

COPY

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
WASHINGTON,
August 3, 1939.

The Honorable George Holden Tinkham,
House of Representatives.

My dear Mr. Tinkham:

I have your letter of July 27, 1939, in which you refer to a map of the Pacific Ocean published in December 1936 by the National Geographic Society on which Christmas Island carries the notation "United States and Great Britain," and request to be informed of the situation with respect to this island.

As you doubtless are aware the National Geographic Society is not a governmental institution and its maps are not official publications of this Government.

According to the Department's information, Christmas Island was discovered by Capt. James Cook, a British subject, on December 24, 1777. Capt. John Stetson, of New Haven, Conn., reported having landed on Christmas Island from the American ship EQUATER on February 15, 1825.

The island has been occupied at various times by American citizens and British subjects. It was first occupied by Americans about 1858 and was bonded as an American guano island on December 29, 1859. Christmas was included in the lists of guano islands issued by the Treasury Department. See in this connection Moore's International Law Digest, volume I, page 567. You may also desire to read the discussion of Christmas Island commencing on page 572 of that volume and also to see the

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exchange of correspondence referred to therein between the United States and Great Britain concerning this island which is published in the Foreign Relations of the United States 1888, volume 1, pages 712, 713, 727-728.

The island is now reported to be occupied by the Central Pacific Coconut Plantations, Ltd., a British corporation, under a lease from the British Government which grants the use of the island for 87 years from January 1, 1914. By a British Order in Council dated July 30, 1919, the boundaries of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands colony were extended to include Christmas Island. No protest in respect to the British Order in Council of 1919 has been made by the Government of the United States.

Sincerely yours,

GREEN H. HACKWORTH.