

Bloody Mary: Mary of Portsmouth

Everyone has heard of the myth of Bloody Mary but where did it come from? As you know, I've always been interested in finding out about old folklore every since I was a little girl. This was one of the reasons why I spent years researching ancient and modern folklore and where they originated. I did a lot of research on this topic and this is what I've found, it might surprise you.

There are many rumors when it comes to the origins of Bloody Mary. Some people say it originated in Europe in the Middle Ages but this is simply false. There are three stories of the origin of Bloody Mary that is considered to be widely accepted among folklore researchers today. The first takes place in 1666 in colonial Portsmouth, New Hampshire. According to the legend, an orphan child, known simply as Mary, would wander the woods and often taunt the people of Portsmouth whenever she was in town.

Mary of Portsmouth, as she is often referred to as, would carry a hand mirror that had a crack running down the middle. When the townsfolk told her that her time in town had been spent, she would reply holding up the hand mirror, "Gaze into the mirror and your fictional horrors will turn to truth!" Strange things started happening in the town of Portsmouth. Items began to be misplaced, arguments among friends, and marriages that lasted years began to crumble; all lead to the thought that Mary of Portsmouth was a participant of witchcraft.

An "angry mob", so to say, gathered and went to find Mary to trial her of charges of witchcraft. As the mob approached the spot where Mary usually camped, they found her body full of blood. Her face had scratches that went deep into her flesh. Her eyes were ripped out of their sockets. Lying next to her was the cracked hand mirror with blood only on the glass. The body was burnt and thrown into the river and the mirror was tossed into the ground and covered up with dirt.

As I was doing my research on "Mary of Portsmouth", I was contacted by an older gentleman by the name of Robert. Bob told me that he built an addition onto his house during the 1970's and upon excavating found a small handheld mirror, which he had dated by experts to be from the mid-17th Century. I went to visit Bob in Portsmouth last summer and when he took me inside of his house, the first thing I saw lying on the table was a hand mirror with a golden handle. On the glass, there was a crack running down left to right.

I will continue my story of the myth of Bloody Mary in next week's article. I hope you enjoyed my short and really hope you hope you'll continue reading part two, which is about Bloody Mary queen of England.

This article was originally written in 1997 and released into the public domain by the American Folktales and Mythologies Society in 2008.