THOMAS FRANCIS "TOM" NEALE

Thomas Francis Neale took as his life's motto "A man is rich in proportion to the number of things which he can afford to let alone," and it is interesting that one of the things he later said he needed the most was a good book to read in the evening in his hammock. He lived for a good many years, off and on, on the tiny uninhabited Anchorage Island within the little atoll of Suwarrow, which is at the southern extremity of the northern group of the Cook Islands, 513 miles northwest of Rarotonga and some 200 miles from the nearest other human habitation.

WALDEN: At a certain season of our life we are accustomed to consider every spot as the possible site of a house. I have thus surveyed the country on every side within a dozen miles of where I live. In imagination I have bought all the farms in succession, for all were to be bought, and I knew their price. I walked over each farmer's premises, tasted his wild apples, discoursed on husbandry with him, took his farm at his price, at any price, mortgaging it to him in my mind; even put a higher price on it, -took every thing but a deed of it, -took his word for his deed, for I dearly love to talk, -cultivated it, and him too to some extent, I trust, and withdrew when I had enjoyed it long enough, leaving him to carry it on. This experience entitled me to be regarded as a sort of real-estate broker by my friends. Wherever I sat, there I might live, and the landscape radiated from me accordingly. What is a house but a *sedes*, a seat? -better if a country seat. I discovered many a site for a house not likely to be soon improved, which some might have thought too far from the village, but to my eyes the village was too far from it. Well, there I might live, I said; and there I did live, for an hour, a summer and a winter life; saw how I could let the years run off, buffet the winter through, and see the spring come in. The future inhabitants of this region, wherever they may place their houses, may be sure that they have been anticipated. An afternoon sufficed to lay out the land into orchard woodlot and pasture, and to decide what fine oaks or pines should be left to stand before the door, and whence each blasted tree could be seen to the best advantage; and then I let it lie, fallow perchance, for a man is rich in proportion to the number of things which he can afford to let alone.

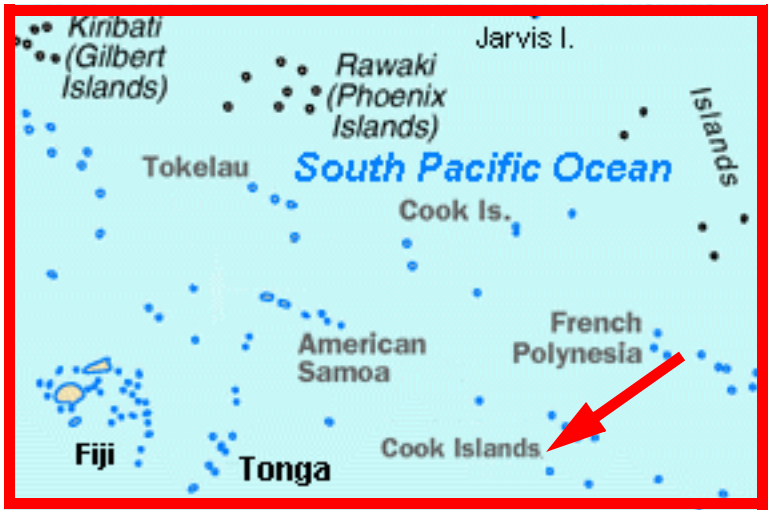
800 CE

In Ireland, the Book of Kells was being illuminated. The first castles were being erected in western Europe. Arabs and Persians were exploring the East African coast and setting up trading stations at Malindi, Mombasa, Kilwa, and Mogadishu. By this point the astrolabe was highly developed in the Islamic world. The device would not be introduced from Andalusia (Islamic Spain) into Europe, however, until the early 12th Century.

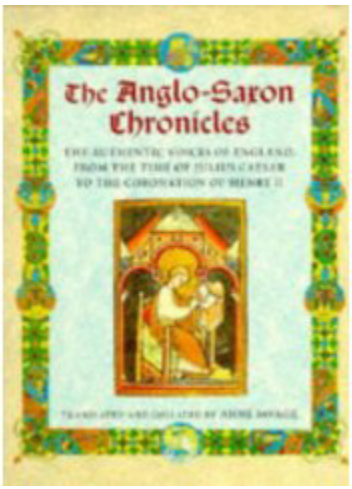
(The instrument pictured above would be crafted in Europe in 1532.)

In the Pacific, the tradition is that Ru, who sailed from Tupua'i in French Polynesia, landed in about this timeframe on Aitutaki and Tangiia and perhaps Rarotonga in the Cook Islands. The master mariner Ru had not, of course, ever seen, or, it seems, did he have any need of, such an astrolabe.

THOMAS FRANCIS NEALE TOM NEALE



ANGLO-SAXON CHRONICLES

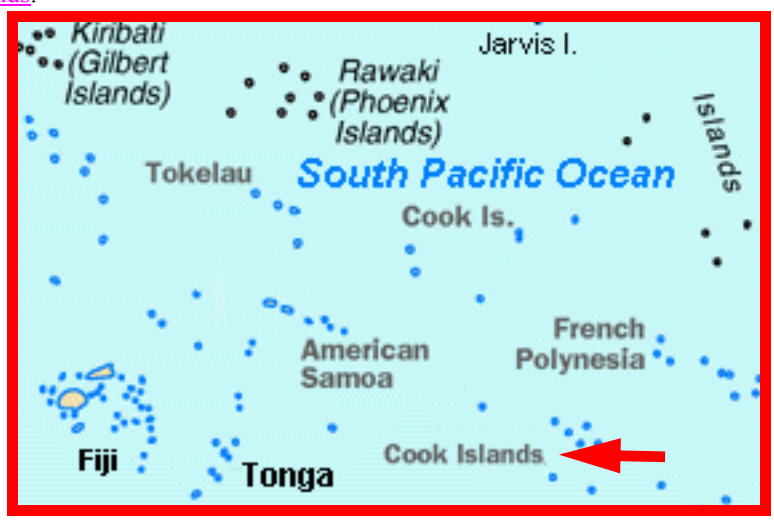


900 CE

The 1st settlers from the Cook Islands, ancestors of the Maoris, reached the South Island of New Zealand.

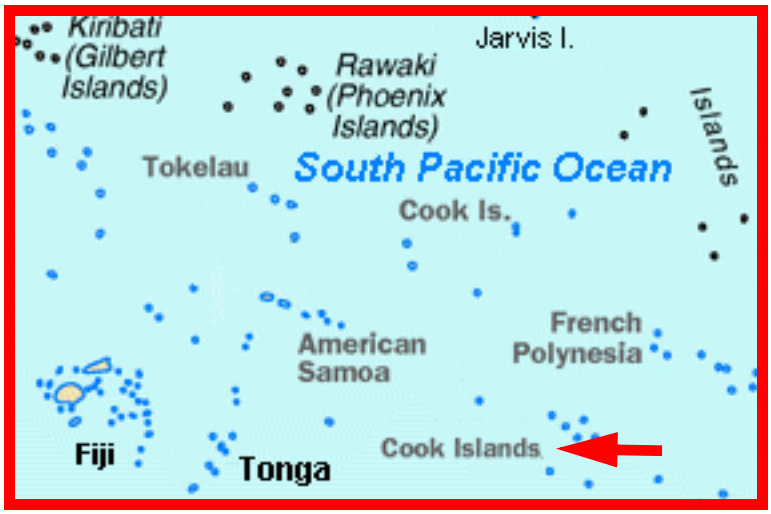
1595

Alvaro de Mendaña visited the Marquesas Islands and then Nderic (Santa Cruz). He landed on Pukapuka in the Cook Islands.



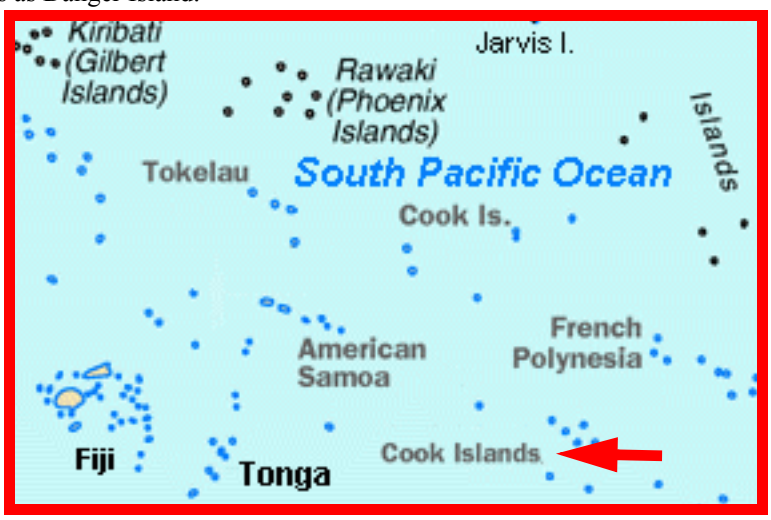
1606

Pedro Fernandes de Queiros discovered the New Hebrides Islands and landed on Rakahanga in the Cook Islands.



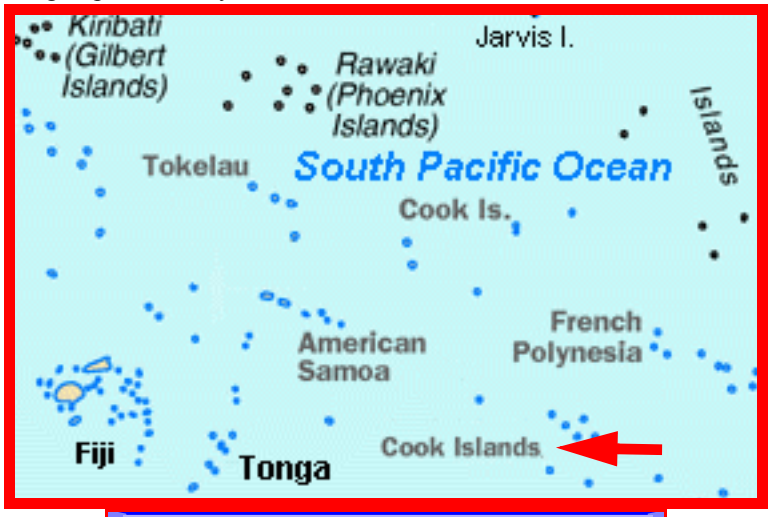
1764

A British vessel arrived off Pukapuka in the Cook Islands. The British, because they were unable to land, designated this as Danger Island.



1773

In this year (and then again in 1779) Captain James Cook sighted and landed on many of the islands of the southern group of what eventually would become known as the Cook Islands (but he did not see Rarotonga). He designated the group the Hervey Islands.

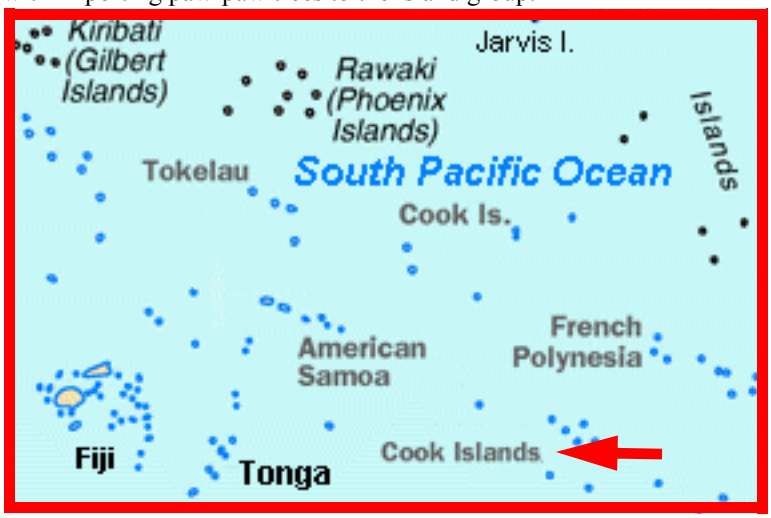


HIS 3 VOYAGES, VOL. III

HIS 3 VOYAGES, VOL. IV

1789

Captain William Bligh of the *Bounty* landed on Aitutaki in the Cook Islands.
He is credited with importing paw-paw trees to the island group.



PLANTS

April 28: Mutiny aboard HMS *Bounty.* Although the mutineers of Captain William Bligh's *Bounty* appeared off Rarotonga in the Cook Islands, probably they did not come ashore.

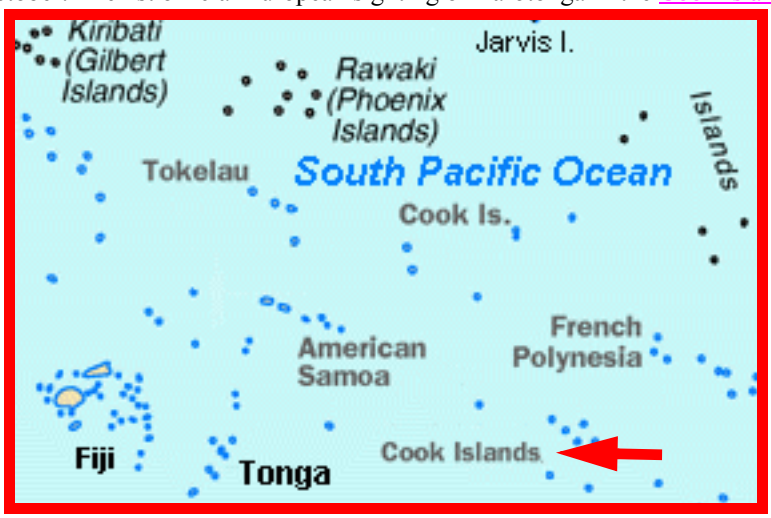
PLANTS

1800

Early in the 19th Century, the name "Cook Islands" was awarded by the Russians to what Captain James Cook had designated as the "Hervey Islands," in honor of the English navigator, when in this timeframe the group of islands appeared for the first time on a Russian nautical chart.

1813

September/October: The 1st official European sighting of Rarotonga in the Cook Islands, by the *Endeavour*.



1814

The 1st known European landing on Rarotonga in the Cook Islands, by the crew of the *Cumberland* on a commercial venture from Australia and New Zealand to find sandalwood (there was none on Rarotonga). Natives killed the captain's girlfriend (Ann Butchers would be the only pakeha, white woman, ever eaten by Pacific Islanders — her bones now rest at Muri near the sailing club).

September 17, Saturday: The Rarotonga group of islands of the Cook Islands, which would eventually become the home of Thomas Francis Neale, was officially discovered by the Russian ship *Suvarov*.

HERMITS

The main island of Suwarrow atoll was, when first sighted by the whites, covered with a tall forest of mostly banyan trees.

Prussian Chancellor Prince Karl August von Hardenberg arrived in Vienna to attend the Congress.

Friend Stephen Wanton Gould wrote in his journal:

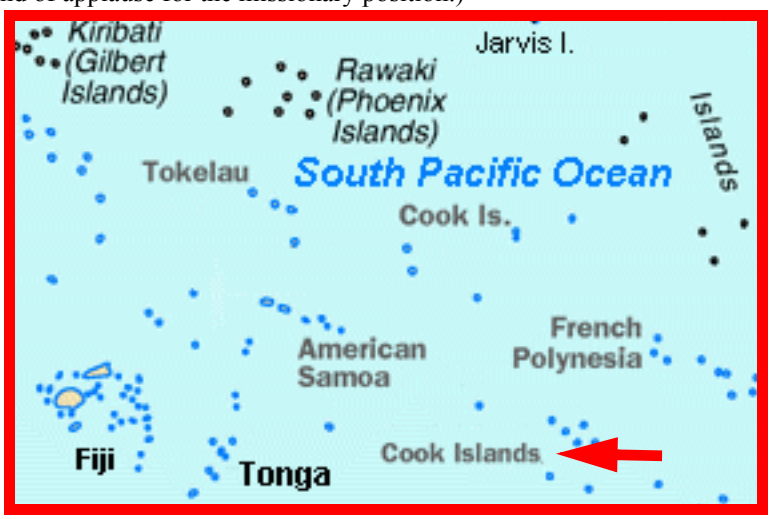
> *7th day 17 of 9 M 1814 / Altho I have been very buisily occupied this Week in Assessing the Town Poor Tax, Yet I can say with a degree of humble gratitude that there has been but few weeks perhaps in my whole life when my mind has been more favord with peace & quiet within. & tho' there is much stir among the people of the Town in moving away there goods & their persons to avoid apprehended danger, & rumors of great Battles that have been fought within the once peaceful & very happy States of America. Yet amid all I have not been moved & on this ground I greatly crave to remain that when we are put to the test & an hostile foe may present at our doors, faith & good resolution may not forsake me. -In this event I feel much for my dear Wife & little son, having no where for them to flee for refuge - but having in the course of my life many times seen ways opened both for preservation & escape from dangers, tho' not of the Magnitude which now appears to threaten & means provided for a lively hood when the close of the Year has left me allmost with out resource - I have no reason to distrust that Almighty Power which is over all his Works & sees & knows what is best for us. —*
> *This evengs Mail brings an account of a great Battle having been fought at Baltimore. - & Plattsburgh Oh! Oh! when will the Art*

of War cease & All men love like Brethren —

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

1821

The Reverend John Williams of the London Missionary Society landed on Aitutaki in the Cook Islands. (Let's have a big round of applause for the missionary position.)



Publication by Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown in London of THE THREE VOYAGES OF CAPT. JAMES COOK ROUND THE WORLD, the 7 volumes that Thoreau would consult at the Concord Town Library.

