

Calamity Jane: Portrait of a Woman who Defied Gender Roles

by

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<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>Pages</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Thesis and introduction of top to Calamity Jane</b>	<b>3-4</b>
<b>Chapter 2: The Western frontier during the 19th century</b>	<b>5-12</b>
<b>Chapter 3: Early Life of Calamity Jane</b>	<b>13-20</b>
<b>Chapter 4: Life as Calamity Jane</b>	<b>21-30</b>
• <b>Photos of Calamity Jane</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Chapter 5: Modern interpretation of Calamity Jane</b>	<b>31-41</b>
• <b>Photos of Calamity Jane in film</b>	<b>42</b>

## **Chapter 1: Thesis, western territory acquisition, women's life and survival on the frontier.**

It was once common that schoolchildren knew of the tales of cowboys and sheriffs of the Old West. Movies featured stories of justice and murder, heroes and villains in shootouts and seeking vengeance. Two of the best known of these folk heroes were Wild Bill Hickok and Calamity Jane. Hickock was well known as a gambler, killed by Jack McCall; but Jane was equally interesting, though usually the lesser known of the two.

This does not do justice to a woman who was as interesting as they come. Calamity Jane in many ways is a good example of being remembered on the Western frontier. This paper will look at one of the most iconic females of the frontier, Calamity Jane, and examine her life in the unusual circumstances of the West. This paper will also describe her upbringing and how Martha Jane Canary got her nickname of "Calamity Jane."

I became interested in Calamity Jane after examining how books and media portrayed the west. Calamity Jane was portrayed in many of them, and I was curious about how the historical reality compared to the myth. Western history has always been a passion for me, as I learned about the Oregon trail and the Louisiana Purchase. The lives of cowboys and wildcats prompted me to read more about how they lived.

I will explore how Calamity Jane fit into gender stereotypes of the time, and how rumors regarding her relationship with Hickok impacted her legacy. I will look at how her contemporaries saw her, including Dr. Valentine T. McGillicuddy during the Black Hills

Expedition, and William “Billie” A. Lull who employed her as a entertainer, and Joseph Foster “White Eye” Anderson who was a prospector she befriended.

In order to create a basic biography of her, I consulted newspaper articles, her autobiography, and secondary works such as the *Deadwood Dick* series by Edward Lytton Wheeler. My chapters cover the development of the West during the late 19th century West, then biographical information regarding Calamity’s life. Secondary source material includes Richard W. Etulain and James D. Mclaird who are experts on Calamity’s legend. I also read her autobiography, which portrayed her adventures, and I used primary sources including newspapers, photos, maps and statistics. For the modern view of her I watched films and televisions programs, and used reviews of them to get a sense of their accuracy. I will be referring to Calamity Jane by her moniker rather than her birth name of Martha Jane Canary.

## Chapter 2: The Western frontier during the 19<sup>th</sup> century

The Western frontier became the intense focus of pioneers and miners seeking free land and wealth after the Civil War. The Armed Occupation Law of 1842 caught people's attention, offering 160 acres of land to men willing to fight the Indian rebellion in Florida.<sup>1</sup> The United States continually expanded: Texas was annexed in 1845, Oregon territory in 1846, the Mexican cession in 1848, and the Gadsden Purchase of 1853.<sup>2</sup> People moved west to fulfill dreams owning land, and making a new life for oneself. They travelled to places that had never been occupied by white settlers, from between the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers, spanning across the Pacific Coast, called the Overland Trail. The trail branched off from the Oregon Trail, which branches off to the southern part of the coast, giving more passages of travel for Americans to traverse.

From 1840, most of the areas settled outside of mountain ranges were close to the Atlantic Ocean and the Mississippi river, growing through the 1850's with the inclusion of Nebraska and Kansas territories growing from unorganized land.<sup>3</sup> The interior west of California rose in higher densities, surging higher in the 1860's-1880's with a rise in population density in the Midwest of Nebraska and Kansas. The negotiations and annexations of territories like Texas and Mexico spread organized state territory between 1840-1900.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Greg, Bradsher. "How the west was settled: the 150-year-old homestead act lured Americans looking for a new life and new opportunities." *Prologue*, vol. 44, no. 4, Winter 2012, pp. 26

<sup>2</sup> Albert Perry Brigham & Charles T. McFarlane, *Essentials of Geography* (New York, NY: American Book Company, 1916) pp. 47. etc.usf.edu/maps/pages/4300/4396/4396.htm

<sup>3</sup> The Website Services & Coordination Staff, US Census Bureau. "Following the Frontier Line, 1790 to 1890." U.S. Census, 1 Mar. 1994, [www.census.gov/dataviz/visualizations/001/](http://www.census.gov/dataviz/visualizations/001/).

<sup>4</sup> McConnell Map Co, and James McConnell. *McConnell's Historical maps of the United States*. [Chicago, Ill.: McConnell Map Co, 1919] Map. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2009581130/>.

The Westward expansion gave rise to a booming new way of life marked by agriculture, mining, and trading. The compulsion to move West from the eastern sections and mid-West parts of the U.S, was a sort of fever, affecting those who wanted more out of life. As one letter home from a Western settler reported, “When I got to Ohio, Ohio feever began to turn but I soon caught the Missouri feever which is very catchin and carried me off.”<sup>5</sup> Yet these journeys were marked by great hardships, including hunger, little accommodation, and no supplies.<sup>6</sup>

The western frontier became a reality of American life with the acquisition of the Louisiana Purchase in the 1804. The fur trade remained a vital economic factor in its development. Native Americans exchanged furs for goods.<sup>7</sup> The routes taken by traders were taken along plains and riverbanks helping to create the Oregon and Santa Fe Trails. But after the price of fur dropped in 1846, land became a more important commodity in the opening of the West.<sup>8</sup>

Miners took to traversing the frontier in search for mineral riches between 1858-1875.<sup>9</sup> Settlements ranged from the mountains of Colorado and Nevada, and stretched across Arizona, Washington, Oregon, Mississippi, Montana, and South Dakota. The influx of miners coming from the east, pioneering for the chance of striking it rich, led to more regulation to mining protocol through civil law among the camps surrounding mining areas.<sup>10</sup> Of these areas,

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<sup>5</sup> Malcolm J. Rohrbough. "Across the Old Northwest and into Missouri." *Trans-Appalachian Frontier: People, Societies, and Institutions, 1775-1850, Third Edition*. Indiana University Press, 2007. Accessed May 5, 2020. pp, 1. [online.infobase.com/Auth/Index?aid=280528&itemid=WE52&articleId=527424](https://online.infobase.com/Auth/Index?aid=280528&itemid=WE52&articleId=527424).

<sup>6</sup> Malcolm J. Rohrbough, 2

<sup>7</sup> Maurice Isserman. "Fur Traders and the Exploration of the Western Frontier." *Exploring North America, 1800–1900*. Chelsea House, 2005. Accessed June 15, 2020. pp, 4. [online.infobase.com/Auth/Index?aid=280528&itemid=WE52&articleId=396886](https://online.infobase.com/Auth/Index?aid=280528&itemid=WE52&articleId=396886).

<sup>8</sup> Maurice Isserman, 16.

<sup>9</sup> Ray Allen Billington and Martin Ridge. "The Miners' Frontier 1858–1875." *Westward Expansion: A History of the American Frontier*, University of New Mexico Press, 2001. *American History*. pp, 1, [online.infobase.com/Auth/Index?aid=280528&itemid=WE52&articleId=534914](https://online.infobase.com/Auth/Index?aid=280528&itemid=WE52&articleId=534914). Accessed 15 June 2020.

<sup>10</sup> Ray Allen Billington and Martin Ridge , 4.

Calamity frequented Missouri, Montana, Utah, Wyoming, South Dakota, Oregon, Washington, and Idaho throughout her life, traveling abundantly.<sup>11</sup>

Travel was done by foot and by prairie wagons, which were stocked with supplies while in route to travelers' destinations, stopping at places near Missouri, traveling roughly 15-20 miles per day as a wagon train.<sup>12</sup> The trails expanded from the Palette to Sweetwater rivers, dividing into manmade routes used over time with the help of maps. Emigrants would crossover either into the Oregon Trails to inexpensive farmland, or into California for the Gold Rush.<sup>13</sup> The hardships came from lack of supplies and medicine while traversing the western frontier, worried about attacks by Native American while at the same time making often attacking native tribes. Settlers hired more experienced guides to go in the right direction away from neighboring Native American tribes, seen as a threat of travel.<sup>14</sup> The Western settlers "often settled on inhabited land, displaced tribes, and consumed the resources upon which Native peoples depended."<sup>15</sup> The experiences were popularized through dime novels and press, which fed the fears of Natives and often resulted in violence being killed by white settlers.<sup>16</sup> Shelter relief for travelers was provided by military forts.<sup>17</sup> There was also the issue of law and order across the western plains, with rise of crime stemming from bandits and travelers.

The frontier life cast away the European fashion trends for more contemporary and plain view of fashion. Functionality worked better-people wore lightweight blouses and colors against

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<sup>11</sup> Calamity Jane, 1-6.

<sup>12</sup> Kelly A. Roark. "Overland Travel." Encyclopedia of American Environmental History. Facts On File, 2010. Accessed May 7, 2020. pp, 1. [online.infobase.com/Auth/Index?aid=280528&itemid=WE52&articleId=209910](http://online.infobase.com/Auth/Index?aid=280528&itemid=WE52&articleId=209910).

<sup>13</sup> Kelly A. Roark, 1.

<sup>14</sup> Kelly A. Roark, 1.

<sup>15</sup> Kelly A. Roark, 1.

<sup>16</sup> Catherine Reef. "Childhood in the Western United States, 1840-1918." Childhood in America. Facts On File, 2002. Accessed May 7, 2020. [online.infobase.com/Auth/Index?aid=280528&itemid=WE52&articleId=203635](http://online.infobase.com/Auth/Index?aid=280528&itemid=WE52&articleId=203635).

