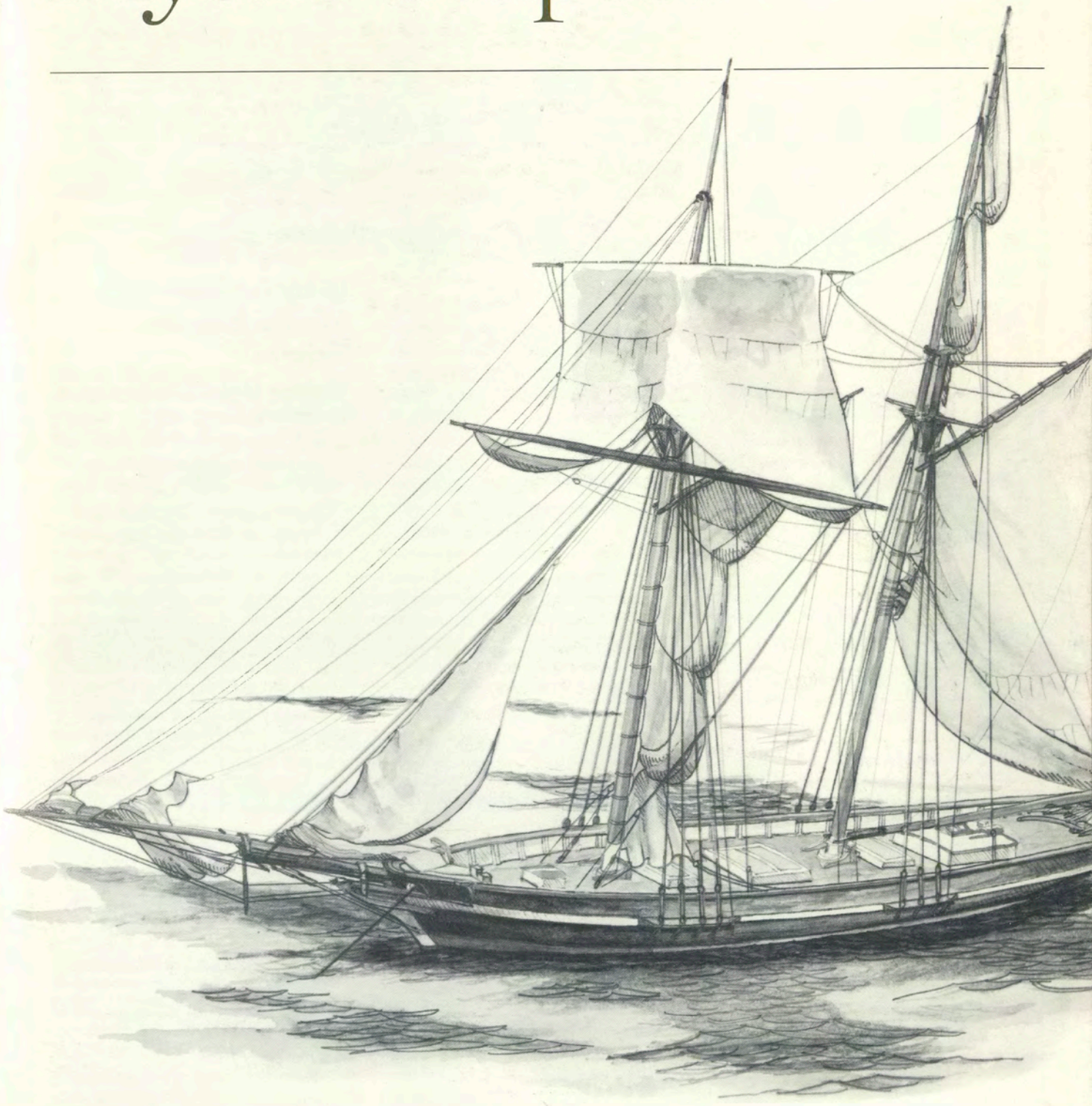
The Log *of* Mystic Seaport®

Spring
1998

Volume 49, No. 4



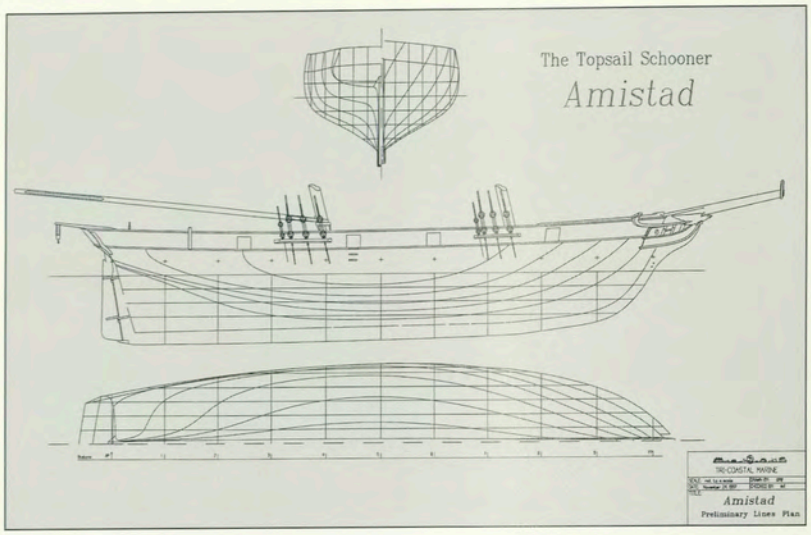
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The Log of Mystic Seaport
Spring 1998
Vol. 49, No. 4
Published quarterly for members
Circulation 23,746

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Printing and Binding: The Racine Company, Danielson, Connecticut

On the cover: A concept for the recreated schooner Amistad, to be built at Mystic Seaport. Watercolor by Guy Peter Boudreau, 1997. (Mystic Seaport 97.150)

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The Log of Mystic Seaport (ISSN 0024-5828) is published quarterly by Mystic Seaport Museum, Inc., 75 Greenmanville Avenue, P.O. Box 6000, Mystic, CT 06355-0990. Subscriptions are by membership only, beginning at $35.00.

Submissions of previously unpublished articles and illustrations concerning the American maritime experience are welcome. Editorial guidelines, and information on the annual Gerald E. Morris Prize Article Contest, are available from the Editor. *The Log of Mystic Seaport* is abstracted in *American History and Life* and *Historical Abstracts*.

Sightings

As this issue of *The Log* will clearly convey, Mystic Seaport is engaged in a project that touches many aspects of the Museum but has a new dimension with worldwide impact. With the release of Steven Spielberg's film AMISTAD, this story will be known by tens of millions of people around the globe. For us, Spielberg's commitment to this story is an affirmation of the position we took four years ago to make people aware of this saga with its maritime roots, its poignant and triumphant human aspects, its legal facets, and its impact on American culture.

Mystic Seaport's focus on the *Amistad* has its origins in the person of Chris Cox, our Vice President for Development and Communications, who deserves the credit for this initiative. While others on Mystic Seaport's staff were aware of the story, Chris perceived that the Museum could play an important and effective role in conveying the story and helping people understand its immediate and long-term impact. Chris's vision was quickly embraced by others throughout the staff, and it was determined that Mystic Seaport's most significant contribution could be the construction of a recreation of the *Amistad* itself. This vessel could then carry the story to the maritime communities of the state and the nation.

While Lowell Weicker was Governor of the State of Connecticut, we took the concept of building an *Amistad* recreation to him, and he quickly recognized its significance. He championed the cause at the state level and helped secure a commitment of state funding. Today, Governor John Rowland continues this tradition of Executive Office support.

Mystic Seaport and its partner, the Connecticut Afro-American Historical Society in New Haven, set about the complicated tasks of researching the vessel's design, securing some mandated additional funding, and creating a new organization to own and operate the ship. The new nonprofit entity, Amistad America, emerged through the hard work of Mystic Seaport's Dana Hewson, Jacques Brunswick, and Quentin Snediker; members of Amistad Affiliates of New York– particularly Warren Marr who has worked for *Amistad* awareness for over twenty years; the Amistad Committee of New Haven; and George Bellinger, who leads the new organization as its Board Chair. Amistad America is fortunate to have Chris Cloud as its senior staff member. He is successfully developing the financial support for the vessel's operation and organizing the creation of the educational programming that will be associated with the vessel. We are delighted to have partners of this caliber and integrity.

Through the talents of fine actors and the best filmmakers, the essence of the story is being widely projected to audiences around the world. But there are limits to what film can achieve. While it evokes emotion and stimulates thought, it is a medium that literally and figuratively projects its message to an audience. It cannot respond to the questions it raises, and within the time constraints of a feature film it cannot cover all the fascinating and meaningful subtleties and companion themes of the story.

Mystic Seaport, through its *Amistad* Exhibition, its library, its informed staff, and its new *Amistad* website can be responsive to those who seek more information. However, the vessel itself will be the ultimate vehicle for interactive *Amistad* interpretation. While it is being built, Mystic Seaport will be the site of the dialog exploring the broad dimensions of the incident and its aftermath. Years hence, when this dramatic vessel sails into a harbor, those familiar with the story from the film can experience further dimensions of the *Amistad* story on board and in associated programs.

In this unusual partnership, the film AMISTAD is reaching a huge audience in a short period of time, while the recreated schooner will proudly carry the *Amistad* legacy forward for decades to come.

J. Revell Carr

DIRECTOR

Searching for the Historic *Amistad*

QUENTIN SNEDIKER

The idea to build a recreation of the historic schooner *Amistad* is not a new one here at Mystic Seaport. As early as 1989, our Development Department and Shipyard staff began discussions with Amistad Affiliates, a small, not-for-profit group based in Cottage Valley, New York, about the feasibility of such an undertaking. During occasional meetings over the next several years, we explored the potentials and possibilities for bringing this idea to fruition.

Most Americans were not familiar with the story of the *Amistad* before the release of the Steven Spielberg film, but many concerned with issues of human rights viewed the *Amistad* incident as an icon representing the struggle for equality for all Americans. The project of recreating this schooner carries with it not only the responsibility to build a strong and safe vessel, but to honor the legacy of that icon.

Amistad Affiliates was founded in 1988 by Warren Quincy Marr II, former editor of the NAACP publication *Crisis*. Warren has had a lifelong involvement with the *Amistad* and its legacy. In the late 1960s, while employed by the American Missionary Association, he helped found the Amistad Research Center, then at Fisk University, now located on the campus of Tulane University in New Orleans. The American Missionary Association was the successor organization to the original Amistad Committee, the group of abolitionists, led by Lewis Tappan, who rallied to support the *Amistad* captives in their legal struggle in 1839. The Amistad Research Center has grown to be the largest collection of human rights related manuscript materials in the world, now holding more than 10,000,000 documents.

In anticipation of the 150th anniversary of the *Amistad* incident, several groups of Connecticut citizens rallied to promote awareness of this important event in our history. Principal among these groups were the New Haven-based Connecticut Afro-American Historical Society, founded in 1971, and a new Amistad Committee, founded in 1988. Together, these two organizations led a campaign to create a monument honoring the *Amistad* incident. This monument now stands in front of the New Haven City Hall, the very site of the prison in which the captives were incarcerated during their trials. Events surrounding the dedication of this monument brought representatives of Mystic Seaport, the Connecticut Afro-American Historical Society, the Amistad Committee, Amistad Affiliates, and then-Governor Lowell Weicker together. The discussion immediately turned to the question: Why not build a recreation of the *Amistad*? Finally, a great idea's time had come.

With their combined skills and experience, these groups provide the foundation necessary to guarantee the project's success. Amistad Affiliates brings a direct connection to the legacy of the *Amistad* through Warren Marr and the Amistad Research Center; the Connecticut Afro-American Historical Society brings 25 years of commitment to teaching about the contribution of Connecticut citizens of African descent to the common history; the Amistad Committee brings representatives of the New Haven educational and spiritual community; and Mystic Seaport brings shipbuilding skill and a commitment to preserving and telling the story of all Americans and the sea.

In 1994 the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development provided a planning grant to begin research into the historic character of the vessel and to develop an operational plan for the vessel once she was built.

In 1996 these four groups incorporated as a consortium under the name Amistad America, Inc. This new organization's mission is to teach the lessons of history, cooperation, and leadership that are illustrated by the *Amistad* incident through the ownership and operation of the new schooner *Amistad*.

Last fall, as a result of Amistad America, Inc.'s having raised the necessary matching funds committed for the vessel's operation from donors such as Phoenix Home Life Mutual Insurance Company and other Connecticut corporations, the State of Connecticut made a commitment to a $2,500,000 bond for construction of an *Amistad* recreation. With the necessary resources now in place to see this project become a reality, construction was scheduled to begin on 8 March 1998.

The Search

We set out to answer several fundamental questions, and in the process uncovered many useful details about the vessel's appearance and her history. Beginning with a thorough examination of secondary resource material, our search grew to include innumerable other resources, including contemporary newspaper accounts, government records, court documents, and manuscript collections. In Connecticut, the collections of the New Haven Colony Historical Society, the Sterling Memorial Library and Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University, and the New London County Historical Society were especially fruitful. Other repositories searched included the National Archives, Library of Congress, New York Public Library, Schomberg Center for Research in Black Culture, and many additional institutions.

The African captives' struggle for freedom, and how that struggle related to the increasingly polarized views on slavery in the nation at that time, immediately became the focus of international media attention in 1839. The vessel itself rapidly became a footnote to this more dramatic story of the captives' plight. In 1839, vessels like the *Amistad* were a common sight all around the "Atlantic world"; consequently, the schooner itself received little notice. Our project provided the first opportunity for a strictly maritime approach to research into the *Amistad*'s history and would, we hoped, deepen our knowledge of the schooner.

What Did the *Amistad* Look Like?

In the most comprehensive recent book on the incident, the 1989 *Mutiny on the Amistad*, Howard Jones came to the same conclusions as had all earlier works. The schooner *Amistad* had been built in Baltimore under the name "*Friendship*," sold to owners in the Spanish colony of Cuba, and renamed *Amistad*. At the time of the incident, the vessel was thought to be about six years old. This was a logical conclusion from the evidence at hand and would be a typical scenario for the time. Baltimore had a strong presence in the trade with Cuba, and many small coasters were built there, operated for several years under the U.S. flag, and then sold to foreign owners. Little was said about the *Amistad*'s size, the details of her appearance, or what became of the vessel after the court trials. Generally all modern writers had agreed with the *New York Morning Herald* report of 30 August 1839: "She is a Baltimore built vessel of matchless model for speed, about 120 tons burden and about six years old."[1]

This general description is borne out by the one known graphic image of the *Amistad*, a watercolor painting in the collections of the New Haven Colony Historical Society. The painting depicts the *Amistad* at anchor off Culloden

This watercolor by an unidentified artist is the only detailed period image of the Amistad. *(Courtesy New Haven Colony Historical Society)*



Point, Long Island, New York, about four miles west of Montauk Point. It represents the scene as the "public armed vessel *Washington*"[2] approached to investigate before taking the *Amistad* and its captives into custody. In the right foreground some of the Africans are shown ashore trading, presumably with Captain Green, a Sag Harbor whaling master who was out gunning when he and his party came upon the captives. Green later filed a claim for salvage against the *Amistad* and her "cargo" in Connecticut District Court. On the horizon, the brig *Washington* approaches the anchored *Amistad*.

