[**Captain McCool**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/11102-captain-mccool/)

* Pyrate Captain
* 
* 
* Member
* 530 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Golden, Colorado
* Interests:Piracy, of course. Also, skiing, fencing, graphite/charcoal drawing, writing, ren-faires, etc.

[Posted February 23, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16571-scallywag/&do=findComment&comment=380203) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16571-scallywag/&do=reportComment&comment=380203)

So this probably already has a discussion devoted to it somewhere in the pub, but does anyone know where the word Scallywag *actually* originated?

I've always been under the impression that the word had its origins just after the American Civil War, and that it originally meant a white southerner who supported the Union and Reconstruction. But it seems to be so deeply ingrained in Pirate culture, that I can't help but wonder where, when, and how it became connected with pirates in the first place. Basically I want to know, can one reasonably use the word in a period context, when it comes to the Golden Age of Piracy? Or is that just completely out of the realm of historical... anything?

Would anyone here care to shed some light on this conundrum?

[**Mission**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1929-mission/)

* Goat Specialist
* 
* 
* Admin
* 5,082 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Monroe, MI
* Interests:Scholarly piracy, designing and creating haunted house rooms and props, movies, abstract thinking, abstruse thinking, obstructive thinking, ideating, random thinking, movies, cartoons, movies, movies scores, cycling, world peace and small furry dogs, movies, writing, drawing, personal skills training, gremlins and, of course, lest I forget, movies.

[Posted February 23, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16571-scallywag/&do=findComment&comment=380216) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16571-scallywag/&do=reportComment&comment=380216)

Ah, words. I love them so...

Most sites with credible etymology references don't provide a nice, concise origin for the word 'scallywag.' According to [Sarah Bromley](http://www.sarahbromley.co.uk/scally/summary.html), a Linguistics Professor at Leeds university, it comes from 'scalawag' which "...was first used “in colloquial Southron [sic ] (US) dialect with the sense of 'an undersized or worthless animal, a runt'”. The Oxford Encyclopedia also pointedly places the blame for this word on the US. According to the [Oxford Etymologist website](http://blog.oup.com/2009/07/scallywag/), "Its earliest recorded sense (“a favorite epithet in western New York for a mean fellow, a scapegrace”) goes back to 1848." The [podictionary](http://podictionary.com/?p=345), which looks pretty well-researched, gives some interesting pre-CW notes, including a reference to the Bromley comment:

"Even before the Civil War the word was in circulation, ironically it was mainly used by Northerners and the Oxford English Dictionary reports mainly by trade unionists meaning a good-for-nothing. The etymology of this tasty word is reported as disappointingly unknown in all the best dictionaries, but a number of reputable word sleuths online offer up some credible alternatives. One track is that scallywag was earlier applied to horses and cattle of small stature—their size being a cause for distain—the suspicion is that that animals like Shetland ponies coming from the northern Scottish isles brought along with them the name of one of the major towns there Scalloway that got transmuted into scallywag.

An alternate theory is that it is distantly related to scholar which has a Latin root but would seem to be the polar opposite of a scallywag. Again the source is Scottish and the thinking goes like this. A farmer renting land belonging to a monetary sent his first born son to study for the church. This young scholar was called a scoloc. Later any farm worker started being called a scallag and this somehow morphed into scallywag, possibly in association with another similar sounding word meaning 'vagabond.'"

Note that none of these have much to do with piracy. That appears to be a more recent connection. I definitely haven't seen it in anything period I've read.

[**GentlemenScotty**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/10571-gentlemenscotty/)

* First Mate
* 
* 
* Member
* 204 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:north-northeast of port royal
* Interests:pyratical
18th century life
the great outdoors
a sip o fine dark rhum!

[Posted February 23, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16571-scallywag/&do=findComment&comment=380228) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16571-scallywag/&do=reportComment&comment=380228)

Mission ..ye is a font!

what a wonderful reply!!

thanks :]

[**Fox**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1019-fox/)

* Old Twillian
* 
* 
* Moderator
* 2,564 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Beautiful lush Devon, England
* Interests:Nautical history of the 16-18th centuries and living history based thereon.

Shooting pirates.