<sup>17</sup> Kelly A. Roark, 1.

the harsh climate of the Midwest. Cotton was the regular material for its light breathing on the plains, and the black felt on hats was replaced with tan material to reflect sunlight rather than absorb it.<sup>18</sup> Military officials in harsh winters wore greatcoats made of wool and buffalo skin with sealskin caps and overshoes.<sup>19</sup> Heavy leather was used for holstering firearms like .45 colt and .44 Smith and Wesson revolvers, typically to handle all forms of weather.<sup>20</sup>

Children represented the ideals and inspiration for families to venture into the west, to offer a better life for them growing up.<sup>21</sup> Parents worried over hazards on the trails, drowning in the river while playing, falling under moving wheels of the wagon, and also to diseases native to the West.<sup>22</sup> Mothers were often forced to bury their children on the side of the road or on the property they were settling in, photographing them for the sake of remembrance.<sup>23</sup> Children were often given homemade toys to ease the boredom when they were not helping farm the land, and they provided companionship to their parents to ease loneliness.

Children could have received basic education, but were needed to keep the farms going. “They generally kept their sons and daughters’ home from school from the planting season.”<sup>24</sup> The lack of supplies could be best described, “Children sat with their classmates on wooden planks, or they supplied their own desks and chairs. They wrote their lessons in chalk on

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<sup>18</sup> Henry B. Crawford, 2008. *Uniforms, Arms, and Equipment. The U. S. Army on the Western Frontier, 1880–1892.* Volume 1: Headgear, Clothing, and Footwear.” *Western Historical Quarterly* 39 (4): 520–21. doi:10.2307/25443804.

<sup>19</sup> Henry B. Crawford, 520-521.

<sup>20</sup> Henry B. Crawford, 520–521.

<sup>21</sup> Catherine, Reef, 1.

<sup>22</sup> Catherine, Reef, 2.

<sup>23</sup> Cathy Luchetti, and Carol Olwell. *Women of the West.* Utah: Norton & Company. 2001. pp. 216.

<sup>24</sup> Catherine Reef, 4.

slates.”<sup>25</sup> The conditions of family life and the prospect of children also affected women in the west as well.

Women performed more heavy physical labor while traversing the frontier, often giving birth and going back to work immediately. On the homestead however, women had more influence over time, quality, and collection of the labor on the farm while their husbands were away for supplies.<sup>26</sup> This also enabled women to break boundaries regarding stereotypical gender roles, we see evidence of this in diaries and journals.

The West afforded a rare opportunity for women who were widowed or single to prosper. Women often controlled their own finances at a time when that was rare. Based on arrangements between spouses, “Husbands and wives worked out individual arrangements about control over these products, often reflecting the labor that each man and woman contributed to the enterprise.”<sup>27</sup> Women often could “verbally debate with their husbands or challenge their husbands' authority in more subtle ways, such as refusing to do small things.”<sup>28</sup> The independent woman would be able to divorce as well if the marriage was disruptive to both parties, even with cases favoring men, opting to remain single and not risk marrying the wrong person.<sup>29</sup>

Women grew up on the frontier seeing marriage as a concept of waiting rather than obligation. Women began preparing themselves: “Working for pay prior to marriage supported Oregon women's fashionable lifestyle.”<sup>30</sup> Magazines, a popular medium for women assured women that they ought to marry out of companionship, and advised that “women expected their

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<sup>25</sup> Catherine Reef, 4.

<sup>26</sup> Cynthia Culver Prescott, 30.

<sup>27</sup> Cynthia Culver Prescott, 31.

<sup>28</sup> Cynthia Culver Prescott, 32

<sup>29</sup> Cynthia Culver Prescott, 33.

<sup>30</sup> Cynthia Culver Prescott, 34.

potential suitors not only to have good economic prospects, but also to demonstrate kindness and genteel behavior.”<sup>31</sup> This gave women more financial control and less constraint in the home, pushing boundaries further.

For native women, the role in the home was very similar to that of white women. They did hard physical work, household work including cooking, and managed the domestic economy. Fathers played a critical role in selecting marriage partners, recommending for their daughters to wed, although never forced the matter out of respect<sup>32</sup>.

Women of the West often defied gender stereotypes. Annie Oakley, for example, revealed in the idea of breaking boundaries, discarding femininity to be a strong and energetic woman. Oakley was a frontierswoman born in rural Ohio, under poor conditions, who learned to shoot to support her family.<sup>33</sup> Her marksmanship caught the eye of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show, and she became a show opener: “As a female sharpshooter, Annie Oakley traveled the world precisely because she could do a “man’s work” while appearing to adhere to the conventions of Victorian femininity.<sup>34</sup> Women like Oakley would dress the role of a feminine icon, in traditional skirts going down to the ankle and tight corsets, holding to the stereotype of dressing at the time. The dress and role of women in the west became a staple of debate; Oakley said “I don’t like bloomers or bloomer women, but I think that sport and healthful exercise make women better, healthier, and happier.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Cynthia Culver Prescott, 36.

<sup>32</sup> Cathy Luchetti and Carol Olwell, 105.

<sup>33</sup> Justin Pollard and Stephanie Pollard. 2017. *Months Past August*. History Today 67 (8): 22–23.  
<http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.purchase.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ahl&AN=123963380&site=ehost-live>.

<sup>34</sup> Lisa Bernd. 2012. *Annie Oakley and the Disruption of Victorian Expectations*. Alabama Review 65 (3): 39–48..  
<http://ezproxy.purchase.edu:2059/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a2h&AN=82350402&site=ehost-live>. pp. 39.

<sup>35</sup> Lisa Bernd, 46.

Oakley worked with guns mainly as a means to feed her family, selling wild game in return for ammo and supplies. The struggle of survival in the west was normal as “Oakley’s role supporting her family, however, was a function of her shooting skills, the independence she experienced as a child living away from home, and the particular situation of her poor, rural family.”<sup>36</sup> Oakley perpetuated the idea of balancing the gendered roles of women by firing her guns for shows, while adding her civility into the mix as a Victorian woman. The wardrobe worn during the Wild West Shows consisted of leather fashioned to show the petite figure and legs of Oakley. Her husband Frank Butler, was said to clean her gun while not using his as often.<sup>37</sup> The idea Butler took a second seat to his wife’s career stood out at the time, and a few reporters said that “Butler had abandoned his own career in order to manage that of his wife....”<sup>38</sup>

While there are many icons of frontierswomen, there is none more significant than Martha “Calamity Jane” Canary. Calamity became the most recognized female to broke gender barrier the last years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Calamity Jane rose to fame through the fiction written by Edward L. Wheeler as part of the Deadwood Dick series. She became Wild Bill’s partner in crime through their misadventures in the west. These stories were mainly fictional, based on tall tales Calamity Jane recounted, entertaining and influencing others. Newspapers were spreading her name over the years at her rise, as well as after her death. Her biography is filled with misinformation spread around, but her legend still retains importance in American folklore. Calamity Jane is remembered as a rowdy gunslinger, but was also a nurturing woman who broke boundaries for others to follow.

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<sup>36</sup> Sarah Russel Cansler. I. 2014. *Annie Oakley, Gender, and Guns: The ‘Champion Rifle Shot’ and Gender Performance, 1860-1926*. Pursuit: The Journal of Undergraduate Research at the University of Tennessee 5 (1): 159–87. pp, 161.  
<http://ezproxy.purchase.edu:2059/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=96891581&site=ehost-live>.

<sup>37</sup> Sarah Russel Cansler, 161

<sup>38</sup> Sarah Russell Cansler, 164.

### **Chapter 3: Early Life of Calamity Jane**

The most accurate record Calamity Jane's family history starts with her grandparents, James and Sara Canary in Marion County, Ohio. The family was well established in a farming community, with property owned by James from 1820-1850. He and Sara had nine children born between 1813-1825.<sup>39</sup> The farm was stable with a worth around \$2500, but was sold after the James and Sarah retired. Western historian Richard Etulain speculates that the land was divided and sold by the children.<sup>40</sup> After the farm was sold, the Calamity's family, one of the sons Robert, married a woman named Charlotte, welcoming their first child Martha on May 1, 1856 in Iowa, who became Calamity Jane.

Baby Jane move from Iowa with her parents for the cheap land available. They settled into Mercer County, Missouri in the late 1850's with other members of the family. According to the 1860 census, Calamity Jane had two siblings, and lived with her grandfather in Princeton, Missouri until 1862.<sup>41</sup> Robert had basic schooling in reading and writing but Charlotte and his sisters were illiterate. The family was rumored to be out of the ordinary, but memorable in Mercer County according to *Calamity Jane and the Lady Wildcats* by Duncan Aikman in 1927: "Charlotte flaunted the conventions both of local respectability and its opposite. The community repaid her by bestowing upon her.... it's notice."<sup>42</sup> The escapades of the woman-folk in the Canary family were talked about, even after Calamity's death in 1903.

Aikman went into detail about Robert in, describing him as an not too successful farmer disconnected to the world around him, even worse he was unable to control his wife.<sup>43</sup> Charlotte was considered controversial but lively, according to Duncan Aikman, a journalist and author of

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<sup>39</sup> Richard W. Etulain, 5.

<sup>40</sup> Richard W. Etulain, 6.

<sup>41</sup> Richard W. Etulain, 11.

<sup>42</sup> Duncan Aikman and Calamity Jane. *Calamity Jane and the Lady Wildcats*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987. Print. pp, 8.

<sup>43</sup> Duncan Aikman, 9.