This painting was owned by Roger Sherman Baldwin, principal attorney for the *Amistad* Africans, and it was donated to the Historical Society by his son in 1899. The unidentified artist demonstrated a working knowledge of this type of vessel. Sails, standing rig, running gear leads, and other technical details are accurately portrayed for a topsail schooner of the period. The question remains, however: Does the painting truly depict the *Amistad* or simply a generic schooner of her type?

As the *Amistad* worked her way north into the waters of the New York Bight in August 1839, she came in contact with several vessels plying these waters. As early as 8 August 1839 the first reference to the mutiny by a group of "slaves" aboard a Spanish coaster on the coast of Cuba was reported in the New York newspapers.[3] From that time on she began to excite public attention, being labeled "a suspicious vessel" and "the long low black schooner." The schooner was first positively identified by Captain Sears of the schooner *Eveline*, bound from New Bedford for Philadelphia. Captain Sears boarded the schooner about 70 miles east of Egg Harbor, New Jersey, on 19 August and reported his findings at Wilmington, Delaware. He described the mysterious schooner as "a long sharp schooner of about 80 tons, with painted green bottom, one white streak, top black, and tops'l yard gone. . . . On her stern *L'Amistad*–trunk cabin–no cabin windows–flush deck–spread eagle for a figure head–copper bottom–clams above copper–kettles for cooking set in brick work on the deck."[4]

This "seaman's eye view" of the *Amistad* proved invaluable to our research. Close examination of the painting reveals a full spread-eagle figurehead, lending credibility to the image for research purposes. Captain Sears's evaluation of her size proves more accurate than most other sources as well.

Over the next several days the New York papers reported an increasing number of encounters with the mysterious vessel by New York pilot boats, including the *Lafayette*, whose captain reported to the papers "a Baltimore built schooner, painted black with a green bottom, and the appearance of having been at sea about three months. She had two long topmasts, and on her stern two gilt stars."[5] From these sources a reasonable idea as to the vessel's appearance begins to emerge, but several important questions remained.

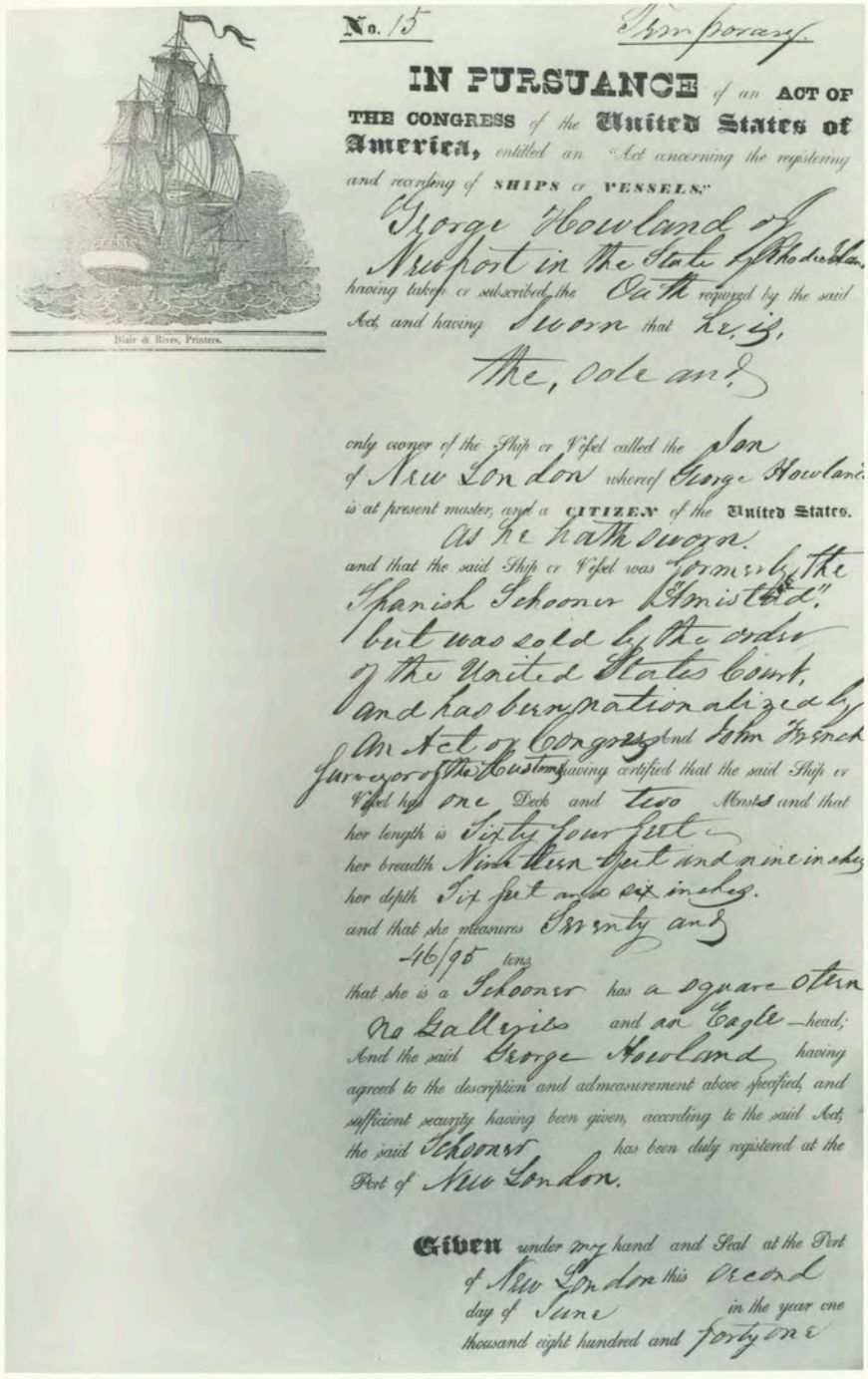
How Big Was the *Amistad*?

Our most important task in formulating the design for this recreation of the *Amistad* was to determine her size. As seen above, there was conflicting information about the *Amistad*'s size. Most newspaper references describe her as about 120 tons–one even refers to her as 180 tons; yet Captain Sears reports her as about 80 tons. Clearly her size needed to be verified before we could proceed.

The first hard evidence about the size of the *Amistad*, including dimensions, came with the discovery of a Temporary Registry for the schooner *Ion*, ex-*Amistad*. While doing research at the National Archives Branch Depository in Waltham, Massachusetts, Warren Marr discovered this document in the New London customs records housed there. This document was issued on 2 June 1841 to declare that George Howland, of Newport, Rhode Island, was the sole owner of the vessel *Ion*, "formerly the Spanish schooner *Amistad*, but was sold by the order of the United States Court, and has been nationalized by an Act of Congress."

It further described the *Amistad* as a having "one deck and two masts, her length is sixty-four feet, her breadth nineteen feet and nine inches her depth six feet and six inches, and that she measures Seventy and 46/95 tons, that she is a schooner, has a square stern, no galleries and an eagle head."[6] This document provides irrefutable evidence regarding her physical appearance, and, therefore, may be the single most important document related to our search.

The dimensions given in this document derive from an admeasurement survey conducted by John French, surveyor for the Port of New London. These measurements were taken at specific places aboard a vessel as designated by law. They are then used to calculate "tonnage," which was not a measurement of weight but of volume, where one ton measures 95 cubic feet of space. This volume measurement is an expression of cargo capacity, and is the basis for licensing and port fees levied against a vessel. By referring to the tonnage laws in effect for 1841 to establish these known points of measurement, we finally have a true picture of the *Amistad*'s size. Allowing for appropriate overhang due to the rake of stem and stern, the historic *Amistad* was approximately 72 feet long measured over the rail. The beam (width) as measured at the widest point on the vessel was 19 feet, nine inches. The depth of hold of six feet, six inches was measured from the underside of the deck planks above to the surface of the



No. 15 Temporary

IN PURSUANCE of an ACT OF THE CONGRESS of the United States of America, entitled an "Act concerning the registering and recording of SHIPS or VESSELS."

George Howland of Newport in the State of Rhode Island having taken or subscribed the Oath required by the said Act, and having sworn that he is, the sole owner of the Ship or Vessel called the Ion of New London whereof George Howland is at present master, and a CITIZEN of the United States. As he hath sworn. and that the said Ship or Vessel was formerly the Spanish Schooner Amistad, but was sold by the order of the United States Court, and has been naturalized by An Act of Congress and John French Surveyor of the Customs having certified that the said Ship or Vessel hath one Deck and two Masts and that her length is Sixty four feet her breadth Nineteen feet and nine inches her depth Six feet and six inches. and that she measures Seventy and 46/95 tons, that she is a Schooner has a square stern No Gallyries and an Eagle head; And the said George Howland having agreed to the description and admeasurement above specified, and sufficient security having been given, according to the said Act, the said Schooner has been duly registered at the Port of New London.

Given under my hand and Seal at the Port of New London this second day of June in the year one thousand eight hundred and forty one

Blair & Rives, Printers.

This temporary registration was issued for the schooner Ion, *ex-*Amistad, *at the New London customhouse on 2 June 1841. It provides precise basic dimensions for the original vessel. (New London Customs Records, RG 36, National Archives Depository, Waltham, Massachusetts; Jennifer Stich photo)*

ceiling (inner planking) in the hold. Allowing for sufficient depth of keel and deadwood, her light draft would have been approximately nine feet.[7]

This evidence reveals that the *Amistad* was really quite a small vessel, far smaller than we might have thought from popular description by modern writers or the impression given by the painting. It is easy to speculate as to how this misunderstanding arose. Contemporary media portrayed the *Amistad* captives' uprising as a larger-than-life event. One reporter facetiously wrote about the increasing exaggeration of the vessel's ferocity: "It is reported she has three tons of money on board, and that the blacks have now three cannon. . . . In a week hence, if not captured in the meantime, this slaver will be increased to a formidable piratical vessel, with one hundred men and 'fixens' to match."[8] As the ferocity of the *Amistad*'s appearance became intensified by news reports, not surprisingly, the vessel's dimensions likewise grew in the public's perception. More practically, however, Baltimore-style schooners carried large sail plans relative to other vessels of their time. To a lay observer this might convey the appearance of a larger vessel than actual measurement might reveal. It is easier still to understand the painting's representation of size relative to the human figures depicted on board. Frequently in ship portraiture, the size of a vessel is exaggerated either relatively larger or smaller by the hand of naive artists as they interpret their observations.

Where Was the *Amistad* Built?

Contemporary newspaper accounts describe the *Amistad* as "built in Baltimore" or "built on the Baltimore model." This might appear a straightforward statement as to the vessel's origin. To those more familiar with the history of this style of craft, however, these statements are inconclusive.

"Baltimore model" craft or "sharp built" vessels, later referred to as "Baltimore Clippers," originally appeared on the waters of the lower Chesapeake Bay in the late eighteenth century. In the early nineteenth century, as the shipbuilding industry became more established in Baltimore, these vessels came to be identified with that port. Their success as privateers during the War of 1812 brought international recognition to these vessels and their builders.

Characterized by low freeboard, with large sail area hung on tall, light, raking spars, these schooners

and brigs were noted for their speed and weatherliness. As a result, they were sought after for any trade where speed and handiness were more desirable than capacity. This of course included illicit trades, which after 1808 included the slave trade. By 1839 Baltimore-model vessels were almost a standard design, and were so successful at their trades that they were often copied by builders in other American ports, and eventually in other nations.[9]

If, indeed, the *Amistad* had been built in Baltimore, there would be evidence of her original construction in the customs records for the port of Baltimore or other nearby ports. Further, if she had been built in the U.S. and sold to owners in the Spanish colony of Cuba, there should be evidence of this transaction in both customs records for her original port of registry and in correspondence between the U.S. consul in Cuba and the U.S. State Department. Both of these resources are housed in the National Archives in Washington, D.C.

Our search began in these records from the year 1820. Since the average life expectancy for a schooner of that era was about eight to ten years, this would preclude the likelihood of an earlier date of construction. Consular correspondence was scoured for record of a schooner of the above description and admeasurement dimensions, possibly named *Friendship,* calling at and being sold in a Cuban port. Between 1820 and 1839, 110 schooners under 120 tons burden were sold from U.S. ports to foreign owners in Cuba. None were named *Friendship*; several were tantalizingly close in tonnage measurement, but no clear match was found. Similarly, an exhaustive study at the National Archives in Washington, D.C., of abstracts of registry and enrollments and surviving master carpenter certificates for all customs districts between Wilmington, North Carolina, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, yielded no definitive match.

As we examined these customs records, the search into contemporary newspaper accounts of the *Amistad* incident continued. In most cities, as mentioned above, the vessel became a footnote, scarcely mentioned as the debate over the status of the Africans heated up. One notable exception, however, was the *Baltimore Sun* which published a small article dealing specifically with the origin of the vessel itself. The article reported a conversation with Norris Willcox, U.S. Marshal for the District of Connecticut, the man charged with the responsibility for the care and keeping of the vessel and her cargo while both were under court authority. The article states: "N. Willcox, Esq., the Marshall; here said that the schooner could not be American built as she was very different from vessels built in this country for the slave trade. She is only about 65 or 80 tons burden, and her decks are made of mahogany."[10]

This statement about mahogany decks is particularly important. Today, mahogany is commonly used in wooden-boatbuilding, but in the 1830s it was an exotic and expensive wood. Surely a small, American-built coastal schooner was highly unlikely to have been built with such expensive imported wood. In Cuba, however, this wood was abundant, as commonly available and used as was white oak in the U.S.

Two other sources corroborate this thinking regarding the schooner's Cuban origin. First, the Congressional debate over the nationalization of the *Amistad* referred to the schooner as "having been built abroad," but cited no country of origin. Second, *Niles' Weekly Register* for 31 October 1840, noting the sale of the *Amistad,* stated, "She is of some 50 or 60 tons burden, built in Cuba, and is said to be old."[11]

That the *Baltimore Sun* took such a strong interest in the origin of the schooner is not surprising. In 1820, federal law strengthened provisions of the legislation that terminated importation of slaves into the U.S. after 1 January 1808. The 1819 legislation equated slavery with piracy and prohibited American citizens from supplying vessels or fitting out vessels for that infamous trade. Baltimore builders had enjoyed a lucrative business constructing their fast, weatherly schooners for this trade. Some continued despite this prohibition; others moved to Havana to continue building these specialized craft. At the time of the *Amistad* incident, two prominent Baltimore shipbuilders were under indictment by the federal government for complicity in the trade by supplying and fitting out such schooners. It is easy to speculate that Baltimore had an interest in proving that the *Amistad,* caught with illegal Africans aboard, was not a product of that port's industry.[12]

These references taken together clearly indicate that the schooner was not of American origin as popularly held, but was built in Cuba. The Baltimore-model design influence is easily traced to the strong presence of these vessels in the Caribbean trade, and to the migration of Baltimore builders to Cuba after 1820.

