

Charles Nordhoff

Charles Nordhoff was born in London, England, to American parents. His father was Walter Nordhoff, a wealthy businessman and author of *The Journey of the Flame* penned under the name "Antonio de Fierro Blanco". His mother, Sarah Cope Whitall, was of Pennsylvania Quaker stock. Nordhoff's parents returned to the United States with him in 1889, living first in Pennsylvania, then Rhode Island, and finally settling in California by 1898.

Charles Bernard Nordhoff's grandfather was Charles Nordhoff, a journalist and author of non-fiction books. Nordhoff himself showed an early interest in writing. His first published work was an article in an ornithological journal, written in 1902 when he was just fifteen. At seventeen, he entered Stanford University, but transferred after one year to Harvard.

After graduation in 1909, Nordhoff worked for his father's businesses, first spending two years in Mexico managing a sugar plantation, then four years as an executive of a tile and brick company in Redlands, California. He quit in 1916, signed up with the Ambulance Corps, and traveled to France. There he joined other American expatriates as a pilot in the Lafayette Escadrille. He finished World War I as a lieutenant in the US Army Air Service.

Writing career

After leaving the service, Nordhoff stayed on in Paris, France, where he worked as a journalist and wrote his first book, *The Fledgling*. In 1919, he and another former Lafayette Squadron pilot, James Norman Hall, who was also an author and journalist, were asked to write a history of that unit. Neither man had known the other during the war. Their first literary collaboration, *The Lafayette Flying Corps*, was published in 1920.

The two authors then returned to the United States, sharing a rented house in Martha's Vineyard, until given a commission by Harper's Magazine to write travel articles set in the South Pacific. They went to Tahiti in the Society Islands for research and inspiration, and ended up staying, Nordhoff for twenty years, Hall for life. Their second book, *Faery Lands of the South Seas* was serialized in Harper's in 1920-21, then published in book form.

Nordhoff married a Tahitian woman, Pepe Teara, with whom he would have four daughters and two sons. He wrote novels on his own for ten years, of which *The Derelict* (1928) was considered his finest solo effort. Nordhoff and Hall continued to jointly write travel and adventure articles for *The Atlantic* during the 1920s and early 1930s. They also co-authored another memoir of the Great War, *Falcons of France* (1929). It was Hall who suggested they work on the Bounty trilogy, *The Mutiny on the Bounty*, *Men Against the Sea* and *Pitcairn's Island*.

Nordhoff, who would write in the mornings and spend the afternoons fishing, once explained how he and James Hall worked together. They initially drew up charts of all the characters, then would dole out the chapters to each other. For their joint works they each made an effort to write in the other's style so as to achieve a reasonably smooth narrative.

After *The Bounty Trilogy*, Nordhoff and Hall's most successful book was *The Hurricane* (1936). They continued their partnership writing novels until 1945. Nordhoff on his own would only produce one more solo book, *In Yankee Windjammers* (1940), a retelling of the ships, sailors, and way of life about which his grandfather had written. His last work, written in collaboration with a little known author named Tod Ford, was *The Far Lands* (1950) which would not appear until three years after his death.

Later life

Nordhoff divorced his first wife in 1936, left Tahiti a few years later, and returned to California, where in 1941 he married Laura Grainger Whiley. During WWII, he had the honor of having a Liberty ship, *SS Charles Nordhoff*, built in Portland, Oregon in 1943, named after him.

Charles Bernard Nordhoff died alone at his home in Montecito, California, on April 10, 1947. His body was found the next morning by Tod Ford, who had called on him to work on their book. Newspapers at the time reported the death as an "apparent heart attack". Later sources indicate he had been drinking heavily, was depressed, and may have committed suicide

James Norman Hall

James Norman Hall (April 22, 1887 – July 5, 1951 – age 64) was an American author best known for the novel *Mutiny on the Bounty* with co-author Charles Nordhoff.

Hall was born in Colfax, Iowa, where he attended the local schools. Hall graduated from Grinnell College in 1910 and became a social worker in Boston, Massachusetts, while trying to establish himself as a writer and studying for a Master's degree from Harvard University.