*Calamity Jane and the Lady Wildcats*; “Her large brown eyes challenged men when it was well-established convention that farm wives in public should look sullenly groundward.”<sup>44</sup> Charlotte was a precursor to her daughter, cigar smoking, horseback riding, and a total flirt. One story has her screaming at a teenage mother, “Hey take that and make a damn dress for your bastard.”<sup>45</sup> Charlotte was remembered by townspeople for her outrageous attitude towards traditional feminine roles, “a crazy, show off, harum-scarum woman, drunk or sober.”<sup>46</sup>

Aikman wrote that Charlotte would regularly berate Robert over his lackluster performance as a father and husband.<sup>47</sup> While in Princeton, Calamity was a lively girl acting like a tomboy and played well with the local children, attending a subscription school for lessons.<sup>48</sup> She spent time playing with boys: “the things you could do with them were not merely mischievous, they were deliciously dangerous.”<sup>49</sup> The family moved during the midst of the Civil War, possibly because Charlotte was pro-slavery; “Her violent, high-stepping conduct...went more and more naturally according to the primly opinion of the Unionist gossips, with being the village hellcat.”<sup>50</sup> The family left in 1863 after several land dispute incidents that wound up in courts.

There is not a lot of evidence about Calamity Jane’s childhood. Her autobiographical pamphlet was primarily used for publicity. On the road with her family, she described herself as a natural frontierswoman: “By the time we reached Virginia City I was considered a remarkable

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<sup>44</sup>Duncan Aikman, 7

<sup>45</sup> Duncan Aikman, 10-11.

<sup>46</sup> Richard W. Etulain, 13.

<sup>47</sup> Duncan Aikman, 9.

<sup>48</sup> Duncan Aikman, 23.

<sup>49</sup> Duncan Aikman, 47.

<sup>50</sup> Richard W. Etulain, 15

good shot and a fearless rider for a girl of my age, she wrote.”<sup>51</sup> Calamity wrote, “Mother died at Black Foot, Montana, 1866, where we buried her. I left Montana in Spring of 1866, for Utah, arriving at Salt Lake City during the summer. Remained in Utah until 1867, where my father died”.<sup>52</sup> According to the *Montana Post* wrote, “The Father it seems is a compulsive gambler in Nevada [City]. The mother is a woman of the lowest grade.”<sup>53</sup> This suggests that in the Canary family, Charlotte provided for the family.<sup>54</sup>

Between 1867-1868, a penniless Robert also died, leaving Calamity an orphan at the age of 15.<sup>55</sup> Barely a teenager, Calamity Jane became the sole protector for her siblings. Still a teenager, she had to become a survivor and this marked a critical turning point in her life. By her teenage years, she was alone in the world, becoming a survivor, and marking a turning point to create the iconic legend she left behind.

In 1869, she appeared in Piedmont, Wyoming. While a census listed her as 15, it is possible she lied on documents in order to be registered as a resident upon arriving at this bustling mining towns of the frontier.<sup>56</sup> Piedmont grew from a tent town, to a station on the transcontinental railroad, where it became popular for housing miners. Calamity omitted Piedmont from her autobiography, and resumed her narrative in the year 1870 when she supposedly joined Gen. Custer army as a scout.<sup>57</sup> This is disproven by the fact that Custer was

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<sup>51</sup> Calamity Jane. *The Life and Adventures of Calamity Jane*. Charlottesville, Va: University of Virginia Library, 1997. <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/490/pg490-images.html>

<sup>52</sup> Calamity Jane, 1.

<sup>53</sup> Richard W. Etulain, 22.

<sup>54</sup> Richard W. Etulain, 24.

<sup>55</sup> Richard W. Etulain, 24.

<sup>56</sup> Richard W. Etulain, 26.

<sup>57</sup> Calamity Jane, 1.

not in the same area as Jane in the southwest, nor had any involvement in the Indian outbreaks.<sup>58</sup> Her iconic male garments were notedL “Up to this time I had always worn the costume of my sex. When I joined Custer, I donned the uniform of a soldier. It was a bit awkward at first but I soon got to be perfectly at home in men's clothes.”<sup>59</sup>

Calamity’s behavior seems to stem from a survivor’s instinct to help others. Her unruly teenage years and uneducated background forced her to rely on generosity of others to survive. During her teens, Calamity worked in the Alton Boardinghouse in Piedmont, tending to children as a means of income, but the proprietor of the home denied being associated with Jane.<sup>60</sup> While at the Alton Boardinghouse, she took a job as a babysitter for a young boy named Charles Mathews in 1873, but was fired when “a neighbor told of seeing her dressed in a soldiers uniform at some party.”<sup>61</sup> There was issue of authority growing up while staying in South Pass City, Wyoming with the Gallagher family.<sup>62</sup> According to the *Chicago Tribune* writer James Chisholm, Calamity was brought home to the Gallagher family “who wanted to give...[Martha] a home and train her to become a member of the family.”<sup>63</sup> There may have been a sign of abuse as Fannie Gallagher “gave her a thrashing, and she objected so strenuously that a miner’s committee investigated the incident. As a result, Mrs. Gallagher refused to have any more to do with her.”<sup>64</sup>

How Calamity got her nickname is a reflection of her adventurous spirit. With Capt. Egan, a soldier serving in battle against the Indians, Calamity “saw the Captain reeling in his

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<sup>58</sup> Richard W. Etulain, 35.

<sup>59</sup> Calamity Jane, 2.

<sup>60</sup> Richard W. Etulain, 29.

<sup>61</sup> Richard W. Etulain, 29.

<sup>62</sup> Richard W. Etulain, 31.

<sup>63</sup> Richard W. Etulain, 31.

<sup>64</sup> Richard W. Etulain, 31.

saddle as though about to fall. I turned my horse and galloped back with all haste to his side and got there in time to catch him as he was falling.”<sup>65</sup> She wrote in her autobiography that Egan christened her while she was recuperating; “I name you Calamity Jane, the heroine of the plains. I have borne that name up to the present time.” The first reference “Calamity Jane” was during the Newton-Jenney expedition of the Black Hills in the summer of 1875. Calamity tailed scientists for much of the summer, namely Dr. Valentine T. McGillicuddy, a topographical surveyor with the U.S. Northern Boundary Survey team.<sup>66</sup>

According to an autobiography by the doctor’s wife, *McGillicuddy, Agent* (1941), Calamity joined the expedition out of interest for adventure. She was said to have dressed as a soldier, to pretend she was part of Colonel Dodge’s troop.<sup>67</sup> Dodge was a lieutenant colonel tasked in keeping the topographical team safe. The expedition was to survey and map the routes of the Black Hills for miners traveling.<sup>68</sup> The expedition party were able to find gold, silver and quartz while digging around, losing a few men to the environment and sickness, needing more help along the way.<sup>69</sup> Calamity tried desperately to join the expedition on two occasions through Dodge himself, then through the doctor, but was refused both times. Her time on the expedition came to an end after being outed by soldiers poking fun at a Dodge for saluting a woman, and she was tossed out.<sup>70</sup> This led to two versions of the story, one in which she repeatedly kept sneaking into camps until they let her stay, turning a blind eye to her being a woman. The second version was that Calamity asked the wagon master to join, which he allowed. In both versions,

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<sup>65</sup> Calamity Jane, 2.

<sup>66</sup> Candy Moulton. *Mapping the Black Hills: Valentine T. McGillicuddy*. True West Magazine, True West, Sept. 2009, [truewestmagazine.com/article/mapping-the-black-hills-valentine-t-mcgillicuddy/](http://truewestmagazine.com/article/mapping-the-black-hills-valentine-t-mcgillicuddy/).

<sup>67</sup> Richard W. Etulain, 41.

<sup>68</sup> Candy Moulton, 2009.

<sup>69</sup> *Black Hills Expedition*. The Grange Advance. [volume] (Red Wing, Minn.), 12 Aug. 1874. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85025567/1874-08-12/ed-1/seq-1/>>

<sup>70</sup> Richard W. Etulain, 42.

McGillycuddy said it “was useless to order her out of any one camp, since she slipped into another.”<sup>71</sup>

According to Thomas C. McMillian, a reporter of the *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, she was a better horseback rider than most of the men she was with.<sup>72</sup> In another report in the *Chicago Daily Tribune*: “dressed in a suit of soldiers blue, and straddles a mule equal to any professional blacksnake swinger in the army.”<sup>73</sup> She was unofficially part of the expedition, but the Tribune also wrote her names origin was because “the soldiers thought “Calamity” was good, and this was the occasion of her receiving the sobriquet Calamity Jane.”<sup>74</sup> Jane’s assignment was “to protect the lives of the miners and settlers in that section.”<sup>75</sup>

Mrs. McGillycuddy credited Calamity’s assistance with the troops: “she was not quarrelsome. She cared for the sick soldiers, mended their clothes, and continued to be a valuable though unauthorized addition to the expedition.”<sup>76</sup> Calamity gained fame as a nurse during the smallpox epidemic of 1878. She provided comfort and support to families of ailing children. Journalist Jesse Brown wrote: “In the hour of terror and death, there came to the front, a willing volunteer, the mule skinning, bull-whacking, and rough, roving woman from the depth, Calamity Jane.”<sup>77</sup> At her own risk, “it made no difference to her, that she knew them or not, or that no gold would be there to repay her for the labor, the sacrifice, the danger.”<sup>78</sup> She was normally

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<sup>71</sup> Julia B. McGillycuddy. *McGillycuddy, Agent: A Biography of Dr. Valentine T. McGillycuddy*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1941. pp, 25-27.

<sup>72</sup> Richard W. Etulain, 44.

<sup>73</sup> *The Gold Hunters*. Chicago daily tribune [volume] (Chicago, Ill.), 19 June 1875. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. pp, 9.  
<<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84031492/1875-06-19/ed-1/seq-9/>>

<sup>74</sup> *The Gold Hunters*, 9.

<sup>75</sup> Calamity Jane, 3.

<sup>76</sup> Julia B. McGillycuddy, 1941.