Evidence uncovered later further corroborates this finding, and provides many additional details. Calvin Lane, an exhibit interpreter at Mystic Seaport, made an invaluable discovery. In 1866, Captain George Howland compiled an autobiography now housed in the Rhode Island Historical Society. Having purchased the *Amistad* in 1841, Howland described the schooner as having been built in Cuba as a pirate ship before entering legitimate coasting trade. He described her as "a sharp clipper, built of West India hard wood, her

deck and bottom plank of red Spanish cedar, her sides of mahogany and strongly copper fastened and coppered."[13] Once again, these materials confirm the vessel's foreign origin and provide further details of her construction.

Was the *Amistad* a Slave Ship?

The *Amistad* was a licensed Spanish coastal trader operating on the north coast of the island of Cuba. Like literally thousands of other similar craft operating in that era, she did the work that tractor trailer trucks do for us today, hauling every commodity of household life. Occasionally, such coastal traders carried enslaved people from one port to another. In the same period there were of course middle-passage slave ships with all of the unimaginable horror associated with this "trade." The Portuguese brig *Teçora*, which carried many of the 53 *Amistad* captives and approximately 400 other individuals across the Atlantic from Sierra Leone to Havana, was such a vessel.

The *Amistad* was owned by her master, Captain Ramón Ferrer, and sailed from her home port of Guanaja, the port city of the province of Príncipe in northeastern Cuba. In his testimony before the district court, Antonio, the 16-year-old slave to Captain Ferrer and cabin boy aboard the *Amistad*, provided information about the vessel's operation. Antonio had been aboard for about three years. He reported that the vessel operated between Príncipe and Havana on an irregular schedule, making a round voyage approximately every two months. She usually carried general cargo, but occasionally she transported captives bound for enslavement on the sugar plantations in that province.

The nature of her trade is evidenced by an advertisement taken by Captain Ferrer in the Havana newspaper *Noticioso y Lucero*, announcing the very voyage that was to carry the *Amistad* to international attention. In this notice, Captain Ferrer sought passengers and cargo bound for his home port. The ad ran daily for a week prior to her sailing on 28 June 1839. This ad demonstrates the legitimate trade in which the *Amistad* was normally engaged, and that carrying enslaved people was incidental to this trade.



HABANA:—Sábado 22 de Junio de 1839.

PARA LAS ISLAS CANARIAS
del 23 al 25 del actual el muy velero bergantin español *San Miguel* (a) *los Cosos*, su capitan D. José M. de los Cosos, su buque nuevo, carga y pasageros en sus dos hermosas cámaras ofreciéndoles el capitan un escelente trato. Informarán su capitan á bordo ó sus consignatarios
CONINCK Y SPALDING.

PARA FILADELFIA
inmediatamente el buen bergantin amer. *Ann*, su capitan Fike; tiene la mayor

PARA BARCELONA
El bien conocido bergantin español *S. Cristóbal*, su capitan don Juan Cardona, que dará la vela á primeros del próximo mes de julio, admite carga á flete y pasageros, á los que se ofrece el buen trato de costumbre: lo despachan sus consignatarios los Sres. ROIG. BRUNET Y COMP. 8 17

PARA LA GUANAJA (PUERTO-PRINCIPE)
La goleta española *Amistad*; admite carga y pasageros; saldrá á la mayor brevedad: impondrá á bordo su patron D. RAMON FERRER. 6 22

Captain Ramón Ferrer advertised the Amistad's *passage in the Havana newspaper,* Noticioso y Lucero, *indicating that the vessel was a coasting schooner, not a slave ship. (Courtesy Library of Congress)*

Captain Ferrer was successful in securing a cargo. When the *Amistad* departed Havana at about 4:00 P.M. on 28 June, she carried many tons of mixed cargo, including cloth, manufactured goods, crockery, foodstuffs, and hundreds of other items, including two cases of sugarcane knives or machetes.[14]

The *Amistad* did possess "kettles for cooking set in a brick," sweeps–long oars for rowing when becalmed–and a large midships hatch, all features commonly found aboard slave ships. There is, however, no indication from any source that she was fitted with "slave shelves," the half-deck "accommodations" for slaves that helped create the unbearably cramped and unsanitary conditions found aboard true slave ships. While aboard the *Amistad*, the captives were divided into two groups. About half were confined below, and the others were "held" on deck. While there is no doubt that the *Amistad* engaged in carrying enslaved people on this voyage and many others, to call the *Amistad* a "slave ship" is to oversimplify the issue, and risk misunderstanding the complex nature of the dependence of the global economy on slave labor through the middle of the nineteenth century.

Why Did the Court Case Unfold in Connecticut?

Various researchers have speculated on the decision of Lieutenant Gedney, commander of the USS *Washington*, to tow the *Amistad* to New London. Wouldn't a port on Long Island, such as Sag Harbor, have been a more logical choice?

Modern chroniclers of the event propose that Gedney chose New London to gain a favorable position for his salvage claim, which included the "value" of the captives as slaves. These writers note that slavery was not entirely abolished by law in Connecticut until 1848,

but had been abolished in New York in 1797. However, Connecticut had prohibited the importation of slaves as early as 1774, legislated freedom for all Connecticut slaves born after 1784 upon their twenty-fifth birthday, and in 1788 prohibited Connecticut residents from engaging in the slave trade. By 1830, 23 individuals born before 1784 remained enslaved in Connecticut due to the state's system of gradual manumission, but with more than 8,000 free blacks Connecticut was not a slave state.[15] More importantly, whether tried in New York or Connecticut, the case fell under federal jurisdiction and therefore federal law would apply, not the legal status of slavery in a particular state.

If we interpret Gedney's decision from the maritime perspective, New London becomes the obvious choice. First, New London was the *Washington*'s base of operations for the summer of 1839. She called there frequently as she went about her survey duties in eastern Long Island Sound, and her master was familiar with its geography, customhouse, and the support found there. More influential in his decision, however, would have been wind and tide.

On 26 August 1839, as the *Washington* took the *Amistad*, the wind was light from the southwest, going to south, and the sea was calm. Late in the afternoon the tide was about to start to ebb, flowing out of the Sound to the east. Sag Harbor lay up to weather and the westward about 18 miles, New London to leeward about 10 miles. Whether to tow the schooner with an unstable crew of 41 Africans against the tide in confined and shallow Gardiner's Bay, or to run downwind in open, deep water back to home port is not a hard decision–the choice of New London is obvious.[16]

What Ever Happened to the *Amistad*?

Arriving in New London Harbor well after dark, the *Amistad* was anchored under the guns of Fort Trumbull, "within musket shot of the *Washington*." After District Court Judge Andrew T. Judson held an initial hearing aboard the *Washington*, the captives were charged with murder and piracy and the vessel and her cargo were libeled for salvage by Lieutenant Gedney. The captives were ordered to New Haven for trial. Sengbe Pieh—Joseph Cinqué—was separated from the other captives and put on board the Revenue Cutter *Wolcott* in chains. The other captives were put aboard the sloop *Plume*, and the two vessel sailed in company for New Haven. The *Amistad* was then shifted to Lawrence's Wharf, located just south of the customhouse, where she remained for a year, accumulating a wharfage fee of 50 cents a day.[17]

In September 1840, Marshal Willcox petitioned the District Court to allow him to auction the vessel and her cargo, stating the schooner was "in a perishable and ruinous condition, said schooner needing extensive and immediate repair to keep her afloat, and said goods constant attention to preserve them from a total loss and unless said schooner and said goods are disposed of they will soon be of no avail to anyone."[18] The court granted this permission and, after being duly advertised, the sale took place on 15 October 1840. The winning bidder was Captain George Howland of Newport, Rhode Island.

Howland paid the extremely low price of $245 for the schooner. Most potential buyers rightly believed that it would be difficult or even impossible under federal vessel-registration law to register this foreign-built vessel. Consequently, the *Amistad* was sold "at about her value to break up." Once Howland had a chance to examine his purchase and evaluate her condition he decided "she was too valuable to break up, hence the cost, delay and struggle to get an American register."

Federal law permitted foreign-built vessels to be registered under the U.S. flag for only two reasons: forfeiture for breach of U.S. law, or legal seizure as a prize in wartime. Because the *Amistad* did not fit either of these criteria, it would require an act of Congress to grant her U.S. registry. Frustrated in his initial attempts, Howland sold the vessel to a Mr. Cottrell, who offered to petition Congress and then sell the vessel back to Captain Howland. According to Howland's manuscript, Cottrell solicited the assistance of John Quincy Adams, who succeeded in obtaining a positive result. The *Congressional Globe*, however, records that this successful petition was presented by a Mr. Clark, and that the issue had to be brought before Congress three times before it could be heard. This occurred at the same time that the case of the *Amistad* captives was being heard in the Supreme Court chamber in the basement of the Capitol, and the national polarization over the issue of the *Amistad* and its implications for the broader debate over slavery found focus in the petition for registry. To pro-slavery interests in the House of Representatives, granting a registry would imply support for the Africans' position. On the third attempt Clark pointed out that the vessel was sold at the direction of the District Court, and a U.S. citizen, who had purchased the vessel in good faith, was being harmed by this delay. Finally, on 3 March 1841–six days before the freedom of the *Amistad* captives was upheld by the Supreme Court–the 26th Congress authorized the enrollment or registry of the schooner *Ion*, ex-*Amistad*.[19]

On 2 June 1841 Howland received a temporary registry for his vessel from the New London custom-

house. He recalled: "I gave her the name *Ion*, attained a register and sailed to Newport, six months from the time I bought her after being subjected to much trouble and expense." After arriving in Newport on 4 June, Howland set about refitting his new vessel. "I repaired and painted the *Amistad*, alias *Ion* and gave her a new suit of sails, rigging, blocks, etc. and in the fall loaded for Havana."

We are fortunate to have a glimpse into the actual sailing qualities of the *Amistad*, now *Ion*, in Howland's own words.[20] He departed Newport on 5 November 1841 for a passage that was to prove a real test for the little schooner's abilities. "On the sixth had a furious N.W. gale and scud before it, our little clipper flying over the seas behaving well, but alas she sprung a leak," Howland wrote. Unable to stop the leak, and exhausted from pumping, Howland altered course for Bermuda, arriving there in 80 hours from Newport. "Great sailing this–I much doubt if ever a vessel made a shorter passage," he noted. After repairing the vessel, and unable to sell his cargo at Bermuda, he gave up on Havana and decided to head for St. Thomas, arriving there ten days later.

Delay and the effects of bilge water on his perishable cargo of onions, apples, live poultry, and cheese were devastating. Howland estimated his loss at $1,200 on this outbound cargo. His troubles were further compounded by the crew. The mate proved to be "a drunken good for nothing villain who gave me much trouble," and his cook was caught selling ship's stores, cargo, and the schooner's boat.

Short of funds, Howland purchased some pig iron as ballast and sought a paying cargo for his speedy schooner. "After laying here for some time I engaged 'full freight' of rice out of a Charleston vessel to carry to Point a Petre, Guadalupe [*sic*] for $200."

The passage from St. Thomas to Guadeloupe was again a swift one, "beating the regular packet by 24 hours." On his arrival Howland was offered a good price for his schooner, but finding a strong demand for rice, tobacco, and other items, he agreed to sell her only after making a trip to Charleston. He agreed to a price of $2,600, and a bill of sale was drawn up. Howland then purchased 200,000 oranges and sailed for Charleston "beating their best pilot boat schooner going in."

Despite another quick passage Howland found the market "glutted with Havana oranges." He managed to clear a small profit despite losing "60,000 rotted. . . about common for so large a cargo stowed in bulk" and paying a 20-percent duty. Howland purchased a cargo of tobacco, rice, pork, beef, pickled and smoked herring, lard, hams, codfish, and pickled salmon. He arranged a deck cargo of tongue-and-groove floorboards, shingles, and barrel staves, as well as "a spare sail boat." He also shipped a new crew, sailing on 12 February 1842 for Pointe-à-Pitre.

Hard luck was to follow Howland on this passage as well. "From the 14 to the 18 we had a tremendous gale, and on the 17 a furious hurricane wind." At 10:00 P.M. on the seventeenth "a high sea swept in broadside and knocked her over on her beam ends, rushed aft and washed me from the helm overboard and clear of the vessel. The crutch rope struck my hand and I clung to it as her stern settled in the sea, I hauled myself on board, clutched the helm, put it hard up and as a sea rolled under her counter she righted up and I was scudding before it again before she had lost her headway."

