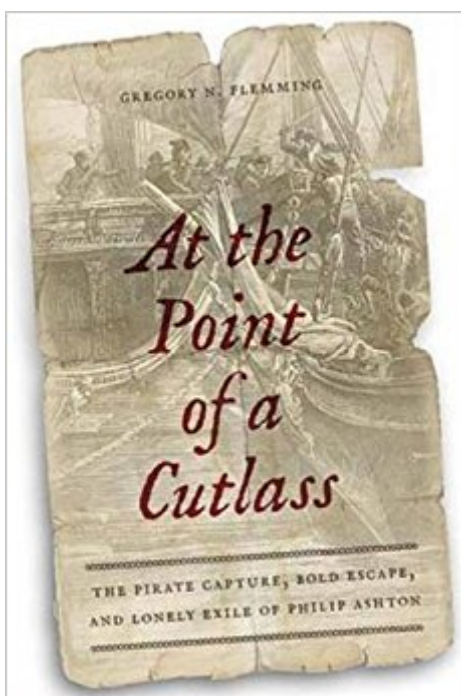


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# At The Point Of A Cutlass: The Pirate Capture, Bold Escape, And Lonely Exile Of Philip Ashton



## Synopsis

A handful of sea stories define the American maritime narrative. Stories of whaling, fishing, exploration, naval adventure, and piracy have always captured our imaginations, and the most colorful of these are the tales of piracy. Called *America's real-life Robinson Crusoe*, the true story of Philip Ashton—a nineteen-year-old fisherman captured by pirates, impressed as a crewman, subjected to torture and hardship, who eventually escaped and lived as a castaway and scavenger on a deserted island in the Caribbean—was at one time as well known as the tales of Cooper, Hawthorne, and Defoe. Based on a rare copy of Ashton's 1725 account, Gregory N. Flemming's vivid portrait recounts this maritime world during the golden age of piracy. Fishing vessels and merchantmen plied the coastal waters and crisscrossed the Atlantic and Caribbean. It was a hard, dangerous life, made more so by both the depredations and temptations of piracy. Chased by the British Royal Navy, blown out of the water or summarily hung when caught, pirate captains such as Edward Low kidnapped, cajoled, beat, and bribed men like Ashton into the rich—but also vile, brutal, and often short life of the pirate. In the tradition of Nathaniel Philbrick, *At the Point of a Cutlass* expands on a lost classic narrative of America and the sea, and brings to life a forgotten world of ships and men on both sides of maritime law.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Flemming relates the story of the capture by pirates of Philip Ashton in 1722, and in the process he reveals a fascinating history of pirates during the first decades of the 18th century, the golden age of piracy. . . . From battles with warships to the way the pirates split

their plunder, Fleming's focus on individual actors adds a welcome depth to the history of piracy with this engaging and harrowing account of America's real-life Robinson Crusoe. Publishers Weekly (starred review) Ashton's account of his travails, published in 1725, became a hit in Colonial New England. Now forgotten, his story is brought back to life by Gregory N. Fleming in his fine new book, *At the Point of a Cutlass*. Beautifully printed and bound though it could use more maps the book delivers blood-thirsty pirates and plenty of action and excitement on the high seas. Forgoing an avast ye swabbies! approach, Fleming's sober style and scholarly approach ballast his account and keep his story on a steady course. Boston Globe "Paints an indelible picture of pirate life, day by day... compelling, dramatic reading." Dallas Morning News "[A] real-life historical thriller." The Week, The Best of U.S. and International Media "At the Point of a Cutlass is trim and shipshape, and it left me talking like Long John Silver for a day or two." Wilmington, NC Star "[Fleming] expertly weaves together the various story threads to create an absorbing account of the harrowing life of a seaman living amid brutal pirates in the waning years of the period that has become known as the Golden Age of Piracy." Pirates and Privateers "For an academic reader, Fleming's synthesis of information is well done. Gleaning the necessary details from records three centuries old is never an easy task and those who study the period will appreciate Fleming's attention to detail and thorough endnotes. For any reader, *At the Point of a Cutlass* is an amazing tale of adventure, danger, and survival." The Northern Mariner "A lively read made all the more compelling from its real-world roots." The Midwest Book Review