<sup>77</sup> Jesse Brown, A. M. Willard, and John T. Milek. *The Black Hills Trails; A History of the Struggles of the Pioneers in the Winning of the Black Hills*. Rapid City, S.D.: Rapid City journal Co, 1924. pp 414.

<sup>78</sup> Jesse Brown, A. M. Willard, and John T. Milek, 415.

fond of children, George Leeman, a Deadwood resident remembered Calamity; “used to say, “How’s my curly-headed kid?” She wasn’t drinking so much then. She drank, but I meant she didn’t get like the last time you know.”<sup>79</sup> Another citizen Russell Pers remembered Calamity in the bars around Deadwood as friendly; “she’d lay a handful of silver on the bar and give us all a drink.”<sup>80</sup>

According to “White Eye” Anderson, a prospector living in Deadwood, “Calamity was a great friend in time of trouble. If anyone got sick or hurt, she nursed them until they got well.”<sup>81</sup> Her efforts to give aid and comfort to ailing families was not forgotten; a smallpox survivor officiated at Jane’s funeral in 1903.<sup>82</sup> The gentle side of Calamity was shown by *New York Times* journalist Seymour G. Pond, who called her the most romanticized characters of the wild west, with readers digest featuring stories of her time as a nurse at the height of the smallpox outbreak.<sup>83</sup> This came out decades after her death, changing perspective of the stories behind the name. Fame grew from other chance encounters attributed to Wild Bill’s entourage.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> George Leeman and Russell Pers. *Oral History Interview with George Leeman and Pers Russell*. 1956.

<sup>80</sup> George Leeman and Russell Pers, 1956.

<sup>81</sup> Joseph F. Anderson. *I Buried Hickok: The Memoirs of White Eye Anderson*. Early West Series, 1980. Print. pp, 103.

<sup>82</sup> Richard W. Etulain, 67

<sup>83</sup> Seymour G. Pond, *FRONTIER STILL RECALLS 'CALAMITY JANE'; She Fought and Swore and Was Handy With a Six Shooter, but There Was Charity in Her Heart*. *New York Times*, 18 Oct. 1925, pp, 9.

<sup>84</sup> James D, McLaird. *Wild Bill Hickok & Calamity Jane: Deadwood Legends*. Pierre:South Dakota State Historical Society, 2008. pp. 117

## Chapter 4: Life as Calamity Jane

Bill Hickok and Calamity Jane both became popular icons of American Western history. “Wild Bill,” like Calamity Jane, has limited biographical information. Like Calamity, he rose to fame after being mythologized by novelist Edward Wheeler.<sup>85</sup> Both figures were known for their unconventional behavior and their fame was fueled by media at the time. Their names are always linked, but in reality, they spent very little time together. This does not stop modern media like *Deadwood* from portraying them always together.

There are few historical sources that support the claim they spent time together. In 1876 when Calamity Jane met with “Wild Bill” and his group half naked after a night of partying.<sup>86</sup> After the party, they gave buckskin clothing to make her presentable enough to travel. According to Joseph Foster “White Eye” Anderson, Calamity had very little interaction with Wild Bill during their time in Deadwood.<sup>87</sup> The most the two interacted was drinking together.<sup>88</sup> The local press in Deadwood exaggerated the stories told by Calamity.

“Wild Bill” was more renowned for being a poker player by profession than a gunslinger, which led to his 1876 death over a poker game.<sup>89</sup> “Wild Bill” was shot in the back of his head at the No. 10 Saloon by Jack McCall according to three men he was playing cards with, Carl Mann, Charles Rich, and Captain Maggie. They all said McCall held them at gunpoint to make a getaway.<sup>90</sup> Hickok’s death was national news, reported in Delaware, Washington, Minnesota, and Illinois the murder of “Wild Bill”. In August, one week prior to his death, “Wild Bill” said,

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<sup>85</sup> James D, McLaird, 3.

<sup>86</sup> Joseph G. Rosa. *They Called Him Wild Bill The Life and Adventures of James Butler Hickok*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964. pp, 130 <<http://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/1599411.html>>.

<sup>87</sup> Joseph F. Anderson, 93.

<sup>88</sup> Joseph F. Anderson, 94

<sup>89</sup> *A Frontier Hero*. Chicago Inter Ocean. [volume] (Chicago IL), 17 Aug. 1876. [newspapers.com/](http://www.newspapers.com/).  
<https://www.newspapers.com/image/32559406>

<sup>90</sup> James D. McLaird, 53.

“I feel that my days are numbered; I see my sun sinking fast, I know I shall be killed here; something tells me I shall never leave these hills alive.”<sup>91</sup> He also remarked, “I have killed many men in my day, but I never killed a man yet but it was killing or get killed for me.”<sup>92</sup>

McCall was arrested and confined by Sherriff Isaac Brown and tried by judge W.L. Kuykendall in 1876. Both Rich and Mann testified at the trial, along with bartender Harry Young. The trial ended with McCall being found not guilty after jury took Wild Bill’s past as a killer into consideration and McCall’s testimony: “Wild Bill killed my brother, and I killed him. Wild Bill threatened to kill me if I crossed his path. I am not sorry.”<sup>93</sup> McCall was acquitted of the charges, and fled the Black Hills to Laramie City, Wyoming and retried by supreme court decision, after a new trial was overruled.<sup>94</sup>

Calamity Jane was devastated at the loss of her best friend. In her autobiography, Jane said she witnessed the shooting and sought out McCall for swift justice; “I at once started to look for the assassin and found him at Shurdy's butcher shop and grabbed a meat cleaver and made him throw up his hands.”<sup>95</sup> Rumors circulated that McCall was hired to kill “Wild Bill” fearing he would clean up the lawless town. These were likely not true as there were many homicides that occurred in the same saloon.<sup>96</sup> McCall was arrested again and retried for murder, and died

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<sup>91</sup> *Wild Bill's Presentiment*. The Morning herald. [volume] (Wilmington, Del.), 08 Sept. 1876. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress.

<<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84038119/1876-09-08/ed-1/seq-3/>>

<sup>92</sup> *Wild Bill's Presentiment*. Alexandria gazette. [volume] (Alexandria, D.C.), 01 Sept. 1876. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress.

<<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85025007/1876-09-01/ed-1/seq-4/>>

<sup>93</sup> *The Deadwood Tragedy*. Hermann Advertiser. [volume] (Hermann, MO), 25, Aug. 1876. Pp 1.

<https://www.newspapers.com/clip/12460870/the-killing-of-wild-bill-hickok-trial/>

<sup>94</sup> *Execution of John McCall*. Lincoln County advocate. (Canton, Dakota Territory, [S.D.]), 07 March 1877.

*Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress.

<<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn2001063144/1877-03-07/ed-1/seq-1/>>

<sup>95</sup> Calamity Jane, 4.

<sup>96</sup> James D. McLaird, 57.

by hanging in 1877; “There is no hope that McCall can escape this sentence imposed upon him.”<sup>97</sup>

Despite the rumor they were a couple, Calamity Jane and “Wild Bill” Hickok were never together except in Deadwood for the few weeks in 1877.<sup>98</sup> While Calamity Jane said she was working for the pony express, she was actually working the dance halls and theaters as an entertainer.<sup>99</sup> These theaters included the Deadwood Theater, Wertheimer Hall, Park Theater, and Gem Theater where she most frequented in Deadwood.<sup>100</sup> The sensationalized rumor of “Wild Bill” and Calamity Jane marrying was created through the *Deadwood Dick* novels.

Jane became well known as a good samaritan with a rugged exterior: “She would turn in and “help out” untried youths and miners doted on her.”<sup>101</sup> In 1878, *The Daily press and Dakotian* described her as 22 years of age, with a dark complexion and black hair, walking awkwardly. The paper described her attitude as warm and caring, making a name for herself, “She is generous, forgiving, kind-hearted, social, and yet when aroused has all the daring and courage of the lion or the devil himself.”<sup>102</sup> But a year earlier in 1877, they referred to her in a different way: “she cried, and swore, and danced.”<sup>103</sup> Perhaps over time, the newspapers got wind of her other accomplishments, rather than gossip mongering her antics around the Black

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<sup>97</sup> *Jack McCall Sentenced*. Bozeman avant courier. [volume] (Bozeman, Mont.), 19 Jan. 1877. Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers. Lib. of Congress. <<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84038123/1877-01-19/ed-1/seq-1/>>.

<sup>98</sup> Leander P. Richardson, *A Trip to the Black Hills*. Scribner’s Monthly. New York. 1877. pp, 755.

<sup>99</sup> Richard W. Etulain, 64.

<sup>100</sup> Richard W. Etulain, 64.

<sup>101</sup> “*Calamity Jane,*” “*Bad Man*” of the West. Aberdeen herald. (Aberdeen, Chehalis County, W.T.), 05 Feb. 1903. Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers. Lib. of Congress. <<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87093220/1903-02-05/ed-1/seq-7/>>

<sup>102</sup> *The Women of the Hills*. Daily press and Dakotian. [volume] (Yankton, Dakota Territory [S.D.]), 10 Jan. 1878. Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers. Lib. of Congress. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84022144/1878-01-10/ed-1/seq-3/>

<sup>103</sup> *From the Hills*. Daily press and Dakotian. [volume] (Yankton, Dakota Territory [S.D.]), 03 Sept. 1877. Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers. Lib. of Congress. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84022144/1877-09-03/ed-1/seq-2/>

Hills. Her zest for excitement was evident based on the reports from Deadwood, as “booming new hurdy gurdy houses opened and soldiers stationed at the nearby military post.”<sup>104</sup> Her rowdiness and nomadic lifestyle led to her status as a mythical character in contemporary media.

