William loved the sea- and to the sea is where history would be written. The wide open Pacific "called to him."

A deal was struck with an American merchant in San Francisco, Elisha Gibbs, whereby William would captain the barque *Canton* to the Far East. There it would be loaded with trade goods from the Orient and return. The first official mention of William Hayes is in the record of the American Counsel at Singapore, where W.H. Hayes sold the American Barque Canton to Englishman John Harvey, who renamed the ship *Santubong*.

Thus formally began the life of the man who would shortly become known as Bully Hayes. Various individuals labeled Bully as a pirate, a scalawag, an adventurer and a notorious circumventer of the law. The transaction that occurred with the *Canton* would become one of his trademarks- hiring on as a captain of a vessel then either selling it to others or selling the goods on board for personal profit.

This brigand was involved in no less than fifteen transactions of this kind, becoming quite knowledgeable about his business. The name Bully Hayes became known from San Francisco to Sydney and throughout the Pacific. Once, in Kahului, Hawaii, the law caught up with Bully. The sheriff of Kahului caught Bully docking in his seaside town. It has been suggested that Bully was involved in the forging of early Hawaiian stamps. The Sheriff immediately boarded the vessel, currently the *Ellenita*. The sheriff expected trouble, but instead found a polite, smooth talking man who promptly invited the sheriff into his cabin for a drink. Well, several drinks later, the Sheriff went up on deck to find that Bully had already set sail from Hawaii. Being the consummate gentleman Bully offered the Sheriff the option of a whaleboat or a trip to some other far point on the journey. The sheriff opted for the whaleboat.

Bully rapidly became notorious. He was involved in blackbirding (the kidnapping of South Seas islanders to work on Australian and New Zealand farms/ranches). Supposedly, those involved would be paid a stipend at the end of their commit-

ment and returned to their home islands. Many never saw their homes again. Other schemes included headhunting (when shrunken heads were in more demand than the currency of the day), gun running to the Maoris, trading for tete de mur or trepangs (dried sea cucumbers used by the Chinese in making soup), kidnapping and ransoming local chieftains for copra (the oil bearing husks of coconuts). By far one of Bully's most prized possessions was the wood clipper brig of 218 tons named *Leonora*, named after yet another wife. This ship sunk in Utwe Harbor in Kosrae, the second largest island in what is now the Federated States of Micronesia and a frequent hiding place for Bully. The *Leonora* now forms the basis of an underwater museum there.

Late in his career, the pulp/popular fiction author Louis Becke immortalized Bully. According to Becke, Bully was a swashbuckling adventurer and scoundrel that fed the imaginations of many in the late 1800s.

Bully Hayes led a full life and passed away in 1877 and in doing so helped provide an interesting bit of history to the South Sea Islands. Again, however, as noted earlier, all of the above was steadfastly and adamantly denied by the man himself, preferring instead to portray himself as a poor unfortunate who happened to be in the wrong place at inopportune times, but certainly innocent of any wrongdoing.

Sources used:

Clune, Frank. Captain Bully Hayes: Blackbirder and Bigamist. London: Angus and Robertson, 1970.

Lubbock, Alfred Basil. Bully Hayes: South Seas Pirate. Boston: Charles E. Lauriat, 1931.

Kosrae Office of Tourism Web Page, <http://www.telecom.fm/kosrae.htm>.