[Posted February 23, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16571-scallywag/&do=findComment&comment=380233) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16571-scallywag/&do=reportComment&comment=380233)

Here's the full blurb from the OED:

**1. A disreputable fellow; a good-for-nothing; a scapegrace, blackguard; in Trade Union slang, a man who will not work. Also attrib.**

1848 BARTLETT Dict. Amer., Scalawag, a favorite epithet in western New York for a mean fellow; a scape-grace. 1855 HALIBURTON Nature I. 112 You good-for-nothing young scallowag. 1885 G. B. SHAW Let. 4 Sept. (1965) I. 138 Any socialist of the plentiful ‘scallawag’ type. 1893 LELAND Mem. II. 178 There are so many scallawags from the East come here, that we are obliged to be a little particular. 1891 Labour Commission Gloss., Scalliwags, an opprobrious term, equal to scamp or villain, applied to men who will not work. 1926 Glasgow Herald 10 Sept. 11 Go back to your scallywag union. 1957 Listener 17 Oct. 608/2 Voyez, that rather scallywag wanderer who was dismissed by Wedgwood.

**2. An impostor or intriguer, esp. in politics; in U.S. Hist., a native white of the southern states who was willing to accept the reconstructionary measures. Also attrib.**

1862 Charleston (S. Carolina) Mercury 9 Aug. 1/3 This invaluable class is composed..of ten parts of unadulterated Andy Johnson Union men, ten of good lord and good devil-ites, five of spuss and seventy-five of scallowags. 1864 SALA in Daily Tel. 27 Sept., The councilmen too often belong to the comprehensive genus ‘scallywag’. They have intrigued and speechified, and stumped their ward. 1867 Nation (N.Y.) 12 Dec. 470/1 The Macon News has to print in full the names of thirteen persons..described (as having ‘voted the Scalawag ticket’). 1879 TOURGEE Fool's Err. (1883) 111/25. 1885 Times (weekly ed.) 29 May 12 Our correspondent tells us that the new system [i.e. of Mental Healing] has not yet fallen into the hands of the ‘Scalawags’. 1886 Forum Apr. 128 Then came the absurd process called Reconstruction, with its swarm of leeches, carpet-baggers and Scalawags. 1888 J. BRYCE Amer. Commonwealth II. II. xliv. 164 A group of such ‘scallawag’ members..increase their legislative income.

**3. U.S. A name for undersized or ill-conditioned cattle. (Perhaps the original use of the word.)**

1854 New York Tribune (Cattle Rep.) 24 Oct. (Cent. Dict.), The number of miserable ‘scallawags’ is so great that..they tend to drag down all above themselves to their own level. 1868 Daily News 18 Sept., Wade Hampton explained the origin of the term..by saying that ‘scalawag’ was the name applied by drovers to lean and ill-favoured kine.

[**Daniel**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/352-daniel/)

* Pyrate Captain
* 
* 
* Member
* 652 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:McLean, VA
* Interests:History, pirates, fiction, writing, writing historical fiction about pirates, jokes, games, law.

[Posted February 23, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16571-scallywag/&do=findComment&comment=380235) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16571-scallywag/&do=reportComment&comment=380235)

Actually, I can't remember ever hearing the name "scallywag" applied to a pirate before *Pirates of the Caribbean* came out. *The Scalawag Bunch* is about Robin Hood's Merry Men, but they aren't really pirates.

[**MarkG**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/10527-markg/)

* Pyrate Captain
* 
* 
* Member
* 587 posts
* Location:Ohio

[Posted February 23, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16571-scallywag/&do=findComment&comment=380259) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16571-scallywag/&do=reportComment&comment=380259)

 On 2/23/2010 at 2:24 PM, Daniel said:

Actually, I can't remember ever hearing the name "scallywag" applied to a pirate before *Pirates of the Caribbean* came out. *The Scalawag Bunch* is about Robin Hood's Merry Men, but they aren't really pirates.

I think that the movies use it because it is in the song from the ride. I'm sure that the songwriters just strung a bunch of terms for disreputable persons to fill out the lyrics. Similarly, I don't thing that "really bad eggs" was ever used to describe pirates.

Mark

[**Captain McCool**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/11102-captain-mccool/)

* Pyrate Captain
* 
* 
* Member
* 530 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Golden, Colorado
* Interests:Piracy, of course. Also, skiing, fencing, graphite/charcoal drawing, writing, ren-faires, etc.