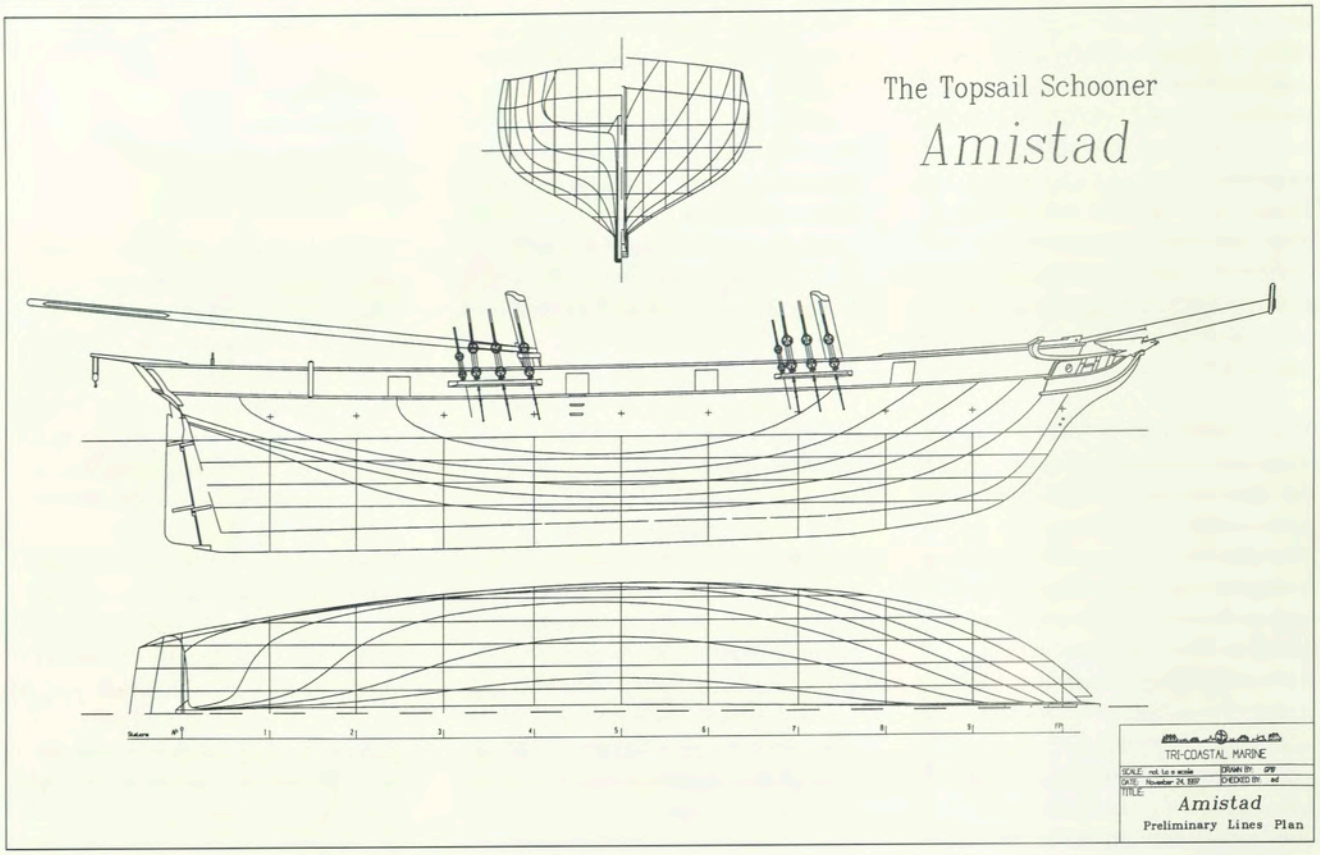
As the gale continued, Howland, fearing the worst, cut away the deck cargo. "In less than a minute, I had a clean deck, the sea had washed off every plank and the boat." After 36 hours the storm finally abated, leaving the crew exhausted. Ten days after leaving Charleston, the *Ion* arrived in Pointe-à-Pitre, where Howland "sold all my cargo to good advantage."

In Pointe-à-Pitre, Howland delivered the schooner to her purchasers. Before they accepted the vessel they had her hove down for inspection. While her bottom was generally in good condition, several spots of rust showed through her copper. Some of her copper sheathing was removed, revealing scattered iron fastenings. Since Howland had represented her as fully copper fastened, the buyers protested, and a hearing was held before the U.S. consul. Howland represented that it was common practice to use scattered iron spikes, "as they were stronger in forcing a warped plank to the timber." Nevertheless, the case was decided against Howland, and he was forced to reduce the sale price by $800. While this reduced his profit, "after all I made $400 more than cost on the sale of the vessel."

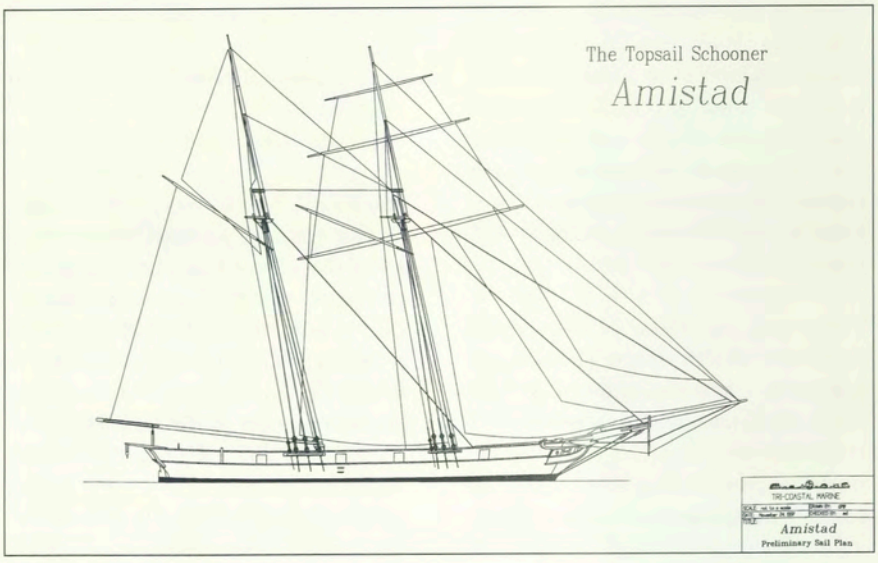
As yet there is no record as to what became of the *Ion*, ex-*Amistad*, under her French owners in the Caribbean. Having been built of tropical hardwood and copper fastened she could have served them well for many more years. Perhaps some new information may yet come to light, but for now our knowledge of the *Amistad* ends with Howland's sale and her departure from the U.S. flag.

The New *Amistad*

After having accumulated a fair picture of the historic *Amistad* of 1839, how will we use this information in the design of the new vessel? First and foremost the new *Amistad* will be a seaworthy vessel meeting all modern standards of safety. From the inception of the idea of building this vessel, her intended mission has been to provide a platform to teach the lessons that are the legacy of the *Amistad*



This preliminary lines plan for the recreated schooner Amistad *represents a hull strongly inspired by the Chesapeake model but modified to accommodate diesel engines. The vessel is slightly larger than the original, but the length and freeboard have been increased proportionally, increasing safety but retaining the look of the original. (Courtesy Tri-Coastal Marine)*



The proposed sail plan for the recreated Amistad *resembles the original, but it is slightly less extreme in height and length to meet Coast Guard regulations. (Courtesy Tri-Coastal Marine)*

incident: history, cooperation, and leadership. We here at Mystic Seaport are keenly aware of the value of a traditional sailing vessel as a laboratory of these lessons. We have intended to build the vessel so that she can carry students of all ages on voyages of varying duration to provide the firsthand experience uniquely found in the environment aboard such a vessel.

Every vessel design is a series of compromises. Whether a small skiff or a large bulk-cargo carrier, compromises among various criteria of capacity, route, construction cost, and economics of trade dictate a vessel's final design. The same is true in the case of the recreation of the *Amistad*.

Were we fortunate enough to discover a half model or other primary form of documentation for this schooner, our operational mission would prohibit us from building a true "replica." With the commitment to operate with program participants aboard, the design becomes subject to safety and stability criteria of the U.S. Coast Guard and other classification and regulatory bodies.

The true challenge of this process is to incorporate as much of the information we have gathered as possible into a design that meets these modern parameters, yet maintains

the essence of the historic vessel's character. To accomplish this considerable task, Amistad America, Inc. has selected the naval architectural firm Tri-Coastal Marine of Berkeley, California, and Annapolis, Maryland. The principals of this firm have been responsible for the design and execution of several of the most successful traditional schooner recreations in recent times, including the *Pride of Baltimore II* and the *Lady Maryland*, and have fully embraced the unique challenge this vessel represents.

The salient departures in the design from that of the historic *Amistad* are demanded by safety. External ballast, watertight bulkheads, and diesel engines–all unheard of in 1839–are today standard in ship construction and safety, and are therefore incorporated into our new vessel design.

As a result, our new *Amistad* will be slightly larger than the original. As much as ten feet of the schooner's length and corresponding interior volume will be consumed by mechanical and safety equipment. Our basic dimensions have been increased proportionally so as not to lose valuable space for educational programs and exhibits. This increased length and proportional freeboard will provide an additional margin of safety and will maintain the vessel's historic appearance, while still meeting stringent modern stability requirements.

Construction of the new *Amistad* was scheduled to begin with a keel-laying ceremony on 8 March 1998. This date was chosen because it is the nearest Sunday to 9 March, the date on which, in 1841, Justice Joseph Story delivered the Supreme Court decision in favor of the African captives of the *Amistad*.

Construction will take two years and about 45,000 person hours to complete. Approximately 100,000 board feet of prime ship timber of various species, including live oak, white oak, and yellow pine will be used to build the vessel. In the spring of the year 2000, the new *Amistad* will begin her mission, sailing far and wide to tell the story of the *Amistad* incident and its important legacy to our nation's history.

An experienced schooner captain and author of *Chesapeake Bay Schooners* (1992), Quentin Snediker is Mystic Seaport's *Amistad* project coordinator.

Notes

1. *New London Gazette*, 28 August 1839.

2. The brig *Washington* was also an interesting vessel. She was built in Baltimore in 1837. During the early years of her career, she served as a coast survey brig in summer under U.S. Navy personnel, and as a revenue cutter in winter under Revenue Service personnel. In court documents she is referred to as "the public armed vessel *Washington*." James T. Mooney, ed., *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*, 8 vols., (Washington, D.C.: Naval Historical Center, 1981), 8: 125.

3. *New York Commercial Advertizer*, 5 August 1839.

4. Ibid., 27 August 1839. From contemporary 1839 sources it seems clear that the vessel bore the name *La Amistad–The Friendship*–although the "*La*" was dropped from most references soon after the start of the trial. Our new vessel will be known simply as *Amistad*.

5. *New York Evening Post*, 23 August 1839.

6. Temporary Registry #15, for the schooner *Ion*, ex-*Amistad*, New London Customs Records, RG 36, National Archives Branch Depository, Waltham, Massachusetts.

7. Ibid. From 1789 until 1864 the means of measuring single-deck vessels, like *Amistad*, remained the same. In accordance with "An Act for Registering and Clearing Vessels, Regulating the Coasting Trade and for Other Purposes," *U.S. Statutes at Large* 1(17): 675, Vol. I, 5th Cong., 3rd sess., Ch. 22, 1799, Sec. 64, length was taken from the "fore part of the main stem to the after part of the stern post above the deck." The actual length overall is somewhat longer, allowing for overhang at stem and stern.

8. *New York Herald*, 28 August 1839.

9. Howard I. Chapelle, *The Baltimore Clipper: Its Origin and Development* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1930); Thomas C. Gillmer, *Pride of Baltimore: The Story of the Baltimore Clippers* (Camden, Maine: International Marine, 1992); Geoffrey Footner, *Tidewater Triumph: The Development and Worldwide Success of the Chesapeake Bay Pilot Schooner* (Mystic: Mystic Seaport, 1998).

10. *Baltimore Sun*, 14 September 1839.

11. *Congressional Globe*, 26th Cong., vol. 9: 93. *Niles' National Register*, 31 October 1840, 144.

12. Howard I. Chapelle, *The National Watercraft Collection*, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1976), 26; *Niles' National Register*, 3 August 1839, 364, 2 November 1839, 159.

13. George Howland, "An Autobiography or Journal of His Life, Voyages, and Travels with an Appendix of His Ancestry," 1866, typescript, 295, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, Rhode Island. Perhaps by 1866 the romance of the *Amistad* saga had taken its toll on even Howland. While piracy was still prevalent on the north coast of Cuba in this era, there is no corroborating evidence to his assertion that the *Amistad* was built for piracy.

14. Antonio's testimony, as well as an inventory of the cargo on board, are included in the files on the case, Records of U.S. District Court for Connecticut, RG 21, National Archives Branch Depository, Waltham.

15. Leonard W. Labaree and Catherine Fennelly, comps. *Public Records of the State of Connecticut, from May 1795 through October 1796* (Hartford: Connecticut State Library, 1951), xvii-xix; the 1830 federal census recorded 23 slaves in Connecticut, including four in New Haven, while the estimate for 1840 is 17, see Horatio T. Strother, *The Underground Railroad in Connecticut* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1962), appendices 3, 5.

16. Testimony of Dr. Sharp of the *Washington*'s crew, in the District Court file on the case, RG 21, National Archives Branch Depository, Waltham.

17. *New London Gazette*, 29, 31 August, 4 September 1839.

18. Willcox to Attorney General Holabird, n.d., The United States *vs.* The *Amistad*, Appellate Case 2161, Records of the Supreme Court of the United States, RG 267, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

19. Secretary of the Treasury to Gilpin, 14 December 1840, Correspondence of the Secretary of the Treasury, "Amistad" #49, NND 193, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; *Congressional Globe*, 26th Cong., vol. 9: 90; *U.S. Statutes at Large*, 1-28th Congress, 1789-1845, Private Laws, Vol. 6, Private Acts of the 26th Congress, Statute II, 3 March 1841, Chapter XXXIX, "An Act to Authorize the enrollment or registry of the Schooner Amistad." "Be it enacted, & etc., That the Spanish Schooner Amistad, lately sold at New London, by the Marshall, in pursuance of an order of the District Court of the United States for the District of Connecticut, may be registered or enrolled, the same as if said schooner had been built within the United States, approved, March 3, 1841."