"Gregory Fleming's account of Philip Ashton's fascinating odyssey is superb. A deeply religious cod fisherman, Ashton survived capture by depraved pirates and months alone on an uninhabited Caribbean island. Eventually rescued, he returned to Marblehead, Massachusetts, to tell his incomparable tale, which gained the attention and admiration of Cotton Mather, his disciple John Barnard, and Daniel Defoe." (George C. Daughan, author of 1812: The Navy's War and The Shining Sea: David Porter and the Epic Voyage of the U.S.S. Essex During the War of 1812) "A dark and fascinating tale. *At the Point of a Cutlass* takes us into corners of the pirate life we haven't been before. |one of the most harrowing survival stories of the colonial era." (Stephan Talty, author of *Empire of Blue Water*, The

Illustrious Dead, and Escape from the Land of Snows)“Pirates have begun to attract serious and talented scholars and writers in recent years; Gregory N. Flemming exemplifies the trend in At the Point of a Cutlass. Here is the powerful story of Philip Ashton’s life-and-death encounter with the notorious sea-robber Ned Low and his swaggering band of pirates. Flemming’s dramatic history of real pirates is vastly better than the Hollywood version! (Marcus Rediker, author of Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age)“More than just a meticulously researched account of an epic survival story, and more than a surprisingly intimate look inside the lives of the victims of 18th century pirates and the politics of piracy, At the Point of a Cutlass is a thrilling voyage with plenty of “Arghh Matey!!” and grog to go around. (Paul Schneider, author of Old Man River: The Mississippi River in North American History)

Mr. Fleming has done his research and has translated it into an interesting and readable form. He augments Ashton’s story with stories of other pirates and the victims they attempted to "recruit." I doubt seriously that any contemporary fisherman would survive Ashton’s ordeal. As I read At the Point I marveled at Ashton’s ability to take what was thrown at him and survive the solitary confinement and disappointments of the island. Mr Fleming did his homework for our benefit. Perhaps not the Pirates of Treasure Island, but pirates much more cruel and terrifying.

Gregory Flemming knows the Caribbean and has spent some quality time in St. Kitts and Nevis and other homes of the pirates on their various sojourns in this region. Highly realistic. Gregory puts you in the mix. I never knew the story of the Pirates of the Caribbean they way he tells it. He is a scholar and an excellent writer. I high recommend the book. It beats Pirates of the Caribbean for accuracy and it’s a good read by a well known scholar in the field.

I enjoyed the book very much. At its center is the true story is the tale of a fisherman in the early 1700’s who was shanghaied from his fishing boat and put aboard a pirate ship. Through many difficulties he was able to escape on a deserted island in the south Caribbean, then found and brought back to his home in America 3 years later. But the book is about much more. Pirates whose names are not household words in our histories are closely followed throughout the story as are several famous Puritan preachers of the day. A good, but sometimes gruesome look at American piracy in its heyday in the warm waters of the Caribbean Sea and coastal America.

At times, it reads like an adventure novel. The title suggests that it is focused on pirates, but it is more than that. It actually has three or four themes. The first is a riveting account of how a fisherman was kidnapped, forced to work for pirates, escaped, and then lived on a Caribbean island, absolutely alone, for two years. The book also describes the general lawlessness on the high seas in the 1720s and 1730s. These pirates were extremely nasty and violent people. Some of the accounts of how they treated their captives are quite shocking. There is a good description of the brutally efficient way in which New England justice system treated pirates. Finally, piracy was woven into the religious politics of the day. The waning Puritan movement, led by Cotton Mather, made use of piracy (public executions in particular) in order to reinforce their view of a strict social order. I felt that this was the most interesting part of the book. All in all, this is a great read whether you are a history buff or not.

Very good. The subject, pirates and seafarers in the colonial era, is little known, but fascinating. The people in the book all have interesting histories and the research is well done. This is an interesting read, especially for those from New England or for those who have hearts drawn to the sea. A pleasant surprise and a worthwhile book that will make you wish for more from this author.

I couldn't put it down. It gave a whole new understanding of how the pirate era worked & why. The big draw for me was the fact that most of the story was on Roatan island. A place I've heard a lot about, from a number of people, prior to reading this book. The author's research too was impressive. On another point, it shows what can transpire when two people under the same circumstances choose different paths. The fact that it's a true story is just wild. Would make a great movie.

Sometimes history is more exciting than fiction!

Best price I could find. Received promptly.

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