Rumors of her love life also surfaced in newspapers along the frontier. One story in 1882 mentioned while living on a ranch in Yellowstone Valley, “she has been blessed with a with an issue in the form of a bright looking baby boy, which she calls “Little Calamity”, as she was unable to find a name nice enough.”<sup>105</sup> Around 1884, Calamity Jane claimed to want domesticated life, and the news of her relationship with a man named William P. Steers was a prime topic of interest. Calamity also references a daughter in the autobiography, though she never referenced Steers. The *Carbon County Journal* described Steers was a neglectful husband and abuser with no respect for Calamity and deserved to be hung for his behavior towards her.<sup>106</sup> They also described Calamity Jane as a victim to impulses and the couple split after three years. Speculation was rife that Calamity continued drinking while caring for her child.

Her autobiography mentions Clinton Burk, “a native of Texas, who I married in August 1885. As I thought I had travelled through life long enough alone and thought it was about time to take a partner for the rest of my days.”<sup>107</sup> There was speculation that Burk and Calamity had two daughters together in 1887, “I became the mother of a girl baby, the very image of its father,

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<sup>104</sup> James D. McLaird, 90.

<sup>105</sup> *Calamity Jane Still a Granger’s Wife*. The Daily Deadwood Pioneer-Times. Nov. 10. 1882. Accessed September 2, 2020. <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/9585527/calamity-jane-lives-in-yellowstone/>

<sup>106</sup> James D. McLaird, 94.

<sup>107</sup> Calamity Jane, 7.

at least that is what he said, but who has the temper of its mother.”<sup>108</sup> While no mention of her daughter is in the pamphlet, *The Illustrated American* mentioned her name was Jessie.<sup>109</sup>

The magazine was a weekly periodical from 1890-1900, covering current events, fiction, with illustrations.<sup>110</sup> The focus was on Calamity’s domestic life, mentioning Burke’s clean clothes in the home and the demeanor of her daughter. The author, M. L. Fox said Calamity worked and lived for Jessie: “I never had a chance to learn nothin’. I don’t care what they say about me, but I want my daughter to be honest and respectable.”-and she wept pitifully.”<sup>111</sup> Calamity in the interview seems to reflect on her life: “I’d like to be respectable, but nobody’ll notice me; they say ‘There’s old Calamity Jane.’ an’ I got enough women left ‘bout me so that it cuts to hear them say it.”<sup>112</sup> The interview is somber but hopeful as Calamity mentions the death of “Little Calamity” from 1882: “I’m glad she’s come when you’re here, fer I want you to see her. she’s all I got to live fer; she’s my only comfort. I had a little boy but he died.”<sup>113</sup> While tall tales of her adventures and appearances in Deadwood Dick played a role in her path to fame, joining Buffalo Bills Wild West Show was what led to her remembrance.

Years as a hardened drinker made Calamity seem much older than she was; one source said Jessie thought Calamity was her grandmother.<sup>114</sup> The *Rocky Mountain News* reported that Jane was around seventy years old, and had killed several of her husbands and divorced others, “Others of her marital companions came to bad ends and others were divorced.”<sup>115</sup> This was

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<sup>108</sup> Calamity Jane, 7.

<sup>109</sup> M. L. Fox, *Calamity Jane*, *Illustrated American* 19 (7 Mar. 1896). pp, 312

<https://hdl.handle.net/2027/iau.31858055623205?urlappend=%3Bseq=318>.

<sup>110</sup> Frank L. Mott, *A History of American Magazines*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938. pp, 58 Print.

<sup>111</sup> M. L. Fox, 312.

<sup>112</sup> M. L. Fox, 312.

<sup>113</sup> M.L. Fox, 312.

<sup>114</sup> Richard W. Etulain, 238.

<sup>115</sup> *Rocky Mountain News*, [volume]. (Denver, CO). 25 Feb. 1901.

corrected by the *Deadwood Daily Pioneer-Times* saying Jane was suffering from the wounds of her past, raising her daughter alone in 1895 after the death of her husband Clinton Burke.<sup>116</sup>

Calamity Jane continued to live as she always did, working as an entertainer to the people while drinking her sorrows, more attention given by the relationship between her and William “Billie” A. Lull.

Lull came to Deadwood from New York in 1876, to become a prospector, staying for two years, meeting Calamity in that time who “did not take kindly to [his] friendly advances. Probably she had never been treated as a Lady before.”<sup>117</sup> In *Calamity Jane, Deadwood City in Early Pioneer Days*, he describes the other side of Calamity only shown through her nursing. While working at the Bella Union Theater, he mentioned “felt that her surliness was a cloak to hide something that she was ashamed to let appear on the surface.”<sup>118</sup> Lull theorized in his writing that years of isolation and travel hardened her ability to open up, “to fight her own battles and never asking aide, or help, from others.”<sup>119</sup> Lull shows a vulnerable side of a woman that hid behind drinking and masculine clothing, also portrayed in the *Deadwood Dick* series.

The *Deadwood Dick* series was a popular best-selling fiction series written by New York born author Edward J. Wheeler. He took creative liberty in using famous names in his stories. Calamity Jane appeared in 20 different stories, depicted as the title character’s lover in some stories, as an adversary in others in the *Deadwood Dick’s Doom* novel.<sup>120</sup> Calamity’s first appearance was in *Deadwood Dick, the Prince of the Road or the Black Rider of the Black Hills*,

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<sup>116</sup> *Calamity Jane in Distress*. *Deadwood Daily Pioneer-Times*, [volume]. (Deadwood, SD.). 27 Feb. 1901. Newspapers.com. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/91768069>

<sup>117</sup> William B. Lull. *Calamity Jane, Deadwood City in Early Pioneer Days*. *South Dakota History*, vol. 28, no. 1-2, 1998, pp. 54. Print.

<sup>118</sup> William B. Lull, 55.

<sup>119</sup> William B. Lull, 63

<sup>120</sup> Maggie Scalan. *Deadwood Dick on Deck (1878) Spotlight*. *Nickels and Dimes, Nickels and Dimes*, 19 Oct. 2020, [dimenovels.lib.niu.edu/learn/spotlights/calamityjane](http://dimenovels.lib.niu.edu/learn/spotlights/calamityjane).

her introduction written with praise and shock: “Yes, she's an odd one. Can ride like the wind, shoot like a sharp-shooter, and swear like a trooper. Is here, there and everywhere, seemingly all at one time.”<sup>121</sup> The novel depicted her as a mysterious and silent for a while and remarking her demeanor; “she may not now have a heart; that was trampled upon, years ago, but her character has not suffered blemish since the day a foul wretch stole away her honor!”<sup>122</sup> Calamity is typically portrayed fearless without concern for herself: “if she is wounded shows it not, but faces the music with as little apparent fear as any of those around her.”<sup>123</sup>

In *Deadwood Dick's Doom*, we get another look at Wheeler's portrayal of Calamity, which shows great emotion for her friends and regret over thinking she was too late to save Dick: “if there was any change it was in the sterner expression of her sad eyes.”<sup>124</sup> Wheeler normally shows off calamity as humble and protective, in *Deadwood Dick on Dec*: “once I might have been unmaidenly to have named a reward, but that is past. I don't expect to get any-never!”<sup>125</sup> Her attitude can be characterized as the same, cold to the world, but ultimately she was there in time of need. The popularity of the novels might have been an intimation of Calamity gaining a celebrity status towards the end of her life, as the series was a bestseller among the West.

*Deadwood Dick or the Game of Gold*, shows the level of care he has for her: “Calamity Jane is pretty-yonder girl is beautiful. Calamity Jane is dear to me, yonder girl is nothing to me.”<sup>126</sup> The

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<sup>121</sup> Edward L. Wheeler. *Deadwood Dick, the Prince of the Road, Or, the Black Rider of the Black Hills*. 15 October, 1877. pp, 9. Print.

<sup>122</sup> Edward L. Wheeler, 9.

<sup>123</sup> Edward L. Wheeler,

<sup>124</sup> Edward L. Wheeler. *Deadwood Dick's Doom, or Calamity Jane's Adventure*. Deadwood Dick Library, Vol. 3, No. 39, New York: [Beadle and Adams], [1899].

<sup>125</sup> Edward L. Wheeler. *Deadwood Dick on Deck*. Deadwood Dick Library. Vol 2, No. 15, New York: [Beadle and Adams], [1899].

<sup>126</sup> Edward L. Wheeler, *Deadwood Dick or the Game of Gold*. Deadwood Dick Library, Vol 3, No. 34. New York: [Beadle and Adams], [1899]. pp, 29. Print

progression of Calamity through issues of the novel, became a popular figure alongside Deadwood Dick.

The book was adapted into a three-act play by Thomas Taggart in 1953 entitled *Deadwood Dick or the Game of Gold: A Rootin' Tootin' melodrama of the Gay 90's in Three Acts*.<sup>127</sup> Calamity plays a small role in the play, acting as the owner of a bar called, "The Man-Trap Saloon".<sup>128</sup> Todd Everett, journalist for the *Los Angeles Times*, describes the play has a simple premise; "full of good guys, bad guys and dance hall girls. There's a lost gold mine, a lost daughter and lots of gunplay."<sup>129</sup>

Another aspect of Calamity's popularity was her time with the *Buffalo Bill Wild West Show*. William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody opened the show in 1883 as a horse and gun show, "launching a genre of outdoor entertainment that thrived for three decades and survived."<sup>130</sup> The entertainment came as "Border drama's", small western showcases demonstrating gunslinging, horseback riding, and featuring genuine western characters.<sup>131</sup> Calamity joined in 1901, retelling her stories and doing horseback riding; "exhibited with Colonel Frederic T. Cummins's "Indian Congress" at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo."<sup>132</sup> Here, she was taken in by benefactor and philanthropist Josephine Brake, in an attempt to rehabilitate her out of the West, but felt

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<sup>127</sup> Maggie Scanlon, 2020.

<sup>128</sup> Tom Taggart, *Deadwood Dick Or, the Game of Gold!: A Rootin' Tootin' Melodrama of the Gay '90s in Three Acts*. New York: S. French, 1953. Print.