20. Howland, "An Autobiography or Journal of His Life," 297-303.

The *Amistad* Incident in the Context of Slavery and Freedom

A Chronology

1502, First reported African slaves in the New World

1619, First Africans arrive in Virginia

1640-1680, Beginning of large-scale introduction of African slave labor in the British Caribbean for sugar production

1680-1710, Beginning of large-scale introduction of African slave labor in North America for tobacco, rice, and indigo production

1774, Connecticut and Rhode Island prohibit further importation of slaves (although Rhode Island merchants remain in slave trade to other colonies)

1776, Society of Friends (Quakers) abolishes slavery among members

1777, Vermont Constitution prohibits slavery

1780, Massachusetts Constitution adopted with freedom clause interpreted as prohibiting slavery

Pennsylvania adopts gradual emancipation, freeing slaves born after 1780 upon their 28th birthday

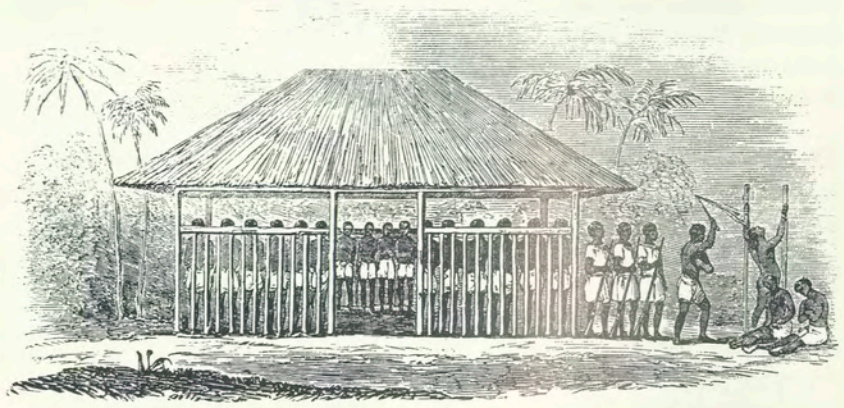
1784, Connecticut and Rhode Island pass gradual emancipation laws

1788, Connecticut prohibits residents from participating in slave trade

1789, U.S. Constitution ratified with clause equating slaves to 3/5ths of a white citizen and provision that slave trade would end within 20 years

Havana, Cuba, opened to the slave trade

1791, Beginning of revolt in French colony of Saint-Domingue that led to establishment of black nation of Haiti in 1801



After being kidnapped or sold into slavery, the Amistad *captives were held in barracoons like this one at Lomboko on the Gallinas River.* (Illustrated London News, *14 April 1849*)

1793, Eli Whitney's invention of cotton gin sets stage for expansion of slavery in American South as short-staple cotton becomes economical product

1798-1808, decade of greatest importation of African slaves into U.S., totaling approximately 200,000

1799, New York passes gradual emancipation law

1800, U.S. citizens prohibited from exporting slaves

Gabriel's conspiracy in Richmond, Virginia, seeks to overthrow slavery in Virginia

1802, slave boatmen plot rebellion along Roanoke River in Virginia

1804, Slavery abolished in Haiti

New Jersey passes gradual emancipation law

1807, Great Britain abolishes slave trade

1808, 1 January, end of legal slave trade into U.S. (approximately 661,000 individuals had been introduced since 1619)

1816, Establishment of American Colonization Society with aim of returning freed slaves to Africa

1819, U.S. law equates slave trading with piracy, punishable by death

Great Britain assigns Royal Navy squadron to patrol against slave ships off coast of West Africa

1820, Legal slave trade into Cuba abolished by terms of 1817 treaty with England

Missouri Compromise establishes balanced admission of slave and free states to appease South

First group of free blacks sails for what would become Liberia

1822, Denmark Vesey slave revolt plot uncovered in Charleston, South Carolina, and conspirators executed

South Carolina passes Negro Seamen Acts requiring imprisonment of black sailors while in port to prevent their inciting slave revolts. Similar acts later passed in Alabama, Louisiana, and Cuba

1825, Africans from captured slave ship *Antelope* returned to slavery by order of Supreme Court

1829, David Walker's *An Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World* advocates that slaves take power and revolt to overturn slavery

1831, Nat Turner slave insurrection in Virginia

1838, Emancipation of slaves in British Empire completed

3 September, Frederick Douglass escapes from slavery in Baltimore to freedom in the North, disguised as a sailor

1839, Mende rice farmer Sengbe Pieh kidnapped and taken to barracoons of Pedro Blanco's slave factory at Lomboko on the Gallinas River in present Sierra Leone

April, Portuguese slave brig *Teçora* sets sail from Lomboko

June, Sengbe Pieh, called Joseph Cinqué by Spanish, and other captives landed in Havana

28 June, *Amistad* departs Havana

1 July, *Amistad* captives rebel and take over the vessel

26 August, USS *Washington* encounters *Amistad* off Culloden Point near Montauk Point, Long Island

27 August, *Amistad* arrives in New London; captives soon after taken to New Haven

29 August, Judge Andrew T. Judson hears testimony on board *Washington* and orders captives to appear in Circuit Court

September 1839-March 1841, captives held in New Haven jail and then under house arrest in New Haven suburb of Westville

9 September, African sailor James Covey brought from New York to New Haven as interpreter for captives

New York abolitionists name Lewis Tappan, Joshua Leavitt, and Simeon Jocelyn the *Amistad* Committee to raise funds for defense of the *Amistad* captives

19-23 September, U.S. Circuit Court trial in Hartford, which delivers case to the District Court

19 November, U.S. District Court trial begins in Hartford but is postponed the next day

1840, 7-13 January, District Court trial in New Haven decides in favor of captives; Van Buren administration appeals case to the U.S. Supreme Court

1841, 22 February-9 March, Supreme Court case results in liberty for the captives

March-November, captives housed in Farmington, Connecticut

27 November, captives depart for Sierra Leone on board bark *Gentleman*, arriving back in Africa in January 1842

November, slaves on board American coastal brig *Creole* revolt and sail vessel to the Bahamas seeking freedom

1846, American Missionary Association formed by members of *Amistad* Committee

1848, Slavery entirely prohibited in Connecticut by state law

1849, British Royal Navy expedition destroys slave factories at Lomboko on Gallinas River

1850, Compromise of 1850 admits California as free state, eliminates slave trade in District of Columbia, establishes Utah and New Mexico without restrictions on slavery, and requires return of fugitive slaves

1857, Dred Scott Decision by Supreme Court imperils fugitive slaves and sets back cause of abolition

1859, John Brown's unsuccessful Harper's Ferry, Virginia, raid to incite slave rebellion heightens tension over slavery in U.S.

1860, 20 December, South Carolina secedes from the Union following Abraham Lincoln's election as president, beginning creation of slaveholding Confederate States of America

1862, 22 September, President Lincoln issues Emancipation Proclamation, granting freedom to slaves in areas of the South in active rebellion on 1 January 1863

1865, Slavery abolished in the U.S. by the 13th Amendment to the Constitution

1866, American Missionary Association founds Fisk University, among other black colleges established by this successor of the *Amistad* incident

1879, Death of Sengbe Pieh (Joseph Cinqué)

1886, Slavery abolished in Cuba



In a heartlessly brutal display during a middle-passage voyage, a slave-ship crew whips African slaves on deck, forcing them to dance for their health. (Amédée Gréhan, La France Maritime *(Paris, 1853), vol. 3; G.W. Blunt White Library, Mystic Seaport)*

The *Amistad* Judge

The Life and Trials of Andrew T. Judson, 1784-1853

DOUGLAS L. STEIN

On a January morning in 1840, Connecticut District Court Judge Andrew T. Judson was nearly finished reading his verdict. Speaking for almost an hour before a packed courtroom in New Haven, he had now reached the point everyone in that room was waiting to hear. The judge spoke with conviction, each word measured for effect. "Cinquez and Grabeau shall not sigh for Africa in vain," he announced, "Bloody as may be their hands, they shall yet embrace their kindred."[1]

With this statement Judson freed the *Amistad* captives, surprised the abolitionists, shocked the president of the United States, angered the Southern slave states, and risked an international incident with Spain. His name was familiar to all as the presiding judge in this historic case, yet today he has slipped from the nation's memory. Although his verdict is remembered, the man has been forgotten.

During the recently renewed interest in the *Amistad*, Mystic Seaport acquired a small collection of Judson's papers.[2] They provide some interesting and heretofore unrecorded details in the life of this important figure.

Judson was born in Ashford, Connecticut, on 29 November 1784, the youngest son of Andrew and Elizabeth Judson. His father was a 1775 graduate of Dartmouth College and pastor of the Eastford, Connecticut, Congregational Church. Young Andrew received a public education, and was chiefly tutored by his father, at least until the age of 18. Then he was recommended to one of his father's college acquaintances, Sylvester Gilbert, a lawyer of some distinction, with whom he commenced the study of law. Referring to his early education, Judson acknowledged that, "The limited means of my father would not allow anything more to be done for me than the benefits of the common school," and he was aware that such limited preparation "would render my task arduous from the beginning, and perhaps limit in a great degree my prospects and hopes for the future."[3]

He did, however, overcome all obstacles, and in January 1806 the 22-year-old Andrew T. Judson was admitted to the Windham County bar. He immediately moved to Vermont and opened a practice near Montpelier, but soon became "homesick and discontented." "Giving up my prospects there," he wrote, "I found my way back, and determined to try what I could do in my native County. Here were familiar faces and kind hearts, ready to help one onward, and so onward I went, as well as possible." His profession "began to be more and more congenial, and its mysteries, one by one, seemed to dissipate." By 1809 he was establishing a successful law practice in his new and permanent home of Canterbury, Connecticut.

In the spring of 1813 he was elected to the Connecticut General Assembly, launching a political career that would continue for the next 40 years. As a freshman representative, Judson was cautious. "This was a new field, and with its duties and labors, I had no acquaintance." During this session he took no part in the business of the House, "contented with being an observer."

A year earlier, in 1812, Judson had applied for a commission as a militia officer, intending to "put my person and my life to the test" for his country in its war with Great Britain. His appointment was rejected, an event that "haunted me by night and by day," and he attributed it to a political rebuke by the county administration, angry over his opposition to some of their programs. Even late in his career, Judson felt that he had never experienced a greater disappointment. "It may have been all for the better," he wrote, "but I will never see it to be so."

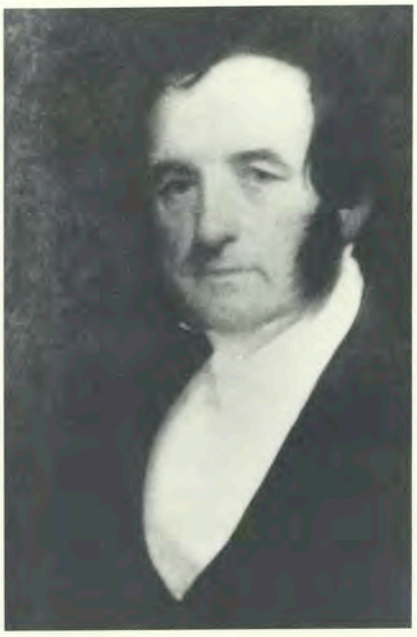
The incident caused him to reconsider his course in public service. He began to harmonize his ambition and his political instincts. "I had been educated and brought up in the Federal school, had seen but little of the world–and knew but little in regard to the great doctrine of either party. There had been neither time or opportunity for me to incorporate these subjects, and decide upon my own course, with such ample light as was needful." So in 1816 Judson, now 32 years

old, left the Federalists and joined the Toleration Party. "Those with whom I had been associated could very well spare me, for the reason that my help was but feeble," he said, "and they were sufficiently strong without me." The Tolerationists represented a new reform coalition with the state's Republican Party, unified in great measure by their opposition to Congregationalism as Connecticut's established church. By 1817 the party had elected a governor and gained control of the General Assembly.

The next year they created a new State Constitution. Judson soldiered for his new party by writing political essays in various newspapers, helping to topple the Federalist establishment in Hartford. He was back in the assembly and played an active role in the session. "All my energies were engaged and devoted," he recalled, believing that the new Constitution "was a praiseworthy object."

In 1819 he was appointed state attorney for Windham County. The office was at that time an important one, he wrote, "and gave to its possessor much professional influence in the County." He entered office "with full determination to become qualified, and then to discharge those duties with impartiality," which he did for the next 14 years. He would later reflect that, "There is perhaps no point in my life to which I can turn with more property, and say *this* is the most important. During this unusually long period, my elections (every two years) had been repeated by both political parties. This was gratifying to my feelings and pride."

During the 1820s Andrew Judson continued to advance his political career and develop business interests in Canterbury. He married Rebecca W. Warren in 1816, and in 1820 they built a new home on Canterbury Green. They entertained frequently, and while Rebecca may have been viewed as



Andrew T. Judson, 1784-1853. (Courtesy Prudence Crandall Museum, Canterbury, Connecticut)

assuming "superiority over her neighbors," Andrew's "own tact and courtesy made ample amends for his wife's reputed deficiencies."[4]

We find Judson's name on the list of founding directors for the Windham County Bank, and for the Windham County Mutual Fire Insurance Company, both incorporated in the 1820s. Besides his law practice he was also the Canterbury town attorney, and justice of the peace.[5] He was an early member of the temperance movement, and he joined the American Colonization Society, becoming active in promoting the organization's objectives. In fact, nobody believed more deeply in the principles of colonization than did Andrew Judson.

Like the abolitionists, colonizationists sought an end to slavery in America. However, their opposition to that abhorrent institution did not necessarily extend to embracing freed slaves as equal citizens of the U.S. Like most Americans of that time, they believed in the separation of the races. Instead of immediate freedom and an indeterminate future in the U.S. for slaves, colonizationists proposed a concept of gradual emancipation and ultimate relocation of free blacks to Africa. Founded by religious leaders in 1816, and supported by some prominent African Americans such as Paul Cuffe, their society and philosophy appealed to a large part of the population, especially in the North; people who wished to see slavery ended, but who feared the potential social trauma inherent in abolitionist doctrine. Churches throughout the country cooperated with the movement by raising donations. By 1822, the American Colonization Society had purchased land on the coast of West Africa and established a settlement for relocated blacks in what would become the colony of Liberia.

The principles of colonization were popular in Canterbury as well.[6] This quiet town of farms and small mills located in eastern Connecticut, was a prosperous community that boasted a reputation for public spirit and the high character of its leading men. A generation earlier, Moses Cleveland had led a group of Connecticut settlers to the "Western Reserve" in Ohio and laid the foundation for the city of Cleveland. Canterbury was active in temperance reform and promoted knowledge of the arts, history, and public affairs through the American Lyceum Committee. Canterbury residents also sought to extend education among their children beyond the district schools, which were in session for only a few months each year.[7] In fact, Judson became embroiled in a dispute with his neighbor over a question of educational opportunity.

The neighbor was Prudence Crandall, a Quaker schoolmistress who in the summer of 1831 purchased a house across the green from Judson's home. Encouraged by several substantial citizens of the town, including Judson, she opened an "academy for young ladies." Early the next year she admitted Sarah Harris, the 17-year-old daughter of a local farmer

and respectable member of the town's black community.[8]

The Harrises had moved from Norwich, Connecticut, where Sarah received her education. She was well known to the other students, yet Crandall was soon asked by town leaders to dismiss her or they would remove their daughters from the school. She refused, and sometime later contacted influential abolitionists in Boston, seeking advice regarding her intention to "change white scholars for colored ones." Encouraged by what she heard, she announced on 2 March 1833 her intention to reopen the school, this time to "young ladies and little misses of color."[9]

Canterbury leaders now sought legal measures to get the school closed. In this respect none was more instrumental than Andrew T. Judson. By this time recognized as "the great man of the town," Judson found himself the leader of a majority in his community who opposed the school.

At a town meeting on 9 March 1833, described by the Reverend Samuel J. May, an abolitionist who was present, Judge Judson presided over a group of angry citizens concerned about the impact of Crandall's school on the community, and inflamed by abolitionist rhetoric and outside interference. In an emotional verbal exchange Judson admonished Reverend May regarding his intention to speak at this meeting in a town where he did not reside, and later reportedly told him the school would undoubtedly have an undesirable effect on real estate values.[10]

According to May, Judson continued: "The colored people can never rise from their menial condition in our country; and never can or ought to be recognized as the equals of the whites. Africa is the place for them. I am in favor of colonization." Judson warned that abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison had "undertaken what you cannot accomplish. You are violating the Constitution of our Republic which settled forever the status of the black man in this land. They belong to Africa. Let them be sent there or kept as they are."

May responded that there would never be fewer blacks in America than there were then, "and for a vast majority of them this is their native land as well as ours. I trust," he continued, "you will ere long come to see that we must accord to these men their rights or incur justly the loss of our own. Education is one of the fundamental rights of all children. Connecticut is the last place where this should be denied." But an angry Judson told him that such a school would never be permitted in Canterbury or any other Connecticut town. When Reverend May asked just how he intended to prevent it, he answered "we will get a law passed by the present legislature, forbidding the institution of such a school."