[Posted February 24, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16571-scallywag/&do=findComment&comment=380267) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16571-scallywag/&do=reportComment&comment=380267)

Not to burst your bubble, MarkG, but "Scallywag" actually does not appear anywhere in the song from the ride. And as for the Pirates of the Caribbean association in general, yeah it's used once in the first movie, but I *know* I had heard it in connection with pirates before then. My only explanation for this is that it's just a term for low-down, dirty, rotten, scoundrels, and therefore naturally found its way into association with pirates. This does not, however, explain why it has become so *exclusively* associated with pirates. I mean, do a Google image search, and probably 90% of the relevant pictures are pirate related. This just baffles me.

[**Patrick Hand**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1049-patrick-hand/)

* The sailor's sailor
* 
* 
* Moderator
* 6,100 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:TH' Mountains of Central California
* Interests:I like wierdness... Klingon, Pyrate..... and even..... gasp.... Renn Faires...... (Baseball and tractor pulls I'd have to think about.... could be wierd or Not,,,,)

[Posted February 24, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16571-scallywag/&do=findComment&comment=380268) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16571-scallywag/&do=reportComment&comment=380268)

I don't know if that is right or not... I gotta dig out the "Pyrates of the Carribean" tourist book with alla the words....

I half-way kinda remember then calling themselfs scallywaggs....

But that is Pyrate PoP, not Capt. Twill....

[**Mission**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1929-mission/)

* Goat Specialist
* 
* 
* Admin
* 5,082 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Monroe, MI
* Interests:Scholarly piracy, designing and creating haunted house rooms and props, movies, abstract thinking, abstruse thinking, obstructive thinking, ideating, random thinking, movies, cartoons, movies, movies scores, cycling, world peace and small furry dogs, movies, writing, drawing, personal skills training, gremlins and, of course, lest I forget, movies.

[Posted February 24, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16571-scallywag/&do=findComment&comment=380293) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16571-scallywag/&do=reportComment&comment=380293)

If you re-read his post, Mark wasn't making the point that the Disney song contained the word. He just said they used a lot of different words that mean similar things to describe a pirate and suggested that the movies took their cue from that. This makes sense, because the first movie did make an effort to incorporate as much of the nature and tone of (not to mention the characters and scenes in) the ride as they could.

At the bottom of it, I think we can safely say in our most officious Twill forum manner that it wouldn't be a GAoP description since the word doesn't appear to have traceable roots to a time before 1840. As Patrick suggests, it's more of a pop-culture pirate reference.

[**Captain McCool**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/11102-captain-mccool/)

* Pyrate Captain
* 
* 
* Member
* 530 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Golden, Colorado
* Interests:Piracy, of course. Also, skiing, fencing, graphite/charcoal drawing, writing, ren-faires, etc.

[Posted February 24, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16571-scallywag/&do=findComment&comment=380353) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16571-scallywag/&do=reportComment&comment=380353)

This is as I suspected. I certainly appreciate the feedback!

I'm still completely at a loss, however, to explain *why* it has become so ingrained in pirate pop-culture. But perhaps that's for a different thread.

[**MarkG**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/10527-markg/)

* Pyrate Captain
* 
* 
* Member
* 587 posts
* Location:Ohio

[Posted February 28, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16571-scallywag/&do=findComment&comment=380714) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16571-scallywag/&do=reportComment&comment=380714)

 On 2/24/2010 at 0:17 AM, Captain McCool said:

Not to burst your bubble, MarkG, but "Scallywag" actually does not appear anywhere in the song from the ride. And as for the Pirates of the Caribbean association in general, yeah it's used once in the first movie, but I *know* I had heard it in connection with pirates before then. My only explanation for this is that it's just a term for low-down, dirty, rotten, scoundrels, and therefore naturally found its way into association with pirates. This does not, however, explain why it has become so *exclusively* associated with pirates. I mean, do a Google image search, and probably 90% of the relevant pictures are pirate related. This just baffles me.

You are right. I was thinking of scoundrels from this verse:

We're rascals, scoundrels, villains, and knaves,

Drink up, me 'earties, yo ho.

We're devils and black sheep, really bad eggs,

Drink up, me 'earties, yo ho.

Yo ho, yo ho, a pirate's life for me.

We're beggars and blighters, ne'er-do-well cads,

Drink up, me 'earties, yo ho.

