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John Buffett's Diary Entries While "Visiting" Pitcairn 1868 to 1872

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John Buffett was the first immigrant to settle among the descendants of *Bounty* mutineers and their Polynesian wives on Pitcairn Island in 1823. Originally from England, he became the island's schoolmaster and diarist of the *Pitcairn Island Register*.

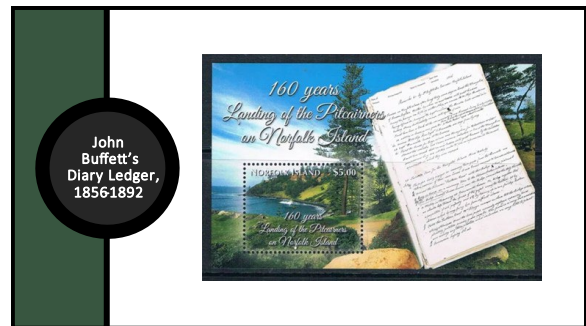


This important document recorded births, deaths, marriages, and noteworthy events that occurred from 1790 to 1854. The entire Pitcairn population traveled at least 3,297

nm west across the South Pacific aboard the HMS *Morayshire* in 1856 to Norfolk Island. In similar fashion, Buffett started writing entries in a ledger beginning on June 8, 1856, the day the Pitcairners landed on Norfolk Island. While Buffett is the principal recorder, other islanders, including a grandson,

contributed to its contents until 1892. Nowhere, except here, has Buffett's ledger been transcribed, nor is it easily accessible to scholars. According to the Pacific Manuscript Bureau (PMB), the original diary was in the possession of Mr. Edwin Young Evans of Norfolk Island in 1971. With his permission, the PMB microfilmed this document that same year. I received a pdf from the PMB via The Australian National University at Canberra. Its cover page identifies this as PMB 123 with the handwritten title, "Diary kept on Norfolk Island and Pitcairn Island, 1856-1892, by John Buffett, Sen. and others." Without direct document access, it is not evident that the ledger includes entries from Buffett's

visit to Pitcairn Island. For this study, I transcribed excerpts from John Buffett's diary during his visit to Pitcairn Island from 1868 to 1872. These entries were transcribed verbatim;



words and phrases that were illegible are shown with gray text. Footnotes offer commentary on selected entries. The period of review includes: 1) Buffett's arrival at Norfolk, 1856, 2) excursion to Auckland, 1857, 3) visit to Pitcairn Island, 1868-1872, and 4) return to Norfolk Island October, 1872. This account uses Buffett's Diary Ledger to form a framework with contemporaneous documents filling in knowledge gaps to create a nuanced account of his travels. For *Bounty/Pitcairn* enthusiasts, Buffett's diary is a virtual gold mine to a little investigated time period on Pitcairn Island.

See also Pitcairn Islands Study Group at
<https://pisg.net/Membership/index.htm>