Judson was as good as his word. Within ten weeks, even though out of office, he was able to influence legislation that became known as the infamous "Black Law" prohibiting the establishment of any school for colored persons who were not inhabitants of the state, without local permission.[11]

A month later Prudence Crandall was arrested for violation of this new law. At the trial, Andrew Judson, one of three prosecuting attorneys, spoke to the purpose of the act, which according to him was simply to "regulate schools for colored persons coming from other governments." He pointed out that it was always Connecticut's policy to regulate its schools, academies, and colleges, for "the seeds of morality and virtue are first sown in our schools, and if neglected, the seeds of vice and immorality would undermine all that we hold dear."[12]

The constitutional implications raised by the Black Law were key issues. If the law was shown to be in violation of the U.S. Constitution, Prudence Crandall committed no crime. Judson told the jury that, "It shall be my humble effort to maintain that the law is constitutional," and suggested that should this legislation be overturned, "the consequences will inevitably destroy the government itself, and this American nation– this nation of white men, may be taken from us and given to the African race!"[13]

Judson was certain this could not happen, since the alleged Constitutional violations involved the rights and privileges of American citizens. The term "citizens," according to Andrew Judson, did not include persons of color. The U.S. Constitution– specifically Article 1, Section 2– implied a lesser status for black people, preventing them from ever achieving social equality with whites. He declared to the jury: "The privilege of being a free man is a higher privilege than the right to be educated. Why should a person be educated who could not be free?" He closed his remarks by saying that he had no wish "to oppress anyone and heartily wished that all slaves might be emancipated immediately if this could be done without destroying our constitution and desolating our land."[14]

Prudence Crandall was eventually found guilty. Her legal counsel, supported with abolitionist funds from Arthur Tappan in New York, immediately appealed. On 22 July 1834 the Court of Errors dismissed the verdict on a defect in the information prepared by the state attorney, thereby clearing Crandall from any crime and avoiding the larger constitutional and civil rights issues implicit in the entire affair.

Even though she was now free to run her school, local harassment continued. Finally, on the night of 9 September 1834, the house was assaulted by ruffians throwing clubs and iron bars through the windows as Prudence Crandall and her students huddled in the shelter

of upstairs rooms. It was now obvious that she would not receive community support, and the safety of her students was increasingly at risk. She sold the house a few months later and the whole affair ended.

An abolitionist newspaper announced that "it was deemed advisable to abandon the school in that heathenish village and to let Andrew T. Judson and his associates with the whole State of Connecticut have all the infamy and guilt which attach to the suppression of so praiseworthy an institution." Judson's name was forever linked with that of Prudence Crandall and her school. His political influence and stature in the community doubtless played a major role in getting the school closed. It is not surprising then that Judson recalled: "In 1833 my townsmen started me again for the House, and the election was successful. I did not fail to carry every measure desired by me, and am grateful to this day for the kindness with which I was treated during that session."[15]



The principal figures in the Amistad *case appear in this lithograph depicting Cinqué addressing the captives on the deck of the* Amistad *on 26 August 1839. Dressed in a red shirt and white trousers, he speaks to his fellow Africans, who wear clothing and fabrics found on board the* Amistad. *The children Margru, Teme, Kale, and Kague are in the foreground. At center is the Congolese Konoma, whose filed and protruding teeth made whites suspect he was a cannibal. Directly behind Cinqué is Antonio, the 16-year-old cabin boy and slave of the* Amistad*'s captain, Ramón Ferrer. To the right of Antonio is José Ruiz, who purchased the male captives in Havana and survived the uprising with a head wound. At far right is Pedro Montes, who purchased the children in Havana and collaborated with Ruiz in the suit to have the captives returned as their property. Between Ruiz and Montes is a U.S. Navy officer, perhaps representing Lieutenant Thomas R. Gedney, who commanded the* Washington *and sued for salvage of the* Amistad *and cargo. Several of the* Washington*'s sailors look on at left. Although none of the observers could understand the captives' Mende language at this time, New York lithographer John Childs quoted Cinqué as telling the captives: "I would not see you serve the white man so I induced you to help me kill the Captain.–I thought I should be killed. I expected it.–It would have been better. . . . I think every day I shall be hanged, but this does not pain me.–I could die happy if by dying I could save so many of my brothers from the bondage of the white man." Childs published this lithograph in New York in 1839. (ICHi-22004, courtesy Chicago Historical Society)*

In the spring of 1835, Andrew Judson, now a Jacksonian Democrat, was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. The following year he resigned to accept a presidential appointment as United States District Judge for the State of Connecticut. Not much is known about Judson's career as District Court judge; at least not until the summer of 1839, when rumors of a mysterious schooner manned by black pirates began to spread through towns and cities along the coast.

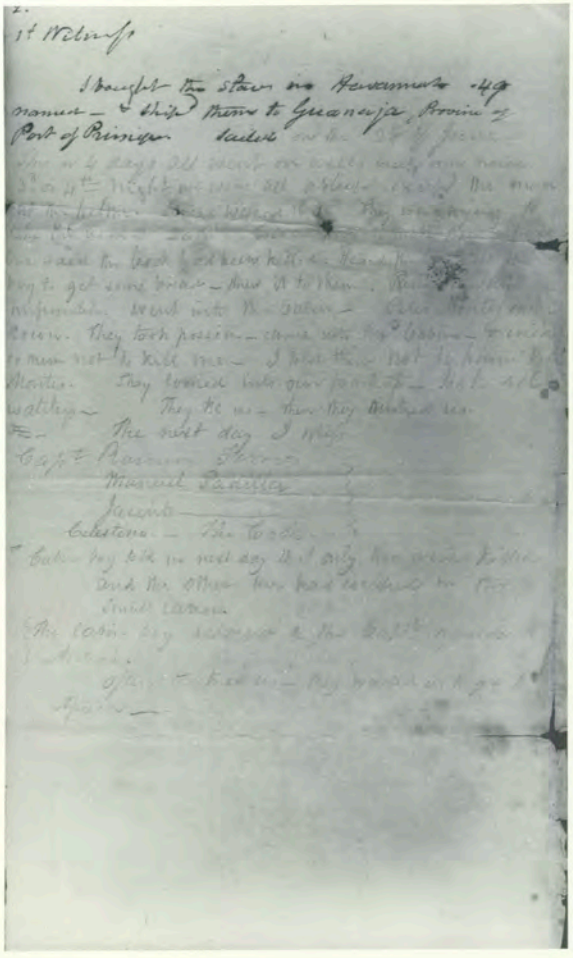
On 26 August a vessel fitting that description was captured near Montauk Point, Long Island, by the U.S. brig *Washington* and brought the short distance to New London, Connecticut. Aboard were 43 black Africans and two Cuban slave owners.

District Court Judge Andrew Judson was notified of these events and arrived from New Haven for a hearing aboard the *Washington*. Through an interpreter he listened to accounts from José Ruiz and Pedro Montes, the two Cubans who claimed the Africans as their property. From them, and from the schooner's papers, he learned that this Spanish-registered vessel, *La Amistad,* had departed Havana, Cuba, in June with five white men, a slave cook and cabin boy, and 53 Africans. They were bound for Puerto Príncipe, 300 miles east on the north coast of Cuba.

On the third night at sea the Africans broke free of their chains and revolted. The captain and cook were killed, and the two crew members escaped in a boat. The slave owners–Ruiz and Montes–were spared because the blacks believed they could navigate the schooner back to Africa. For nearly eight weeks they sailed east by day, secretly changing course at night to the northwest, hoping to reach one of the U.S. slave states. By the time they reached Long Island, several of the Africans had died, the two Cubans were suffering from injuries received during the revolt, and the *Amistad* was barely seaworthy.[16]

The apparent leader of the Africans, Sengbe Pieh, whom the Cubans called Joseph Cinqué, was also present at the hearing, but he spoke only his native Mende language so no one could communicate with him. Having heard the Cubans' testimony, Judson ordered the Africans to be held on charges of murder, mutiny, and piracy. They were sent to the jail in New Haven to await a hearing.

In mid-September the Africans were taken to Hartford and



Judge Judson scrawled these notes as he listened to José Ruiz's testimony on board the Washington *in New London Harbor on 29 August 1839. When he ran out of ink, Judson continued in pencil. (Coll. 247, box 1/4, G.W. Blunt White Library, Mystic Seaport)*

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appeared before the U.S. Circuit Court, presided over by U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thompson Smith and District Court Judge Andrew Judson. Thompson ruled that the court had no jurisdiction to try the Africans for murder and mutiny, since whatever happened aboard the *Amistad* occurred in international waters on a Spanish ship. No murder charges would be brought against the captives. However, their status had yet to be determined, and for this he sent the entire matter to the District Court. The name of Andrew T. Judson once again became prominent in the news.

The District Court convened immediately after the Circuit Court was adjourned. Judson declared that slavery did not exist in Connecticut, so there would be no salvage allowed for, or a value placed upon, the *Amistad*'s Africans.[17] In addition, since they were no longer considered criminals, he ordered them removed from jail to a more appropriate place of confinement. He also directed that they be adequately clothed and fed and be given medical attention. A trial date was set for November.

It was now Judge Judson's task to untangle the conflicting claims on the *Amistad* and its cargo, particularly determining whether or not the Africans should be considered part of that cargo. Over the next four months the primary issue became clear: were these Africans property, or were they people with rights?

Once again Judson faced his old antagonists from the Prudence Crandall affair. Immediately after the *Amistad* was seized, abolitionists began to organize a committee to defend the Africans. Lewis Tappan, a New York merchant and philanthropist, organized groups to oversee fundraising, education, religious instruction, and other aspects of the forthcoming struggle to free the "Amistads." Roger S. Baldwin, a New Haven lawyer, was retained to head a defense team that included New York attorneys Seth Staples and Theodore Sedgwick.

The abolitionists did not relish the prospect of arguing their case before a judge who seven years earlier had inspired legislation restricting education for black children in Connecticut. To them Judson had earned a reputation for racial prejudice, even while professing to oppose slavery, and they were concerned that justice for the Africans aboard the *Amistad* would ultimately depend on his ruling.

The District Court trial opened in November of 1839, but circumstances soon necessitated a postponement until January.[18] By this time the case had become an issue of national interest. The Spanish government was demanding the return of the Africans so they could be tried for murder in Cuba. Most citizens in the Northern states, including many who opposed the antislavery movement, supported the right of the captives to return home.

Seeking crucial support for his forthcoming reelection, Democratic President Martin Van Buren wanted to get rid of the ship, the captives, and the potential this case posed for alienating Southern Democrats. Andrew Jackson's democracy had left the nation's economy in recession, and his successor was getting the blame for the ongoing effects of the Panic of 1837. Van Buren would need the continued support of Southern voters if he was to continue in office. Surely he could count on a fellow Democrat with Judson's political instincts to help rally the party to victory in 1840. In fact, so certain was the administration that Judson would rule in favor of the Spanish claim, a U.S. Navy schooner was waiting at New Haven to transport the Africans back to Havana.[19]

The *Amistad* captives, through their abolitionist counsel, were suing for their freedom. In addition the court would consider the salvage claims on the vessel by Lieutenant Gedney, commander of the U.S. brig *Washington*, for bringing the *Amistad* to New London; another by Montes and Ruiz, who wanted their property back; and yet anoth-

er salvage claim by Long Island mariners Peletiah Fordham and Henry Green, who first made contact with the captives on the beach near Montauk.

The *Amistad* trial reconvened in the statehouse on the New Haven Green on 7 January 1840. Through the efforts of the abolitionists and Yale College faculty and students, a translator had been found for the Africans: seaman James Covey, a young Mende man who had been rescued from a slave ship and was serving aboard a British man-of-war then in New York. With Covey as their interpreter the captives could finally tell their story. On the second day Cinqué gave his evidence as spectators listened with "breathless attention."[20]

They had all been taken from their villages in Africa. Some were kidnapped, others captured in tribal wars and sold by other Africans to slavers. At the slave port of Lomboko they were chained and crammed aboard a Portuguese slave ship for the long voyage to Cuba, where they were landed illegally and taken to the Havana slave market. Here they were sold to Montes and Ruiz. Aboard the *Amistad*, the mulatto cook, evidently as a cruel joke, told Cinqué that their owners planned to use them for food. This, said one of the captives, "made our hearts burn." Later Cinqué found a loose nail in the deck and used it to unlock his chains and secure their freedom.

Just how much Judson was affected by the cruelty and tragedy of Cinqué's story is not clear; while it moved many who listened, it probably had little influence on the judge's verdict. By this time he had heard testimony from Dr. Richard Madden, an abolitionist who had been a British antislavery commissioner in Cuba.

Testifying in Judson's chambers several weeks earlier, Madden had explained that in Cuba there were three classes of blacks: *creoles*, who had been born within the Spanish dominions; Spanish-speaking *ladinos*, who had been brought to Cuba before 1820, when a treaty between Spain and Great Britain ended the legal slave trade to Cuba; and African-speaking *bozales*, who had been brought from Africa since the end of the legal slave trade and had not yet learned Spanish. Since the *Amistad* captives could only speak their native Mende language, they were obviously *bozales*, imported into Cuba in violation of Spanish law and therefore not legal slaves.[21]

The Cubans, Madden said, circumvented the Spanish ban on the slave trade with fraudulent documentation, for which officials collected a bonus. In this case the *Amistad* blacks had been deliberately misclassified as "ladinos" to deceive any inspectors who might stop the vessel and check her manifest. He estimated that approximately 25,000 Africans had been illegally brought to Cuba and sold as slaves during the previous three years.[22]

The court heard six days of testimony from all interested parties. Finally on Monday morning, 13 January, Andrew Judson was ready to present his decision to a packed courtroom.[23]

For more than an hour he addressed the principal contentions in the case. First he confirmed the Connecticut District Court's jurisdiction by explaining the *Amistad* was captured in Long Island Sound. "For all purposes of Admiralty" he wrote, "Long Island Sound has ever been considered high seas. [It] does not belong to either Connecticut or New York. Having found the fact that the seizure of the Schooner Amistad was made upon the high seas, and not in a port or harbor, the seizor had good right and lawful authority to bring the vessel into the Port of New London, and when first brought here, the jurisdiction of this District Court attaches to the vessel and her cargo."[24] Thus, Lieutenant Gedney was not obligated to take his prize into a New York port.

