

Historic Columbia County

The Ordeal of Captain Paddock

Part I

For years I had dismissed Judah Paddock's "Narrative"—about his shipwreck on the western Barbary coast of Africa in 1800 and his weeks in captivity—as just one of the many exaggerated personal accounts of adventures, or misadventures, that proliferated in the first half of the 19th century.

When reading Paddock's "Narrative" again, however, I realize that he told a good story and one that rang true. In fact, I was amazed that the man survived his ordeal.

Paddock himself apologizes for some confusion in the narrative, since the book was published 18 years later and he had lost all his papers.

Relations With Africa

The situation between the new nation of the United States and the Barbary States of Africa bears a strong resemblance to some present problems. The Mohammedan leaders of the Barbary States of North Africa—Morocco, Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli—had long made a habit of seizing the ships of Christian nations and holding their crews for ransom. Since 1783 the United States and European countries had been paying a yearly tribute to the pirates of North Africa so that their merchant ships could safely trade with the Mediterranean countries.

One so-called peace treaty, which described the United States as an "island in the ocean," included perpetual tribute, particularly in naval sup-

plies. Several clauses included the unhappy provision that every American shipmaster had to return to the Dey of Algiers any escaped slave (read captured Christian) he might discover. There was some muttering in Congress, especially over the naval supplies

duty to make war upon them wherever they could be found, and to make slaves of all they could take as prisoners, and that every Musselman who should be slain in battle was sure to go to paradise."

By 1793 the Algerine corsairs had sailed



demanding, with fears that those navy supplies would be used against American shippers. That treaty did release 120 Americans who had been slaves, some for as long as 11 years.

The Barbary policy was best explained by the Ambassador of Tripoli: "It was written in their Koran, that all nations who should not have acknowledged their authority were sinners, that it was their right and

through the Straits of Gibraltar and had captured four ships, five brigs and a schooner, all American, adding 105 new slaves to the 14 who had waited eight years for their ransom to be paid. This added \$300,000 to the U.S. Congressional appropriation for the ransom—the "price of peace" as it was euphemistically labelled.

One of the major objections to the continued payment of ransom was that it would only increase the number of men captured and lead to higher ransoms required.

In 1795 Congress appropriated \$800,000 for ransom, "presents" (bribery), and the annual tribute. When it was slow in arriving, the Algerian Hasen Bashaw Dey threatened to turn his corsairs loose against American ships and re-enslave paroled American captives.

By 1796 the U.S. had sunk to the level of presenting a bribe to the Dey of a 36-gun American frigate, along with \$225,000 in coin, bringing the cost of Algerine negotiations to almost a million dollars, while treaties still had to be concluded with Tripoli and Tunis.

A "quasi-war" with the French led to the establishment of a new American Navy, an idea that was fought in Congress along political lines between the Federalists and the

Democratic-Republican interests.

American Navy

In the same year that Captain Paddock sailed out of New York for Cork, Ireland, the U.S. warship George Washington was carrying tribute to Algiers. The Dey then forced the captain, under threats to blow up his ship and loose his corsairs to prey on other American ships, to carry presents to the Grand Seigneur of Constantinople. These included jewels, wild animals, and male and female slaves. The 26-year-old Captain Bainbridge did so—to save his crew. Finally, a show of force by the infant American Navy ended the power of the Mediterranean pirates in 1805. By then, Captain Paddock was safely back in Hudson.

Judah Paddock was a son of Stephen Paddock, one of the early Proprietors of the city of Hudson. Judah and his brother Laban were seafaring men who became wealthy and influential citizens of the community. Prior to 1800, Judah had aided a Russian ship in distress and was presented a sword by Empress Catherine of Russia. He was involved in shipping and traded with the West Indies, Liverpool and Russia.

On the 8th of January, 1800, Captain Paddock and his crew left New York City in the Hudson ship Oswego with a cargo of flaxseed and staves bound for Cork, Ireland. The Oswego, formerly a whaling ship, was four years old, 260 tons, and by his account, "A good ship and a fast sailer." The crew consisted of the chief mate Daniel Hussey of Nantucket; John Clark, 2nd mate, of Hudson; Gorham Paddock, a boy and a relation; "one man by the name of Wilbor, one by the name of Jack Hill, a black man Jack of Hudson, a black man Sam of Philadelphia, Johnson of the northern part of the state of New York, two Danes and two Swedes."

While in Cork, Paddock bought two pieces of gown patterns made of tabinet (a cheap fabric like poplin) for his wife. These play an important part in his story. Also, a man called Pat came aboard as crew in Ireland, but refused to sign ship papers.