<sup>129</sup> Todd Everett. *THEATER REVIEW 'DEADWOOD DICK, OR A GAME OF GOLD' : A Youthful Novelty : The Young Artists Ensemble Production Is an Old-Fashioned, Lusty Melodrama with All the Trimmings*. Los Angeles Times, Los Angeles Times, 19 Mar. 1992, [www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1992-03-19-vl-5776-story.html](http://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1992-03-19-vl-5776-story.html).

<sup>130</sup> Paul Fees. *Wild West Shows*. Centerofthewest.org, Buffalo Bills Center of the West, 12 Aug. 2020, [centerofthewest.org/learn/western-essays/wild-west-shows/](http://centerofthewest.org/learn/western-essays/wild-west-shows/).

<sup>131</sup> Paul Fees, 2020.

<sup>132</sup> James D. McLaird, *CALAMITY JANE (1856-1903)*. [Http://Plainshumanities.unl.edu/](http://Plainshumanities.unl.edu/), Encyclopedia of the Great Plains, 2011, [plainshumanities.unl.edu/encyclopedia/doc/egp.gen.006](http://plainshumanities.unl.edu/encyclopedia/doc/egp.gen.006).

compelled to return shortly after.<sup>133</sup> Being featured in a prominent show in the East, as well as taken in by a benefactor left an lasting impression on people towards the close of the West.

Calamity Jane died on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1903, and was buried next to Wild Bill, just two years after leaving Buffalo. Due to her celebrity status, some speculate that Deadwood was responsible for engineering her final resting place.<sup>134</sup> Calamity lead an interesting life along the frontier, having been traveling much of the time and seeking adventure since a teenager. Like many women, Calamity rose as a celebrity of the frontier, doing what was needed to live another day. She broke down the boundaries of the 19<sup>th</sup> century separate sphere that confined women by living in a man's world and adapting to it. As Calamity said; "I been tough an' lived a bad life, an' like all them that make mistakes I see it when it's too late."<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> "Calamity Jane," "Bad Man" of the West. Aberdeen herald. (Aberdeen, Chehalis County, W.T.), 05 Feb. 1903. Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers. Lib. of Congress. <<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87093220/1903-02-05/ed-1/seq-7/>>

<sup>134</sup> *Belle Fourche Bee*, [volume] (Belle Fourche, Butte County, S.D.). 6 Aug. 1903.

<sup>135</sup> M. L. Fox, 312.

**Depictions of Calamity: Female attire, at Wild Bill's grave, in buckskin, and at the Pan-American Exposition.**



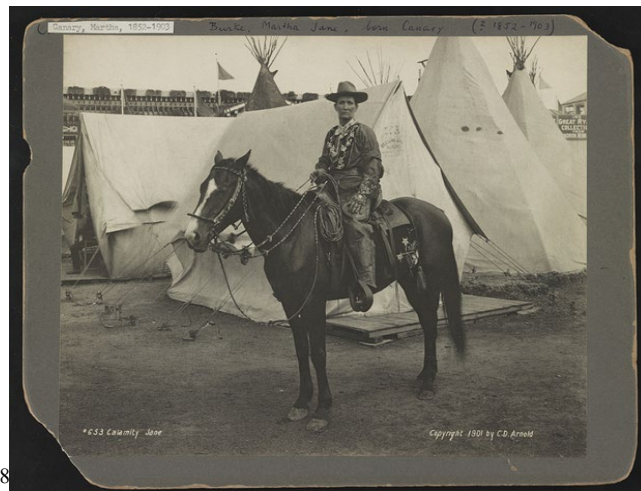
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**Chapter 5: Modern interpretation of Calamity Jane**

<sup>136</sup> Frank J. Meyers, 1890-1973. *Calamity Jane*. undated. Retrieved from the Digital Public Library of America, <https://digitalcollections.uwyo.edu/luna/servlet/detail/uwydbuwy~17~17~1349149~228829>. (Accessed November 7, 2020.)

<sup>137</sup> J. A Kumpf, photographer. *Calamity Jane on Wild Bill's grave*. Deadwood South Dakota, ca. 1903. Photograph. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2005688172/>.

<sup>138</sup> H. R Locke, photographer. *Calamity Jane, Gen. Crook's scout, no. 2.* , ca. 1895. Photograph. <https://www.loc.gov/item/91483145/>.

<sup>139</sup> C. D Arnold, , photographer. *Calamity Jane*. Buffalo New York, ca. 1901. Photograph. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2005688173/>.

Calamity Jane and Wild Bill Hickok became even more famous after death. Their popularity increased ten-fold when their story was portrayed in film. There are several movies made about them, some about the two of them, some about one or the other. The earliest depiction of Calamity Jane can be found from 1915.

*In the days of '75 and '76*, released in 1915 as a silent film, is a retelling their story of how the two were originally portrayed, with Freeda Hartzell Romine playing Calamity Jane and A. L. Johnson as Wild Bill. Calamity Jane was living with her mother getting unwanted attention from McCall, with Wild Bill saving her.<sup>140</sup> The two rode off into the sunset together, only for McCall to kill Wild Bill out of jealousy, leading to Jane getting him executed. Their fictional romance was also the plot of the 1923, *Wild Bill Hickok* film, by Paramount.<sup>141</sup> Wild Bill was portrayed by Wyatt Earp, and Ethel Grey Terry as Calamity Jane. The relationship between Calamity Jane and Wild Bill was explored as star crossed lovers, never returning the others affection until tragedy tears them apart. Bill's death in the film was what led to Calamity turning to a life of drinking, gambling, and wearing buckskin clothing.

According to critic Rob Baker, *Wild Bill Hickok* reviewed bad reviews and was described as "rather dull and tedious." The film also did poorly at the box office accelerating Hart's already fading star."<sup>142</sup> The film is not well known. Both movies were based on newspaper gossip and dime novel interpretation but were not historical. Calamity Jane as a secondary character was stereotyped as the damsel in distress, smitten by the hero that comes to her aid. Her portrayal as the romantic character involved with Wild Bill was also the subject of

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<sup>140</sup> James D, McLaird, 123.

<sup>141</sup> James D, McLaird, 123.

<sup>142</sup> Rob Baker, *The Real Wild Bill Hickok versus Hollywood*. Flashbak, 5 July 2018, [flashbak.com/the-real-wild-bill-hickok-versus-the-hollywood-version-398413/](http://flashbak.com/the-real-wild-bill-hickok-versus-the-hollywood-version-398413/).

the 1937 movie *The Plainsman* from Paramount, in which Jane was portrayed by Jean Arthur. The romance between the two ended with Calamity leading Wild Bill to his untimely death.<sup>143</sup>

The romance comes off as a tragic love affair, complicating the plot from the action sequences and Arthur's portrayal described by Fay Fetick: "would be considered racist now, such as Calamity Jane's derogatory description of Indians, calling them "hairless coyotes."<sup>144</sup> Screen writer and novelist Graham Greene described the film as, "the finest Western since *The Virginian*: perhaps it is the finest Western in the history of the film."<sup>145</sup> Arthur's portrayal was described by Josephine O' Neill of *The Daily Telegraph* as being "so good that I could not visualize another actress in the part."<sup>146</sup> The duo was a great match to portray Wild Bill and Calamity described by critic Emanuel Levy: "There's good rapport between Cooper and Jean Arthur."<sup>147</sup>

In the 1949 film *Calamity Jane and Sam Bass*, we get same story with a fictional newcomer riding into town looking for a horse and falling for Calamity throughout the film. Calamity was played by Yvonne De Carlo.<sup>148</sup> Sam Bass was a western outlaw famous for his 1877 railroad robberies: "A fearless rebel, he turns against the authority of the law or government, often gaining the support of ordinary people who have endured cruelty and

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<sup>143</sup> James D. McLaird, 124.

<sup>144</sup> Fay Fetick. "*The Plainsman (1936)*." *University of Missouri–St. Louis*, University of Missouri-St. Louis, 2010, [www.umsl.edu/~gradyf/film/reviews/Plainsman.htm](http://www.umsl.edu/~gradyf/film/reviews/Plainsman.htm).

<sup>145</sup> Graham Greene. "*The Plainsman*." "*At the Plaza " The Great Barrier*." *The Spectator Archive*, *The Spectator*, 12 Feb. 1937, [archive.spectator.co.uk/article/12th-february-1937/15/the-cinema](http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/12th-february-1937/15/the-cinema).

<sup>146</sup> Josephine O' Niell, *NEW SHOWS IN SYDNEY TODAY THE PLAINSMAN*. *The Daily Telegraph* (Sydney, NSW : 1931 - 1954), p. 9. Retrieved November 18, 2020, from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article247130042>

<sup>147</sup> Emmanuel Levy, *Plainsman, The (1936): DeMille's Epic, Starring Cooper and Jean Arthur*. Emanuel Levy, 2012, [emanuellevy.com/review/plainsman-the-1936/](http://emanuellevy.com/review/plainsman-the-1936/).

<sup>148</sup> Leonard, Goldstein, et al. *Calamity Jane and Sam Bass*. 2014.

corruption at the hands of their own bosses.”<sup>149</sup> Much like the ending with Wild Bill, Bass is killed off and Jane mourns the loss of another love. The movie used famous names the same way dime novels had done, leading to more elaborate ideas to follow in the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Jane was a hardworking horse trainer with a penchant for guns and small talk while Bass came off as smooth and tricky, an expert gambler.

