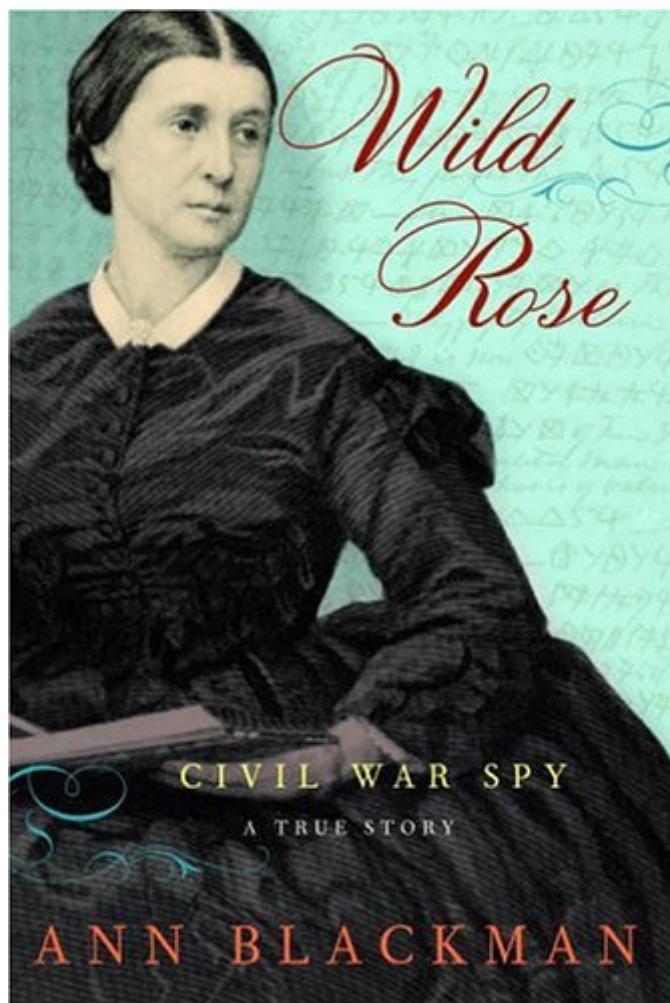


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# Wild Rose: Rose O'Neale Greenhow, Civil War Spy



## Synopsis

For sheer bravado and style, no woman in the North or South rivaled the Civil War heroine Rose O'Neale Greenhow. Fearless spy for the Confederacy, glittering Washington hostess, legendary beauty and lover, Rose Greenhow risked everything for the cause she valued more than life itself. In this superb portrait, biographer Ann Blackman tells the surprising true story of a unique woman in history. "I am a Southern woman, born with revolutionary blood in my veins," Rose once declared "and that fiery spirit would plunge her into the center of power and the thick of adventure. Born into a slave-holding family, Rose moved to Washington, D.C., as a young woman and soon established herself as one of the capital's most charming and influential socialites, an intimate of John C. Calhoun, James Buchanan, and Dolley Madison. She married well, bore eight children and buried five, and, at the height of the Gold Rush, accompanied her husband Robert Greenhow to San Francisco. Widowed after Robert died in a tragic accident, Rose became notorious in Washington for her daring "and numerous "love affairs. But with the outbreak of the Civil War, everything changed. Overnight, Rose Greenhow, fashionable hostess, became Rose Greenhow, intrepid spy. As Blackman reveals, deadly accurate intelligence that Rose supplied to General Pierre G. T. Beauregard written in a fascinating code (the code duplicated in the background on the jacket of this book). Her message to Beauregard turned the tide in the first Battle of Bull Run, and was a brilliant piece of spycraft that eventually led to her arrest by Allan Pinkerton and imprisonment with her young daughter. Indomitable, Rose regained her freedom and, as the war reached a crisis, journeyed to Europe to plead the Confederate cause at the royal courts of England and France. Drawing on newly discovered diaries and a rich trove of contemporary accounts, Blackman has fashioned a thrilling, intimate narrative that reads like a novel. Wild Rose is an unforgettable rendering of an astonishing woman, a book that will stand with the finest Civil War biographies. From the Hardcover edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I first came across the name Rose O'Neale Greenhow, though the website Fold3.com. Rose was featured in the section for this month in history due to her Confederate spy arrest on August 23, 1861. As an avid history buff, I was fascinated to learn of this southern spy during the Civil War. Wanting to know more, I searched for a book on the subject and found Wild Rose. Rose was a well-educated woman of high society, using her intelligence at a time when women were looked down on for an interest in politics. She was a staunch supporter of slavery and made sure everyone knew her opinion. Wild Rose tells of how Rose comes to these beliefs. Through her spying right in the heart of Washington D.C., society, she was able to provide information to the South that changed the outcome of some battles of the war in the south's favor. With her information about military information on the North, she used couriers that brought the information to the Confederate generals. After being caught and exiled to the South, President Jefferson Davis then sent her to England & France, in the hopes Rose could convince them of helping the Confederacy. While in Europe, she wrote her memoir, which became a best-seller in Europe. The royalties from her book ended up being the downfall of Rose, keeping her money around her neck by a chain. She drowned while trying to escape from a blockade in Wilmington, North Carolina when her lifeboat overturned in the water. I found this book very informative & a great read. Would recommend to anyone interested in Civil War or women's history, but I think anyone a fan of history would enjoy the book. I gave it only four stars because I wished that the author Ann Blackman would have written the book in chronological order.