Aye, but we're loved by our mommies and dads,

I guess that PoTC 1 was the first linking.

[**Captain McCool**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/11102-captain-mccool/)

* Pyrate Captain
* 
* 
* Member
* 530 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Golden, Colorado
* Interests:Piracy, of course. Also, skiing, fencing, graphite/charcoal drawing, writing, ren-faires, etc.

[Posted March 1, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16571-scallywag/&do=findComment&comment=380732) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16571-scallywag/&do=reportComment&comment=380732)

Heh, yeah, I was like "wait... was it in there? Lesse... pillage, plunder, rifle... no... rascals, scoundrels, really bad eggs... nope."

But I could swear I'd heard it in regards to pirates previous to CotBP. Anyone else? Or would this discussion be better moved to Pirate Pop?

[**Mission**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1929-mission/)

* Goat Specialist
* 
* 
* Admin
* 5,082 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Monroe, MI
* Interests:Scholarly piracy, designing and creating haunted house rooms and props, movies, abstract thinking, abstruse thinking, obstructive thinking, ideating, random thinking, movies, cartoons, movies, movies scores, cycling, world peace and small furry dogs, movies, writing, drawing, personal skills training, gremlins and, of course, lest I forget, movies.

[Posted March 10, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16571-scallywag/&do=findComment&comment=381110) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16571-scallywag/&do=reportComment&comment=381110)

Speaking of anachronistic words and phrases that PotC uses, I got to wondering about the phrase "every man jack".

According to [UsingEnglish.com](http://www.usingenglish.com/reference/idioms/every%2Bman%2Bjack.html), it is an idiom:

"If every man jack was involved in something, it is an emphatic way of saying that absolutely everybody was involved."

This must mean that "man jack" is a single person.

Wiki eventually led me to phrase "last man Jack" which is from Cricket. This led me to just "Jack" which, according to the [wiki entry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jack_%28playing_card%29) for "jack (playing card)":

"The term [last man jack] originates from a cricket pun. In the cricket batting order, the worst batsman is listed at number 11. The "last man" (to bat) can therefore be referred to using playing cards terminology; following numbers 8, 9 and 10 comes Jack."

Of further interest:

"[The knave] became Jack in 1864, when Samuel Hart, an English cardmaker, published a deck using J instead of Kn for the lowest court card. The Knave had been called a Jack as part of the terminology of All-Fours since the 1600s, but this was not common usage because the word was considered vulgar."

Based on all this, the term wouldn't have been in use during the approximate period when PotC is supposed to take place.

\_\_

Of further interest and almost no relevance to the original topic:

"[in France] each court card is said to represent a particular historical or mythological personage. The jacks in a French deck have traditionally assigned names as follows:

\* Jack of Spades: Ogier the Dane (legendary hero of the chansons de geste)

\* Jack of Hearts: La Hire (French warrior)

\* Jack of Diamonds: Hector (mythological hero of the Iliad)

\* Jack of Clubs: Lancelot"

Hector the Jack! It's like Robert the Bruce!

[**Daniel**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/352-daniel/)

* Pyrate Captain
* 
* 
* Member
* 652 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:McLean, VA
* Interests:History, pirates, fiction, writing, writing historical fiction about pirates, jokes, games, law.

[Posted March 10, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16571-scallywag/&do=findComment&comment=381112) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16571-scallywag/&do=reportComment&comment=381112)

Well, "Jack" could also be short for "Jack Tar," a British seaman. But my Merriam Webster's says that Jack Tar itself only goes back to 1781, so I guess it's still not period.

Dang, so that line "Every man jack could have sailed with Old Pew" from *The Derelict* is an anachronism? What a bummer!

