

It was in January, 1790, that Fletcher Christian and his followers fled to Pitcairn Island. Accompanied by Polynesian wives, they founded a paradise of their own. Above: As portrayed in "Mutiny on the Bounty"

ECHO OF YESTERDAY

BY JAMES STREET

RADIO GOES TO PITCAIRN, BRINGING THE WORLD TO DESCENDANTS OF MUTINEERS OF THE BOUNTY WHO FLED THERE 148 YEARS AGO

A modern radio station is being installed on Pitcairn Island and soon the 199 descendants of the mutineers of the *Bounty* will broadcast to America over networks of the National Broadcasting Company. — News Item.

FLETCHER CHRISTIAN, a giant of a man with a strange vision of freedom in his sad eyes, gathered his frightened followers on a boulder that stood like the Rock of Ages against the growling, grumbling, greedy sea, and with dread in their hearts and forlorn hope in their souls they watched flames flash and flicker up the rigging of *H.M.S. Bounty*.

The spars fell and sparks danced above the stricken ship. Her flag went up in a burst of glorious fire and soon was charred into ashes, a thimbleful of ashes that shortly before had represented the might of all England. The blue waters around the ship turned to yellow and smoke rolled into a blanket and hung over the horizon of the South Seas. The *Bounty* shuddered, settled and vanished.

The watchers were silent. The *Bounty* was gone! Behind the little group that saw her death was an adventure without parallel in history! A dare without equal! For they had defied the unknown, had sneered at death, and now they would not compromise with the fates.

But their faces were drawn as the *Bounty* burned, for tomorrow for them was a mystery.

Fletcher Christian turned from his followers as the ship disappeared and the waters hissed, and entered in his record—"Births, Deaths, Marriages and Remarkable Family Events"—the following:

"Jan. 23, 1790. *H.M.S. Bounty* burned at Pitcairn Island."

And there, said Christian, was the last connection with the world. They were isolated, marooned, 4,000 miles from white men, and alone on a lonely island in the loneliest sea of the world.

But now radio has gone to Pitcairn Island, and the new entry in the "Births, Deaths, Marriages and Remarkable Family Events" probably will be in March and in all likelihood will read:

"A radio station has been installed. Pitcairn Island is no longer isolated."

ONE hundred and forty-eight years from the season when the *Bounty* was burned, the descendants of Fletcher Christian and his comrades—the madcap mutineers who struck a blow for the rights of men who go down to the sea in ships—have shattered the isolation that their fathers ordained and have become a part of the radio brotherhood of man.

A group of manufacturers donated equipment for the new station which will permit the islanders to become a voice and ear of the world. The set will get its primary power from ordi-

nary storage batteries, for Pitcairn has no power plant.

The National Broadcasting Company has completed arrangements for American broadcasts with the Pitcairn Island Expedition, which will erect the station on the lonely island, far from ship lanes—a dot of land and coral thousands of miles from nowhere.

THE expedition is sponsored by F. C. Henrickson, president of the Coto-Coil Company of Providence, Rhode Island. L. S. Bellem, Jr., and Granville P. Lindley, two other Rhode Islanders, will install the new transmitter. Lindley was the chief electrician of Byrd's second Antarctic expedition.

Broadcasts from the island are expected to begin the middle of next month. The expedition left New York February 3 and will arrive at their destination on Sunday, February 27. Two weeks will be required to install the equipment, after which the two members will spend an additional eight weeks testing and experimenting.

The islanders became radio conscious about a year ago, when the schooner *Yankee* dropped a hook and Alan Eurich, the ship's "Sparks," went ashore. The island had a tiny receiver, donated in 1920 by a British company on condition that Andrew Young, descendant of one of the mutineers, would learn the code. He learned it, and taught it to many islanders.

In 1928, an amateur operator from New Zealand installed an ancient

transmitting set. It included a gasoline-driven generator which kept the storage battery charged. But there's no gasoline on Pitcairn and soon the set was useless. All Young could do was wait until a ship happened by to refill his gas tanks. So all in all, Station PITC—the call-letters of the world's outpost—operated only every now and then, mostly then.

That was the situation when Operator Eurich of the *Yankee* went ashore. He wrote a story about the station and it was published in *QST*, official organ for radio amateurs. The "hams" asked American manufacturers to chip in and present Young with a new station, and the Pitcairn Island and NBC programs were the results.

The new apparatus is equipped with a windmill charger, which will give life to the 12-volt, 300-ampere-hour battery. There will be enough juice to run the station ten hours a day. The transmitter can operate either as a code-transmitter or as a radiotelephone, with a maximum power output of eighty watts.

To make broadcasts possible to the United States, the manufacturers backing the expedition have built equipment powerful enough to short-wave programs from Pitcairn to the RCA West Coast receiving station at Point Reyes, Calif.—a distance of 4,500 miles.