HIS 3 VOYAGES, VOL. I
HIS 3 VOYAGES, VOL. II
HIS 3 VOYAGES, VOL. III
HIS 3 VOYAGES, VOL. IV
HIS 3 VOYAGES, VOL. V
HIS 3 VOYAGES, VOL. VI
HIS 3 VOYAGES, VOL. VII

Thoreau would consult the Concord Social Library's copy of this, and insert material into his Factbook and into his Indian Notebook #12.[1] He would acquire for instance a piece of information that shows up in his journal for the fall and winter of 1845/1846 as "Clothing — shelter — & fuel warm us outwardly– I have read that the New Hollander goes naked in a pretty cold winter — and warms his body by putting his feet close to a hot fire — though the rest of his body may be in frost–," that he would find of use for his WALDEN; OR, LIFE IN THE WOODS manuscript, in the following truncated form:

"the New Hollander goes naked with impunity,
while the European shivers in his clothes."[2]

1. The original notebooks are held by the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York, as manuscripts #596 through #606. There are photocopies, made by Robert F. Sayre in the 1930s, in four boxes at the University of Iowa Libraries, accession number MsC 795. More recently, Bradley P. Dean, PhD and Paul Maher, Jr. have attempted to work over these materials.

1831

February: In August of this year there would be an obscurement of the sun which would cause much alarm in America, and, from the "confession" of Nat Turner in his jail cell later in this year, we can now learn that his thinking had at that time been:

> *And by signs in the heavens that it would make known to me when I should commence the great work, and until the first sign appeared I should conceal it from the knowledge of men; and on the appearance of the sign, I should arise and prepare myself, and slay my enemies with their own weapons. And immediately on the sign appearing in the heavens, the seal was removed from my lips, and I communicated the great work laid out for me to do, to four in whom I had the greatest confidence (Henry, Hark, Nelson, and Sam).*

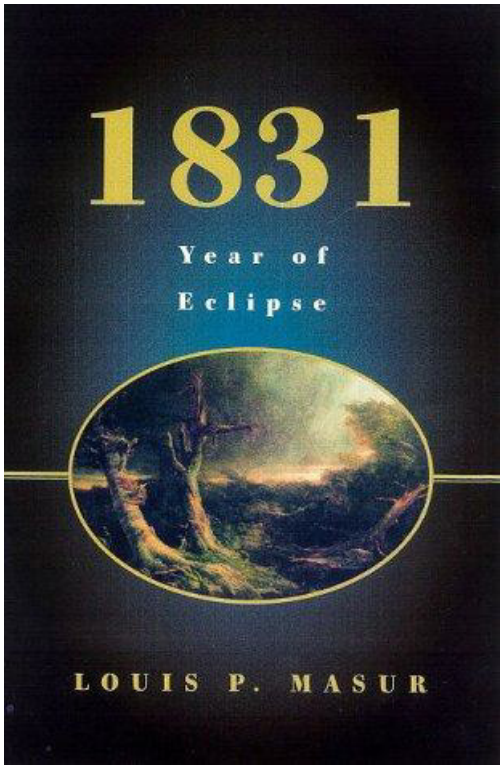
Here is the standard uncorroborated and undocumented and, indeed, uninvestigated and inaccurate, eclipse theory of this, an interpretation which strangely places the sign in the heavens in the month of February, half a year earlier than in the month of August when Turner's insurrection actually went down — per J.S.

2. By "New Hollander" here is intended of course "Australian aborigine," Australia having been known in Captain Cook's era as New Holland just as the landmass to the east of it was known, and still is known, as New Zealand.

Bowmen's CAMBRIDGE DICTIONARY OF AMERICAN BIOGRAPHY (emphasis added):

> Turner, Nat (1800-31): Leader of slave insurrection, born in Southampton County, Virginia, USA. He was born on the Virginia plantation of Benjamin Turner, who allowed him to be instructed in reading, writing, and religion. Sold three times in his childhood and hired out to John Travis (in the 1820s), he became a fiery preacher and leader of African-American slaves on Benjamin Turner's plantation and in his Southampton County, Va, neighbourhood, claiming that he was chosen by God to lead them from bondage. Believing in signs and hearing divine voices, **he was convinced by an eclipse of the sun (1831)** that the time to rise up had come and he enlisted the help of four other slaves in the area. An insurrection was planned, aborted, and rescheduled; then, on August 21-2, he and six other slaves killed the Travis family, managed to secure arms and horses, and enlisted about 75 other slaves in a disorganized insurrection that resulted in only the murder of 51 white people. Afterwards, he hid nearby successfully for six weeks until his discovery, conviction, and hanging at Jerusalem, Va, along with 16 of his followers. The incident put fear in the heart of Southerners, ended the organized emancipation movement in that region, resulted in even harsher laws against slaves, and deepened the schism between slaveholders and free-soilers that would culminate in the Civil War.

This standard uncorroborated and undocumented and, indeed, uninvestigated and inaccurate, eclipse theory has recently been perpetuated by the incautious "historian" Louis P. Masur, in his 1831: YEAR OF ECLIPSE (Hill and Wang, 2001. ISBN: 0-8090-4118-9):



The circumstances of any and all partial or total eclipses of the sun that might possibly have been viewed by an ignorant Nat Turner as alleged in that CAMBRIDGE DICTIONARY OF AMERICAN BIOGRAPHY above, who had been born in 1800 and was executed in 1831, at any point during his lifetime in North America, would be

exhaustively iterated as follows:

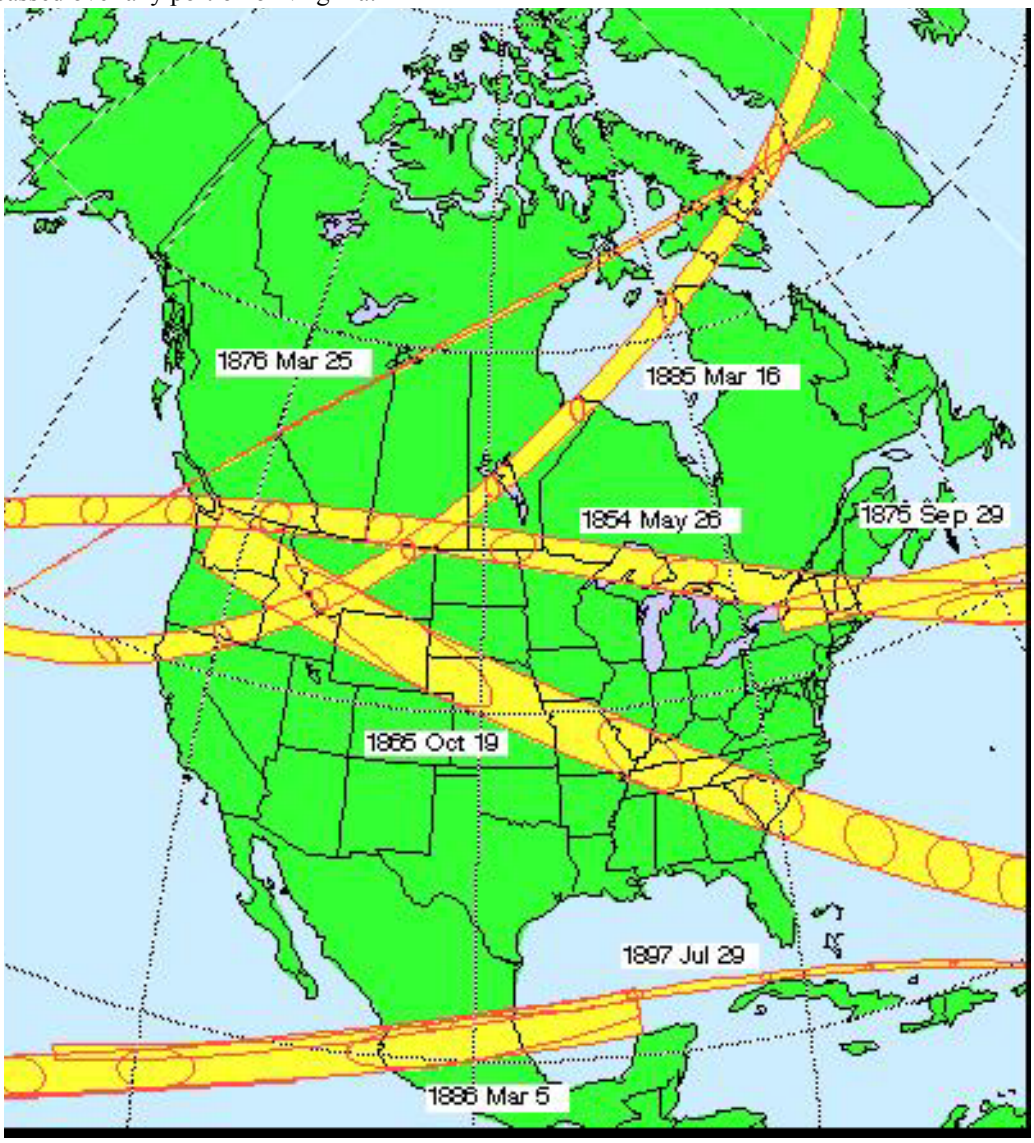
Date	Greatest Eclipse	Type	Saros #	Gamma	Eclipse Mag.	Lat.	Long.	Sun Alt.	Path Width	Center Dur.
1801 Apr 13	04:08	P	145	1.315	0.420	61.3N	11.7E	0		
1801 Sep 08	05:54	P	112	1.466	0.160	61.1N	168.4W	0		
1802 Aug 28	07:12	A	122	0.757	0.937	51.3N	105.7E	41	354	05m35s
1803 Aug 17	08:25	A	132	-0.005	0.966	13.6N	54.7E	90	124	03m47s
1804 Feb 11	11:16	H	137	0.705	1.000	26.7N	4.4W	45	0	00m00s
1805 Jan 30	18:57	P	147	1.465	0.167	62.7N	152.8W	0		
1805 Jun 26	23:27	P	114	1.046	0.935	65.5N	9.8W	0		
1806 Jun 16	16:24	T	124	0.320	1.060	42.2N	64.5W	71	210	04m55s
1807 Nov 29	11:42	H	139	0.538	1.014	11.1N	3.9E	57	55	01m26s
1808 Nov 18	02:30	P	149	1.187	0.657	69.2N	162.7E	0		
1809 Apr 14	20:07	A	116	0.874	0.943	65.8N	157.3W	29	436	04m35s
1810 Apr 04	01:41	A	126	0.103	0.997	11.1N	153.8E	84	12	00m21s
1811 Sep 17	18:43	A	141	0.680	0.934	43.0N	85.9W	47	330	06m51s
1812 Feb 12	20:28	P	108	1.355	0.341	70.7N	168.8W	0		
1812 Sep 05	19:04	P	151	1.394	0.287	71.8N	4.5E	0		
1813 Feb 01	08:58	A	118	0.715	0.982	28.0N	40.4E	44	91	01m53s
1814 Jul 17	06:30	T	133	0.164	1.077	30.9N	84.7E	80	254	06m33s
1815 Jul 06	23:43	T	143	0.906	1.059	88.1N	162.8W	25	469	03m13s
1816 Nov 19	10:17	T	120	0.841	1.023	35.0N	41.5E	32	145	02m00s
1817 May 16	06:58	A	125	-0.205	0.948	7.9N	78.5E	78	194	06m30s
1818 May 05	07:16	A	135	0.544	0.946	45.8N	52.5E	57	233	05m05s
1819 Apr 24	11:32	P	145	1.258	0.522	61.7N	108.1W	0		
1819 Sep 19	13:03	Pe	112	1.526	0.058	61.0N	75.7E	0		
1820 Sep 07	14:00	A	122	0.825	0.933	51.6N	8.7E	34	433	05m49s
1821 Aug 27	**15:19**	**A**	**132**	**0.067**	**0.966**	**13.6N**	**47.7W**	**86**	**123**	**03m38s**
1822 Feb 21	**19:40**	**A**	**137**	**0.691**	**1.000**	**28.6N**	**132.3W**	**46**	**2**	**00m02s**
1823 Feb 11	03:03	P	147	1.454	0.185	62.0N	76.7E	0		
1823 Jul 08	06:56	P	114	1.118	0.795	64.6N	131.9W	0		
1824 Jun 26	23:46	T	124	0.396	1.058	46.6N	171.4W	66	207	04m31s
1825 Jun 16	12:19	H	134	-0.381	1.004	1.0N	6.0W	68	13	00m25s

TOM NEALE THOMAS FRANCIS NEALE

Date	Greatest Eclipse	Type	Saros #	Gamma	Eclipse Mag.	Lat.	Long.	Sun Alt.	Path Width	Center Dur.
1825 Dec 09	20:22	H	139	0.530	1.015	9.2N	127.4W	58	60	01m34s
1826 Nov 29	11:14	P	149	1.176	0.677	68.2N	20.0E	0		
1827 Apr 26	03:11	A	116	0.932	0.946	74.8N	73.4E	21	560	03m53s
1828 Apr 14	09:19	Hm	126	0.150	1.003	17.9N	37.7E	81	10	00m18s
1829 Sep 28	01:47	A	141	0.624	0.932	34.9N	164.4E	51	323	07m43s
1830 Feb 23	05:04	P	108	1.372	0.309	71.3N	48.9E	0		
1830 Sep 17	02:08	P	151	1.332	0.393	72.1N	115.5W	0		
1831 Feb 12	**17:22**	**A**	**118**	**0.729**	**0.981**	**31.9N**	**88.3W**	**43**	**100**	**01m57s**

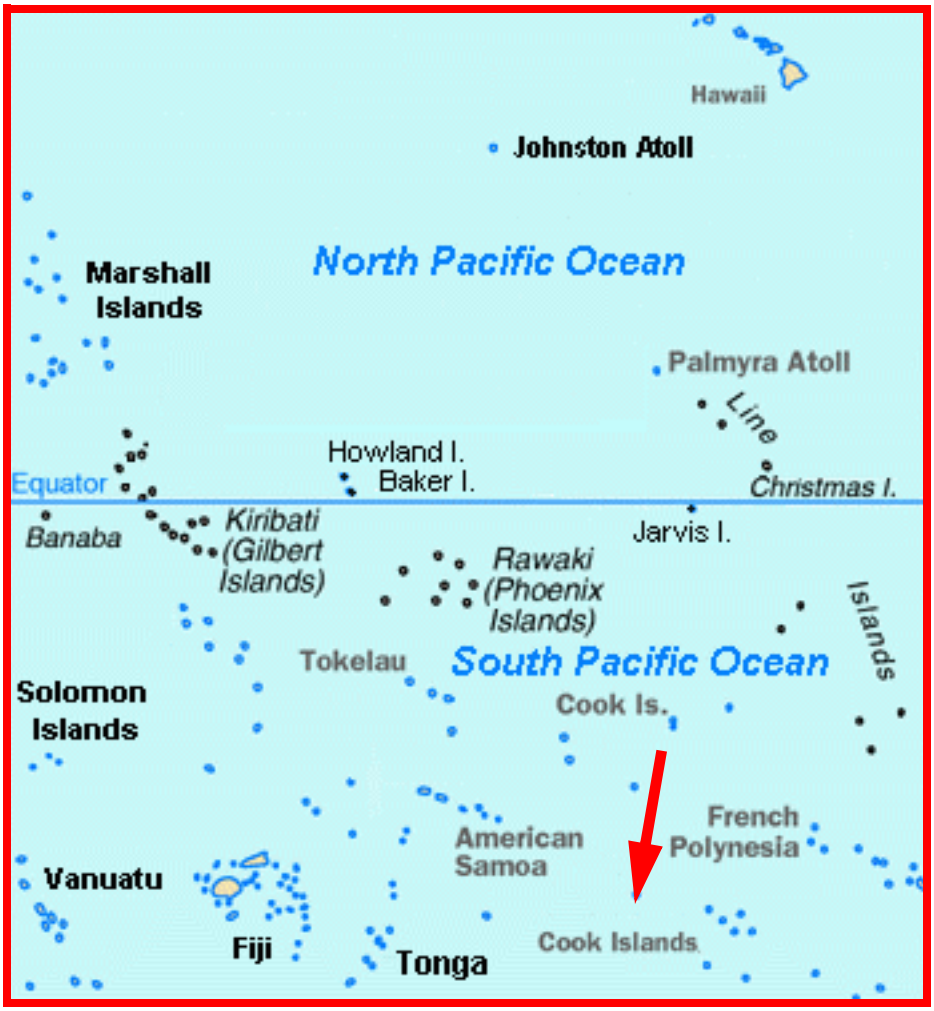
There is only one solar eclipse of the 38-odd calculated in the above table, as having occurred at some point on the northern hemisphere of the earth during Nat Turner's lifetime, which could possibly qualify as the initiator of the timing of his revolt, and that would have been the one marked in red letters on the above list, the very last entry before his execution, the one which had occurred on February 12, 1831. However, that solar eclipse (#7243) had been merely a partial (annular) one passing across the continent from Baja California to Massachusetts in such an entirely glancing manner as to be viewable for less than two minutes just north of Silas, Alabama (31.5N 88.2W) even in its partiality, and might be plausible as an explanation for the timing of the slave revolt only had Turner been a Mississippi bottomlands plantation freedom fighter rather than a tidewater freedom fighter in the vicinity of the Great Dismal Swamp and Newport News, Virginia (36.6N 76.3W). Our astronomers haven't even bothered to put this little local February 12, 1831 Alabama nibble thingie upon their chart of historically significant annular eclipses in the USA, none of which it seemed ever

passed over any portion of Virginia:



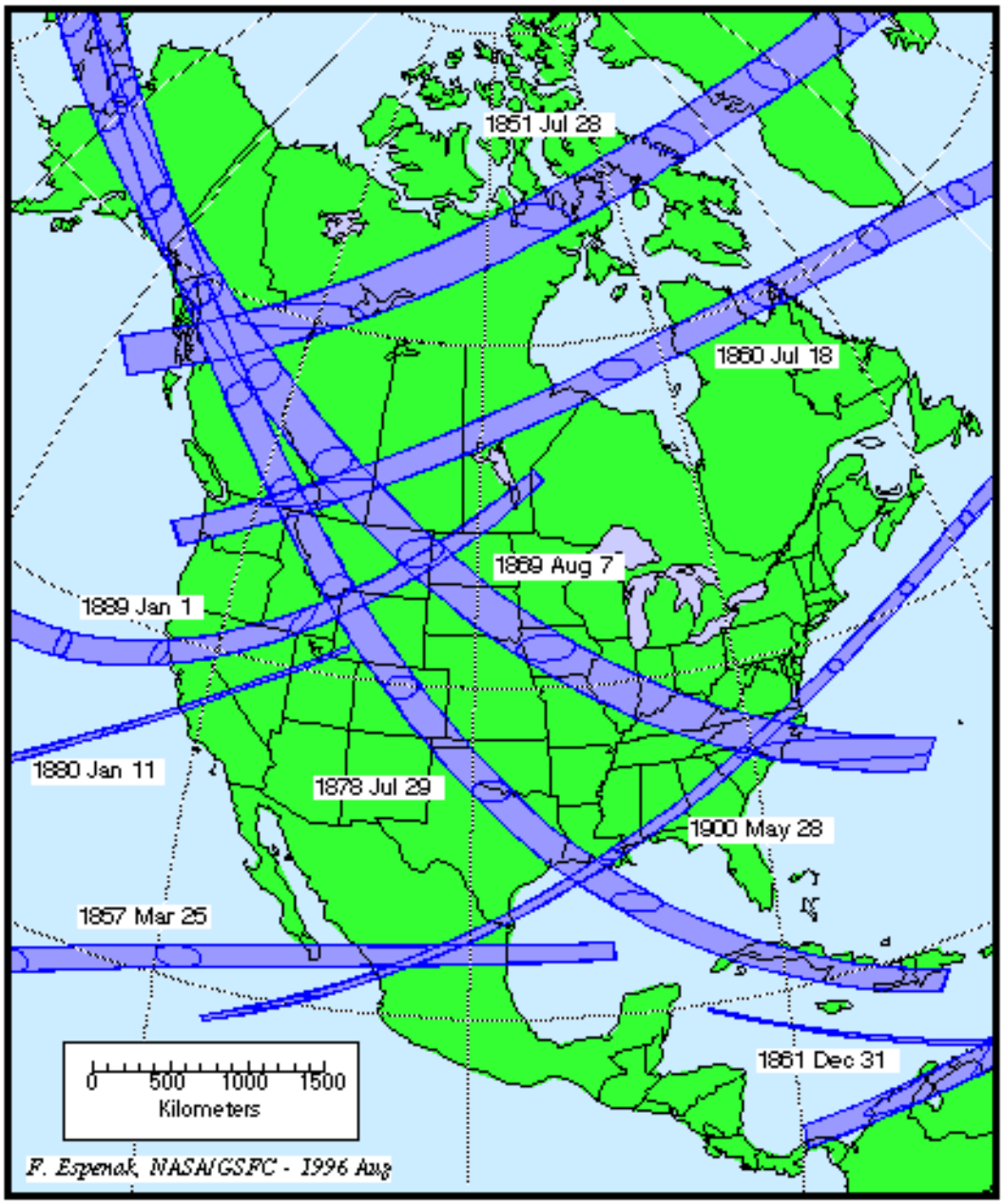
To expand upon this ridiculousness, there was also a total eclipse on August 7, 1831, the totality of which lasted for almost three and a half minutes, and that of course was precisely timed to be unquestionably the cause of this August 21, 1831 American freedom fight — but that total solar eclipse had been viewable only along a path 160 miles wide in the vicinity of Rarotonga (21.1S 159.5W) in the Cook Islands chain in the Southern Hemisphere, for instance by the Reverend John Williams of the London Missionary Society at his

post there in that remote reach of the South Pacific.



Although there has indeed been a total eclipse of the sun that might qualify for the honor of triggering ignorant

expectations in tidewater Virginia, that event would not transpire until May 28th in the year 1900:

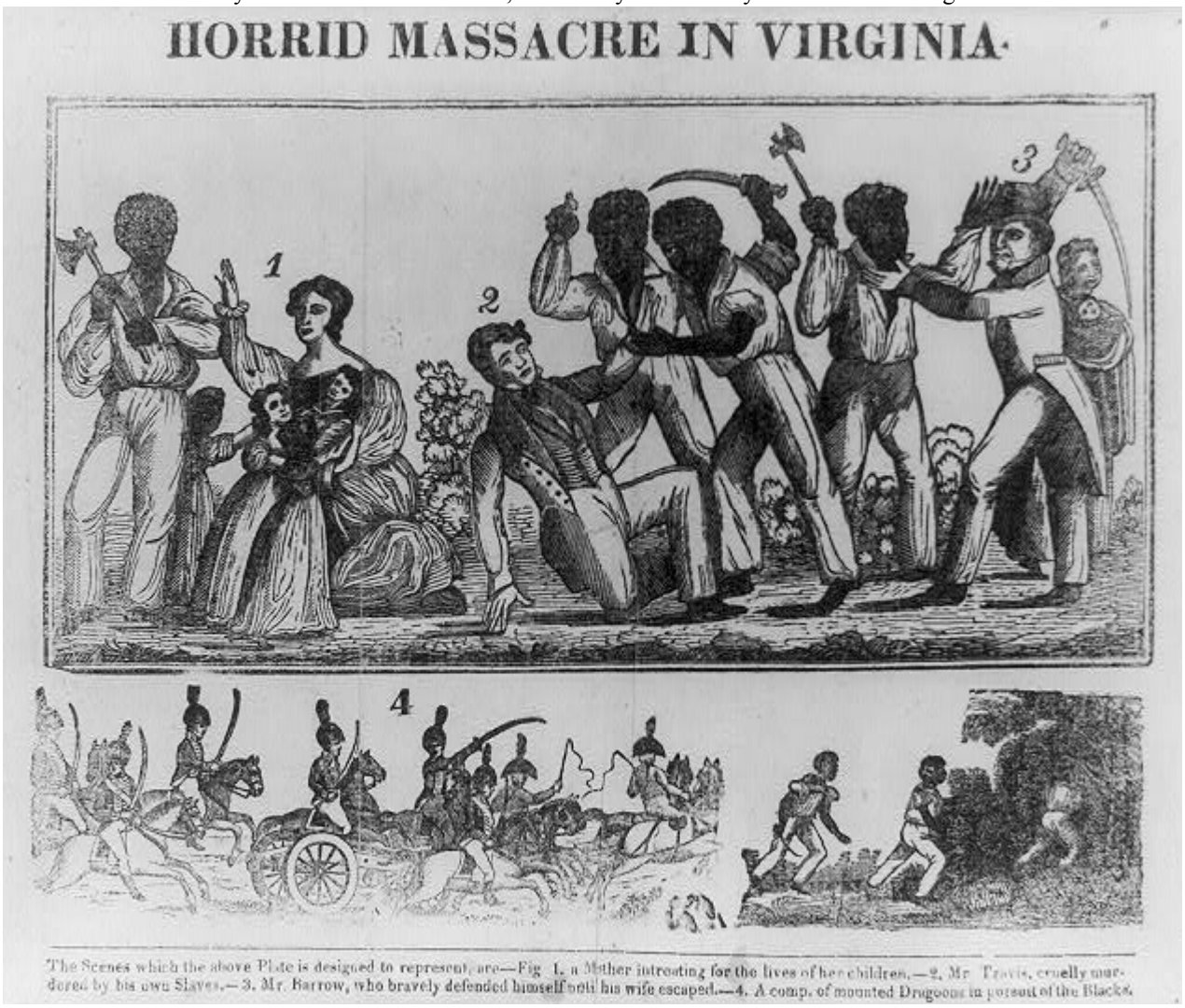


How then to account for the explanation offered by Nat Turner in his confinement awaiting his execution and rendering? For three days the sun appeared, all the way from New York down into South Carolina, to have changed in color. This atmospheric disturbance has been characterized as "The Three Blue Days" centering upon August 12th. Some superstitions white people in Philadelphia had announced this to be "a sad augury of coming evil" and Turner had interpreted it as a black hand appear to cross the sun ("as the black spot passed over the sun, so shall the black pass over the earth"), while other persons reported that they believed they had seen in the heavens, emerging from "a long narrow (or serpentine) silvery colored belt," the letters **G – O – D**.

But this has not been an eclipse. The phenomenon had been caused by high altitude smoke given off by an

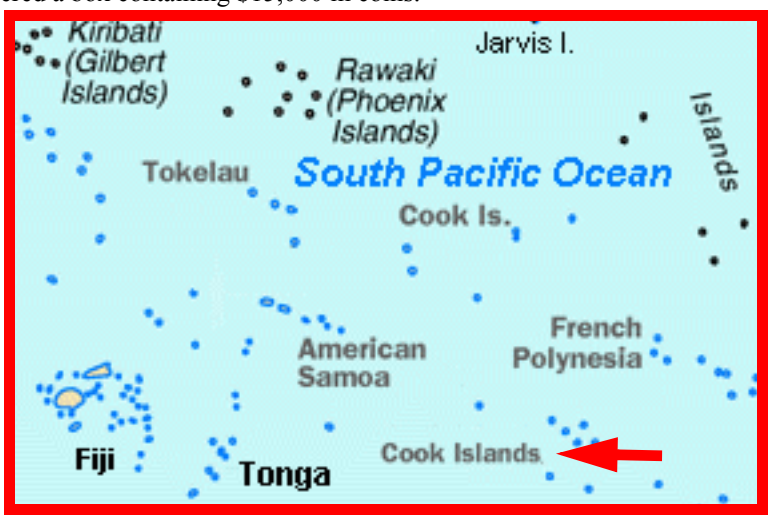
immense forest fire in Canada.

Why does it matter, whether the trigger event influencing the timing of the revolt had been a solar obscurement rather than an eclipse? Here is the reason. What had occurred was a one-time, quite mysterious event, which all across our nation in the absence of factual information received weird spontaneous explanation.
To presume that Nat Turner was so ignorant and sprang from such a deprived culture, that people like him would not have known what a solar eclipse was, and would therefore have been subject to such serious misunderstandings when one occurred, actually is of a piece with the 19th-Century story that when Turner's body was rendered after his death, his skull was discovered to be as thick as that of a sheep. We should beware of the one story as we beware of the other, as not only unnecessary but also demeaning.



1850

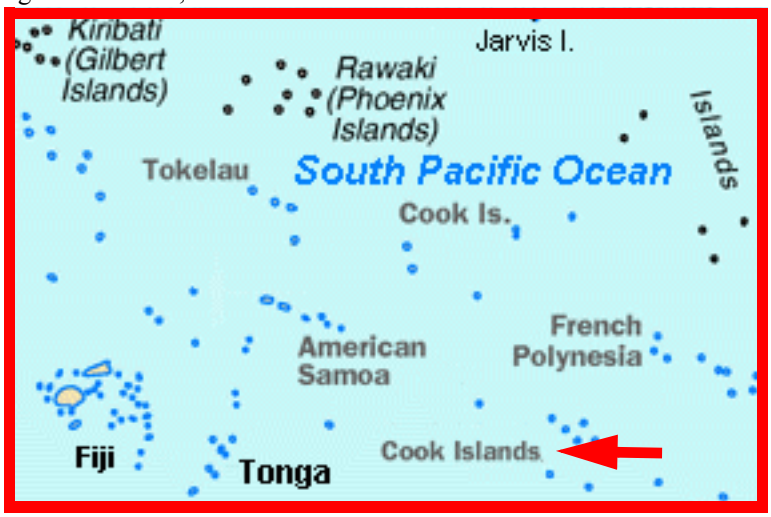
During this decade a ship out of Tahiti doing salvage on a wreck in the reef of Suwarrow atoll in the Cook Islands discovered a box containing $15,000 in coins.



(OK, it wasn't pirate treasure exactly, but something for nothing will make your day.)

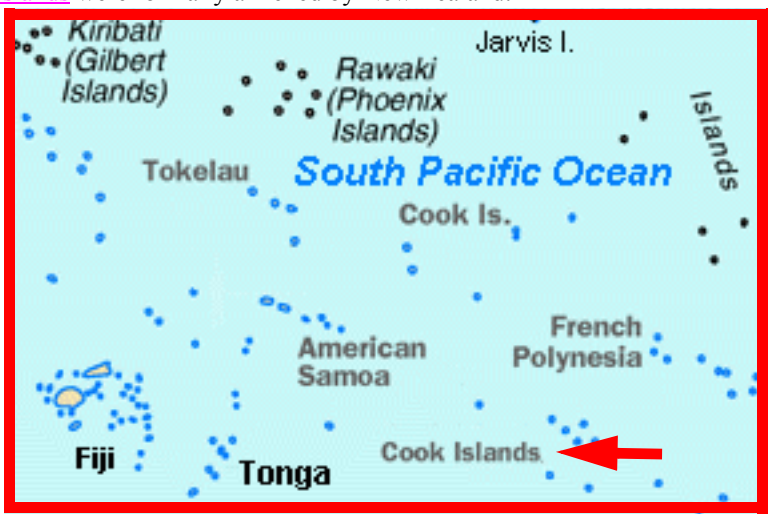
1876

During the mid-1870, the main island of Suwarrow atoll of the Cook Islands was being cleared of its tall forest and banyan trees. Stone walls and platforms were discovered, and lime kilns, a flintlock, and a musket. There was a skeleton, and it turned out to be holding in its palm an iron bolt. A New Zealander, Henry Mair, discovered, in a turtle nest somewhere on Suwarrow atoll, silver Pieces of Eight. The coins were from the period in which the British navigator George Anson, had crossed the Pacific after losing five ships in a raid on Spanish shipping in the Pacific, in 1742 aboard *HMS Centurion*.



1900

October 7: The Cook Islands were formally annexed by New Zealand.



1902

Thomas Francis Neale was born in New Zealand.

HERMITS

There was no history of wanderlust in my family that I knew of - than the enterprise which had brought my father, who was born in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, out to New Zealand after serving with the 17th Lancers. By the time he met my mother, who came of sound pioneering stock, he had become a company secretary. And so I was born in Wellington, though while I was still a baby we moved to Greymouth in New Zealand's South Island, where my father was appointed paymaster to the state coal mines. Here we remained until I was about seven, when the family -I had two brothers and three sisters- moved to Timaru on the opposite side of South Island.

It was a change for the better. My maternal grandmother owned twenty acres of land only five miles out of Timaru and here we settled down, my father commuting to his new office either by bicycle, trap or on horseback, while I went to the local school where (with all due modesty) I was good enough in reading, geography and arithmetic to merit a rapid move from Standard One to Standard Three.

Looking back, I imagine the real clue to my future aspirations lay in the fact that is always seemed absolutely natural that I should go to sea. I cannot remember ever contemplating any other way of life and there was no opposition from my parents when I

announced I would like to join the New Zealand Navy. My real ambition was to become a skilled navigator, but when my father took me to Auckland Naval Base to sign on, I was dismayed to discover that already I was too old at eighteen and a half to be apprenticed as a seaman. It was a bitter disappointment, but I had set my heart on a seafaring career and did the next best thing. Signing on as an apprentice engineer meant starting right at the bottom -and I mean at the bottom- as a stoker, although I didn't mind because the job, however menial, would give me a chance to see something of the Pacific.

I spent four years in the new Zealand Navy before buying myself out, and I only left because of a nagging desire to see more of the world than the brief glimpses we obtained beyond the confining, narrow streets of the ports where we docked. And our visits were dictated by naval necessity - simple things like routine patrols or defective boilers, so that I saw Papeete but never Tahiti; Apia but never Samoa; Nukualofa but never Tonga. It was the islands I always longed to see, not a vista of dock cranes nor the sleazy bars which one can find in every maritime corner of the world. For the next few years I wandered from island to island. Sometimes I would take a job for a few months as a fireman on one of the slow, old, inter-island tramps. When I tired of this, I would settle down for a spell, clearing bush or planting bananas. There was always work, and there was always food. And it was only now that I really came to know and love the islands strung like pearls across the South Pacific - Manihiki at dawn as the schooner threads its way through the pass in the reef; Papeete at sunset with the Pacific lapping up against the main street; the haze on the coconut palms of Puka Puka; the clouds above Moorea with its jagged silhouette of extinct volcanoes; Pago Pago, where Somerset Maugham created the character of Sadie Thompson, and where you can still find the Rainmaker's Hotel; Apia, where, I was later told, Michener was inspired to create Bloody Mary and where Aggie Grey's Hotel welcomes guests with a large whisky and soda. I loved them all, and it was ten years before I returned to New Zealand in 1931. I was then twenty-eight and when I reached Timaru I telephoned my father at his office.

"Who's that?" he asked.

"Tom."

"Which Tom?"

"Your Tom!" I replied.

At first he could hardly believe it. But before long he was at the station to fetch me in his car. The old man looked much the same as I remembered him, as did my mother - but my brothers and sisters had grown so much that at first I scarcely recognised them. Ten years is a long time, but before long I was back in the family routine as though I had been away hardly more than a month. Yet, somehow, I remained an outsider in my own mind. I had seen too much, done so much, existed under a succession of such utterly different circumstances, that at times I would catch myself looking at my mother sitting placidly in her favourite chair and think to myself, "Is it really possible that for all these years while I've been seeing the world, she has sat there each evening apparently content?"