Hall was on vacation in the United Kingdom in the summer of 1914, when World War I began. Posing as a Canadian, he enlisted in the British Army, serving in the Royal Fusiliers as a machine gunner during the Battle of Loos. He was discharged after his true nationality was discovered, and he returned to the United States and wrote his first book, *Kitchener's Mob* (1916), recounting his wartime experiences.

Returning to France, Hall joined the Lafayette Escadrille, a French-American flying corps, before the United States officially entered the war. Hall was awarded the Croix de Guerre with five palms and the Médaille Militaire. When the United States entered the war, Hall was made a Captain in the Army Air Service. There he met another American pilot, Charles Nordhoff. After being shot down, Hall spent the last months of the conflict as a German prisoner of war. He was awarded the French Légion d'Honneur and the American Distinguished Service Cross.

After the war, Hall spent much of his life on the island of Tahiti, where he and Nordhoff, who had also moved there, wrote a number of successful adventure books (including the *Bounty* trilogy), many of which were subsequently made into movies. In 1925 Hall married Sarah (Lala) Winchester, who was part-Polynesian. They had two children: the cinematographer Conrad Hall (1926–2003) and Nancy Hall-Rutgers (born 1930).

Hall died in Tahiti and is buried on the hillside property just above the modest wooden house he and Lala lived in for many years

Mutiny on the Bounty

A first Novel *Les Révoltés de la Bounty* (The Mutineers of the Bounty) was published by Jules Verne in 1879.

In the Wake of the Bounty (1933) (notable as the first film to introduce Errol Flynn to movie audiences, as Fletcher Christian)

Mutiny on the Bounty (1935) starring Charles Laughton and Clark Gable, and directed by Frank Lloyd based on the Charles Nordhoff and James Norman Hall novel *Mutiny on the Bounty*.

The film was one of the biggest hits of its time and remains a classic today and, although its historical accuracy has been seriously questioned (inevitable as it is based in a novel about the facts, not the facts themselves) it is considered by film critics to be the best film inspired by the mutiny. The movie does contain a few historical inaccuracies. Captain Bligh was never on board *HMS Pandora*, nor was he present at the trial of the mutineers who stayed on Tahiti. At the time he was halfway around the world on a second voyage for breadfruit plants. Fletcher Christian's father had died many years before Christian's travels on board *the Bounty*—the movie shows the elder Christian at the trial. It should be noted though, that the movie was always presented as an adaptation of the Nordhoff and Hall trilogy, which already differed from the actual story of the mutiny.

Bligh is depicted as a brutal, sadistic disciplinarian. Particular episodes include a keelhauling and flogging a dead man. Neither of these happened. Keelhauling was used rarely, if at all, and had been abandoned long before Bligh's time. Indeed the meticulous record of the Bounty's log reveals that the flogging rate was lower than the average for that time. Prior to the Mutiny the Bounty had only two deaths—one seaman died of scurvy (not keelhauling) and the ship's surgeon died apparently of drink and indolence and not as a result of abuse by Bligh. Likewise the movie shows the mutineers taking over the ship only after killing several loyal crewmen when in fact none died—although one crewman came very close to shooting Bligh until stopped by Christian. Lastly Christian is shown being inspired to take over the ship after several crewmen have unjustly been put into irons by Bligh; this is fictional license.

However, some historically accurate aspects exist in the film. Clark Gable reluctantly had to shave off his famous moustache because the sailors in the Royal Navy in the eighteenth century had to be clean-shaven.

In the final scene of the film Gable gives a rousing speech to his fellow mutineers speaking of creating a perfect society of free men on Pitcairn away from Bligh and the Navy. The reality was very different. Free from the restraints of Naval discipline the mutineers proved incapable of self-government. Pitcairn degenerated into a true hell on earth of drunkenness, rape and ultimately murder. Apart from John Adams and Ned Young all the mutineers perished, most of them by violence. Whether the film intended the irony is not known.