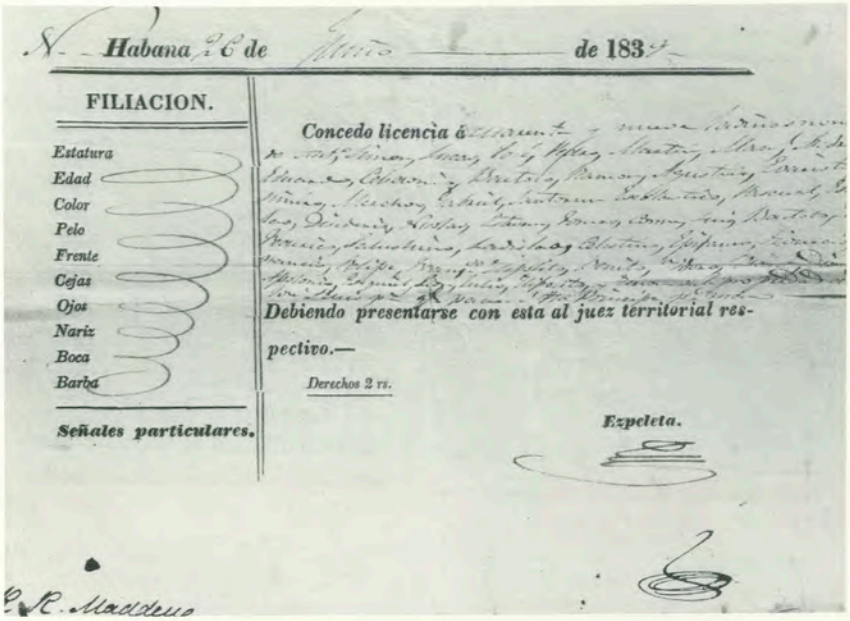
Judson then turned his remarks to the salvage question, awarding Lieutenant Gedney one-third of the appraised value of the vessel and cargo (captives excepted) as salvage. The *Amistad* was "at the mercy of the winds and waves" he said, and the blacks on board were certainly not capable of sailing her back to Africa. Consequently, Gedney's actions saved the schooner from certain destruction. He also awarded Montes and Ruiz salvage at the same rate, but dismissed the claim by Fordham and Green, pointing out that they were never on the *Amistad* and did not render substantial assistance in the recovery of the vessel.

Judson now proceeded to his ruling on the blacks. "They were born free," he said, "and ever since have been and still of right are free and not slaves."[25] Evidence showed that they had been kidnapped in violation of Spanish law and unlawfully sold as slaves in Cuba.

"The government of Spain demand of us under their treaty, a restoration of these Negroes, and we ask them for their title," Judson said.

"It is a very well settled principle, here and elsewhere, that the party demanding restoration must show his title. Aware of this rule, of law, the Spanish claimants send to me their evidence of title. And what is that document. A deed, a bill of sale, a transfer? No. It is a permit, a license, a pass signed by the Governor General of Cuba for Don Pedro Montes & Don Jose Ruiz to transport 54 Ladinos to Guanaja, and this is all! In point of fact, these are not Ladinos. They might be lawfully sold and carried to Guanaja. These negroes are Bozals and not [Ladinos]. Here then is the point–the pivot upon which this great controversy must *turn! . . . They were Bozals, and not slaves."*

Judson continued by saying that this distinction is established by



The Cuban case for ownership of the Amistad *captives was based on the* trespassos–passports–*issued for their transportation on the* Amistad. *Ruiz's passport includes the names assigned to the Africans, but Judge Judson did not accept such documents as proof of ownership or legal slavery. (District Court Records of Connecticut, RG 36, National Archives Depository, Waltham; Jennifer Stich photo)*

Spanish law, "Why then should the law be doubted by me? I do not doubt it. I do expressly find it to be such. . . possession is only one indication of property, and that has been rebuted by the proof that these are Bozal blacks and cannot be made property by any machinery of sale or transportation. . . . It is the naked possession when they bring these blacks upon the decks of the Amistad, on which they rely. When the right is disputed this is not enough."

According to Judson, the Cuban pass issued to the *Amistad* was intended "to serve the double purpose of proving property and title, and yet when we look on it again, and apply to it our judicial test, if the expression may be allowed, we find that instrument still is for Ladinos and not Bozals. It contains on its face, an untruth. The Governor General has not given a Pass for these blacks consequently these Bozals stand on the decks of the Amistad without any pass whatever."

Montes and Ruiz had no legal claim before the court, and Judson believed "The purchaser must be vigilant in the investigation of the property he buys. If there had been vigilance in this case Ruiz and Montes might have saved all their property. . . and the Court might have been relieved from this heavy responsibility, which has been pressing it down for these four months."

"When these facts are known by the Spanish Minister, he cannot but discover that the subjects of his Queen have acquired no rights in these men–they are not the property of Spain. That being removed, by his own law, there can no longer be cause of complaint. At all events, this cannot be expected at my hands, because the Supreme Court have always refused to surrender property, unless there was proof of title in the claimants."[26] In his final decree that morning, Judson ordered that all the Africans "be delivered to the president of the United States to be transported to Africa, there to be delivered to the agent, appointed to receive and conduct them home."[27]

Judson's decision astounded the defense attorneys. He had accepted their argument that the captives were free, albeit with a stipulation that they be returned to Africa. The abolitionists had hoped for a ruling of unconditional freedom; that the blacks wished to return home, they believed, only masked the fact that they were not allowed to choose their fate. However, they did not wish to continue the case and risk a possible reversal by a higher court.[28]

The Van Buren administration, on the other hand, was not pleased. Judson's gavel had hardly fallen before the United States, on behalf of the Spanish government, appealed the case to the Supreme Court. Scheduled for February 1841, the oral arguments lasted eight days, with defense attorney Roger S. Baldwin and the elderly former president John Quincy Adams eloquently defending the principles of Andrew Judson's ruling. On 9 March 1841 the court upheld his decision with but a single revision; that the captives be "dismissed from the custody of the court" rather than be delivered to the custody of the president.[29]

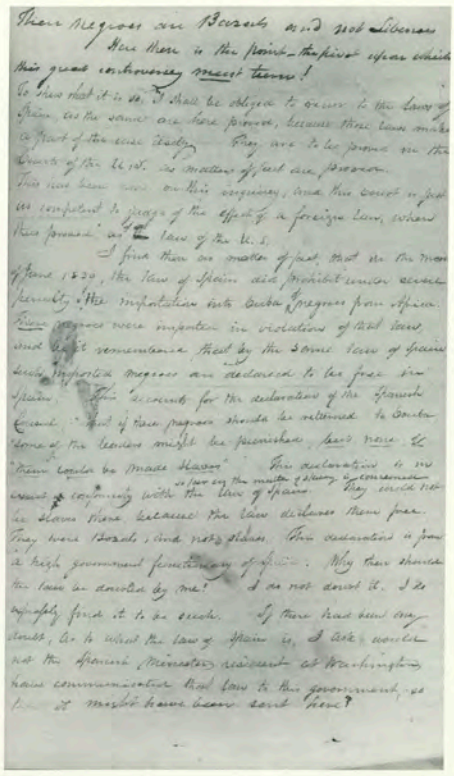
Most historians agree that the *Amistad* captives' journey through the American legal system was chaotic, but in the end they did receive a fair measure of justice. Judge Judson had navigated dangerous waters between slavery and freedom. He had allowed the abolitionists to claim a conditional victory, while presenting the Van Buren administration with an opportunity to be associated with the humanitarian effort of returning the captives to Africa. The *New York Evening Post* wrote that Judson's opinion had demonstrated the absence of conflict between America's laws and the "great principles of justice," while another stated that the decision did honor to Judson by exhibiting "a judgment of mercy to the unfortunate and oppressed."[30]

The *Amistad* case also provided a forum for Judson to communicate

his colonizationist philosophy and to show the world how relocation of the Africans to their "native home" could, in his view, be part of a just and merciful decision. His ruling, like that in the Prudence Crandall case, avoided any redefinition of equality and civil rights in America. Remaining true to his interpretation of Constitutional law and his ambivalence about the status of blacks in America, Judson had ruled in the narrowest terms on matters of property. The principles of slavery as it then existed remained undisturbed, although the public exposure to the case did provide support for the ongoing efforts of the abolitionists. Only when the dispute over slavery divided the unity of the nation, twenty years after the *Amistad* case, were the status and rights of black Americans settled by war.[31]

Some people might see a change of sentiment from the Prudence Crandall incident to the *Amistad* case. One was a civil-rights issue while the other was reduced to a property case that involved slavery. However, Judson's actions in both instances were consistent with his worldview. While he recognized the justice of freedom over slavery, freedom for blacks could always be limited by the laws of the land. His ruling in the *Amistad* case stated specifically that *these* captives "were born free" and that they had been taken in violation of the laws of Spain. It remained purely a matter of interpreting the law.

Andrew Judson measured his success by the recognition and support he received through his work in public office. Politics was a profession that allowed him to hone his legal skills and advance his influence within the state. His enemies, of whom there were many, saw him to be an opportunist who spoke for those who might do him the most good. A critical notice in the *Norwich Courier* stated that "Mr. Judson has been either in or a candidate for office ever since he was of age and joins any party that will gratify his ambition."[32]



Judge Judson's verdict on the Amistad *case in the District Court was based on this draft in his hand. (Coll. 247, box 1/7, G.W. Blunt White Library, Mystic Seaport)*

He was also unfettered in his approach to the law, sometimes constructing extreme interpretations of statutes to support his arguments. He was popular with his constituents, but disliked by others. He could be an articulate and often emotional adversary. He was certainly not a visionary, but rather an effective voice for many of the popular ideals, prejudices, and concerns of his era.[33]

In his personal life, he and Rebecca lived quietly and respectably in Canterbury, where according to Judson, "we have trudged along together, harmonizing in our views and mode of life, as well, and perhaps better than most others."[34] He would continue as District Court judge until his death on 17 March 1853, but he was never associated again with any case as compelling as that of the schooner *Amistad*.

The Andrew T. Judson Papers represent an important new resource in the archives of the *Amistad* affair. Most importantly they provide a look at Judson's life from his own perspective. We may now learn more about him, and use his own words as part of that process. This, I believe, is crucial for any interpretation of his conduct in public office. Ultimately, I would hope these items may be just a small portion of Judson's personal papers which, if they do still exist, might one day reach our collections here at Mystic Seaport, to be reunited and cataloged into a collection of even greater significance.

Douglas L. Stein is curator of manuscripts at Mystic Seaport"s G.W. White Blunt White Library. He is the author of *America Maritime Documents, 1776-1860* (1992).

Notes

1. Quoted from Connecticut District Court records found in Paul Finkelman, *Slavery In the Courtroom, An Annotated Bibliography of American Cases* (Washington, D.C., 1985), 228. "Cinqué" as the Spanish called him, was in his twenties and the acknowledged leader of the *Amistad* captives. Grabeau, another captive, also testified before Judson's court.

2. The Andrew T. Judson Papers were donated by Mr. Douglass Bjorn. We are pleased to acknowledge his interest in Mystic Seaport's programs and his support of our collections.

3. Andrew T. Judson, "A Short Sketch of My Own Life," a manuscript autobiography, possibly unfinished, Andrew T. Judson Papers, Coll 247, box 1/9, G.W. Blunt White Library, Mystic Seaport. All quoted material in the text prior to note 4 is taken from this source.

4. Ellen D. Learned, *History of Windham County, Connecticut*, 2 vols. (Worcester, Massachusetts, 1880), 2: 490. The inference is that Rebecca Warren, from Windham, may have been less active in Canterbury's social life than one might expect from the wife of so important a community leader as Andrew Judson.

5. This information is included in a Judson chronology compiled by Arthur J. Marinelli, museum assistant at the Prudence Crandall Museum in Canterbury, n.d. My special thanks go to Curator Kaz Kozlowski, and to Arthur Marinelli, for their valued support and assistance with this article.

6. Marvis Olive Welch, *Prudence Crandall, A Biography* (Manchester, Connecticut, 1983), 14.

7. Ibid., 11-15.

8. Information from the Prudence Crandall Museum indicates that approximately 75 free blacks lived in Canterbury at this time.

9. Welch, *Prudence Crandall*, 24-28.



Sengbe Pieh–Joseph Cinqué–was painted by abolitionist artist Nathaniel Jocelyn. (Courtesy New Haven Colony Historical Society)

10. Samuel J. May, *Some Recollections of the Anti Slavery Conflict* (Boston, 1869), as quoted in Welch, *Prudence Crandall*, 0-35. Quoted portions of the following conversation prior to note 11 are from this source.

11. Enacted on 24 May 1833, the Black Law stated specifically that "no person shall set up or establish in this State any school, academy, or literary institutions for the instruction or education of colored persons who are not inhabitants of this State, nor instruct or teach in any school, or other literary institution whatever in this State; nor harbor or board, for the purpose of attending or being taught or instructed in any such school, academy, or literary institution, any colored person who is not an inhabitant of any town in this State, without the consent in writing, first obtained, or a majority of the civil authorities." Andrew Judson was not in the legislature at this time, but his influence was such that he was able to expedite action on the bill from his colleagues in office. The Black Law would be repealed in 1838, the result of charges that it was unjust and unconstitutional.

12. As quoted in Welch, *Prudence Crandall*, 228.

13. Ibid., 228.

14. Ibid., 81.

15. *The Liberator*, ca. September 1834, quoted in Welch, *Prudence Crandall*, 108; Judson, "A Short Sketch of My Own Life."

16. Judson, notes on the testimony of Montes and Ruiz on board the *Washington*, 29 August 1839, Coll. 247, box 1/4.

17. According to the federal census, there were 23 slaves in Connecticut in 1830. Slavery in Connecticut had been limited since 1774 by several acts that included gradual emancipation beginning in 1784, so any blacks still qualifying as slaves in 1839 would have been born before 1784. Nevertheless, slavery was not entirely prohibited by Connecticut State Law until 1848. See Horatio T. Strother, *The Underground Railroad in Connecticut* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1962), appendix 3; Harold J. Bingham, *History of Connecticut*, vol. 1 (New York: Lewis Historical Publications, 1962), 520.

18. Judson, rough notes of the first day's testimony in Hartford, 19 November 1839, providing details of the first contact with the *Amistad* captives by Fordham, Green, and others on the beach near Montauk, Coll. 247, box 1/5.

19. Howard Jones, *Mutiny On The Amistad* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987, 1997), is the most comprehensive recent book about the *Amistad* affair. The social, legal, and political implications which were so much a part of this incident, and which Andrew Judson had to consider, are thoroughly discussed. See also, Donald Dale Jackson, "Mutiny On the Amistad," *Smithsonian* (December 1997): 115-24, a concise, well-organized account of the *Amistad* incident.

20. Jones, *Mutiny on the Amistad*, 104.

21. John W. Barber, *A History of the Amistad Captives* (New Haven, Connecticut, 1840), 55.

22. Jones, *Mutiny on the Amistad*, 123.

23. Judson, rough drafts of final ruling, read at New Haven on 13 January 1840, Coll. 247, box 1/6, 1/7. Although incomplete, the drafts reveal how Judson prepared his decisions regarding the *Amistad*'s location off Montauk Point and the ultimate freedom of the Africans.