I stayed for some months, doing odd jobs, but then I was off again, and I knew this time where I wanted to go, for of all the

islands one beckoned more than any other. This was Moorea, the small French island off Tahiti, and it was here that finally I settled -or thought I had- in an island of dramatic beauty, with its jagged peaks of blue and grey rising from the white beaches to awesome pinnacles against the blue sky. It is a small island in which, however, everything seems to be a little larger than life. It is an island of plenty. I could walk along the twisting, narrow coast road and pick guavas, coconuts or papa-paws and pineapples and nobody could be angry. The French, who had superimposed their wonderful way of life on the people, took care that Moorea should remain unspoiled.

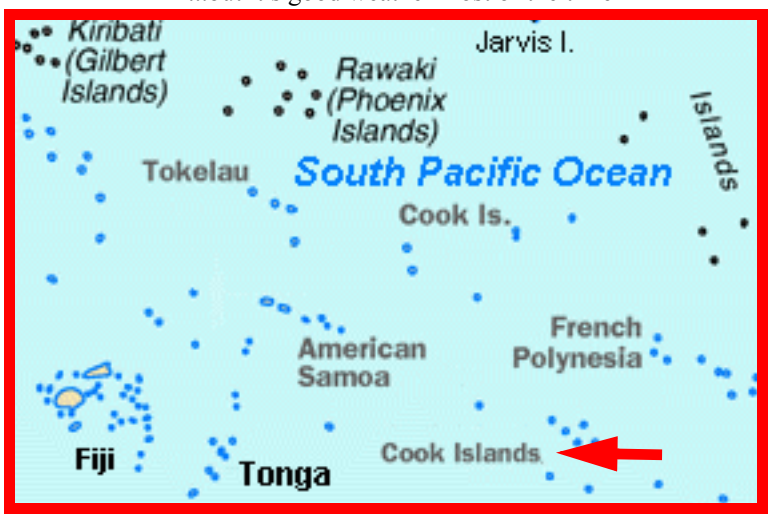
Only one boat a day made the twelve-mile trip from Papeete and passed through the narrow channel in the barrier reef. And -when I was there, anyway- providing a man behaved himself, he was left alone, and I preferred it that way. I had to work -indeed, I wanted to work- and there was always bush to be cleared, copra to be prepared, fish to be caught. I really wanted for nothing, and I remember saying to myself one beautiful evening after swimming in the lagoon, "Neale," (I always call myself Neale when I talk to myself), "this is the nearest thing on earth to paradise."

Life was incredibly cheap. A bullock was slaughtered twice a week and we were able to buy the meat at four-pence a pound. Within a short time of settling down the natives had built me a comfortable two-roomed shack for which I paid them a bag of sugar and a small case of corned beef. Life was as simple as that. I had my own garden, a wood-burning stove, plenty of vegetables, fruit and fish. My living expenses never came to more than one pound sterling a week -often the total was less- because from the moment I left the a Navy I had made up my mind to "batch" - in other words, look after myself completely; do my own washing, cooking, mending, and never move anywhere without being entirely equipped to fend for myself. It is a decision I have stuck to all my life. Even now, I am never without my own mattress, sheets, pillows, blankets, cutlery, crockery, kitchen utensils and a battered old silver teapot. Even as I write, the "housewife" which the Navy gave me the day I joined up is not far out of reach. It is in itself a symbol of years of "batching" which has saved me a fortune. Mine was a simple existence. No furnished rooms to rent, no meals to buy. My only luxury was buying books. I was very happy in Moorea. I quickly learned to speak Tahitian, I made one or two friends, I worked fairly hard, I read a great deal. My taste in literature is catholic, anything from Conrad or Defoe to a Western; the only thing I demand is an interesting book in bed last thing at night. It was in Moorea that I first stumbled on the works of the American writer Robert Dean Frisbie, who was to have such an important influence on my life. Frisbie had settled in the Pacific, and had written several volumes about the islands which I read time and time again, though it never entered by head then that one day we should be friends.

1942

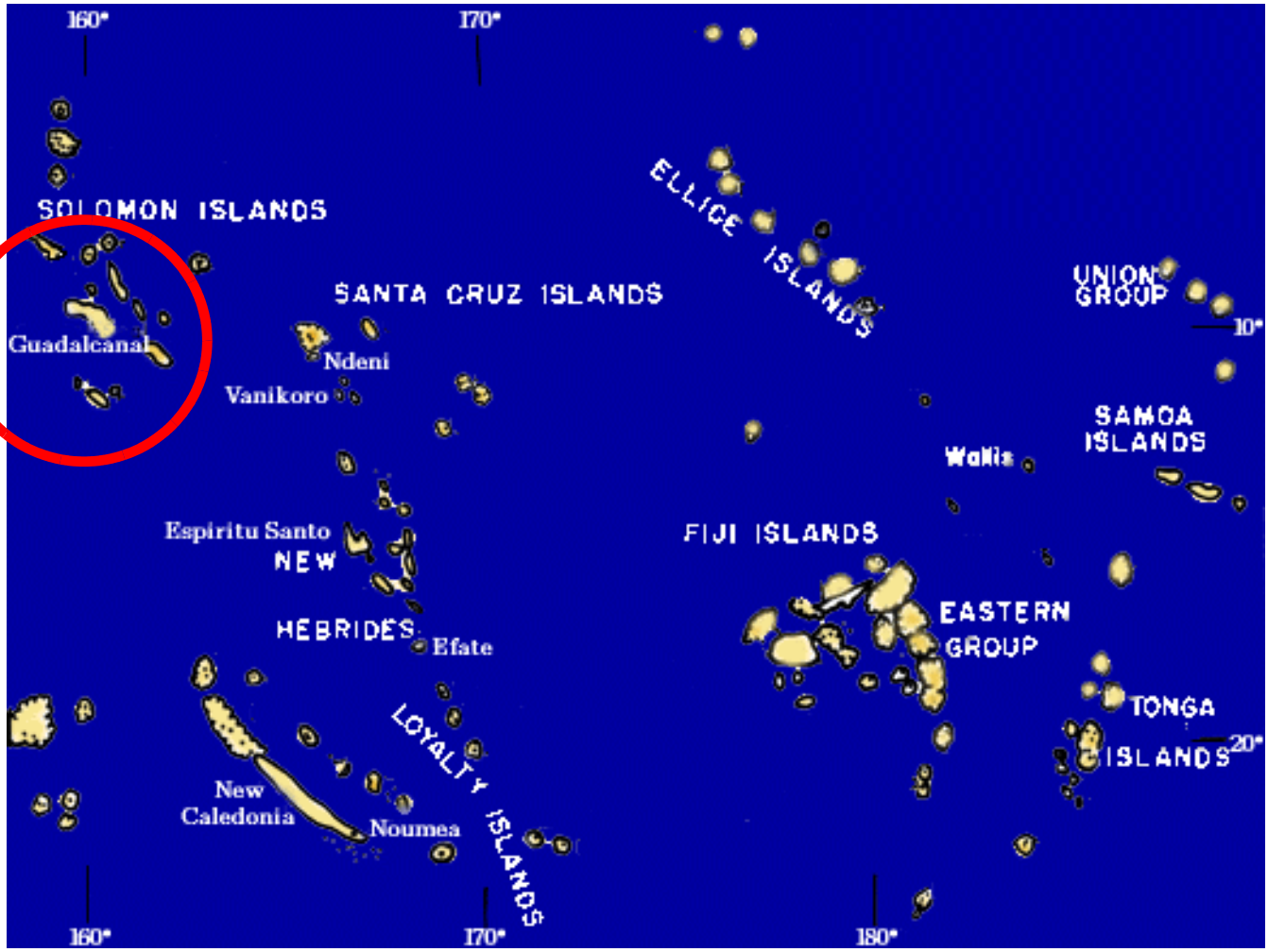
During a great hurricane, 16 of the 22 islets of the Suvarov atoll in the Cook Islands were washed away within a matter of hours. The lives of the children of the islanders were saved by lashing each child into the fork of a tamanu tree elastic enough to bend with the wind until the violence of the storm was spent.

...but it's good weather most of the time



Long-term fighting back and forth across the island of Guadalcanal, deliberately kept inconclusive at the cost of many American lives, helped to maintain the pretense that when the USA eventually was able to go on the offensive in the Pacific, we would be reacting to the original Japanese attack — rather than initiating a fresh

aggression.In the Guadalcanal operation, the inspiration for which was entirely political rather than in any

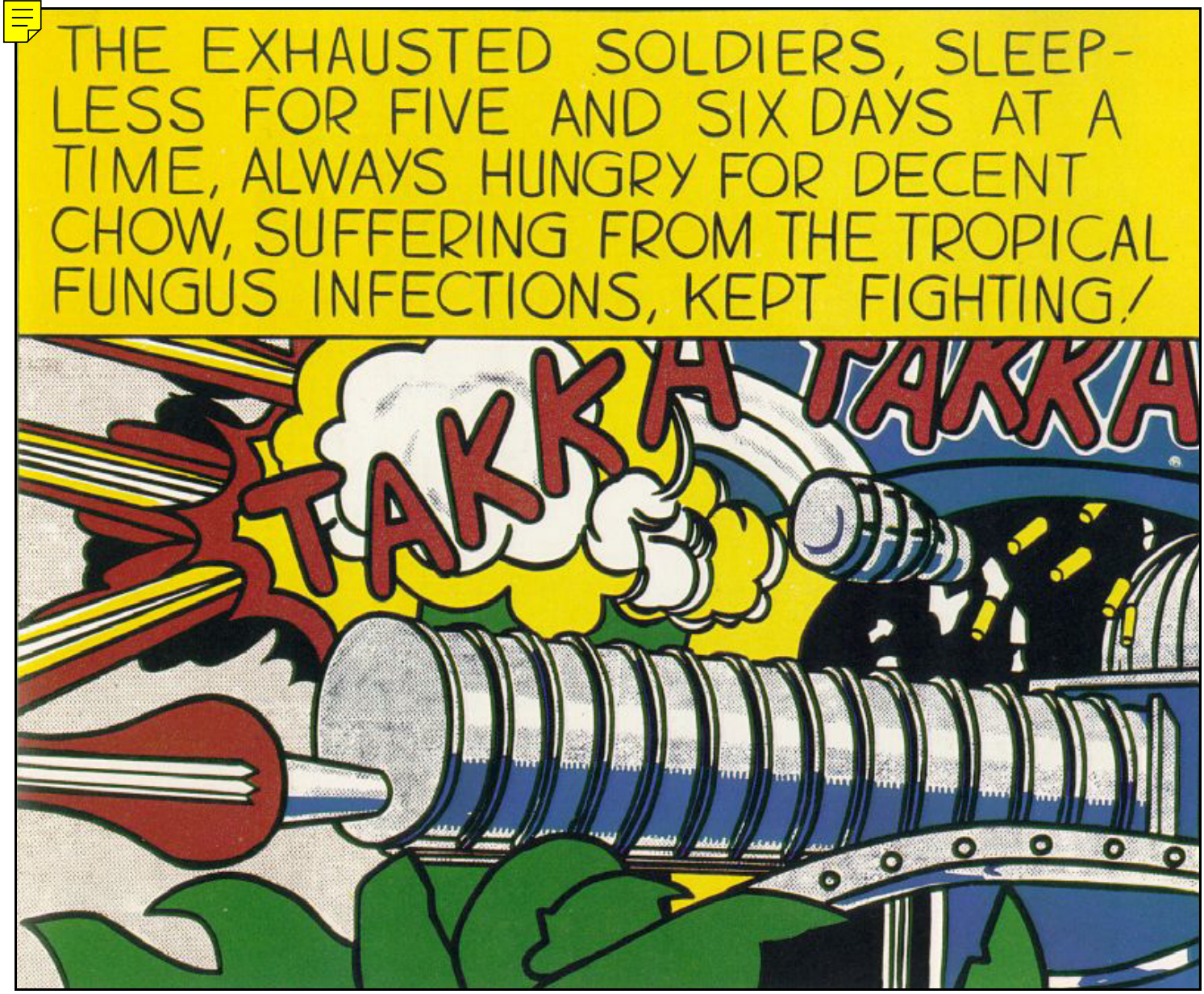


sense military, between 7 August 1942 and 8 February 1943, 71 Marine officers and 1,026 enlisted men[3] would be killed and 52 officers and 246 men would be listed as missing in action and presumed dead. In addition, 11 officers and 98 men would be listed as either dead or wounded, 223 officers and 2,693 men would be more or

3. God must love enlisted men: he makes so many of them!

less seriously wounded, and 357 officers and 4,063 men would become prisoners of war.

WORLD WAR II



1945

June: Thomas Francis Neale, who had been living on Rarotonga and Moorea in the Cook Islands, saw Suwarrow for the first time. At that point five coastwatchers in the pay of the Allies were stationed on the atoll, at Anchorage Island.

HERMITS

I might have stayed in Moorea for ever, but around 1940, at a moment when I thought myself really happy, a character came into my life who was to change it in a remarkable way. This was Andy Thompson, the man who led me to Frisbie, captain of a hundred-ton island schooner called the *Tiare Taporo* - the "Lime Flower." I met Andy on a trip to Papeete and immediately liked him. He was bluff, hearty and a good friend, though after that first meeting months would sometimes pass before we met again, for we had to wait until the *Tiare Taporo* called at Papeete. We never corresponded.

I was astounded, therefore, to receive a letter from him one day. It must have been early in 1943. Andy was a man used to commanding a vessel and never wasted words. He simply wrote: "Be ready. I've got a job for you in the Cook Islands." At that time I didn't particularly want a job in the Cook Islands and Andy didn't even tell me what the job was. Yet when the *Tiare Taporo* arrived in Papeete a few weeks later, I was waiting. And because I sailed back with him I was destined to meet Frisbie, who in turn "led" me to Suvarov. To this day, I do not know why I returned with Andy - particularly as the job he had line up involved me in running a store on one of the outer islands belonging to the firm which owned Andy's schooner. The regular

storekeeper was due to go on leave and I was supposed to relieve him. On his return, I gathered, I would be sent on as a sort of permanent relief storekeeper to the other islands in the Cooks. I suppose, subconsciously, I must have been ready for a change of environment. Nonetheless, I didn't find the prospect entirely attractive. First, I had to go to Rarotonga and here, within two days of arriving, I met Frisbie.

Since this man's influence was to bear deeply on my life, I must describe him. Frisbie was a remarkable man. Some time before I met him, his beautiful native wife had died, leaving him with four young children. He loved the islands; his books about them had been well reviewed but had not, as far as I could learn, made him much money. Not that that worried him, for his life was writing and he had the happy facility for living from one day to the next with, apparently, hardly a care in the world. He was, he told me, an old friend of Andy's, and any friend of Andy's was a friend of his. It was Sunday morning and, unknown to me, Andy had invited us both for lunch.

I could not have known then what momentous consequences this meeting was to have. None of us suspected it then but Frisbie had only a few more years to live (he was to die of tetanus), and on that Sunday morning I saw in front of me a tall, thin man of about forty-five with an intelligent but emaciated face. He looked ill, but I remember how his eagerness and enthusiasm mounted as he started to talk about "our" islands and told me of his desire to write more books about them. We liked each other on sight, which surprised me, for I do not make friends easily; and it was after lunch -washed down with a bottle of Andy's excellent rum- that Frisbie first mentioned Suvarov. Of course, I had heard of this great lagoon, with its coral reef stretching nearly fifty miles in circumference, but I had never been there, for it was off to trade routes, and shipping rarely passed that way.

Because it reef is submerged at high tide -leaving only a line of writhing white foam to warn the navigator of its perils- Suvarov, however, is clearly marked on all maps. Yet Suvarov is not the name of an island, but of an atoll, and the small islets inside the lagoon each have their own names. The islets vary in size from Anchorage, the largest, which is half a mile long, to One Tree Island, the smallest, which is merely a mushroom of coral. The atoll lies almost in the centre of the Pacific, five hundred and thirteen miles north of Rarotonga, and the nearest inhabited island is Manihiki, two hundred miles distant.

That afternoon Frisbie entranced me, and I can see him now on the veranda, the rum bottle on the big table between us, leaning forward with that blazing characteristic earnestness, saying to me, "Tom Neale, Suvarov is the most beautiful place on earth, and no man has really lived until he has lived there." Fine words, I thought, but not so easy to put into action.

"Of course, you must remember," he broke in, "there's a war on, and at present Suvarov is inhabited." This I knew - for two New Zealanders with three native helpers were stationed on Anchorage in Suvarov's lagoon. These "coast-watchers" kept an eye open for ships or aircraft in the area, and would report back any movement to headquarters by radio.

"But they'd probably be glad to see you - or even me," added Frisbie with a touch of irony. I got up for it was time to leave.