[**callenish gunner**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1944-callenish-gunner/)

* Scourge o' the 7 Seas
* 
* 
* Member
* 2,138 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Pennsylvania mountains north of Clarion
* Interests:The Callenish gunner has just hoved into view looking for safe anchorage in these waters... purveyor of bladed and flintlock weaponry also leather accessories ..........painter of portraits and period scenes by avocation I'm getting my armoury business underway and will be doing as many festivals as I can ...right now along the east coast or great lakes

[Posted March 10, 2010](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16571-scallywag/&do=findComment&comment=381126) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16571-scallywag/&do=reportComment&comment=381126)

**Another possible origin of the Jack reference;**

*“…yet the spirit of Jacks of old is in you. It’s a lucky name—as the tales that your people still tell can vouch for.”* (de Lint, 119)

While it was surely in use beforehand, the nickname Jack was first recorded in the thirteenth century. By the 15th century, Jack had become a common name to signify every-man with other European forms being Juan, Jean, or Hans. Appearing in nursery rhymes such as “Jack Sprat” as early as 1639 and a character in oral traditions even longer, Jack is lucky, both a trickster and an unlikely hero, sometimes clever, often naïve, but always successful. The most famous Jack tales are “Jack and the Beanstalk” but his greatest fame is as a slayer of giants (Cavendish, 1381). When the Jack Tale cycle migrated from Europe to North America, Jack became an “Americanized farmboy-hero Jack.” (Guiterrez, 85) The first record of Jack in the United States appears before 1800 in Virginia where these tales were “handed down from generation to generation from time immemorial” (Kercheval 1902, 285-86 as quoted by Lindahl (McCarthy 1994, xvii))

*“But that was always the way with Jacks, wasn’t it? They were clever and fools all at once.”* (de Lint, 169)

[**Mission**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1929-mission/)

* Goat Specialist
* 
* 
* Admin
* 5,082 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Monroe, MI
* Interests:Scholarly piracy, designing and creating haunted house rooms and props, movies, abstract thinking, abstruse thinking, obstructive thinking, ideating, random thinking, movies, cartoons, movies, movies scores, cycling, world peace and small furry dogs, movies, writing, drawing, personal skills training, gremlins and, of course, lest I forget, movies.

[Posted February 21, 2012](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16571-scallywag/&do=findComment&comment=406325) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/16571-scallywag/&do=reportComment&comment=406325)

Ah, a period use of the word 'Jack' to describe a seaman from Alexander Hamilton's *A New Account of the East-Indies* from 1727. (Not to mention an amusing story.):

“[A] Mandereen [an esteemed official in *Amoy* - Xiamen, China] going in his Chair, with his usual Retinue, met a Sailor coming with a Keg of Arrack [a distilled alcoholic drink] under his Arm. Every Body went off the Street [as was the custom when encountering a mandereen] but the jolly Sailor, who had been tasting his Arrack, he was so mannerly as to walk aside, and give the *Mandereen* the Middle of the Street, but one of the Retinue gave the Sailor a Box on the Ear, and had almost shov’d him down Keg and all. The Sailor d—n’d him for a Son of a Whore, and askt what he meant by it, and at the same Time gave the Aggressor a Box on the Ear in Return. The poor Seaman was soon overpowered by the Retinue, but the *Mandereen* ordered to do him no Harm, till he had sent for the *English* Linguist, who forthwith came.

The *Mandereen* told the Linguist what had happened, and bid him ask the Sailor why he gave him that Affront. The Sailor swore that the *Mandereen* had affronting him, in allowing his Servant to beat him, while he was aware by G—d that he would box the *Mandereen*, or every one of his Gang, for a Spanish Dollar, and with that put his Hand in his Pocket and pull’d a Dollar out.

The *Mandereen* ordered the Linguist to tell him verbatim what the Sailor said, and why he pull’d his Money out. When the Linguist had told him all, the *Mandereen* was ready to fall off his Chair with laughing. And after he had composed himself, he asked if the Sailor would stand to his Challenge, who sware that he would. The *Mandereen* had one *Tartar* in his Retinue, famous for boxing, who had won many Prizes at it, and called for him to try his Skill on the Englishman. The *Tartar* was a lusty Man, and the Sailor short, but well set. The *Tartar* promised and easie Conquest, and to the Combat they went. The *Tartars* used to kick high at the Guts, and the first Time he kickt, the Sailor had him on his Back. The *Tartar* was much asham’d of the Foil he had received, and kicked at the Sailor again, but the Jack soon tripp’d up his Heels again. He desired then to have a fair Bout

\_\_

of Boxing without Tripping, which Jack agreed to, and batter’d the *Tartar*’s Face and Breast so with his Head, that he was forc’d to yield to old *England*. The Mandereen was so pleased with the Bravery and Dexterity of the Seamen, that he made him a Present of ten *Tayels* of Silver.” (Hamilton, p. 523-4)