DURING the expedition's stay, the broadcasts will feature talks by Radio Engineer Bellem and Construction Engineer Lindley, and will include descriptions of the romantic island and interviews with the islanders.

The islanders are grateful for radio, but those business houses that gave the station have shattered a glorious legend for the rest of us. For who has not thrilled at the name of Pitcairn Island? Who has not built aircastles on its shifting sands? Who among you has not lived on the island in a world of make-believe, has not sailed side by side with Christian through seas of romance, has not seen the crawling, smelly slums of England whence came the *Bounty* mutineers, and has not traveled with them over the world and under the world to Tahiti and then down, down off the charted course, down an unknown sea to a paradise of coral and palms and eternal rest?

But now radio is going to Pitcairn! What a world of achievements those simple words foretell! For the islanders will be your next-door neighbors. No longer will they be something strange and far away. And their yesterdays will be told only in histories and their tomorrows will be like ours—Bulova-watch time! Charlie McCarthy! Ben Bernie and all the lads! Now they will go to Pitcairn, and Pitcairn will come to us.

The world, my friends, is no longer a stage—it's a radio dial!

AND radio has turned down and folded the last chapter of Pitcairn's history of isolation. The next thing we know they'll be having income taxes and traffic laws and maybe a New Deal, and then where will our island of idle dreams be?

It was one hundred and fifty-one years ago that pig-headed old George III commissioned Capt. Jonathan Bligh to sail the stout little warship *Bounty* to the South Seas, gather breadfruit trees and take them to the West Indies and plant them so the slaves would have cheap food and could live cheaply and work harder in human bondage for the power and glory of England.

A crew was got, mostly from the slums, and the *Bounty* sailed from

Spithead in 1787, and in October of 1788 hove to at Tahiti, almost around the world from England.

The voyage had been tortuous. There had been calms and storms and other things that try men's hearts. Bligh was a driver. He had orders to get breadfruit for his majesty's slaves, and nothing was going to defeat him—not even the sea. But he reckoned not with the courage of men.

THE crew had taken almost inhuman punishment, and when the *Bounty* sailed from Tahiti after a twenty-three-weeks' stay, she had a hold full of breadfruit trees for slaves, and a fo'cas'le full of grim Englishmen who would not be slaves.

Christian, his spirit rebelling because Bligh was beating and driving his crew, could stand it no longer and planned to desert ship alone. But a seaman saw him attempt to get a boat away and told Christian that several of his comrades would mutiny.

The next day Christian and twenty-four seamen mutinied and cast Bligh and twenty-one loyal sailors adrift in an open boat with ample provisions. Bligh, one of the greatest sailors of all time, sailed the tiny boat more than three thousand miles to safety. He had vowed to bring the mutineers before an admiralty court, but while he was battling the sea, Christian sailed the *Bounty* back to Tahiti.

Realizing that England would hunt him down, Christian attempted to persuade all the mutineers to go with him to an undetermined destination. Only nine would venture back aboard the *Bounty*.

But these carried nine Tahitian wives. Six other Tahitians—three with wives—also sailed on the voyage.

CHRIStIAN, even if he knew, never told his companions where they were going. They sailed 1,400 miles northwest and came eventually to tiny Pitcairn Island, which had been discovered in 1767. The first thing Christian did was to begin a chronicle of their adventures, calling it "Births, Deaths, Marriages and Remarkable Family Events."

The world soon forgot about the Pitcairn Islanders, and no wonder, for their haven was 4,600 miles from San Francisco, 5,300 from Sydney, Australia, and 3,800 miles east of New Zealand.

Dissension cropped out soon after the paradise was founded and the women got the blame. In 1793 John Williams' wife, Fasto, died and the Englishman took unto himself the wife of one of the Tahitian natives without the native's permission. The native men—all six of them—plotted murder, but the colored wives of the white men got word of the plan and warned their husbands by singing a song—"Why Do the Black Men Sharpen Their Axes? To Kill the White Men."

THERE was war in paradise, and five of the original mutineers, including Christian, were butchered. Another, Alexander Smith, was seriously wounded and the remaining three escaped. Then they in turn, aided by the widows of the slain mutineers, murdered the six Tahitians. And that left only four men and eleven women. Smith became the leader, and the islanders began tilling the ground and living peacefully, absolutely oblivious to the rest of the world.

The next viper in Paradise was that old demon, rum. William McCoy had learned how to make moonshine. He used a copper kettle from the *Bounty* as a still and brewed a powerful potion

of panther juice, which they called "tee-root" because it was made from the tee-root. McCoy bootlegged some of the stuff, but drank most of it himself, and on April 30, 1798, he got loaded to the gills, tied a stone around his neck and jumped into the sea.

And then there were only three white men. Violence returned in 1799 when Matthew Quintal threatened the lives of Smith and Richard Young, but Young and Smith joined forces, put Quintal on the spot, rubbed him out, and then there were only two men. Young died a natural death in 1800, and Smith had Paradise to himself, except for a lot of women and the half-caste children.