And as I said good-bye to this tall, thin man whose face and eyes seemed to urn with enthusiasm, I said, and the words and sigh came straight from the heart, "That's the sort of place for me."
"Well - if you feel that way about it, why don't you go there?" he retorted.
Storekeeping was not a very arduous job and I soon fell into my new life. My first "posting" took me to Atiu - a small island with rounded, flat-topped hills, and fertile valleys filled with oranges, coconuts and paw-paw; all of it less than seven thousand acres, each one of them exquisite and forever beckoning. From there I moved on to Puka Puka -"the Land of Little Hills"- where seven hundred people lived and produced copra.
The pattern of my life hardly varied, irrespective of the island on which I happened to be relieving the local storekeeper. Each morning I would make my breakfast, open up the store and wait for the first native customers in the square functional warehouse with its tin roof. The walls were lined with shelves of flour, tea, coffee, beans, tinned goods, cloth, needles - everything which one didn't really need at all in an island already overflowing with fruit and fish! No wonder that as I was shuttled from one outer island to another, I soon discovered that storekeeping was not the life for me, though it did have its compensations.
As long as I kept my stock and accounts in good order, I had a fair amount of leisure, which I occupied by reading. In some stores we carried supplies of paperback books so even my browsing cost me nothing, providing I didn't dirty the covers. I was batching, of course, and each store had free quarters so I was able to save a little money, especially as in some of the smaller islands the white population could be counted on the fingers of one hand.
Mine was, in every sense of the word, a village store. One moment I would be selling flour, the next I would be advising a mother how to cure her baby's cough. I carried an alarming assortment of medicines (always very popular) as well as a jumble of odds and ends ranging from spectacles to cheap binoculars, from brightly decorated tin trunks to lengths of rusty chain. I had drums of kerosene for the smoking lamps of the village, lines and hooks for the fishermen who, more often than not, would try to buy these with their latest catch of parrot fish or crays.
I came to be something of a "doctor" and village counsellor, and this I did find a rewarding part of my job, for in the really small islands I was often the only man to whom the people could turn for help. In an indirect way, I was money-lender, too - because I alone had the power to judge the worth of a man's credit against the future price of copra, and many is the bolt of calico I have sold against nuts still on the tree.
The really sad conclusion about my life as a storekeeper is that I might have enjoyed it had the store been in Tahiti or Moorea or had I never met Frisbie and been fired with the dream of going to Suvarov, for my yearnings were not desperate ones; I didn't spend all my days mooning about. But always in the back of my mind was the vague feeling, "What a bore life is! Wouldn't it be wonderful if for once I could see what life is like on an uninhabited island."

As it was, I seemed to spend my time waiting for the inter-island schooner which, every now and the, would lie off the island, giving the people a reason for wakening for a few hours out of their languid torpor while my stores were unloaded. Occasionally, Andy would sail in in the *Tiare Taporo*, then we would spend an evening on my veranda.

It was an eventful, placid existence and though I should have been content enough, I soon disliked it intensely. Why, then, did I remain for years as a storekeeper moving around from island to island? The main reason was that every time I was transferred, I had to return through Rarotonga and so met up with Frisbie again. Then we would talk far into the night about Suvarov (and the other islands of the Pacific) and occasionally, when the rum bottle was low I was able to persuade him to read the latest passages he had written. He had a deep compelling voice, and talked with as much enthusiasm as he wrote. And towards the end of each evening -and often "the end" only came when the dawn was streaking over the red tin roofs of Raro- we always came back to Suvarov. "Do you think I'll ever get there?" I asked one night. "Why not?" answered Frisbie, "though probably you'll have to wait until the war's over." I remember we were sitting together sipping a last beer on a visit to Rarotonga, "but then -there's no reason why you shouldn't go -that is, providing you equip yourself properly. Suvarov may be beautiful, but then -there's no reason why you shouldn't go -that is, providing you equip yourself properly. Suvarov may be beautiful, but it is not only looks damn fragile, it is damn fragile -and I should know."

There was no need to elaborate. I already knew that in the great hurricane of 1942, sixteen of the twenty-two islets in the lagoon had literally been washed away within a matter of hours. Frisbie had been trapped on Anchorage with his four small children and the coast-watchers during this hurricane. He had saved children's lives by lashing them in the forks of tamanu trees elastic enough to bend with the wind until the violence of the storm was spent.

I did not see Frisbie again for some time, but we corresponded regularly, and one day when I was feeling particularly low, I picked up his book, THE ISLAND OF DESIRE. When I came to the second half I discovered it was all about Suvarov; how he had lived on the island with his children, hoe he had been caught in that great hurricane. I was enthralled and his descriptions were so vivid that no sooner had I finished the book than I sat down and wrote to him. "one of these days," I wrote in my sloping, eager hand, "that's where I'm going to live." Frisbie replied, a half joking letter in which he suggested "Let's both go. You can live on Motu Tuo and I can live on Anchorage, and we can visit each other. It made sense. For like me, Frisbie was naturally a solitary man. Like me, he never had much money and yet, sadly, we were never to see the island together. In fact, Frisbie was never to see Suvarov again before he died in 1948.

There was another important reason for remaining in the Cooks. If ever I did go to Suvarov -if ever I had the luck or courage to "go it alone"- I would have to leave from Rarotonga, for Suvarov is in the Cook Islands, and though the inter-island trading schooners rarely passed near the atoll there might one day be an occasion when a ship would sail close enough to the island to be diverted. But only from Raro.

This is exactly what happened. Suddenly, in 1945, there came an opportunity to visit Suvarov for two days. It was Andy who broke the news to me in Rarotonga. He was under orders, he told me, to take the *Tiare Taporo* round the islands, calling in at Suvarov with stores for the coast-watchers there, on his way back from Manihiko.

"I need an engineer for this trip," he said off-handedly, as though he did not know how much I longed to see the island. "Care to come along?" I was aboard the Tiare before Andy had time to change his mind!

When we sailed a few days later, Andy and I were the only Europeans aboard amongst a crew of eight Cook Islanders. We set off for the northern Cooks -Puka Puka, Penrhyn, Manihiki- which are all low-lying atolls quite different from the Southern cooks which are always known as the "High Islands."

It was a pleasant, leisurely trip. I can imagine no more perfect way of seeing the South Pacific than from the deck of a small schooner. Life moved at an even, unhurried pace. I did not have much work for the *Tiare* carried sail and the engine was seldom needed. Our normal routine was to sail for a few days until we reached an atoll, lay off-shore, discharging cargo, take on some copra and then sail off again into the beautiful blue Pacific with white fleecy clouds filling the sky above.

The night before we reached Suvarov, we lay well off the atoll without even sighting it, for Andy, a good navigator, had no intention of risking his ship during the hours of darkness. All through the night we could hear the faint, faraway boom of the swells breaking on Suvarov's reef. Though there was no moon, it was clear and starry, and I stood on deck for a long time, listening, filled with an emotion I cannot even attempt to describe, until finally I felt asleep dreaming of tomorrow.

Dawn brought perfect weather and we began to approach the atoll at first light, though it lay so flat that for a long time we could not make out the land ahead. We had a good wind and full sail, and the *Tiare* must have been making four knots without her engines as I stood on the cabin top, the only sound the lap of the water and the creaking of wood, shading my eyes until at last I caught my first glimpse of Suvarov - the pulsating, creamy foam of the reef thundering before us for miles, and a few clumps of palm trees silhouetted against the blue sky, the clumps widely separated on the islets that dotted the enormous, almost circular stretch of reef. The air was shimmering under a sun already harsh as Andy took the *Tiare* towards the pass, and Anchorage started to take a more distinct shape. I could make out the white beach now, an old broken-down wharf - a relic of the days when attempts had been made to grow copra on the island - and then some figures waving on the beach. From the south end a great flock of screaming frigate birds rose angrily into the air, black and wheeling, waiting for the smaller terns to catch fish so they could steal them.

How puny the islets seemed in the vast rolling emptiness of the Pacific! Frisbie had called them fragile but they were more than that. To me they looked almost forlorn, so that it seemed amazing they could have survived the titanic forces of nature which have so often wiped out large islands. Had they been rugged, then survival would have been easier to appreciate, but none of the islets ahead of us in the lagoon was more than ten or fifteen

feet above sea level, so that only the tops of the coconut trees proclaimed their existence. The chop of the sea ceased, for now we were in the lagoon, and it was as though the *Tiare* were floating on vast pieces of colored satin. We edged towards Anchorage very slowly through a sea so still that our slight ripple hardly disturbed it. Like many South Pacific islets, Anchorage -lying just inside the lagoon- is subterraneously joined to the main reef by a submerged "causeway" of coral. And so, as I looked down into the water, I thought I had never seen so many colours in my life as the vivid blues, greens and even pinks that morning; no painter could have imitated those patterns formed by underwater coral at differing depths. Then the anchor rattled down. We put a ship's boat overboard and a few minutes later I was wading ashore through the warm, still water towards the blinding white beach.

Common politeness made me greet the five men living there -each of them desperately anxious to go home as soon as possible!- but as soon as I decently could, I went off alone, and on that first day I took a spear and my machete -a French one I had bought in Tahiti, more slender and pointed than those of the Cook Islands- and went along the reef, spearing the plentiful fish I discovered in the reef pools and so lazy that one could hardly miss them.

In the evening, I had supper with the coast-watchers and looked over their shack with the secret, questing eyes of a man wondering if one day he would inherit it. It seemed ideal. The tanks were full of good water, and when I went for a stroll I discovered a fine garden they had made out of a wilderness. The watchers were only anxious to leave. How different are men's attitudes to life! They were agreeable, cheerful and noisy -and delighted with the stores we had brought them- but their was a forced gaiety, hiding their anger that war should have played them such a dirty trick as turning them into castaways on a desert island.

On the second day, Andy and I took a ship's boat in the islet of Motu Tuo six miles across the lagoon, where the native boys caught coconut crabs and fish and lit a fire to cook our picnic lunch. And when lunch was over, I turned to Andy and said simply, but with utter conviction, "Andy, now I know this is the place I've been looking for all this time." It was to take me seven more years before my dream came true. Seven long years before another vessel from Rarotonga passed anywhere near the island, seven years during which I reached middle age. Perhaps it was this consciousness of time passing, perhaps this and the dreariness of my job that brought an increasing heaviness of heart which I only managed to struggle against by clinging obstinately to the hope that I would one day get back to the island.

1952

October 7: The New Zealand hermit-wannabee Thomas Francis Neale took up residence in the Anchorage Island compound abandoned by the wartime coastwatchers on the Suwarrow atoll in the Cook Islands of the great Pacific Ocean.

In 1952 my opportunity came. Dick Brown, an independent trader in Rarotonga, had gone into the shipping business after the war, buying a long narrow submarine chaser of less than a hundred tons which he had converted into an inter-island trader. She was called the *Mahurangi*, and quite by chance I heard that on her next trip she was going north to Palmerston Island and then to Manihiki. I did not need a map to know that the course passed right by Suvarov. In all my years in the Cooks, I had never heard of a trading vessel sailing this direct route; it was an opportunity which might never come my way again. I totted up my finances. I had saved 79 pounds. I went to Dick and asked when he was sailing.

"In two weeks," he replied.

"How much would it cost to divert on the way to Manihiki and take me to Suvarov?"

He scratched his head, figuring. "Thirty quid."

It seemed a lot of money, especially when the *Mahurangi* must pass almost within sight of Suvarov and could have dropped me off with little trouble. But diverting a vessel is always expensive and I did not argue.

"Done!" I said, and we shook hands on it.

I had just two weeks to gather together everything I thought a man would need to survive on an uninhabited coral atoll. Two

weeks - and 49 pounds.

OCTOBER 1952-JUNE 1954

THE FIRST DAY

It was 1.30 p.m. as we chugged slowly towards the pass. I stood leaning over the gunwale, sipping from a tin of warm beer, watching Frisbie's "island of desire" - which was now about to become my island - as we prepared to drop anchor a hundred yards offshore. This was an experience I did not want to share with anyone. The journey northwards had been uneventful. I knew several of the crew -good-hearted, cheerful, bare-chested boys from the outer islands in search of adventure- and we carried nine native passengers as well as myself. There were five women and four men, all returning to Manihiki after visiting relatives in Raro, and they were bursting with the infectious exuberance of people just ending a wonderful holiday in the "big city." The forward deck was cluttered with their farewell gifts; everything from newly-plaited hats to bundles of protesting chickens. Like all holidaymakers, they were taking home things they could just as easily have bought on their own island, but these were invested with all the importance of souvenirs or gifts.

They were a jolly crowd, but something had made me keep to myself for most of the trip. One might have thought I would eagerly seize the opportunity of sharing these last few days in the company of my fellow men, but in fact the opposite happened. Perhaps I was too excited; perhaps I was a little afraid. As the captain -eyes fixed on the two rocks marking the channel- bellowed orders, I stood a little apart from the others, filled with a tremendous excitement surging up inside me. But I have never been a demonstrative man and I doubt whether the crew or passengers crowding the rails had the slightest inkling that this was a moment so remarkable to me that I could hardly believe it was really happening.

The sun beat down harshly; scarcely a ripple disturbed the lagoon as we edged our way through the pass, and the white beach, which I had last seen with Andy from the cabin top of the *Tiare Taporo*, came closer and closer. My landing was hardly spectacular. Not far off the old wrecked pier the crew lowered a ship's boat and loaded my belongs aboard, and rowed me ashore. As the *Mahurangi*'s skipper had decided to stay in the lagoon until the following morning, my boat was followed by the passengers anxious for the chance to stretch their legs. So I came ashore in crowded company and almost before my crates and stores had been off-loaded, the beach was busy with women washing clothes whilst the men hurried off to fish.

Quite suddenly, though still in the company of human beings, I felt a momentary pang of loneliness. Everybody seemed so busy that nobody had any time to notice me. The crew was already rowing back to the *Mahurangi*, the laughing, brown women were sorting out their washing, the fishermen had disappeared, while I stood, feeling a little forlorn, on the hot white beach under

a blazing sun, surrounded by a mound of crates, parcels, and black stones, unceremoniously dumped near the pier. A plaintive meaow reminded me I had a friend. Mrs. Thievery was impatiently demanding her freedom. Leaving all my packages on the beach, except my Gladstone and the box with the cats, I walked almost apprehensively the fifty yards up the coral path to the shack. I was in some way reluctant to get there, wondering what I would find. Was it still going to be habitable? Were the water tanks still in good order? All sorts of anxieties crowded into my mind. Was there anything left of the garden which the coast-watchers had started, and what about the fowls they had left behind? Then there was the old boat. I had seen no sign of it on the beach. I quickened my step along the narrow path, brushing past the tangled undergrowth and creepers, the dense thickets of young coconuts, pandanus, gardenias, which had grown into a curtain, walling me in, almost blocking out the sun. Suddenly the shack was there in front of me and I must admit my heart sank. I had forgotten the amazing violence of tropical growth; forgotten, too, just how long ago it was since men had lived here. Subconsciously, I had always remembered Suvarov when the shack had been inhabited. And now, standing there with my bag and box at my feet, I could hardly distinguish the galvanised iron roof through the thick, lush creepers covering it. The outbuildings, too, seemed almost strangled beneath a profusion of growth. Cautiously I stepped on to the veranda which ran the length of the shack. The floorboards felt firm, but when I looked up at the roof, I saw the plaited coconut fronds had rotted away. And then, at one end of the veranda I spotted a boat, upside down, with two quarter-inch cracks running right along her bottom. I knew immediately she would sink like a stone in the water; nor was this realisation made any less depressing by the knowledge I had brought no caulking with me. It was all rather overpowering. I sat in the hot sun, mopped my brow and opened up my faithful Gladstone bag and took out the screwdriver which I had packed on top of my clothes in order to be able to unscrew the netted top of the box and release the cats. In a moment the mother had jumped out, looking around her, and I set the kitten down alongside. Unlike me, they did not seem a bit deterred and proceeded to make themselves at home immediately. Within five minutes Mrs. Thievery had killed her first island rat. I rolled myself a cigarette and sat on the veranda for a few moments and looked around at the scene I remembered so well from my one brief visit. The end of the veranda -which was about seven feet wide- had been walled in to make an extra room, which the coast-watchers had used as their kai room. In front of the shack the ground had been cleared to form a yard which was in hopeless confusion with weeds and vines trailing across it, dead coconut fronds blown in on stormy nights littering every corner. At the end of the yard was a storage shed and bathhouse, also overgrown with vines, while to my left were the remnants of the garden. After one glance at the tangled wreckage of its fence I turned away. Time enough later for these problems. First I must look over the shack. So, getting up, I pushed open my front door. Oddly, this act gave me a curious sensation, an almost spooky feeling as though I were venturing across the threshold of an empty, derelict building which held associations I couldn't know anything about. As though, in fact, I was trespassing into

someone else's past which had become lost and forgotten, but was still somehow personal because the men who had lived here must have left some vestige of their personalities behind. Once I was over this, I went inside. The room was about ten by ten. There was a high step up from the veranda and the first thing I saw was a good solid table up against the wall facing me. Nearby was a home-made kitchen chair. High on the wall to my left I saw two shelves holding some fifty paperback books. Two of the walls had been pierced for shutters and I opened them to let in air and light. These were typical island shutters, hinged at the top, opening upwards and designed to be kept open with a pole.

This had been the radio room, and it would make an excellent office, I thought; a sort of writing room where I could keep my few papers and, each evening, record the day's events in my journal. And the barometer would look very handsome nailed to the wall over the table! Indeed, when I took down one or two books and riffled their pages, it did not need much imagination on my part to invest the roughly hewn table with the more dignified title of desk and visualise the small, square room not so much as four rather bare walls, but as my study.

A footstep outside interrupted my daydream, and as I turned round to see the man in the doorway, I felt a moment of irritation that even on this day I could not be left alone. But I had been unfair. It was one of the passengers, a big burly Manihiki pearl diver called Tagi, who now stood rather sheepishly, wearing nothing but a pareu, and said, "Tom, we thought you might be too busy to cook yourself a meal. When the fish is ready, come and eat with us." Full of contrition, I accepted gratefully, for on this day of all days I had no time to cook.

"I'll give you a call when it's ready," he added cheerfully, but seemed to linger. He was filled with curiosity.

"Come in and see - not bad, eh?" I asked him.

He looked around, then followed me into the bedroom which was separated from the office by a partition five foot high, with a narrow slip serving as a door. I opened up the other shutters. This room was double the length of the first room, and to my astonishment contained a bed. It had never entered my head that I would find a bed as for some reason I had assumed the coast-watchers would have been equipped with camp beds and I had been cheerfully resigned to sleeping on the floor until I built one. I sat down eagerly to test it. It was solidly built of wood - with no springs, I was pleased to note, for I cannot stand a bed which sags. A wooden bedside table and a small shelf, which had probably been erected to keep toilet articles on, completed the furnishings.