Maybe I'd heard of Rose Greenhow somewhere, but I certainly never knew anything about her amazing life in Washington before the Civil War, hob-nobbing with presidents, crossing the Isthmus

of Panama, listening to John Calhoun's rants about Northern abolitionists and nursing him on his deathbed. Author Blackman paints a shocking portrait of the capital as a center of slavery, elitism and provincial thinking; muddy streets strewn with garbage and the story of a runaway presidential carriage. You can smell the city through her writing. Blackman's discovery of Rose's diary brings the woman to life. Who could imagine her arguing with Napoleon III or taking tea with Thomas Carlyle? The lively writing and careful attention to every detail make this book an illuminating exposition of American history.

Perhaps many of you already know about the Southern socialite who passed critical information to Beauregard just before 1st Manassas. I just finished reading this excellent biography, *Wild Rose*, of the famous Confederate spy and firebrand, written by Ann Blackman, Random House, 2006. The author delves into the social life and politics of pre-bellum Washington, DC. with great care and finesse. Even though Blackman is obviously an abolitionist, nevertheless, she treats respectfully the beliefs and viewpoint of Rose Greenhow. The work is a scholarly labor with dozens of period photographs and hundreds of end notes. The author writes well and I highly recommend this work to anyone who is interested in just how life was in Washington in the 1840's and 1850's. You will be entranced reading about the balls, late night visits, slave antics and agonies, political shenanigans, prisons, and European courts.

I have not traditionally been a reader of historic non-fiction but was intrigued by the subject-matter of this book and was not disappointed. I was fascinated to learn about the social scene of the time and to be introduced to this admirable woman. It was incredible what a "small world" it was and how other historic figures were interwoven unexpectedly into this biography. While I don't agree with her politics nor her methods, I couldn't help but admire her courage and the conviction with which she contributed to a cause she believed in. The writing style was informative and conversational. In fact the book inspired me to read *A Slave in the White House: Paul Jennings and the Madisons* to learn more about this remarkable man of integrity to whom I was first introduced by Ms. Blackman. In contrast, that book was written in a far more academic style and while it was thought-provoking it didn't grab me as "*Wild Rose*" did, but as a companion book it was a great read and provided another perspective and angle to the subject-matter.

Loved this book! Civil War Washington came to life with stories of walking along the Avenue & excursions to the market, plus the grit we didn't learn in school about slave cages not far from the

Capitol. Blackman reveals Rose Greenhow's life in amazing detail—from the books Rose read to anecdotes from her personal diary. At the same time, Blackman explains the context of the period, the rising tension in the nation's capital & the complexity of Washington's intertwining political & social scenes. Beautifully written & packed with historical detail, this is definitely the best read of the summer.

As an assignment in my US History class, I had to choose a non-fiction book about an event in American history that covered anything between 1776 and now. I chose this book, and I didn't even feel like I was doing homework! Incredibly fascinating, well written, well researched and thorough, this book was hard to put down!

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