But he managed to get by in spite of this handicap, and everything was going pretty well on Pitcairn in 1808 when Matthew Folger, a Yankee skipper hard out from Boston, in the good ship *Topaz*, hove to at the speck in the South Seas and went ashore for water.

HE WOULDN'T believe Smith, but when the Englishman showed him the record and proof of the adventure, the hard-headed old Yankee skipper swore under his breath and drank a slug of tee-root to the courage of the men. He brought news to Pitcairn. The French Revolution was history—Napoleon was on the march—Europe was seething. A little republic called the United States had opened its eyes, cast aside its swaddling-clothes, and was yowling for a place in the crib of nations.

The Yankee skipper told Smith such glowing stories of the United States that the Englishman even decided that the islanders should have a democratic form of government like America's, and to make it complete, Smith changed his name to John Adams, then president of the United States. And John Adams became the first president of Paradise.

The *Topaz* sailed away and brought to the outside world the story of the *Bounty*. But it was such an incredible era that the story soon was forgotten.

THE islanders thrived in body, but not in knowledge, for there was none to teach them. The only book on the island was the *Bounty* Bible, but Smith read that aloud to his people and taught the children to read and write. And then in 1822 an English ship dropped anchor at Pitcairn and the crew went ashore for fresh victuals. John Buffet and John Evans, two of the seamen, were so entranced with the island that they jumped ship and remained there.

They were reasonably well educated men and took up the teaching job. They noted that the islanders, in appearance and manners, were like a typical group of middle-class English—dockworkers and laborers. They had ugly, knotty hands, and wore no shoes. They spoke English very well, and despite the constant intermarriage, their minds were stable. In fact, only one case of insanity ever has been recorded on the island.

When steamships came in and the story of Pitcairn Island came out, romanticists went there to satisfy that strange yearning that all men have—to see strange places, particularly South Sea islands of romance. And now comes radio to the isle of idle dreams. Happy listening, you islanders! And welcome to the greatest family on earth—the radio listeners of the world.

But I can't help wondering what old Fletcher Christian, or even Captain Bligh, would say if either could see you now, waiting for the sound of the gong and station identification.

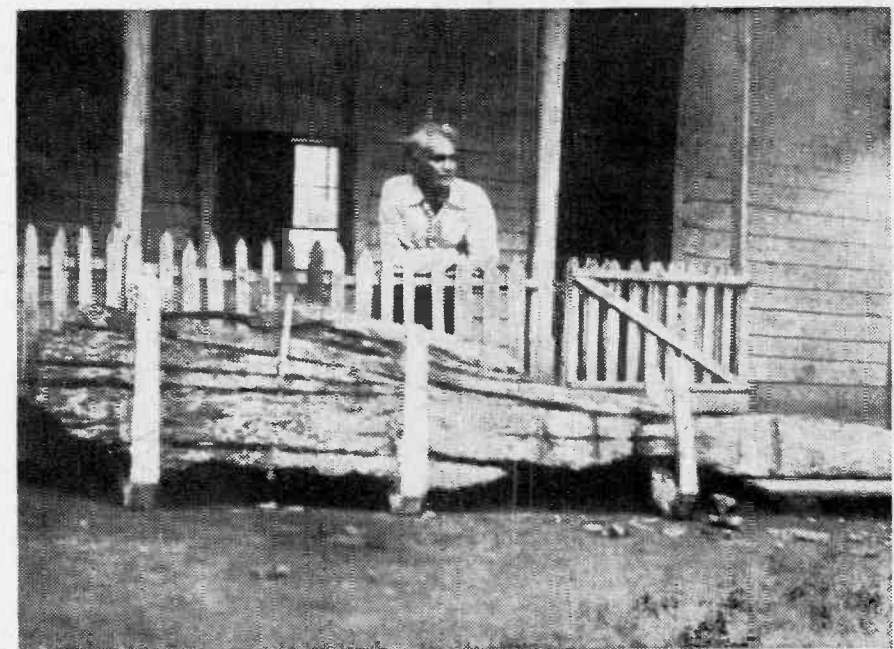


—Wide World

Outpost of the world, Pitcairn nestles in the loneliest sea of the world, is 4,600 miles from San Francisco, 5,300 from Sydney, Australia. Rarely visited, it remains one of the most romantic of all South Sea Islands



It was Capt. Bligh's tortuous treatment that led Christian and twenty-four seamen to mutiny. In M-G-M's film of the historic events, Bligh was portrayed by Charles Laughton (left), Christian by Clark Gable (rear)



—Wide World

A relic of an ancient tragedy of the sea is this rudder of H.M.S. *Bounty*. Discovered in 1933, it lies in front of the courthouse of Pitcairn Island. Parkin Christian (above), descendant of Fletcher Christian, is Magistrate