"I wish I had a house like this," sighed Tagi.

A practical thought now occurred to me. If the coast-watchers had left a bed, two tables, a chair and books, might they not also have left some useful articles in the kai room? I hastened to inspect it. This room had been constructed by walling in the last third of the veranda and when I pushed open the door from the veranda and looked inside, I was astounded. In one corner was a large food safe with doors and sides of zinc netting, in another the carcass of an ancient kerosene-operated refrigerator The fuel tank had been removed but it would still make an excellent cupboard. The hinges of the food safe seemed strong

when I swung the door open and the three shelves were in good condition.
To complete the furnishings, the coast-watchers had built a solid table -more of a bench, really- running nearly the length of the longest wall and facing out on to the yard, with shutters above it.
I wonder if you can appreciate the excitement I felt when I discovered this unexpected treasure. I know I had barely landed on Anchorage, yet the sight of these solid pieces of furniture -which would save me endless work- made me feel as Crusoe must have felt each time he returned to the wreck. I was so delighted that I opened the food safe and the refrigerator again for the sheer pleasure it gave me, and I remember mopping my brow and saying, "Yes, Tagi, you're right. This is a place in a million."
At the far end of this room a broken-down door led out to the cook-house, quite a decent room, roofed with flattened-out fuel drums, and walled in with slats of dried mid-rib of coconut fronds neatly nailed on to supporting poles, and giving plenty of air. Round the back of the shack were the two water tanks, which I remembered. They were in good condition. One, built of circular corrugated iron, held about three hundred gallons; the other, a square galvanized tank, held some four hundred gallons. And when I turned on the taps excellent water came gushing out. To my relief, this was quite drinkable. The tanks must have been well built and, since they rested on a wooden platform eighteen inches above the ground, did not seem to have suffered the general process of decay. Fed from the guttering along the wall, each was almost full.
Behind the shack, I discovered a latrine some eight feet deep, situated some little distance away. This handy convenience was lined with two oil drums whose bottoms had been thoughtfully knocked out. On the spur of the moment, I christened it "The House of Meditation." As I toured my new domain, my first sensation of dismay began to evaporate in the excitement of discovering items like the food safe and the bed, and I began to think to myself that this wilderness of creepers and vines could easily be cleared up in a couple of days. Then I had another pleasant surprise -in fact, two- after walking across the yard to take a look at the store shed and bath-house. Situated at the far end of the yard, it was shaded by parau trees which shed their hibiscus blossoms each way, so that I had to tread over a carpet of flowers to reach it. Picking up a handful, I let them trickle through my fingers as I stood for a moment, soaking in the scene. A gap in the trees, like a window, gave me a glimpse of the lagoon, blue and still and sunlit. If I listened carefully I could hear the thunder of the barrier reef above the faint rustle of the palm fronds, until the clamour of frigate birds wheeling overhead drowned all other sounds. One more angry than the rest seemed to dive almost on to the shack, and as I watched it, I suddenly realised that the long, low building, even though covered with creepers, was solid and that Tagi had been right to envy me, for it was, in fact, going to be the best place I had ever "batched" in. I turned round to tell him, but he had gone. I had been so absorbed I had never heard him leave. Entering the rough lean-to hut, whose walls were made of plaited coconut stretched on pandanus poles, I discovered a real treasure which the coast-watchers must have

left - a coil of eight-gauge fencing wire. There were at least a hundred and fifty yards of it and it was all in excellent condition. Jutting off the shed was the bath-house, with a water tank on a stand, and a half-wall of flattened tin drums. It was badly overgrown with creepers but it would be easy to hack these down, and in no time I would be able to build a shelf for my washbowl, and put up a line for my towels. I was on the point of leaving the bath-house when I got a real start. An old hen, clucking with fear, rose right up under my feet and made off into the bush. I had a comfortable feeling that eggs might be available in future.

Now I took a look at the garden, or rather the remains of the garden, overgrown with weeds and thick creepers. Once there had been a fence, but now only a few poles stuck out like rotten teeth, adorned with once-taut wire whose remnants lay tangled on the ground. One glance told me that whatever topsoil there might once have been had long since blown away. Right away it was obvious that re-making the garden was going to be a major problem. Only a single breadfruit tree in one corner of the wilderness gave a hint that the soil was at least fruitful. I had been so preoccupied in exploring my new home that I only became aware of how hungry I was when Tagi returned to summon me down to the meal on the beach. But later, as we sat there against a background of palms with the lagoon stretching away in front of us and the *Mahurangi* riding at anchor a hundred yards out, I couldn't help watching my companions' faces and wondering what they would be doing at this time the following day the following week, the following month, the following year. Would they ever remember me at all once they had sailed away in the schooner?

It was an odd sensation.

But somehow I did not very much care whether they chose to remember or not. For now I was quite sure I had broken free, thought it was hard, sitting there eating fish with my fingers, to search inside myself for words which described what it felt like. The might not remember me, but, I wondered would I ever remember them? How, in later years would I look back on this last meal? I covertly watched the five women who had finished their washing which was laid on the beach, weighed down at each corner with lumps of coral, as they feasted, without a care in the world. Jolly, handsome-looking women, mostly inclined to plumpness from eating too much poi, they grabbed whatever they could - from the tasty fish and crays to the ugly over-rich coconut crabs. We all ate off banana or breadfruit leaves, while a kettle boiled noisily on the small fire, and there was a great deal of laughter and giggling and suddenly I found myself being envious of them.

The Cook Islanders are such happy-go-lucky people, untouched by the onslaught of tourism, that nobody can help liking them. They were contented, no doubt about that, and they didn't have to search for happiness. They were simpler than we whites in the South Seas, they took their pleasure as they came. I was the odd fish at that fishy meal!

Once we had finished, there was still plenty of daylight and Tagi announced that the men would carry my packages up to the shack. No sooner had they started, however, than the five women also surged towards the yard. Now that I had shared the meal, they felt they had earned the right to see where I was going to

live, to satisfy a curiosity that I found rather touching because of its innocence. I couldn't be angry, for those weren't predatory females anxious to probe the secrets of a crank. They accepted me for what I was, and wanted to see if I would be comfortable. They obviously thought I was not going to be comfortable, for when they had gathered in the yard, a great deal of gesticulating accompanied a torrent of words. In a way I was anxious to get down to work for I had all my belongs to sort out.

"What's the row about?" I asked, a little crossly.

"The women say your veranda roof is no good," replied Tagi.

"I could have told you that," I retorted.

"They would like to make a new one," he added.

And they did! Almost before the last of my packages had been deposited in the shack, five giggling women were squatting on my veranda burdened with fronds. They worked to such good effect that over half a new roof had been finished before the *Mahurangi* sailed the following morning. I had little time that first evening to explore my island. Indeed, all I could do was unpack the few necessities I required, for as I wrote on the first page of my journal, "I haven't had time for a proper look around, but I can see miles of work sticking out. There will be no time for sitting under a tree and watching the reef, not for a long time anyway." Soon after sundown, after I had entered this in my journal, I rolled a last cigarette before turning in. I was either too tired or maybe too excited even to brew a pot of tea. I had unpacked a little glass and crockery and now I used some of my precious soap to scrub down my eating table. I put a couple of drinking coconuts on the shelf near the bed and then I unrolled my kapok mattress, spread it out and made my bed carefully. I had had no time to examine the books left by the coast-watchers, but in any event it did not matter, for on this first night only one book seemed appropriate. When the cats had settled down, I lit the glass table lamp, carried it to the bedside table, and soon I was tucked in reading THE ISLAND OF DESIRE.

Only once did I wake during the night, when a sudden squeal, half human, half animal, made me jump up, frozen with fear. It was succeeded by a series of grunts - and then I knew the sounds and relaxed. it seem that the rumours I had heard of wild pigs on the island were true.

The *Mahurangi* sailed soon after dawn. Over the years I had imagined this moment dozens of times, often wondering what sort of emotions I would experience at the actual moment of severing my last contact with the outside world. I had imagined I might be a little despondent and had thought, too, there might be a sudden surge of almost frightening loneliness. But now the schooner was leaving I felt nothing but impatience that the ship took so long to get under way. I hate protracted farewells at the best of times, and yet I would have been abnormal had I not felt a pang or two of emotion. It was not despondency. It was not fear. But when Tagi, who was the last to get into the ship's boat came and said, "Best of luck, Tom," I will admit there was a lump in my throat. It was the severing of the link, the rather ceremonious way he shook hands, that made me feel that way; but it passed quickly.

At last all the passengers were on board, and the old *Mahurangi*

began to move. I stood on the beach watching her sail slowly towards the gap through the reef. Once she was far enough away, I took off my shorts and waved them in symbolic farewell.
From that moment onwards I never again put on those shorts. Instead I wore a five-inch strip torn from an old pareu. I wore it native style, one end fastened round the waist, with the other end hanging down in front, then passed between the legs, down behind, the end being tucked under the waist band. Done properly, it will remain in position all day, whether you are working, swimming or fishing.

1954

June: Thomas Francis Neale needed to leave Suwarrow due to problems of arthritis and fear that he had slipped a disc.

HERMITS

1960

March: Thomas Francis Neale went back to Suwarrow, this time, it would turn out, staying 42 months.

HERMITS

1963

December 27, day: Thomas Francis Neale was forced off Suwarrow in the Cook Islands because a commercial pearl-diving operation was destroying his tranquility. (See AN ISLAND TO ONESELF.)

HERMITS

AN ISLAND TO ONESELF — SUVAROV, COOK ISLANDS

BY TOM NEALE

This is the story of the years which I spent alone, in two spells on an uninhabited coral atoll half a mile long and three hundred yards wide in the South Pacific. It was two hundred miles from the nearest inhabited island, and I first arrived there on October 7, 1952 and remained alone (with only two yachts calling) until June 24, 1954, when I was taken off ill after a dramatic rescue.

I was unable to return to the atoll until April 23, 1960 and this time I remained alone until December 27, 1963.

I was fifty when I went to live alone on Suvarov, after thirty years of roaming the Pacific, and in this story I will try to describe my feelings, try to put into words what was, for me, the most remarkable and worthwhile experience of my whole life.

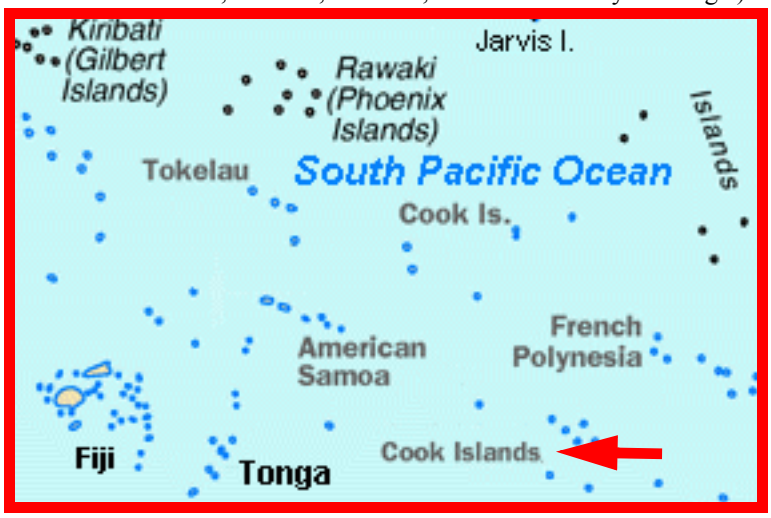
I chose to live in the Pacific islands because life there moves at the sort of pace which you feel God must have had in mind originally when He made the sun to keep us warm and provided the fruits of the earth for the taking; but though I came to know most of the islands, for the life of me I sometimes wonder what it was in my blood that had brought me to live among them....

1965

April 20, day: Meeting in Honolulu, Defense Secretary Robert Strange McNamara, General William C. Westmoreland, General Earle Wheeler, William Bundy, and Ambassador Maxwell D. Taylor agreed to recommend to President Lyndon Baines Johnson that we send another 40,000 combat soldiers to Vietnam. Elections were held, and the Cook Islands were no longer a colony of New Zealand. (Elizabeth II, in her

Hey, hey, LBJ!

capacity as Queen of New Zealand, remains, however, at least nominally in charge.)



Leonard P. Ullmann and Leonard Krasner's CASE STUDIES IN BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION offered the 1st use of the term "behavior modification" in the title of a book. By 1980, Ullman and Krasner's treatise would have been cited in more than 480 other publications and it had thus become a "citation classic" in the journal Current Contents.[4]

PSYCHOLOGY

4. Street, W.R. A CHRONOLOGY OF NOTEWORTHY EVENTS IN AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGY. Washington DC: American Psychological Association, 1994

1967

July: Thomas Francis Neale returned to the Suwarrow atoll the 3d time — this time, it would turn out, for 10 years.

HERMITS

(During cyclones, waves sweep entirely over the islands of this coral atoll. With an only moderate amount of further global warming, it will be totally submerged and all its rare bird population will be exterminated.)

1977

Early in this year, stomach cancer forced Thomas Francis Neale to relocate to Rarotonga.

HERMITS

November 30: Thomas Francis Neale died in hospital on Rarotonga.

HERMITS

TOM NEALE **THOMAS FRANCIS NEALE**

"It's all now you see. Yesterday won't be over until tomorrow and tomorrow began ten thousand years ago."

– Remark by character "Garin Stevens"
in William Faulkner's INTRUDER IN THE DUST

Prepared: May 28, 2013

THOMAS FRANCIS NEALE TOM NEALE

ARRGH AUTOMATED RESEARCH REPORT

GENERATION HOTLINE

This stuff presumably looks to you as if it were generated by a human. Such is not the case. Instead, upon someone's request we have pulled it out of the hat of a pirate that has grown out of the shoulder of our pet parrot "Laura" (depicted above). What these chronological lists are: they are research reports compiled by ARRGH algorithms out of a database of data modules which we term the Kouroo Contexture. This is data mining. To respond to such a request for information, we merely push a button.

Commonly, the first output of the program has obvious deficiencies and so we need to go back into the data modules stored in the contexture and do a minor amount of tweaking, and then we need to punch that button again and do a recompile of the chronology — but there is nothing here that remotely resembles the ordinary "writerly" process which you know and love. As the contents of this originating contexture improve, and as the programming improves, and as funding becomes available (to date no funding whatever has been needed in the creation of this facility, the entire operation being run out of pocket change) we expect a diminished need to do such tweaking and recompiling, and we fully expect to achieve a simulation of a generous and untiring robotic research librarian. Onward and upward in this brave new world.

> First come first serve. There is no charge.
> Place your requests with <Kouroo@kouroo.info>.
> Arrgh.

THOMAS FRANCIS NEALE TOM NEALE

AN ISLAND TO ONESELF — SUVAROV, COOK ISLANDS

BY TOM NEALE

This is the story of the years which I spent alone, in two spells on an uninhabited coral atoll half a mile long and three hundred yards wide in the South Pacific. It was two hundred miles from the nearest inhabited island, and I first arrived there on October 7, 1952 and remained alone (with only two yachts calling) until June 24, 1954, when I was taken off ill after a dramatic rescue.

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I was fifty when I went to live alone on Suvarov, after thirty years of roaming the Pacific, and in this story I will try to describe my feelings, try to put into words what was, for me, the most remarkable and worthwhile experience of my whole life.

I chose to live in the Pacific islands because life there moves at the sort of pace which you feel God must have had in mind originally when He made the sun to keep us warm and provided the fruits of the earth for the taking; but though I came to know most of the islands, for the life of me I sometimes wonder what it was in my blood that had brought me to live among them. There was no history of wanderlust in my family that I knew of - than the enterprise which had brought my father, who was born in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, out to New Zealand after serving with the 17th Lancers. By the time he met my mother, who came of sound pioneering stock, he had become a company secretary. And so I was born in Wellington, though while I was still a baby we moved to Greymouth in New Zealand's South Island, where my father was appointed paymaster to the state coal mines. Here we remained until I was about seven, when the family -I had two brothers and three sisters- moved to Timaru on the opposite side of South Island.

It was a change for the better. My maternal grandmother owned twenty acres of land only five miles out of Timaru and here we settled down, my father commuting to his new office either by bicycle, trap or on horseback, while I went to the local school where (with all due modesty) I was good enough in reading, geography and arithmetic to merit a rapid move from Standard One to Standard Three.

