

“Mutiny” in the Magazine Section:  
*Bounty*, Pitcairn and the Popular Press

The timeless tale of the mutiny on the *Bounty* and Pitcairn Island has captured the interest and imagination of readers for more than 200 years. With its larger-than-life personalities and romantic South Seas setting, the *Bounty* Saga has generated a vast catalog of books, journals and magazine articles—ranging from straightforward retellings and serious scholarship to fiction and parodies.

Editors of periodicals—from one-penny tabloids and slick magazines to the dignified pages of *National Geographic* and *The New Yorker*—have been dipping into the deep well of the *Bounty* Saga since the early 1800s.

Frequently, the illustrations commissioned to accompany these articles have been of outstanding quality, like this one, which appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post*. Today, I’d like to share with you some of the more interesting *Bounty*- and Pitcairn Island-related articles and illustrations that have appeared in a wide range of publications over nearly 200 years. I hope that at least some of them will be brand new to you. Please sit back, relax, and let me take you on a visual tour of “Mutiny in the Magazine Section” that begins in the early 1800s and continues up to the present—in roughly chronological order, with a few special exceptions.

The tale of the *Bounty* entered popular culture when William Bligh returned to England. The news of his remarkable open boat voyage sparked the interest of just about everyone in Great Britain. Newspapers published stories about the *Bounty* mutiny within days of Bligh’s return, and a play, *The Pirates: Or, The Calamities of Capt. Bligh*, quickly opened at the Royalty Theatre.

Years later, news about Pitcairn Island revived public interest in the *Bounty*, which led to additional stage adaptations such as *A New Romantick Operatick Ballet Spectacle*

*[Founded on the Recent Discovery of a Numerous Colony, Formed by, and Descended from, the Mutineers of the Bounty Frigate,] called Pitcairn's Island.*

In 1832, John Barrow renewed interest in the subject when he published *The Eventful History of the Mutiny and Piratical Seizure of H.M.S. Bounty*—which, for the time, put the many strands of the *Bounty* Saga into a coherent, comprehensible narrative. Since then, articles about the *Bounty* and Pitcairn Island have become perennial favorites in the popular press.

More than 100 issues of the one-penny *Chronicles of the Sea*—a publication with the lengthy subtitle of *Fateful Narratives of Shipwrecks, Fires, Famines and Disasters*—were published in London. Two issues about the *Bounty*, featuring nicely detailed illustrations of *Bounty* and *Pandora*, were published in 1838.

The 19th century was a “Golden Age” of popular periodicals, such as *Cassell's Family Magazine*, *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, *The Illustrated London News*, and dozens more, all competing for the attention of readers. With its history of violence followed by religious redemption, the story of Pitcairn Island was a perennial favorite with readers of that era, and numerous retellings appeared in periodicals throughout the 19th century. With its history of violence followed by religious redemption, the story of Pitcairn Island was a perennial favorite with readers of that era, and numerous retellings appeared in periodicals throughout the 19th century.

In 1871, *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* published selections from Lady Belcher's *The Mutineers of the Bounty and their Descendants in Pitcairn and Norfolk Islands*, expanding the audience for her newly published book. The article opens with a portrait of George Nobbs. The article also included illustrations from Lady Belcher's book, such as this engraving of the Pitcairn Settlement on Norfolk Island.

*Cassell's Family Magazine* included fiction and non-fiction, and was filled with illustrations. In 1880, *Cassell's* published “The Pitcairn Islanders, and the Mutiny of the

Bounty” by Dr. Robert Brown, who states, “The community settled in this lovely dot in the Pacific have a history all their own, which, though often told, yet seems never to lose its freshness for the world’s ear.” The illustrations in this article include John Adams’s grave and the church and school built by John Adams.

The Seaman’s Friend Society, organized in 1825, provided decent lodging for sailors as well as Bibles and reading material filled with inspirational stories, including *The Sailors’ Magazine*. This issue from the 1860s featured a 48-page biography of Peter Heywood. While it includes accurate information, it is laced with quotes from the scriptures, and facts are frequently ignored or distorted to express the Society’s viewpoint and provide a moral lesson to the reader. I believe these two illustrations were taken from Nathan Welby Fiske’s *The Story of Alec*.

