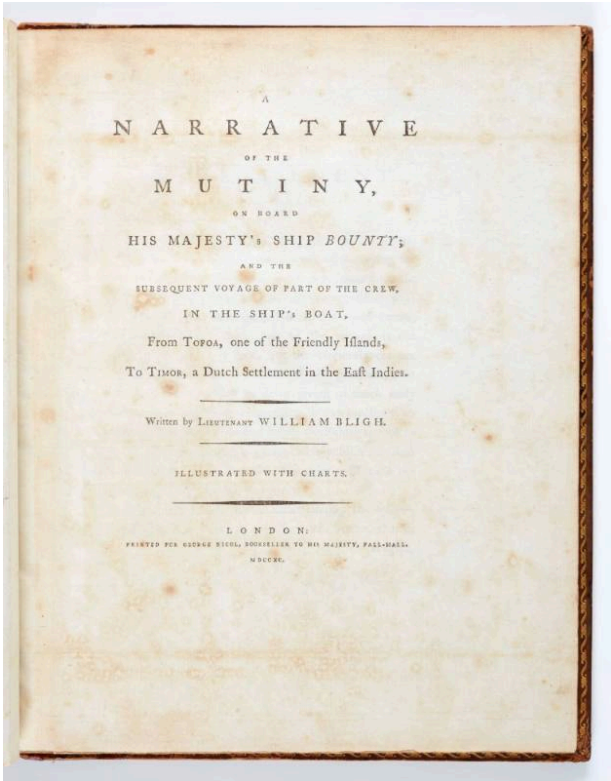


Basic Detail Report



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Title

A Narrative of the Mutiny on Board His Majesty's Ship the BOUNTY

Date

1790

Primary Maker

William Bligh

Medium

Ink on paper, leather bound boards, gilt

Dimensions

Overall: 311 × 250 × 11 mm, 1 kg

Name

Book

History

The ship BOUNTY was sent from England to Tahiti in 1787 under the command of Lieutenant William Bligh to collect breadfruit trees and transport them to the West Indies. The trees were planned to be cultivated as food for slaves. BOUNTY arrived in Tahiti in October 1788 where it anchored at Matavai Bay. The ship's crew remained there for six months until April 1789 growing the breadfruit plants and enjoying a lifestyle of leisure, women, a warm climate and ample food. Twenty-four days after leaving Tahiti part of the crew under the leadership of Fletcher Christian mutinied in the early morning of 28 April 1789. Captain Bligh and 18 loyalists were forced into the BOUNTY's boat and set adrift near Tofoa in the Friendly Islands (Tonga). Bligh - in an incredible feat of seamanship - ultimately sailed the boat to Timor and raised the alarm. This was a 6,700-kilometre voyage that took 41 days to complete without navigation equipment. Fletcher Christian and the mutineers - now in command of HMS BOUNTY- sailed first to Tubuai and then Tahiti. They intended to establish a settlement at Tubuai and when this failed Christian returned to Tahiti and the majority of the mutineers disembarked and decided to stay. Christian with eight other mutineers and a group of Polynesians left to search for an uninhabited island where they could establish a settlement and hide from the Royal Navy. They ultimately settled at Pitcairn's Island, which had been incorrectly charted on the Royal Navy's maps. Despite several massacres on the island which claimed the lives of most of the men, the tiny settlement survived and was later discovered in 1808 by Captain Mayhew Folger of the American ship TOPAZ. On returning to England and being court martialled in 1790 Bligh was cleared of any role in the mutiny and honourably acquitted. In that same year he also released his publication. Bligh's narrative attempted to explain the reasons for the mutiny and describe the events that led up to his

being cast adrift in the ocean. Bligh writes 'It will very naturally be asked, what could be the reason for such a revolt? in answer to which, I can only conjecture that the mutineers had assured themselves of a more happy life among the Otaheiteans, than they could possibly have in England; which, joined to some female connections, have most probably been the principal cause of the whole transaction'. Later theories raised doubts about Bligh's projected innocence. John Barrow was appointed Secretary to the Admiralty in 1804 and remained in the post for 40 years. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1821 and knighted in 1835. Barrow's book was the first to question Bligh's part in causing the mutiny and opened the story of the BOUNTY mutiny to wider debate.