Looking back, I imagine the real clue to my future aspirations lay in the fact that is always seemed absolutely natural that I should go to sea. I cannot remember ever contemplating any other way of life and there was no opposition from my parents when I announced I would like to join the New Zealand Navy. My real ambition was to become a skilled navigator, but when my father took me to Auckland Naval Base to sign on, I was dismayed to discover that already I was too old at eighteen and a half to be apprenticed as a seaman. It was a bitter disappointment, but I had set my heart on a seafaring career and did the next best thing. Signing on as an apprentice engineer meant starting right at the bottom -and I mean at the bottom- as a stoker, although

I didn't mind because the job, however menial, would give me a chance to see something of the Pacific.
I spent four years in the new Zealand Navy before buying myself out, and I only left because of a nagging desire to see more of the world than the brief glimpses we obtained beyond the confining, narrow streets of the ports where we docked. And our visits were dictated by naval necessity - simple things like routine patrols or defective boilers, so that I saw Papeete but never Tahiti; Apia but never Samoa; Nukualofa but never Tonga. It was the islands I always longed to see, not a vista of dock cranes nor the sleazy bars which one can find in every maritime corner of the world. For the next few years I wandered from island to island. Sometimes I would take a job for a few months as a fireman on one of the slow, old, inter-island tramps. When I tired of this, I would settle down for a spell, clearing bush or planting bananas. There was always work, and there was always food. And it was only now that I really came to know and love the islands strung like pearls across the South Pacific - Manihiki at dawn as the schooner threads its way through the pass in the reef; Papeete at sunset with the Pacific lapping up against the main street; the haze on the coconut palms of Puka Puka; the clouds above Moorea with its jagged silhouette of extinct volcanoes; Pago Pago, where Somerset Maugham created the character of Sadie Thompson, and where you can still find the Rainmaker's Hotel; Apia, where, I was later told, Michener was inspired to create Bloody Mary and where Aggie Grey's Hotel welcomes guests with a large whisky and soda. I loved them all, and it was ten years before I returned to New Zealand in 1931. I was then twenty-eight and when I reached Timaru I telephoned my father at his office.
"Who's that?" he asked.
"Tom."
"Which Tom?"
"Your Tom!" I replied.
At first he could hardly believe it. But before long he was at the station to fetch me in his car. The old man looked much the same as I remembered him, as did my mother - but my brothers and sisters had grown so much that at first I scarcely recognised them. Ten years is a long time, but before long I was back in the family routine as though I had been away hardly more than a month. Yet, somehow, I remained an outsider in my own mind. I had seen too much, done so much, existed under a succession of such utterly different circumstances, that at times I would catch myself looking at my mother sitting placidly in her favourite chair and think to myself, "Is it really possible that for all these years while I've been seeing the world, she has sat there each evening apparently content?"
I stayed for some months, doing odd jobs, but then I was off again, and I knew this time where I wanted to go, for of all the islands one beckoned more than any other. This was Moorea, the small French island off Tahiti, and it was here that finally I settled -or thought I had- in an island of dramatic beauty, with its jagged peaks of blue and grey rising from the white beaches to awesome pinnacles against the blue sky. It is a small island in which, however, everything seems to be a little larger than life. It is an island of plenty. I could walk along the twisting, narrow coast road and pick guavas, coconuts or papa-paws and

pineapples and nobody could be angry. The French, who had superimposed their wonderful way of life on the people, took care that Moorea should remain unspoiled.

Only one boat a day made the twelve-mile trip from Papeete and passed through the narrow channel in the barrier reef. And -when I was there, anyway- providing a man behaved himself, he was left alone, and I preferred it that way. I had to work -indeed, I wanted to work- and there was always bush to be cleared, copra to be prepared, fish to be caught. I really wanted for nothing, and I remember saying to myself one beautiful evening after swimming in the lagoon, "Neale," (I always call myself Neale when I talk to myself), "this is the nearest thing on earth to paradise."

Life was incredibly cheap. A bullock was slaughtered twice a week and we were able to buy the meat at four-pence a pound. Within a short time of settling down the natives had built me a comfortable two-roomed shack for which I paid them a bag of sugar and a small case of corned beef. Life was as simple as that. I had my own garden, a wood-burning stove, plenty of vegetables, fruit and fish. My living expenses never came to more than one pound sterling a week -often the total was less- because from the moment I left the a Navy I had made up my mind to "batch" - in other words, look after myself completely; do my own washing, cooking, mending, and never move anywhere without being entirely equipped to fend for myself. It is a decision I have stuck to all my life. Even now, I am never without my own mattress, sheets, pillows, blankets, cutlery, crockery, kitchen utensils and a battered old silver teapot. Even as I write, the "housewife" which the Navy gave me the day I joined up is not far out of reach. It is in itself a symbol of years of "batching" which has saved me a fortune. Mine was a simple existence. No furnished rooms to rent, no meals to buy. My only luxury was buying books. I was very happy in Moorea. I quickly learned to speak Tahitian, I made one or two friends, I worked fairly hard, I read a great deal. My taste in literature is catholic, anything from Conrad or Defoe to a Western; the only thing I demand is an interesting book in bed last thing at night. It was in Moorea that I first stumbled on the works of the American writer Robert Dean Frisbie, who was to have such an important influence on my life. Frisbie had settled in the Pacific, and had written several volumes about the islands which I read time and time again, though it never entered by head then that one day we should be friends.

I might have stayed in Moorea for ever, but around 1940, at a moment when I thought myself really happy, a character came into my life who was to change it in a remarkable way. This was Andy Thompson, the man who led me to Frisbie, captain of a hundred-ton island schooner called the *Tiare Taporo* - the "Lime Flower." I met Andy on a trip to Papeete and immediately liked him. He was bluff, hearty and a good friend, though after that first meeting months would sometimes pass before we met again, for we had to wait until the *Tiare Taporo* called at Papeete. We never corresponded.

I was astounded, therefore, to receive a letter from him one day. It must have been early in 1943. Andy was a man used to commanding a vessel and never wasted words. He simply wrote: "Be ready. I've got a job for you in the Cook Islands." At that time

I didn't particularly want a job in the Cook Islands and Andy didn't even tell me what the job was. Yet when the *Tiare Taporo* arrived in Papeete a few weeks later, I was waiting. And because I sailed back with him I was destined to meet Frisbie, who in turn "led" me to Suvarov. To this day, I do not know why I returned with Andy - particularly as the job he had line up involved me in running a store on one of the outer islands belonging to the firm which owned Andy's schooner. The regular storekeeper was due to go on leave and I was supposed to relieve him. On his return, I gathered, I would be sent on as a sort of permanent relief storekeeper to the other islands in the Cooks. I suppose, subconsciously, I must have been ready for a change of environment. Nonetheless, I didn't find the prospect entirely attractive. First, I had to go to Rarotonga and here, within two days of arriving, I met Frisbie.

Since this man's influence was to bear deeply on my life, I must describe him. Frisbie was a remarkable man. Some time before I met him, his beautiful native wife had died, leaving him with four young children. He loved the islands; his books about them had been well reviewed but had not, as far as I could learn, made him much money. Not that that worried him, for his life was writing and he had the happy facility for living from one day to the next with, apparently, hardly a care in the world. He was, he told me, an old friend of Andy's, and any friend of Andy's was a friend of his. It was Sunday morning and, unknown to me, Andy had invited us both for lunch.

I could not have known then what momentous consequences this meeting was to have. None of us suspected it then but Frisbie had only a few more years to live (he was to die of tetanus), and on that Sunday morning I saw in front of me a tall, thin man of about forty-five with an intelligent but emaciated face. He looked ill, but I remember how his eagerness and enthusiasm mounted as he started to talk about "our" islands and told me of his desire to write more books about them. We liked each other on sight, which surprised me, for I do not make friends easily; and it was after lunch -washed down with a bottle of Andy's excellent rum- that Frisbie first mentioned Suvarov. Of course, I had heard of this great lagoon, with its coral reef stretching nearly fifty miles in circumference, but I had never been there, for it was off to trade routes, and shipping rarely passed that way.

Because it reef is submerged at high tide -leaving only a line of writhing white foam to warn the navigator of its perils- Suvarov, however, is clearly marked on all maps. Yet Suvarov is not the name of an island, but of an atoll, and the small islets inside the lagoon each have their own names. The islets vary in size from Anchorage, the largest, which is half a mile long, to One Tree Island, the smallest, which is merely a mushroom of coral. The atoll lies almost in the centre of the Pacific, five hundred and thirteen miles north of Rarotonga, and the nearest inhabited island is Manihiki, two hundred miles distant.

That afternoon Frisbie entranced me, and I can see him now on the veranda, the rum bottle on the big table between us, leaning forward with that blazing characteristic earnestness, saying to me, "Tom Neale, Suvarov is the most beautiful place on earth, and no man has really lived until he has lived there." Fine words, I thought, but not so easy to put into action.

"Of course, you must remember," he broke in, "there's a war on, and at present Suvarov is inhabited." This I knew - for two New Zealanders with three native helpers were stationed on Anchorage in Suvarov's lagoon. These "coast-watchers" kept an eye open for ships or aircraft in the area, and would report back any movement to headquarters by radio.

"But they'd probably be glad to see you - or even me," added Frisbie with a touch of irony. I got up for it was time to leave. And as I said good-bye to this tall, thin man whose face and eyes seemed to urn with enthusiasm, I said, and the words and sigh came straight from the heart, "That's the sort of place for me."

"Well - if you feel that way about it, why don't you go there?" he retorted.

Storekeeping was not a very arduous job and I soon fell into my new life. My first "posting" took me to Atiu - a small island with rounded, flat-topped hills, and fertile valleys filled with oranges, coconuts and paw-paw; all of it less than seven thousand acres, each one of them exquisite and forever beckoning. From there I moved on to Puka Puka -"the Land of Little Hills"- where seven hundred people lived and produced copra.

The pattern of my life hardly varied, irrespective of the island on which I happened to be relieving the local storekeeper. Each morning I would make my breakfast, open up the store and wait for the first native customers in the square functional warehouse with its tin roof. The walls were lined with shelves of flour, tea, coffee, beans, tinned goods, cloth, needles - everything which one didn't really need at all in an island already overflowing with fruit and fish! No wonder that as I was shuttled from one outer island to another, I soon discovered that storekeeping was not the life for me, though it did have its compensations.

As long as I kept my stock and accounts in good order, I had a fair amount of leisure, which I occupied by reading. In some stores we carried supplies of paperback books so even my browsing cost me nothing, providing I didn't dirty the covers. I was batching, of course, and each store had free quarters so I was able to save a little money, especially as in some of the smaller islands the white population could be counted on the fingers of one hand.

Mine was, in every sense of the word, a village store. One moment I would be selling flour, the next I would be advising a mother how to cure her baby's cough. I carried an alarming assortment of medicines (always very popular) as well as a jumble of odds and ends ranging from spectacles to cheap binoculars, from brightly decorated tin trunks to lengths of rusty chain. I had drums of kerosene for the smoking lamps of the village, lines and hooks for the fishermen who, more often than not, would try to buy these with their latest catch of parrot fish or crays.

I came to be something of a "doctor" and village counsellor, and this I did find a rewarding part of my job, for in the really small islands I was often the only man to whom the people could turn for help. In an indirect way, I was money-lender, too - because I alone had the power to judge the worth of a man's credit against the future price of copra, and many is the bolt of calico I have sold against nuts still on the tree.

The really sad conclusion about my life as a storekeeper is that I might have enjoyed it had the store been in Tahiti or Moorea or had I never met Frisbie and been fired with the dream of going to Suvarov, for my yearnings were not desperate ones; I didn't spend all my days mooning about. But always in the back of my mind was the vague feeling, "What a bore life is! Wouldn't it be wonderful if for once I could see what life is like on an uninhabited island."

As it was, I seemed to spend my time waiting for the inter-island schooner which, every now and the, would lie off the island, giving the people a reason for wakening for a few hours out of their languid torpor while my stores were unloaded. Occasionally, Andy would sail in in the *Tiare Taporo*, then we would spend an evening on my veranda.

It was an eventful, placid existence and though I should have been content enough, I soon disliked it intensely. Why, then, did I remain for years as a storekeeper moving around from island to island? The main reason was that every time I was transferred, I had to return through Rarotonga and so met up with Frisbie again. Then we would talk far into the night about Suvarov (and the other islands of the Pacific) and occasionally, when the rum bottle was low I was able to persuade him to read the latest passages he had written. He had a deep compelling voice, and talked with as much enthusiasm as he wrote. And towards the end of each evening -and often "the end" only came when the dawn was streaking over the red tin roofs of Raro- we always came back to Suvarov. "Do you think I'll ever get there?" I asked one night. "Why not?" answered Frisbie, "though probably you'll have to wait until the war's over." I remember we were sitting together sipping a last beer on a visit to Rarotonga, "but then -there's no reason why you shouldn't go -that is, providing you equip yourself properly. Suvarov may be beautiful, but then -there's no reason why you shouldn't go -that is, providing you equip yourself properly. Suvarov may be beautiful, but it is not only looks damn fragile, it is damn fragile -and I should know." There was no need to elaborate. I already knew that in the great hurricane of 1942, sixteen of the twenty-two islets in the lagoon had literally been washed away within a matter of hours. Frisbie had been trapped on Anchorage with his four small children and the coast-watchers during this hurricane. He had saved children's lives by lashing them in the forks of tamanu trees elastic enough to bend with the wind until the violence of the storm was spent.

I did not see Frisbie again for some time, but we corresponded regularly, and one day when I was feeling particularly low, I picked up his book, THE ISLAND OF DESIRE. When I came to the second half I discovered it was all about Suvarov; how he had lived on the island with his children, hoe he had been caught in that great hurricane. I was enthralled and his descriptions were so vivid that no sooner had I finished the book than I sat down and wrote to him. "one of these days," I wrote in my sloping, eager hand, "that's where I'm going to live." Frisbie replied, a half joking letter in which he suggested "Let's both go. You can live on Motu Tuo and I can live on Anchorage, and we can visit each other. It made sense. For like me, Frisbie was naturally a solitary man. Like me, he never had much money and yet, sadly, we were never to see the island together. In fact,

Frisbie was never to see Suvarov again before he died in 1948. There was another important reason for remaining in the Cooks. If ever I did go to Suvarov -if ever I had the luck or courage to "go it alone"- I would have to leave from Rarotonga, for Suvarov is in the Cook Islands, and though the inter-island trading schooners rarely passed near the atoll there might one day be an occasion when a ship would sail close enough to the island to be diverted. But only from Raro.

This is exactly what happened. Suddenly, in 1945, there came an opportunity to visit Suvarov for two days. It was Andy who broke the news to me in Rarotonga. He was under orders, he told me, to take the *Tiare Taporo* round the islands, calling in at Suvarov with stores for the coast-watchers there, on his way back from Manihiko.

"I need an engineer for this trip," he said off-handedly, as though he did not know how much I longed to see the island. "Care to come along?" I was aboard the *Tiare* before Andy had time to change his mind!

When we sailed a few days later, Andy and I were the only Europeans aboard amongst a crew of eight Cook Islanders. We set off for the northern Cooks -Puka Puka, Penrhyn, Manihiki- which are all low-lying atolls quite different from the Southern cooks which are always known as the "High Islands."

It was a pleasant, leisurely trip. I can imagine no more perfect way of seeing the South Pacific than from the deck of a small schooner. Life moved at an even, unhurried pace. I did not have much work for the *Tiare* carried sail and the engine was seldom needed. Our normal routine was to sail for a few days until we reached an atoll, lay off-shore, discharging cargo, take on some copra and then sail off again into the beautiful blue Pacific with white fleecy clouds filling the sky above.

The night before we reached Suvarov, we lay well off the atoll without even sighting it, for Andy, a good navigator, had no intention of risking his ship during the hours of darkness. All through the night we could hear the faint, faraway boom of the swells breaking on Suvarov's reef. Though there was no moon, it was clear and starry, and I stood on deck for a long time, listening, filled with an emotion I cannot even attempt to describe, until finally I felt asleep dreaming of tomorrow.

Dawn brought perfect weather and we began to approach the atoll at first light, though it lay so flat that for a long time we could not make out the land ahead. We had a good wind and full sail, and the *Tiare* must have been making four knots without her engines as I stood on the cabin top, the only sound the lap of the water and the creaking of wood, shading my eyes until at last I caught my first glimpse of Suvarov - the pulsating, creamy foam of the reef thundering before us for miles, and a few clumps of palm trees silhouetted against the blue sky, the clumps widely separated on the islets that dotted the enormous, almost circular stretch of reef. The air was shimmering under a sun already harsh as Andy took the *Tiare* towards the pass, and Anchorage started to take a more distinct shape. I could make out the white beach now, an old broken-down wharf - a relic of the days when attempts had been made to grow copra on the island - and then some figures waving on the beach. From the south end a great flock of screaming frigate birds rose angrily into the air, black and wheeling, waiting for the smaller terns to catch

fish so they could steal them.
How puny the islets seemed in the vast rolling emptiness of the Pacific! Frisbie had called them fragile but they were more than that. To me they looked almost forlorn, so that it seemed amazing they could have survived the titanic forces of nature which have so often wiped out large islands. Had they been rugged, then survival would have been easier to appreciate, but none of the islets ahead of us in the lagoon was more than ten or fifteen feet above sea level, so that only the tops of the coconut trees proclaimed their existence. The chop of the sea ceased, for now we were in the lagoon, and it was as though the *Tiare* were floating on vast pieces of colored satin. We edged towards Anchorage very slowly through a sea so still that our slight ripple hardly disturbed it. Like many South Pacific islets, Anchorage -lying just inside the lagoon- is subterraneously joined to the main reef by a submerged "causeway" of coral. And so, as I looked down into the water, I thought I had never seen so many colours in my life as the vivid blues, greens and even pinks that morning; no painter could have imitated those patterns formed by underwater coral at differing depths. Then the anchor rattled down. We put a ship's boat overboard and a few minutes later I was wading ashore through the warm, still water towards the blinding white beach.
Common politeness made me greet the five men living there -each of them desperately anxious to go home as soon as possible!- but as soon as I decently could, I went off alone, and on that first day I took a spear and my machete -a French one I had bought in Tahiti, more slender and pointed than those of the Cook Islands- and went along the reef, spearing the plentiful fish I discovered in the reef pools and so lazy that one could hardly miss them.
In the evening, I had supper with the coast-watchers and looked over their shack with the secret, questing eyes of a man wondering if one day he would inherit it. It seemed ideal. The tanks were full of good water, and when I went for a stroll I discovered a fine garden they had made out of a wilderness. The watchers were only anxious to leave. How different are men's attitudes to life! They were agreeable, cheerful and noisy -and delighted with the stores we had brought them- but their was a forced gaiety, hiding their anger that war should have played them such a dirty trick as turning them into castaways on a desert island.
On the second day, Andy and I took a ship's boat in the islet of Motu Tuo six miles across the lagoon, where the native boys caught coconut crabs and fish and lit a fire to cook our picnic lunch. And when lunch was over, I turned to Andy and said simply, but with utter conviction, "Andy, now I know this is the place I've been looking for all this time." It was to take me seven more years before my dream came true. Seven long years before another vessel from Rarotonga passed anywhere near the island, seven years during which I reached middle age. Perhaps it was this consciousness of time passing, perhaps this and the dreariness of my job that brought an increasing heaviness of heart which I only managed to struggle against by clinging obstinately to the hope that I would one day get back to the island. In 1952 my opportunity came. Dick Brown, an independent trader in Rarotonga, had gone into the shipping business after

the war, buying a long narrow submarine chaser of less than a hundred tons which he had converted into an inter-island trader. She was called the *Mahurangi*, and quite by chance I heard that on her next trip she was going north to Palmerston Island and then to Manihiki. I did not need a map to know that the course passed right by Suvarov. In all my years in the Cooks, I had never heard of a trading vessel sailing this direct route; it was an opportunity which might never come my way again. I totted up my finances. I had saved 79 pounds. I went to Dick and asked when he was sailing.