Mutiny on the Bounty (1962) is a 1962 film starring Marlon Brando, based on the novel *Mutiny on the Bounty* by Charles Nordhoff and James Norman Hall. The film retells the 1789 real-life mutiny aboard *H.M.A.V. Bounty* led by Fletcher Christian against the ship's captain, William Bligh. It is the second American film to be made from the novel, the first being *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1935). All three films based on the Nordhoff and Hall novel (1933, 1935 and 1962) have considerable variations from actual historical events. Some of those in the 1962 film include:

- The movie has Bligh and Christian meeting for the first time; in reality, they had sailed together before.
- In the movie, Christian is second-in-command; in reality, he was Master's mate.
- Bligh is older in the movie than he was in real life. In the actual mutiny he was 33; Trevor Howard was 47 during most of the filming.
- Bligh was asleep during the initial stages of the uprising; the movie shows him as awake and on deck.
- Bligh is also seen as cruel, or at least ruthless, when in truth he was unusually progressive for a Royal Navy officer of his time.
- Christian is seen as resolute and decisive when in reality he was indecisive and suffered from a nervous disposition.
- In the movie, Bligh's acquittal at his court-martial comes with a considerably negative statement attached. In reality, William Bligh was hailed as a hero for his courage and his astonishing feat of navigation in getting the Bounty loyalists home.
- Christian dies at the end of the film, not from being murdered as in real life, but as a result of burns suffered while trying to save the Bounty after the other mutineers set her on fire. However, the murky historical evidence that exists suggests that he lived on the island for several years before being killed; some even contend that he eventually returned to England some years later, a difficult proposition given the distances involved and remoteness of the island in the 18th century world.

A musical based on the same story appeared in the West End during the 1980s. It was written by and starred David Essex.

Motivation for the Mutiny:

<http://www.experiencefestival.com/a/mutiny%20on%20the%20bounty%20-%20motivations%20behind%20the%20mutiny/id/5107938>

To this day, there is considerable debate on what caused the mutiny to occur. Some people blame Captain Bligh for causing the mutiny. They feel that Bligh was a villain and tyrant, who abused the crew to the point that Christian and the crew felt they had no choice but to mutiny. Others feel the blame rests entirely with Fletcher Christian and the crew. They feel that Bligh was not an unusually harsh captain, that he was for the most part a man of his times.

For the book *Mr. Bligh's Bad Language*, Greg Denning analyzed ships' logs for the statistics on floggings at sea between 1765 and 1793. Fleet-wide, 21.5% of sailors received at least one lash, and the average number of lashes per flogging was five. At one extreme, George Vancouver had 45% of his crew flogged, averaging 21 strokes per flogging; Bligh was well below average, with 19 percent of his crew receiving an average of 1.5 lashes; whatever Bligh's faults, unusually harsh discipline was not among them. This is also brought out by the fact that three deserters during the voyage were flogged instead of being hanged. Further, Bligh noted within his official log that he needed every man.

On the other hand, Bligh was reputed to have a harsh tongue, and to criticize substandard performance at length in front of other crewmembers. While he may have been comparatively lenient in actual discipline, some historians have speculated that his demanding character cost him the loyalty necessary to maintain good order among the crew, especially in light of six months of soft living in Tahiti. Most ships of the time carried more officers than the *Bounty* did, and there were no Marines on board. This too was a factor in the success of the mutiny, and would not be a lesson easily forgotten by Bligh. On his second trip to Tahiti, he had both more officers and a complement of Marines.

As mentioned previously, while at Tahiti the men found they liked the place, especially the native women. Those who hold the crew responsible felt that after spending so much time on Tahiti they did not want to return to the ordinary life of a seaman and instead live a life of ease and sexual excess on that island.

Where did the *Bounty* come from?

His Majesty's Armed Vessel (HMAV) Bounty began her career as the collier *Bethia*. She was purchased by the British Royal Navy on May 26, 1787, and renamed *Bounty*. She was a relatively small sailing ship at 215 tons with length: 91 ft (27.7 m), mounting only four four pounders (2 kg cannon) and ten swivel guns. By way of comparison, Cook's *Endeavour* displaced 368 tons, and *Resolution* 462 tons.

Spithead:

Spithead is an area of the Solent and a roadstead off Gilkicker Point in Hampshire, England. It is protected from all winds, except those from the southeast. It receives its name from the Spit, a sandbank stretching south from the Hampshire shore for 5 km (3 miles); and it is 22.5 km (14 miles) long by about 6.5 km (4 miles) in average breadth.

The Fleet Review is a British tradition that usually takes place at Spithead, where the monarch reviews the massed Royal Navy.

In 1797 there was a mutiny (the Spithead mutiny) in the Royal Navy fleet at anchor at Spithead.