The world’s first illustrated weekly newspaper, *The Illustrated London News* had a long publication run, from 1842 to 2003. Early issues like this one from 1880 were notable for their excellent wood engravings.

The *Illustrated London News* ran many articles and artwork about the *Bounty* and Pitcairn Island over the years, including “The Pitcairn Islanders,” published on February 15, 1879, which included these two engravings.

Issued every Saturday, a weekly, two-penny tabloid paper named *The Thriller* ran from 1929 to 1940 and was a staple of crime fiction and adventure enthusiasts in the United Kingdom. *The Thriller* serialized *Mutiny on the Bounty* over six issues in 1936, declaring it to be “The finest true-life story every written.” That may be so, but the novel they printed was actually *Men Against the Sea*. I was disappointed to find no interesting illustrations, just still photos of the *Bounty* from the MGM film. *The Thriller* must have been run on a tight budget.

Who would have thought that *Popular Mechanics* would publish an issue about the *Bounty*? “Secrets of the Movie Ships” appeared in the July 1936 issue. This illustrated

article included technical information about the *Bounty* replica created for the 1935 MGM film version of Nordhoff and Hall's *Mutiny on the Bounty*.

*The Blue Peter* was a magazine of sea travel, named after the signal flag that summons passengers to a waiting ship. It started in 1921 and the last issue in appeared in 1939, when it was renamed *The Trident* (1939-56). This issue featured "The Travels of Fletcher Christian" by the famous *Bounty* scholar Owen Rutter, based on Fletcher Christian's fictional correspondence, which Rutter calls, "One of the most interesting frauds in the history of travel literature."

Paperback books started to appear alongside magazine racks in the late 1930s. The first ones were issued from Pocket Books, which eventually secured the rights to reprint Nordhoff and Hall's *Bounty Trilogy* books. The first paperback editions of these novels appeared in the mid-1940s. The low price and colorful covers of these paperbacks gave millions of readers—many of whom had seen the MGM film *Mutiny on the Bounty*—the chance to discover the novels that inspired the film.

One set was tied in with the 1962 film version with Marlon Brando. Pocket Books also produced "scholastic" editions for sale in schools.

Other paperback publishers, such as Dell and Berkeley, provided a great service by making more serious *Bounty/Pitcairn* scholarship—including Irvin Anthony's *The Saga of the Bounty* and Richard Hough's *Captain Bligh and Mr. Christian* available in inexpensive editions.

Hough's book was revised, retitled and reissued in 1984 as a tie-in to the Mel Gibson/Anthony Hopkins film, *The Bounty*—the most accurate film version of the mutiny to date.

A paperback edition of Jack London's famous tale "The Seed of McCoy" published by Pyramid Books in 1956 featured an illustration very much in line with the men's magazines of that era.

Along with the rise of paperbacks, a very special comic book began to appear on the newsstands. From 1941 up to the early 1970s, *Classics Illustrated* comics attracted millions of young readers. The *Classics Illustrated* pledge—"To bring you the world's finest literature in an authentic, absorbing, and colorful manner"—was printed on the inside front cover of the 100th issue, adapted from James Nordhoff and Charles Norman Hall's *Mutiny on the Bounty* and published in 1952. It went through nine printings.

*Classics Illustrated* even offered biographies of the authors, enhancing the young reader's educational experience.

*Mutiny on the Bounty* was quickly followed by an adaptation of *Men Against the Sea*—which was later reprinted with a cover far superior to the first one. There are some excellent examples of comic art in *Men Against the Sea* by artist Rudolph Palais, who also illustrated *Pitcairn's Island*. As one has critic remarked, "The heavily scored waves, sails, and wood grain of the open boat—and even the folds in Bligh's coat—combine to convey the desperation of the 19 men set adrift by the mutineers."