Bosley Crowther, a New York Times film critic, describes De Carlo, “the lady of the title, who loves Sam very much, blabs to certain parties regarding the virtues of the horse and ruins an honest swindle whereby Sam figured to clean up in a race.”<sup>150</sup> Mae Tinee of the *Chicago Daily Tribune* wrote, “Miss De Carlo on the other hand, acts like a leading lady in a high school play.”<sup>151</sup>

In 1953 Calamity Jane finally came into her own as the strong-willed woman protagonist in the movie *Calamity Jane* produced by Warner Bros. Doris Day portrayed Calamity in a comedic, musical tone, tempering it with a flash of Calamity’s gentle and rowdy nature.<sup>152</sup> *Calamity Jane* was the first film that portrayed Jane as an icon. The film had mixed reviews. Bosley Crowther of *The New York Times* said “Calamity Jane is a frontier female whose

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<sup>149</sup> Nancy Cassell McEntire. 2003. *Sam Bass: The Ballad and the Man*. *Western Folklore* 62 (3): 189–214.  
<http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.purchase.edu:2048/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ahl&AN=14394203&site=ehost-live>.

<sup>150</sup> Bosley Crowther. *THE SCREEN*. *The New York Times*, *The New York Times*, 18 July 1949,  
[www.nytimes.com/1949/07/18/archives/the-screen.html](http://www.nytimes.com/1949/07/18/archives/the-screen.html).

<sup>151</sup> Mae Tinee. *Calamity Jane Is Purified in a Pokey Movie: "CALAMITY JANE AND SAM BASS" THE CAST*. *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1923-1963); Chicago, Ill. [Chicago, Ill]06 Aug 1949: 14  
<http://ezproxy.purchase.edu:2048/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.purchase.edu:8443/docview/177806004?accountid=14171>

<sup>152</sup> Mae Tinee. *Old Wild Bill Tamed Down in this Film: "CALAMITY JANE"*. *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1923-1963), Nov 16, 1953. 1,  
<http://ezproxy.purchase.edu:2048/login?url=https://ezproxy.purchase.edu:4131/docview/178623868?accountid=14171>.

indifference to the graces of her sex is both ridiculous and repulsive.”<sup>153</sup> He categorized the film as a comedy, but energetic and beautiful in the set design, matching Day’s high-spirited portrayal. “In the interest of a happy comic mood, Miss Day could afford to be less violent, occasionally a little more relaxed,” Crowther wrote.<sup>154</sup> Day was described by *Variety* magazine as “fine as a country girl in calico or a cutie from the chorus line but strain shows through in her essaying of the hard and dynamic Calamity character.”<sup>155</sup>

Some recent interpretations viewed Day as gay, as she was living with woman named Katie Brown.<sup>156</sup> Some interpreted her as masculine in nature, gawking at women, dressed in buckskin, and making it appear that they share a home.<sup>157</sup> *The Guardian* critic Peter Bradshaw mentions “Jane’s tomboyish style, plus the fact that she sets up home with Katie in her shack (with “Calam and Katie” on the front door). Such an interpretation earned this revival a place at the BFI Flare LGBT festival.”<sup>158</sup> The song “Secret Love” sung by Day is beloved for its soft tone and lyrics by the LGBT community. Armond White of *Out* magazine describes Jane as exhibiting “a self-defeating willingness to fit into a male-dominated culture. Her tough mannerisms are also designed to protect her hidden, vulnerable emotions.”<sup>159</sup>

Tamar Jeffers McDonald from the University of Kent said “Day’s look as the female hero of the film is decidedly androgynous. .. “Day would have been better cast in a role that called for

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<sup>153</sup> Bosley Crowther. *THE SCREEN IN REVIEW; Musical Western Horses Into Paramount With Calamity Jane Holding the Reins*. The New York Times, The New York Times, 5 Nov. 1953, [www.nytimes.com/1953/11/05/archives/the-screen-in-review-musical-western-horses-into-paramount-with.html](http://www.nytimes.com/1953/11/05/archives/the-screen-in-review-musical-western-horses-into-paramount-with.html).

<sup>154</sup> Bosley Crowther, 1953.

<sup>155</sup> *Calamity Jane*. *Variety*, *Variety*, 1 Jan. 1953, [variety.com/1952/film/reviews/calamity-jane-1200417536/](http://variety.com/1952/film/reviews/calamity-jane-1200417536/).

<sup>156</sup> Peter Bradshaw. *Calamity Jane Review – Hugely Enjoyable Proto-Lesbian Musical*. The Guardian, Guardian News and Media, 7 Apr. 2016, [www.theguardian.com/film/2016/apr/07/calamity-jane-review-doris-day](http://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/apr/07/calamity-jane-review-doris-day).

<sup>157</sup> David Wayne Butler, Doris Day, and Howard Keel. *Calamity Jane Film*. [S.l.]: [s.n.], 1965.

<sup>158</sup> Peter Bradshaw. “*Calamity Jane Review – Hugely Enjoyable Proto-Lesbian Musical*.” *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 7 Apr. 2016, [www.theguardian.com/film/2016/apr/07/calamity-jane-review-doris-day](http://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/apr/07/calamity-jane-review-doris-day).

<sup>159</sup> Armond White. *The First Gay Anthem: Calamity Jane’s ‘Secret Love’*. *OUT*, *Out Magazine*, 29 June 2017, [www.out.com/armond-white/2017/6/29/first-gay-anthem-calamity-janes-secret-love](http://www.out.com/armond-white/2017/6/29/first-gay-anthem-calamity-janes-secret-love).

more traditional female behavior, symbolized by more traditional female attire than the buckskins in which Calam spends most of the film.”<sup>160</sup> To McDonald there is the typical trope of showing a woman in rags becoming a beautiful woman, although in the film Day is already beautiful before putting on dresses to impress Wild Bill.

By the 1950s, Calamity Jane morphed into a modern woman who accomplished much on the frontier. Women of the west ran the homestead and worked diligently for the family, caring and nurturing while their husbands went off to trade or mine. Calamity Jane was single, and around men much of her life, wore buckskin clothing, and came off as very masculine: “the greater portion of my time was spent in hunting along with the men and hunters of the party, in fact I was at all times with the men when there was excitement and adventure to be had.”<sup>161</sup> Calamity challenged the stereotype: “She represented a frontier novelty, an oddball character that attested to the peculiar conditions of the untamed West. The wild ways of the “female scout” matched the idea of a West brimming with adventuring, gunplay, and reverie.”<sup>162</sup>

In 1995, Calamity Jane shifted to the small screen with the CBS television movie *Buffalo Girls* based on the Larry McMurtry novel by the same name. Anjelica Huston played Calamity Jane, centering around the myth of Wild Bill and Calamity Jane as a couple. The plot featured them as trying to reclaim their daughter after giving her away to an Englishman. John J. O’Connor of the *New York Times* described Huston’s performance: “Jane is depicted here as a kind of asexual oddity; her decidedly butch manner softened by the narrative device of having

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<sup>160</sup> Tamar Jeffers McDonald. 2007. “Carrying Concealed Weapons: Gendered Makeover in Calamity Jane.” *Journal of Popular Film & Television* 34 (4): 179–87. doi:10.3200/JPFT.34.4.179-187.

<sup>161</sup> Calamity Jane, 1.

<sup>162</sup> Karen Jones. *Lady Wildcats and Wild Women: Hunting, Gender and the Politics of Show(Wo)Manship in the Nineteenth Century American West*. *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 34, no. 1 (February 2012): 37–49. doi:10.1080/08905495.2012.646547.

her write loving letters to Janey, the daughter she gave away to an English aristocrat.”<sup>163</sup> The movie also shows a possible romance between Jane and a Brothel owner named Dora Dufran, adding more confusion regarding her sexuality. The film uses this to its advantage giving a reason move the plot forward with Dufran and Calamity both admitting to never loving the men they were with.<sup>164</sup>

This CBS tv movie abandoned the romantic aspects of Wild Bill and Calamity Jane in favor of issue regarding sexual identity.<sup>165</sup> The film also emphasized Calamity Janes fame and reputation in contrast to money and skill.<sup>166</sup> According to Tony Scott of *Variety*, “Huston works valiantly to make Calamity, who even gets a Stella Dallas bit in , credible, or even interesting, but it’s a no go.”<sup>167</sup> O’Connor mentions, “The story’s most fascinating, and carefully unexplored, element is sexual identity” as a surprising development in the movie. He also mentions “the tenderest moments in this unorthodox western are between Jane and Dora.”<sup>168</sup> The discussion of Calamity’s sexuality became a common point of discussion by critics, despite very little evidence to substantiate that in reality.

The 1998 animated children’s cartoon *The Legend of Calamity Jane* by Warner Bros, presented a darker version of Calamity. She was portrayed as a whip cracking vigilante fighting against lawlessness in the west, and shooting nooses to free Indians from lynching.<sup>169</sup> The cartoon changed her drinking habit from alcohol to milk and made her pale skinned with green eyes and red hair. Calamity was shown as someone who protected people, and fought for

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<sup>163</sup> John J, O’Connor. *Tale of Calamity Jane and Friends*. New York Times, 29 Apr. 1995, pp. 49.

<sup>164</sup> John J, O’Connor, 49.

<sup>165</sup> Richard W, Etulain, 303.

<sup>166</sup> Richard W, Etulain, 304.

<sup>167</sup> Tony Scott. “Buffalo Girls.” *Variety*, *Variety*, 26 Apr. 1995, [variety.com/1995/tv/reviews/buffalo-girls-2-1200441311/](http://variety.com/1995/tv/reviews/buffalo-girls-2-1200441311/).

<sup>168</sup> John J, O’Connor, 49.

<sup>169</sup> Pascal, Morelli. et al. *The Legend of Calamity Jane*. 1998.

justice.<sup>170</sup> The cartoon took creative liberty in changing Calamity's appearance, but did show her compassion for freedom and humanity through the 13-episode run.

