

Holland Land Office Museum

Quick Facts

THE SHIP “BATAVIA”

Owned by the Dutch East India Co, “The Batavia” set sail in October 1628. It sailed for the city Batavia in the Dutch East Indies. (Present day Jakarta, Indonesia.) On the ship was 250 passengers, including 38 women and children, and a crew of 100.

Upon leaving Holland the ship sailed south, rounded the tip of Africa at Cape Town and set sail for Java. Because of the trade winds, the best way to sail was east, toward Australia, then north to Java. The waters off the coast of Australia were dangerous because of coral reefs, but an experienced captain would be able to navigate the waters.

Only four ships of the Dutch East India Co. were lost to the reefs off the coast of Australia, and “The Batavia” was the first. Ship became off course, but compounded with other troubles, it spelled disaster for “The Batavia.” The ship's Captain became ill, and its First Mate was drunk and chasing women.

East India Company ships carried two sets of authorities, the captain and his officers and the Chief Merchants representing the Company. The Captain commanded the ship, but the Chief Merchant told him where to sail.

The ship ran aground on an island 40 miles off the Australian coast, near the present day city of Perth. When the ship ran aground, the Captain and the Chief Merchant were ill in their bunks,

and the First Mate was chasing women. The Assistant Merchant started to think and talk about taking over the ship.

Ship did not sink on the rocks. The lookout saw the rocks, but thought it was the reflection of the moonlight on the water. Forty people drowned on the reef and getting to the island. Afterward two of the ship's lifeboats were used to take off passengers and crew and to negotiate the 40 miles to the Australian coast.

The Chief Merchant decided to go for help. He took the two boats with about 50 people made an incredible journey through 2,300 sea miles to Batavia. A rescue ship returned to “The Batavia” to reclaim its cargo (including gold and silver).

About 170 people were left behind on the island, including the Assistant Merchant that talked about mutiny. In the aftermath, the Assistant Merchant murdered 125 of those left behind. About 40 people survived under the leadership of a soldier who was onboard. They fortified themselves on the island and withstood attacks by the mutineers. When the rescue ship arrived in September, the Assistant Merchant and his mutineers were immediately hanged for their crimes. In all less than 100 people survived the ordeal.

In the 1960's, Australian divers found the remains of the ship, including many artifacts.

An exact size replica of “The Batavia” ship began in 1985, and on April 7, 1995, Queen Beatrix officially named her “The Batavia”, and the ship was launched.