On the other hand, some of the images in the *Classics Illustrated Pitcairn's Island* were so violent that it was taken out of print in 1955 and did not become available again until 1972.

Gold Key Comics, which began operating in 1962, published a comic book version of the 1962 film *Mutiny on the Bounty*, featuring Marlon Brando on the cover. Like *Classics Illustrated*, the Gold Key comic of the Brando film included a page of information about Pitcairn Island for young readers.

MGM's publicity department was covering all bases during promotion of the Brando film, as shown by this coloring book, which may have been displayed next to the Gold Key comic. I believe there was jigsaw puzzle available as well.

Here's another familiar magazine that has enjoyed a long publishing run. Famous for its parodies of current films, its editors couldn't resist making fun of Brando's affected performance in the 1962 *Mutiny on the Bounty*. *Mad Magazine's* version was entitled "Mutiny on the Bouncy," portraying Brando as a foppish, indecisive mutineer. *Mad's* writers had a great deal of fun satirizing Brando's temperamental behavior during the filming, which added to the movie's monumental budget.

At the other end of the reading spectrum, *Saga, the Magazine for Men* is one of the countless "Stag Magazines"—also known as the "Postwar Pulp"—targeted to a male audience from about 1945 through the 1990s. They usually sported lurid covers and frequently lurid content as well.

Surprisingly, *Saga's* illustrated, "Triple-Length Feature" cover story by Jack Pearl, entitled "Captain Bligh of the *Bounty*," presented a more accurate interpretation of Bligh than either of the MGM film versions.

*Man's World* had no scruples about historical accuracy. A story entitled "I Survived the Savage Mutiny on the Bounty," which supposedly was based on Peter Heywood's "secret diary," didn't even get the names of the crew correctly. And, as seen by this illustration, native women—who look more like Americans than Tahitians—somehow managed to stow away on the *Bounty* and take part in the mutiny.

More sophisticated magazines often appeared on the magazine racks right alongside the men's pulp publications. For decades *National Geographic* has been publishing superb articles, photographs and illustrations about the *Bounty*, Pitcairn Island and Norfolk Island.

Luis Marden's "In *Bounty's* Wake: Finding the Wreck of H.M.S. *Pandora*," in the October 1985 issue of *National Geographic Magazine*, was accompanied by outstanding artwork by Roy Andersen, who contributed these evocative illustrations of the *Pandora* at Tahiti, and the prisoners escaping from "Pandora's Box" when the ship foundered on the Great Barrier Reef.

*Islands Magazine* appeals primarily to the sophisticated traveler, and occasionally runs historic articles related to tourist destinations, including the South Seas.

Let's step back in time several decades, for a look at what I think are some of the finest illustrations of Nordhoff and Hall's *Bounty Trilogy*. I'm sure that many of you are familiar with the *Saturday Evening Post*, a publication that has roots in the earliest days of the United States. The distinguished authors it published include F. Scott Fitzgerald, Sinclair Lewis and William Faulkner—and, in 1933 and 1934, Charles Nordhoff and James Norman Hall.

In its heyday, the magazine was especially famous for its covers by Norman Rockwell, but other fine artists contributed their work as well, including Anton Otto Fischer, who spent many years at sea and was named "Artist Laureate" for the United States Coast Guard. His work frequently appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post*. He also illustrated Charles Nordhoff's *The Pearl Lagoon* as well as the "Tugboat Annie" stories.

*Men Against the Sea* appeared in four consecutive issues in late 1933.

#### SLIDES OF *MEN AGAINST THE SEA*

The work of master illustrator W. H.D. Koerner's usually is associated with the mythical Wild West, and his work also frequently appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post*, which serialized *Pitcairn's Island* with his artwork in 1934.

#### SLIDES OF *PITCAIRN'S ISLAND*

Now, let's return to a more contemporary array of periodicals.

*Smithsonian Magazine*, the official journal of the Smithsonian Institute in Washington D.C. is a monthly periodical that started in 1970. This article from 1988 devoted quite a few pages to news and photos about Pitcairn Island.