The 2016 film *Jane got her Gun*, from The Weinstein Company, gave Calamity a third dimension as a character outside of the cliché of dressing her as a soldier. Natalie Portman portrayed Calamity Jane as a woman driven by an unhappy home life.<sup>171</sup> The plot revolves around Calamity hunting down a gang that kidnapped her daughter.<sup>172</sup> She is portrayed as a woman seeking justice. The concept is interesting balancing the nurturing and rowdy nature of Calamity, but as Jordan Hoffman of *The Guardian* wrote; "When action and emotion does finally come, it's way past the point of caring about any of these characters."<sup>173</sup> The 2016 depiction gives Calamity a hardened outlook, ready to step up when wronged, following the typical western plot. "Whatever feminist angle the film might have once aspired to is lost in its listless shuffle."<sup>174</sup>

One of the most creative and insightful portrayals of Calamity Jane is in the television series "Deadwood," which appeared on HBO channel from 2003-6. *Deadwood* attempted to create an accurate historical atmosphere with each episode. The series was praised by many critics. Emily VanDerWerff of *VOX* said the series showed "events that happened at the lowest levels of the mining camp rippled outward to affect those at the very top. There were no gods;

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<sup>170</sup> Pascal, Morelli. et al. *The Legend of Calamity Jane*. 1998.

<sup>171</sup> Aleen Keshishian. et al. *Jane Got a Gun*. 2016.

<sup>172</sup> Kate Stables. 2016. "Jane Got a Gun." *Sight & Sound* 26 (6): 79–80.

<http://ezproxy.purchase.edu:2059/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=115089577&site=ehost-live>.

<sup>173</sup> Jordan Hoffman. *Jane Got a Gun Review: Big Nat, No Cattle as Portman Western Fires Blanks*. *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 31 Jan. 2016, [www.theguardian.com/film/2016/jan/31/jane-got-a-gun-review-big-nat-no-cattle-as-portman-western-fires-blanks](http://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/jan/31/jane-got-a-gun-review-big-nat-no-cattle-as-portman-western-fires-blanks).

<sup>174</sup> Glenn Kenny. *Review: In 'Jane Got a Gun,' Clear Skies, Followed by a Hail of Bullets*. *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 29 Jan. 2016, [www.nytimes.com/2016/01/30/movies/natalie-portman-jane-got-a-gun-review.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/30/movies/natalie-portman-jane-got-a-gun-review.html).

just men and women, struggling to get by.”<sup>175</sup> Robin Weigert portrayed Calamity Jane, and she received an Emmy nomination and much critical acclaim from audiences. In an interview with Chris Evangelista of *Slashfilm*, she said “David wrote for Jane in the series, like she’d see herself as a total piece of shit. Other people would see the potential for good in her, and these hidden virtues just kept coming out.”<sup>176</sup> The show ran for 3 seasons, concluding in 2019 with a feature length movie described by *Variety* ““Deadwood: The Movie” gradually but deliberately rewards fans who have waited 13 years to find out what happened to our favorite foul-mouthed ne’er-do-wells.”<sup>177</sup>

*Deadwood* was not historically accurate in the portrayal of events of the frontier town, notably in regards to Calamity’s relationship to prostitute Joannie Stubbs and Seth Bullock going after McCall after Wild Bill’s death.<sup>178</sup> Jane was portrayed with a balance of rough bravado and a nurturing woman who helped every way she could.<sup>179</sup>

To emphasize this nurturing side, *Deadwood* included the subplot of Jane’s love of children.<sup>180</sup> Yet inebriation causes her to withdraw from caring for an orphaned girl named Sofia Metz. Berating herself for leaving a child alone, she showers Metz with love and affection, becoming a foster mother in the series. Another poignant scene in the finale movie has Calamity

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<sup>175</sup> Emily VanDerWerff. *Deadwood, HBO's Western, Is Maybe the Best Drama Ever Made. Actually, Scratch the 'Maybe.'.* Vox, Vox, 4 Oct. 2019, [www.vox.com/culture/2016/10/4/12824202/deadwood-hbo-best-drama](http://www.vox.com/culture/2016/10/4/12824202/deadwood-hbo-best-drama).

<sup>176</sup> Chris Evangelista. *Robin Weigert Talks Becoming Calamity Jane, Dealing With Cancellation and Returning for 'Deadwood: The Movie' [Interview].* Slashfilm, Slashfilm, 29 May 2019, [www.slashfilm.com/robin-weigert-deadwood-interview/](http://www.slashfilm.com/robin-weigert-deadwood-interview/).

<sup>177</sup> Mekeisha Madden Toby. *TV Review: 'Deadwood: The Movie'.* Variety, Variety, 15 May 2019, [variety.com/2019/tv/reviews/tv-review-deadwood-movie-1203215301/](http://variety.com/2019/tv/reviews/tv-review-deadwood-movie-1203215301/).

<sup>178</sup> David Milch, et al. *Deadwood. The complete first season*. [New York]: HBO Video, 2004.

<sup>179</sup> David, Bianculli. *13 Years Later, 'Deadwood' Goes Out Just As Brilliantly As It Came In.* NPR, NPR, 31 May 2019, [www.npr.org/2019/05/31/728586097/13-years-later-deadwood-goes-out-just-as-brilliantly-as-it-came-in](http://www.npr.org/2019/05/31/728586097/13-years-later-deadwood-goes-out-just-as-brilliantly-as-it-came-in).

<sup>180</sup> Richard W, Etulain. pp.311.

reflecting on her actions through the series as a self-reflection of her friendship to Wild Bill, having Stubbs recall that all of the decisions made by Calamity were her own.

Calamity's nurturing side was rarely written about in newspapers. There were rumors of a married daughter that Calamity Jane refused to name at her death. In movies, this daughter appeared from time to time such as in *Buffalo Girls*, where she left her daughter with someone while he was traveling. Some believe the fame stems from her bravado as she, served alongside soldiers with Capt. Egan and the Black Hills expedition's. Others cite her ability to look fear in the eyes and help her friends in a time of need. Yet another view is that of her as a nurse, caring for patients on the expeditions and outbreaks of smallpox. Her status as a survivor can come from whichever depiction is given, but they all see her as a fighter on the Western frontier. While film critics and audiences of her character praise the performances and see different views of her status as a female icon, historians remember her in their own way.

Calamity Jane, is to a large extent a mystery, despite the many books and portrayals. No one is exactly sure what she did. Professor Ona Russell questioned the origin of her name and what went behind it: "I am interested in exploring what the name might have signified."<sup>181</sup> While some speculate that Calamity was known for her drunken escapades and foolhardy personality, Russell argues, "it was because her bravery, strength, and independence were traits associated with a masculine ideal and connected with a national identity that she was cast as a threat."<sup>182</sup> The perception of the buckskin clothing was a ploy of individuality, breaking from the role of women as, "If women could look like men, then, theoretically, they could act like them as

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<sup>181</sup> Ona Russell. *WHAT'S IN A NAME ANYWAY?: THE CALAMITY OF CALAMITY JANE*. American studies. 35.2 (1994): 21–38. Print.

<sup>182</sup> Ona Russell, 22.

well.”<sup>183</sup> Russell sees Calamity as a deconstruction of the female role, that did what she personally wanted to do by her own virtue, there was no clear-cut reason for her actions, only that she done them.<sup>184</sup>

As modern interpreters see it, Calamity Jane defied gender roles: “The wild ways of the “female scout” matched the idea of a West brimming with adventuring, gunplay, and reverie.”<sup>185</sup> The openness western frontier allowed women to embrace new ideals. In this way, Calamity’s tales of hunting and scouting defined her as different. “Calamity, like other “wild women,” represented entertainment products by virtue of her transgressive behavior. Men were titillated by Jane's entry into the masculine domain,” said Jones.<sup>186</sup> Some might view her as a hardened drunkard, in the past, some as a nurturer, some as a sharpshooter, and some as an LBGT icon. At its core, her story describes a woman struggling to survive through adversity.

Contemporary media took creative liberty in Calamity’s image, portraying her as a rough rider with a penchant for drinking, while others showed a broader perspective. Calamity came from a life without a home or a real family, and perhaps the hardship of loneliness affected her through adulthood. She had a life of survival-- doing what was needed to eat, even possibly selling her body to raise money to survive. Caring for the ill regardless of possibly catching their disease meant nothing to Calamity, as she was only concerned with giving aid to those who needed it. Calamity Jane is a complex female icon, whose life is riddled with questions about its reality. She remains a mythical figure who impacted the history of the West.

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<sup>183</sup> Ona Russell, 25.

<sup>184</sup> Ona Russell, 33.

<sup>185</sup> Karen Jones, 39.

<sup>186</sup> Karen Jones, 39.

**Film Depictions of Calamity Jane (In order): Doris Day, Yvonne De Carlo, Robin Weigert, and Natalie Portman.**



<sup>187</sup> Butler, David Wayne, Doris Day, and Howard Keel. *Calamity Jane Film*. [S.l.]: [s.n.], 1965.

<https://www.amazon.com/Calamity-Jane-Movie-Poster-Inches/dp/B004UYK6EW>

<sup>188</sup> *Calamity Jane and Sam Bass*. 1949. Retrieved from the Digital Public Library of America, <http://cdm16786.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/ref/collection/sayre/id/19600>. (Accessed November 7, 2020.)

<sup>189</sup> Mark Butler, *Deadwood: the Magnificent TV Western That Was Axed Too Soon*. Inews.co.uk, Inews, 24 Sept. 2020, [inews.co.uk/culture/television/deadwood-tv-western-cancelled-too-soon-76618](http://inews.co.uk/culture/television/deadwood-tv-western-cancelled-too-soon-76618).

<sup>190</sup> Glenn Kenny, *Review: In 'Jane Got a Gun,' Clear Skies, Followed by a Hail of Bullets*. The New York Times, The New York Times, 29 Jan. 2016, [www.nytimes.com/2016/01/30/movies/natalie-portman-jane-got-a-gun-review.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/30/movies/natalie-portman-jane-got-a-gun-review.html).

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