24. Coll. 247, box 1/6.

25. Quoted in Jones, *Mutiny on the Amistad*, 130.

26. Judson, rough drafts of final ruling, Coll. 247, box 1/7. It might be said that the "Amistads" regained their freedom, for the most part, simply because of what Andrew Judson determined to be fraudulent paperwork by the Cuban authorities. The murdered captain's slave cabin boy Antonio–considered a legal slave under Spanish law–was to be returned to Cuba.

27. As quoted in *The African Slave Trade*, 228.

28. Jones, *Mutiny on the Amistad*, 134-35.

29. This meant that the Africans' passage home must come from private funds. Their fundraising included personal appearances by several of the Africans at antislavery meetings throughout the northeast. Those who were learning English read from the Bible, and Cinqué would describe the sufferings they had endured as pawns of the slave trade, telling again the riveting story of their takeover of the *Amistad*. Some considered these lectures demeaning, contending that the Africans were being made to perform like sideshow attractions. The reader is referred to Dianna R. McCain, *Free Men: The Amistad Revolt and the American Anti-Slavery Movement*, (Middletown: Connecticut Humanities Council, 1990).

30. *The African Slave Trade*, 229; quoted in Jones, *Mutiny on the Amistad*, 134.

31. However, it would be the abolitionists who were largely responsible for raising funds to transport the "Amistads" home, not the colonizationists. The 35 surviving captives returned to Africa in January 1842. "The definition of citizenship during the antebellum period was unclear. The problem was that no one had clarified how one secured citizenship, nor had anyone defined a citizen," Jones, *Mutiny on the Amistad*, 98. This is what was avoided in both the Prudence Crandall and *Amistad* cases. The nation continued to struggle with the issue until ratification of the 13th Amendment (1865).

32. As quoted in Welch, *Prudence Crandall*, 120. After Judson left the Federalist Party in 1816, he traveled a road of change and reform, from Tolerationists to Republican to Jacksonian Democrat. In matters of law his deliberations were often made with due consideration to the practical implications his verdict might produce. This was certainly the case with the *Amistad* captives, as he sought, I believe, to reach a just ruling that would please the greatest number of people, while remaining consistent with his own principles and enhancing his professional image.

33. In his *Amistad* ruling Judson stretched a law of 1819 "nearly beyond recognition" as precedent for returning the blacks to Africa. He pointed out that this law made it illegal "to import or bring in any manner whatsoever, into the U.S. from any foreign country any Negro, with intent to hold him as a slave." According to Judson, the "broad language" thus made it unlawful to bring a Negro into this country to "hold to service, any where, and in any place." Of course Montes and Ruiz never intended to import their slaves to America, and when the *Amistad* arrived off Long Island it was in command of the blacks. See Jones, *Mutiny on the Amistad*, 132. Andrew Judson's Connecticut tended to view slavery as a condition characteristic of another region of the country, whose principles did not have to be directly applied to the realities in the state. Overall it held a moderate course, endorsing colonization as the method by which slaves were to be ultimately freed. There was a general antipathy for extremists. Bingham, *History of Connecticut*, 520-25.

34. Judson, "A Short Sketch of My Own Life."

Amistad America

CHRIS CLOUD

Amistad America, Inc., is a not-for-profit educational foundation created in 1996 by Mystic Seaport, the Connecticut Afro-American Historical Society, Amistad Committee of New Haven, the Amistad Affiliates, and other interested parties to promote the legacy of the *Amistad* incident by building and providing a reproduction of the original vessel. Later that year the State of Connecticut's Department of Economic and Community Development awarded Amistad America a $2.5 million grant to build a full-scale recreation of the schooner *Amistad*. The intent of this project is to develop a new and exciting cultural and educational attraction for the State of Connecticut and the rest of the country that will keep the *Amistad* story alive for generations to come.

The revolt and legal defense of the *Amistad* captives united black and white abolitionists in the common cause of eliminating slavery. In Connecticut, abolitionists provided for the captives' health, education, and legal defense. In addition, the network of abolitionists and missionaries first united in this cause was instrumental in founding more than a dozen colleges and universities for black students in the South after the Civil War. Amistad America is dedicated to working in partnership with school systems throughout the state and the country to explain the history and significance of the *Amistad* incident of 1839, which led to the first United States Supreme Court decision in favor of people of color.

The mission of Amistad America is to teach the lessons of history, leadership, and cooperation inherent in the *Amistad* incident and its legacy through the ownership, educational programming, and operation of the recreated "freedom schooner" *Amistad*. The *Amistad* incident offers themes on which to focus meaningful conversations around issues of race and diversity, conversations in which teachers inspire students to appreciate history and learn to apply history lessons to contemporary issues that face young people in our society. The *Amistad*, whose name means friendship in Spanish, ultimately brought races together, and the story, which embodies American ideals of perseverance, justice, and equality, still offers important messages for all Americans about our collective history and our collective future.

What follows are a few of the compelling reasons why Amistad America and Mystic Seaport have decided to build the freedom schooner *Amistad*.

- Race continues to be one of the central issues dividing the country. The lessons of cooperation among races inherent in the *Amistad* incident are still relevant today.

- The image of the freedom schooner *Amistad* symbolizes the struggle for equality and human rights in this country.

- The *Amistad* incident is specific to Connecticut, and at the same time combines local events and personalities with national and international issues to produce a story of significance to all.

- The dramatic story of the *Amistad* captives has begun to capture the attention of modern youth and people all over the world. Until recently the story was relatively obscure in history texts, but as it is increasingly discovered it will change the way we think about the formative years of our nation's history.

- The thematic elements of the *Amistad* story connect history to issues facing America today and illustrate solutions.

- A program focused on the *Amistad* story will foster cooperation among people of diverse backgrounds to achieve a common goal.

- In this nation, there is a need to show minority youth the importance of their heritage and the historical contributions of African Americans to the development of the United States.

- Finally, Amistad America is dedicated to building this vessel to continue the legacy of the *Amistad* incident and to ensure that *Amistad* and its story remains meaningful for generations to come.

After more than four years of planning, Mystic Seaport and Amistad America, Inc. celebrated the "keel laying" of the freedom schooner *Amistad* on Sunday, 8 March 1998, in the preservation shipyard at Mystic Seaport. This ceremony, in which the vessel's keel was put in place, is the shipbuilding equivalent of a ground-breaking, and signified the beginning of construction of this approximately $3.1 million, 80-foot, hand-hewn wooden vessel. It also signified the beginning of the educational programming of Amistad America, which will first focus around the construction of the vessel until her scheduled launch in the spring of the year 2000. When complete, the new

Amistad will be fitted to provide a learning and exhibit space, and will sail the nation's waterways as an educational ambassador and training vessel, teaching the lessons of history, cooperation, and leadership to Americans of all ages, interests, and cultural backgrounds.

Amistad America plans to offer a variety of educational programs, including:

• *Amistad* CD ROM Project: Cinegram Media, Mystic Seaport, and Amistad America are developing a CD ROM that will focus on the *Amistad* incident and its significance. This CD ROM will be the most authoritative, interactive account of the series of events that led to the rebellion at sea of the African captives, their attempt to sail the vessel back to West Africa, their capture, and the series of trials that led to the Supreme Court.

• *Amistad* Web Site (www.amistad.mysticseaport.org): Amistad America and Mystic Seaport have developed a new web site entitled *Exploring Amistad* to bring the history and legacy of the *Amistad* incident to the World Wide Web. The site was created to make primary resource material, curricula, and a teachers forum available on the Internet.

• Mystic Seaport Exhibits: Mystic Seaport will continue to develop exhibits showcasing the *Amistad* story. These will offer visitors an opportunity to further explore the history and legacy of the *Amistad* incident.

• Connecticut Newspapers in Education: Mystic Seaport and Amistad America have created an eight-part newspaper educational supplement and teachers' guide based on the *Amistad* incident. The series has appeared in all of Connecticut's daily newspapers and is being used in every school district in the state.

• Captain Bill Pinkney / Middle Passage Voyage: The Middle Passage Voyage will continue the work of Captain Bill Pinkney's first solo circumnavigation of the globe as he sails with teachers across the Atlantic to West Africa. The teachers will conduct their classes via the Internet while on the vessel, teaching lessons of history, navigation, astronomy, and geography. Captain Pinkney will also be the first captain of the *Amistad* once the vessel is completed.

• *Amistad* Discovery Center: Mystic Seaport will create near the building site a discovery center to serve general admission visitors, organized groups, teachers, and students with a combination of interactive exhibits and resource materials.

• "All in the Same Boat": An interdistrict overnight program for Connecticut students in grades 4-6 will be established, based on Mystic Seaport's School Overnight Program model. The *Amistad* project is an ideal catalyst for a new magnet program addressing Connecticut's efforts to provide quality integrated educational opportunities that break down traditional barriers currently existing in our school districts. Variations of this program are also possible such as summer programs and weekend opportunities.

• *Amistad* Thematic Study Program: This three-hour program will be a subset of the longer "All in the Same Boat" program and will be available for school and community groups visiting for the day only.

• Mystic Seaport Planetarium Program: Developed for school, youth, and adult groups, this program demonstrates the science behind the famous "zigzag course" of the *Amistad* up the East Coast as well as the celestial view from western Africa to Cuba. Also available will be background on astronomy and navigation from several cultural and historical points of view.

• *Amistad* Family Guide: A publication available at no cost to families visiting Mystic Seaport will guide them to the *Amistad* exhibition, shipyard, and related activities, and will include graphics, at-home activities, and recommended readings.

• Vessel Construction: School groups, Museum visitors, and volunteers will be involved in the construction of the vessel.

At the center of our outreach activities will be the voices and concerns of youth throughout America. This project is committed to engaging young people of all races and cultures in an understanding of our collective history as a tool for understanding their own identity.

Currently, Amistad America is raising funds toward a goal of $1 million for the educational and operational needs of the vessel. To date, nearly one-third of the required dollars have been committed, due largely to the support of our lead corporate sponsor, Phoenix Home Life Mutual Insurance Company, and our educational partner, The United Church of Christ. SNET has also provided significant corporate support, as have Peoples Bank and Yankee Energy. Additional financial support for the vessel is still necessary. Please feel free to contact Amistad America at Mystic Seaport, 860.572.0711, extension 5211, with any questions, thoughts, or suggestions that you may have regarding Amistad America and the freedom schooner *Amistad*.

A former legislative aide in the Connecticut General Assembly, Christopher R. Cloud is project manager for Amistad America, Inc.

Book Marks

An *Amistad* Bibliography

This bibliography was compiled by Lisa Horan of Mystic Seaport's Henry B. duPont Shipyard. As you can see from the rest of this issue, Mystic Seaport's involvement with the *Amistad* is indeed many-faceted, from building a recreation of the vessel to educating the public about the various aspects of the legal case resulting from the *Amistad*'s capture. Material reflecting the role African Americans played in America's maritime industries is also a component. Therefore Lisa needed to consult a number of existing bibliographies and weave together a document that addresses the multiple issues with which we are dealing. Works consulted include Calvin Lane's *Amistad* training manual, compiled for our Education Department, and other in-house bibliographies, as well as published and unpublished materials held in our Library. While the bibliography is not exhaustive, the range it covers is extremely helpful to those interested in learning, or teaching, more about the *Amistad* case and putting it into context in American history.

Paul O'Pecko, Library Director

Personal Papers and Court Papers

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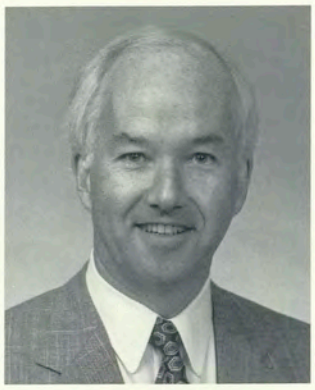
Amistad America, Inc. "*Amistad* America,Inc.," http://www.amistadamerica.org

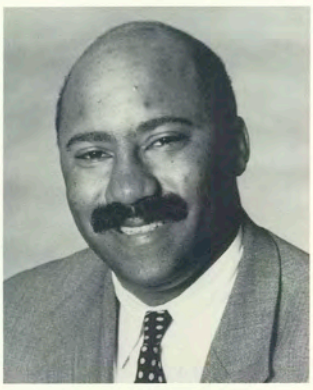
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Mystic Seaport Salutes!

PHOENIX HOME LIFE MUTAL INSURANCE COMPANY

In April 1997, Phoenix Home Life Mutual Insurance Company made news by pledging a $300,000 guarantee to Amistad America, Inc., a grant that triggered the release of a $2.5 million Connecticut State bond for the construction by Mystic Seaport of a recreation of the schooner *Amistad*.

Given the company's history, Phoenix's support was nothing new. One of the company's incorporators, Francis Gillette, was a prominent opponent of slavery. And throughout its 147-year history, the company has prided itself on its commitment to the community, working annually with more than 100 nonprofit, civic and educational institutions to help build better communities.

"We are proud to support this effort," said Carl Chadburn, Phoenix senior vice president. "The *Amistad* story sheds light on a critical part of history, teaching lessons that are especially timely and important."

Phoenix is working closely with Mystic Seaport and Amistad America, a nonprofit educational foundation that will own and operate the vessel, to promote the project and raise funds for it. Phoenix has provided in-kind development and production of marketing materials, office space and equipment, administrative support, and assistance in obtaining additional support from corporations and foundations.

In addition, the company underwrote and served as sponsor of three hours of educational programming on Connecticut Public Television during Black History Month.

Phoenix's support has impressed Christopher Cloud, project manager for Amistad America, who has an office in the company's Hartford home office that he says "feels like home."

"I'm only here part time because I have offices in other locations, but people treat me like I'm part of the company," says Cloud. "I don't think Amistad America could have found a better partner or a more committed and talented group of people."

That commitment stems, at least partially, from the significance of the *Amistad* incident. Steven Spielberg's historical drama AMISTAD, which premiered December 12, has brought unprecedented national exposure to the story, heightening awareness and increasing interest in *Amistad*-related events and projects.

"The *Amistad* incident was the first time in our nation's history that whites and blacks worked together to secure justice," says Cloud. "The principles and values that were so important to the outcome of the incident are still meaningful today, and we hope to convey their importance for generations to come."

Left: Carl Chadburn. Right: Chris Cloud. (Judy Beisler photo)

Now watch us build the freedom schooner Amistad

The legacy of *Amistad* resonates in many forms: poetry, plays, murals, books, film, and most recently, Mystic Seaport's most ambitious shipbuilding project ever — the recreation of the schooner *Amistad*. Visit our *Amistad* exhibits and be part of history in the making. For information visit Amistad America's and Mystic Seaport's websites at http://www.amistadamerica.org or http://www.amistad.mysticseaport.org



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