"In two weeks," he replied.

"How much would it cost to divert on the way to Manihiki and take me to Suvarov?"

He scratched his head, figuring. "Thirty quid."

It seemed a lot of money, especially when the *Mahurangi* must pass almost within sight of Suvarov and could have dropped me off with little trouble. But diverting a vessel is always expensive and I did not argue.

"Done!" I said, and we shook hands on it.

I had just two weeks to gather together everything I thought a man would need to survive on an uninhabited coral atoll. Two weeks - and 49 pounds.

OCTOBER 1952-JUNE 1954

THE FIRST DAY

It was 1.30 p.m. as we chugged slowly towards the pass. I stood leaning over the gunwale, sipping from a tin of warm beer, watching Frisbie's "island of desire" - which was now about to become my island - as we prepared to drop anchor a hundred yards offshore. This was an experience I did not want to share with anyone. The journey northwards had been uneventful. I knew several of the crew -good-hearted, cheerful, bare-chested boys from the outer islands in search of adventure- and we carried nine native passengers as well as myself. There were five women and four men, all returning to Manihiki after visiting relatives in Raro, and they were bursting with the infectious exuberance of people just ending a wonderful holiday in the "big city." The forward deck was cluttered with their farewell gifts; everything from newly-plaited hats to bundles of protesting chickens. Like all holidaymakers, they were taking home things they could just as easily have bought on their own island, but these were invested with all the importance of souvenirs or gifts.

They were a jolly crowd, but something had made me keep to myself for most of the trip. One might have thought I would eagerly seize the opportunity of sharing these last few days in the company of my fellow men, but in fact the opposite happened. Perhaps I was too excited; perhaps I was a little afraid. As the captain -eyes fixed on the two rocks marking the channel- bellowed orders, I stood a little apart from the others, filled with a tremendous excitement surging up inside me. But I have never been a demonstrative man and I doubt whether the crew or

passengers crowding the rails had the slightest inkling that this was a moment so remarkable to me that I could hardly believe it was really happening.

The sun beat down harshly; scarcely a ripple disturbed the lagoon as we edged our way through the pass, and the white beach, which I had last seen with Andy from the cabin top of the *Tiare Taporo*, came closer and closer. My landing was hardly spectacular. Not far off the old wrecked pier the crew lowered a ship's boat and loaded my belongs aboard, and rowed me ashore. As the *Mahurangi*'s skipper had decided to stay in the lagoon until the following morning, my boat was followed by the passengers anxious for the chance to stretch their legs. So I came ashore in crowded company and almost before my crates and stores had been off-loaded, the beach was busy with women washing clothes whilst the men hurried off to fish.

Quite suddenly, though still in the company of human beings, I felt a momentary pang of loneliness. Everybody seemed so busy that nobody had any time to notice me. The crew was already rowing back to the *Mahurangi*, the laughing, brown women were sorting out their washing, the fishermen had disappeared, while I stood, feeling a little forlorn, on the hot white beach under a blazing sun, surrounded by a mound of crates, parcels, and black stones, unceremoniously dumped near the pier. A plaintive meaow reminded me I had a friend. Mrs. Thievery was impatiently demanding her freedom. Leaving all my packages on the beach, except my Gladstone and the box with the cats, I walked almost apprehensively the fifty yards up the coral path to the shack. I was in some way reluctant to get there, wondering what I would find. Was it still going to be habitable? Were the water tanks still in good order? All sorts of anxieties crowded into my mind. Was there anything left of the garden which the coast-watchers had started, and what about the fowls they had left behind? Then there was the old boat. I had seen no sign of it on the beach. I quickened my step along the narrow path, brushing past the tangled undergrowth and creepers, the dense thickets of young coconuts, pandanus, gardenias, which had grown into a curtain, walling me in, almost blocking out the sun. Suddenly the shack was there in front of me and I must admit my heart sank. I had forgotten the amazing violence of tropical growth; forgotten, too, just how long ago it was since men had lived here. Subconsciously, I had always remembered Suvarov when the shack had been inhabited. And now, standing there with my bag and box at my feet, I could hardly distinguish the galvanised iron roof through the thick, lush creepers covering it. The outbuildings, too, seemed almost strangled beneath a profusion of growth. Cautiously I stepped on to the veranda which ran the length of the shack. The floorboards felt firm, but when I looked up at the roof, I saw the plaited coconut fronds had rotted away. And then, at one end of the veranda I spotted a boat, upside down, with two quarter-inch cracks running right along her bottom. I knew immediately she would sink like a stone in the water; nor was this realisation made any less depressing by the knowledge I had brought no caulking with me. It was all rather overpowering. I sat in the hot sun, mopped my brow and opened up my faithful Gladstone bag and took out the screwdriver which I had packed on top of my clothes in order to be able to unscrew the netted top of the box and release the cats. In a moment the

mother had jumped out, looking around her, and I set the kitten down alongside. Unlike me, they did not seem a bit deterred and proceeded to make themselves at home immediately. Within five minutes Mrs. Thievery had killed her first island rat. I rolled myself a cigarette and sat on the veranda for a few moments and looked around at the scene I remembered so well from my one brief visit. The end of the veranda -which was about seven feet wide- had been walled in to make an extra room, which the coast-watchers had used as their kai room. In front of the shack the ground had been cleared to form a yard which was in hopeless confusion with weeds and vines trailing across it, dead coconut fronds blown in on stormy nights littering every corner. At the end of the yard was a storage shed and bathhouse, also overgrown with vines, while to my left were the remnants of the garden. After one glance at the tangled wreckage of its fence I turned away. Time enough later for these problems. First I must look over the shack. So, getting up, I pushed open my front door. Oddly, this act gave me a curious sensation, an almost spooky feeling as though I were venturing across the threshold of an empty, derelict building which held associations I couldn't know anything about. As though, in fact, I was trespassing into someone else's past which had become lost and forgotten, but was still somehow personal because the men who had lived here must have left some vestige of their personalities behind. Once I was over this, I went inside. The room was about ten by ten. There was a high step up from the veranda and the first thing I saw was a good solid table up against the wall facing me. Nearby was a home-made kitchen chair. High on the wall to my left I saw two shelves holding some fifty paperback books. Two of the walls had been pierced for shutters and I opened them to let in air and light. These were typical island shutters, hinged at the top, opening upwards and designed to be kept open with a pole.

This had been the radio room, and it would make an excellent office, I thought; a sort of writing room where I could keep my few papers and, each evening, record the day's events in my journal. And the barometer would look very handsome nailed to the wall over the table! Indeed, when I took down one or two books and riffled their pages, it did not need much imagination on my part to invest the roughly hewn table with the more dignified title of desk and visualise the small, square room not so much as four rather bare walls, but as my study.

A footstep outside interrupted my daydream, and as I turned round to see the man in the doorway, I felt a moment of irritation that even on this day I could not be left alone. But I had been unfair. It was one of the passengers, a big burly Manihiki pearl diver called Tagi, who now stood rather sheepishly, wearing nothing but a pareu, and said, "Tom, we thought you might be too busy to cook yourself a meal. When the fish is ready, come and eat with us." Full of contrition, I accepted gratefully, for on this day of all days I had no time to cook.

"I'll give you a call when it's ready," he added cheerfully, but seemed to linger. He was filled with curiosity.

"Come in and see - not bad, eh?" I asked him.

He looked around, then followed me into the bedroom which was separated from the office by a partition five foot high, with a narrow slip serving as a door. I opened up the other shutters.

This room was double the length of the first room, and to my astonishment contained a bed. It had never entered my head that I would find a bed as for some reason I had assumed the coast-watchers would have been equipped with camp beds and I had been cheerfully resigned to sleeping on the floor until I built one. I sat down eagerly to test it. It was solidly built of wood - with no springs, I was pleased to note, for I cannot stand a bed which sags. A wooden bedside table and a small shelf, which had probably been erected to keep toilet articles on, completed the furnishings.

"I wish I had a house like this," sighed Tagi.

A practical thought now occurred to me. If the coast-watchers had left a bed, two tables, a chair and books, might they not also have left some useful articles in the kai room? I hastened to inspect it. This room had been constructed by walling in the last third of the veranda and when I pushed open the door from the veranda and looked inside, I was astounded. In one corner was a large food safe with doors and sides of zinc netting, in another the carcass of an ancient kerosene-operated refrigerator The fuel tank had been removed but it would still make an excellent cupboard. The hinges of the food safe seemed strong when I swung the door open and the three shelves were in good condition.

To complete the furnishings, the coast-watchers had built a solid table -more of a bench, really- running nearly the length of the longest wall and facing out on to the yard, with shutters above it.

I wonder if you can appreciate the excitement I felt when I discovered this unexpected treasure. I know I had barely landed on Anchorage, yet the sight of these solid pieces of furniture -which would save me endless work- made me feel as Crusoe must have felt each time he returned to the wreck. I was so delighted that I opened the food safe and the refrigerator again for the sheer pleasure it gave me, and I remember mopping my brow and saying, "Yes, Tagi, you're right. This is a place in a million."

At the far end of this room a broken-down door led out to the cook-house, quite a decent room, roofed with flattened-out fuel drums, and walled in with slats of dried mid-rib of coconut fronds neatly nailed on to supporting poles, and giving plenty of air. Round the back of the shack were the two water tanks, which I remembered. They were in good condition. One, built of circular corrugated iron, held about three hundred gallons; the other, a square galvanized tank, held some four hundred gallons. And when I turned on the taps excellent water came gushing out. To my relief, this was quite drinkable. The tanks must have been well built and, since they rested on a wooden platform eighteen inches above the ground, did not seem to have suffered the general process of decay. Fed from the guttering along the wall, each was almost full.

Behind the shack, I discovered a latrine some eight feet deep, situated some little distance away. This handy convenience was lined with two oil drums whose bottoms had been thoughtfully knocked out. On the spur of the moment, I christened it "The House of Meditation." As I toured my new domain, my first sensation of dismay began to evaporate in the excitement of discovering items like the food safe and the bed, and I began to think to myself that this wilderness of creepers and vines

could easily be cleared up in a couple of days. Then I had another pleasant surprise -in fact, two- after walking across the yard to take a look at the store shed and bath-house. Situated at the far end of the yard, it was shaded by parau trees which shed their hibiscus blossoms each way, so that I had to tread over a carpet of flowers to reach it. Picking up a handful, I let them trickle through my fingers as I stood for a moment, soaking in the scene. A gap in the trees, like a window, gave me a glimpse of the lagoon, blue and still and sunlit. If I listened carefully I could hear the thunder of the barrier reef above the faint rustle of the palm fronds, until the clamour of frigate birds wheeling overhead drowned all other sounds. One more angry than the rest seemed to dive almost on to the shack, and as I watched it, I suddenly realised that the long, low building, even though covered with creepers, was solid and that Tagi had been right to envy me, for it was, in fact, going to be the best place I had ever "batched" in. I turned round to tell him, but he had gone. I had been so absorbed I had never heard him leave. Entering the rough lean-to hut, whose walls were made of plaited coconut stretched on pandanus poles, I discovered a real treasure which the coast-watchers must have left - a coil of eight-gauge fencing wire. There were at least a hundred and fifty yards of it and it was all in excellent condition. Jutting off the shed was the bath-house, with a water tank on a stand, and a half-wall of flattened tin drums. It was badly overgrown with creepers but it would be easy to hack these down, and in no time I would be able to build a shelf for my washbowl, and put up a line for my towels. I was on the point of leaving the bath-house when I got a real start. An old hen, clucking with fear, rose right up under my feet and made off into the bush. I had a comfortable feeling that eggs might be available in future.

Now I took a look at the garden, or rather the remains of the garden, overgrown with weeds and thick creepers. Once there had been a fence, but now only a few poles stuck out like rotten teeth, adorned with once-taut wire whose remnants lay tangled on the ground. One glance told me that whatever topsoil there might once have been had long since blown away. Right away it was obvious that re-making the garden was going to be a major problem. Only a single breadfruit tree in one corner of the wilderness gave a hint that the soil was at least fruitful. I had been so preoccupied in exploring my new home that I only became aware of how hungry I was when Tagi returned to summon me down to the meal on the beach. But later, as we sat there against a background of palms with the lagoon stretching away in front of us and the *Mahurangi* riding at anchor a hundred yards out, I couldn't help watching my companions' faces and wondering what they would be doing at this time the following day the following week, the following month, the following year. Would they ever remember me at all once they had sailed away in the schooner?

It was an odd sensation.

But somehow I did not very much care whether they chose to remember or not. For now I was quite sure I had broken free, thought it was hard, sitting there eating fish with my fingers, to search inside myself for words which described what it felt like. The might not remember me, but, I wondered would I ever remember them? How, in later years would I look back on this

last meal? I covertly watched the five women who had finished their washing which was laid on the beach, weighed down at each corner with lumps of coral, as they feasted, without a care in the world. Jolly, handsome-looking women, mostly inclined to plumpness from eating too much poi, they grabbed whatever they could - from the tasty fish and crays to the ugly over-rich coconut crabs. We all ate off banana or breadfruit leaves, while a kettle boiled noisily on the small fire, and there was a great deal of laughter and giggling and suddenly I found myself being envious of them.

The Cook Islanders are such happy-go-lucky people, untouched by the onslaught of tourism, that nobody can help liking them. They were contented, no doubt about that, and they didn't have to search for happiness. They were simpler than we whites in the South Seas, they took their pleasure as they came. I was the odd fish at that fishy meal!

Once we had finished, there was still plenty of daylight and Tagi announced that the men would carry my packages up to the shack. No sooner had they started, however, than the five women also surged towards the yard. Now that I had shared the meal, they felt they had earned the right to see where I was going to live, to satisfy a curiosity that I found rather touching because of its innocence. I couldn't be angry, for those weren't predatory females anxious to probe the secrets of a crank. They accepted me for what I was, and wanted to see if I would be comfortable. They obviously thought I was not going to be comfortable, for when they had gathered in the yard, a great deal of gesticulating accompanied a torrent of words. In a way I was anxious to get down to work for I had all my belongs to sort out.

"What's the row about?" I asked, a little crossly.

"The women say your veranda roof is no good," replied Tagi.

"I could have told you that," I retorted.

"They would like to make a new one," he added.

And they did! Almost before the last of my packages had been deposited in the shack, five giggling women were squatting on my veranda burdened with fronds. They worked to such good effect that over half a new roof had been finished before the *Mahurangi* sailed the following morning. I had little time that first evening to explore my island. Indeed, all I could do was unpack the few necessities I required, for as I wrote on the first page of my journal, "I haven't had time for a proper look around, but I can see miles of work sticking out. There will be no time for sitting under a tree and watching the reef, not for a long time anyway." Soon after sundown, after I had entered this in my journal, I rolled a last cigarette before turning in. I was either too tired or maybe too excited even to brew a pot of tea. I had unpacked a little glass and crockery and now I used some of my precious soap to scrub down my eating table. I put a couple of drinking coconuts on the shelf near the bed and then I unrolled my kapok mattress, spread it out and made my bed carefully. I had had no time to examine the books left by the coast-watchers, but in any event it did not matter, for on this first night only one book seemed appropriate. When the cats had settled down, I lit the glass table lamp, carried it to the bedside table, and soon I was tucked in reading THE ISLAND OF DESIRE.

Only once did I wake during the night, when a sudden squeal, half human, half animal, made me jump up, frozen with fear. It was succeeded by a series of grunts - and then I knew the sounds and relaxed. it seem that the rumours I had heard of wild pigs on the island were true.

The *Mahurangi* sailed soon after dawn. Over the years I had imagined this moment dozens of times, often wondering what sort of emotions I would experience at the actual moment of severing my last contact with the outside world. I had imagined I might be a little despondent and had thought, too, there might be a sudden surge of almost frightening loneliness. But now the schooner was leaving I felt nothing but impatience that the ship took so long to get under way. I hate protracted farewells at the best of times, and yet I would have been abnormal had I not felt a pang or two of emotion. It was not despondency. It was not fear. But when Tagi, who was the last to get into the ship's boat came and said, "Best of luck, Tom," I will admit there was a lump in my throat. It was the severing of the link, the rather ceremonious way he shook hands, that made me feel that way; but it passed quickly.

At last all the passengers were on board, and the old *Mahurangi* began to move. I stood on the beach watching her sail slowly towards the gap through the reef. Once she was far enough away, I took off my shorts and waved them in symbolic farewell.

From that moment onwards I never again put on those shorts. Instead I wore a five-inch strip torn from an old pareu. I wore it native style, one end fastened round the waist, with the other end hanging down in front, then passed between the legs, down behind, the end being tucked under the waist band. Done properly, it will remain in position all day, whether you are working, swimming or fishing.