In 1998, *Yankee Magazine*, which has close ties to the venerable *Old Farmer's Almanac*, published this article about the visit of the ship *Cyrus* to Pitcairn in 1839 and its link with famous "Bounty Bibles."

*British Heritage* describes itself as a magazine of travel, culture and adventure, especially written for those who love England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales. An article by Bruce Heydt, which alludes to the speculation that Bligh and Christian may have had a homosexual relationship, provoked a flurry of letters denouncing the theory in the following issue. The hypothesis was first developed in Madge Darby's *Who Caused the Mutiny on the Bounty* and expanded by Richard Hough in *Captain Bligh and Mr. Christian*. It remains a controversial theory.

No, that's isn't 90 year-old Fletcher Christian on the cover of the January 2003 issue of *British Heritage* 24. It's Christopher Lee from the *Lord of the Rings* film. This issue includes an excellent article by the late Sven Wahlroos, who makes a convincing case that "Neither Bligh nor Christian caused the mutiny:

"It was their interaction, combined with several other lesser but contributing factors, which caused the mutiny. These factors include the value placed on the *taio* friendship experienced by the crew on Tahiti, the possibility that Fletcher Christian suffered from borderline personality disorder, and, perhaps above all, Christian's sense of honor, severely wounded by Bligh's behavior."



Specialist magazines like the Naval Institute's *Naval History...and Sea History*, a publication of the Naval Institute, occasionally publish *Bounty*-related articles, such as this recent one devoted to the *Pandora* voyage and illustrated by Paul Garnett.

The first issue of *The New Yorker* appeared in 1925 and continues to entertain readers with its sophisticated reading fare, including cartoons like this one, which suggests that Bligh's bad grammar provoked the mutiny.

"The crew can no longer tolerate Captain Bligh's ruthless splitting of infinitives."

In its August 4, 2003 issue, *The New Yorker* magazine treated readers to an advance look at *The Bounty* by Caroline Alexander, which would not appear in bookstores until later that year. "Wreck of the Pandora: The Fate of the Men Sent to Hunt Down the Bounty Mutineers," is a lengthy excerpt from *The Bounty*, with evocative illustrations by Mark Ulriksen. Readers must have been surprised to discover that there is so much more to *Bounty*'s story than the mutiny itself.

Here are Mark Ulriksen's renderings of Bligh and Heywood. Note how he gives Bligh a more heroic expression than Heywood's, which dovetails with Alexander's own interpretation of events.

Another magazine with deep roots in New England, *The Atlantic*, first published in 1857, has a long and venerable history of printing the highest quality fiction and non-fiction. Christopher Buckley's "Scrutiny on the Bounty" was an amusing response to Caroline Alexander's efforts to rehabilitate William Bligh's infamous reputation. Buckley presented us with "Captain Bligh's Secret Logbook." As the day of mutiny approaches Bligh writes the following:

**April 26.** Awoke at 6 bells to a Commotion on deck. Found the men inebriated on taro-root beer and pelting each other with our precious Bread-fruits.

**April 27.** Feeling confident that Order and good Naval discipline has been restored. The men go about their business, playing Bezique and Ten-o-Whiskers, napping and smoking and fishing and holding Spitting contests.

**April 28.** Wanting to reward this good Behaviour, at 7 bells I announced that we would have a nice refreshing swim before our noon-meal of Dolphin and Sharke ceviche in a lyme-cilantro Reduction with julienned mangoes and mashed wasabi taro. (My own recipe.)

**June 12.** Do earnestly hope Christian delivered my Bread-fruit safely to the West Indies.

In conclusion, I think this presentation demonstrates that the *Bounty* Saga is destined to live on—not only in scholarly books and journals—but also in the magazine section of your local Walgreen's or Barnes and Noble. You might see me there someday, looking for a magazine that just might have a new article about the *Bounty* or Pitcairn Island.

I hope you've enjoyed this tour of the *Bounty* Saga in the world of periodicals.

Thank you!