A Course Is Set

Paddock decided to sail to the Cape Verde Islands for salt and hides to bring back to the states. On March 22nd (it had taken 24 stormy days to reach Ireland) the Oswego sailed for the Cape Verde Islands with a course set to pass near Madeira. Not sighting that island, nor the Canary Islands to the south, the first mate and

the captain argued over their exact position. Hussey believed they were too far westward, the Captain only sure by his sightings that they were off latitude past Cape Nun on the coast of Africa. Both were uneasy as to their reckonings.

That night Paddock was awakened with cries of "Breakers! Right ahead!" The waves lifted the ship and smashed it on the rocks. They were shipwrecked on the Barbary Coast of western Africa.

After much dispute among the crew, it was decided to use the long boat to get to shore and survey the country. They had great difficulties reaching shore and damaged the long boat in doing so. When they landed on the rocky, desolate coast, they found a few fragments of a ship that had been wrecked in that spot earlier. Captain Paddock recalled that Captain Delano had been wrecked on this coast several years before, but he secretly hoped that the "inhabitants of the country had become more humanized" in the interim.

When dawn came on the 4th of April, they saw their ship on the rocks off shore, all sails still standing. It was necessary to swim to the ship and attach a line from it to the shore to haul back all the provisions, clothes, sails, and a live pig. Unfortunately, the liquor aboard was also sent to shore—six gallons of equal parts gin, rum and brandy, and a hamper of port wine and porter.

Reconnoiter

On the morning of April 5th some men were sent to gather wood to repair the long boat, while two others were sent to reconnoiter the area—one towards the distant mountains, another in the supposed direction of Cape Nun. The men were divided into watches and it was discovered that two had disappeared during their watch. Pat and one of the Danes were discovered later in a drunken stupor behind a sand hill.

While Paddock was destroying what he thought was all the rest of the liquor, the crew reported finding the footprints of two barefoot men with a dog who had ventured close to their camp. It was assumed that this had happened while the two drunken men on watch had passed out.

The man who had been sent toward the mountains returned filled with terror. He cried that the land was inhabited not by Arabs but by man-eaters! He had found a large pile of human bones near the remains of a fire.—Margaret Schram
Next: Captivity

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The Ordeal Of Captain Paddock Of Hudson

Part II

When the crew member of the Oswego—shipwrecked off the Barbary Coast—returned with the report of seeing a heap of human bones, Captain Judah Paddock decided to walk to St. Cruz (Agader), about 180 miles north by his reckoning.

The crew set about making knapsacks of sails and the captain changed into his best clothes. His crew member Jack insisted on carrying the tabinet patterns, saying "Mistress shall have these yet." Paddock instructed the crew to say they were Englishmen from Liverpool heading for the British Consul at Mogadore, because the natives would not know about the United States.

They set off in intense heat over sand hills covered with sharp, pointed rocks. More human and animal tracks were seen as they moved northward.

About 45 miles from the ship they came upon a deserted settlement of 20 or 30 houses. They found a wooden cask filled with human hair, and, a short distance away, another heap of human bones. A fearful night followed, made more so by the howling of hyenas. The next morning found Pat drunk again, having hidden a bottle of liquor in his clothes.

The crew determined to return to the wreck, where they felt safer. Despite Paddock's entreaties, nine left to go back to the wrecked ship, while Paddock and three others continued on.

The next day the four were attacked by "wild Arabs," who sprang at them with daggers, cutting away their knapsacks and clothes. The captain described them as

monsters, with long, straight black hair, obviously never combed. Their one redeeming feature was their "melodious" voices—their language, of course, was not understood.

After enduring threats of being shot, the men were loaded down with all the packs and marched off. When they collapsed from heat, thirst and exhaustion, their captors beat them. Using sign language, Paddock indicated their need for water and they were given a sip from a goatskin bag. The goat had recently been killed, and the bag, and the water, smelled like putrid flesh.

They were taken back to the site of the shipwreck, enduring extreme suffering on the way, and there they found a group of 250 native men, women and children, plus camels. The rest of the crew was also in captivity.

The men were divided among their captors, Paddock and Jack "fell to the worst fellow." They were hurried off by their owners and marched for two days without food or water—their pleas ignored. Finally a goat-like animal was killed, buried in the sand, and a fire built over it. When barely cooked, the natives consumed everything but the uncooked "guts," which they gave to their prisoners. Because of their hunger and thirst, Paddock says they "fed deliciously."

They travelled constantly, averaging 35 to 40 miles a day, with only thick, scummy putrid water to drink. The nights were bitterly cold, and the men huddled together for warmth without blankets. The searing heat and shifting sand made walking

difficult, and the cruelties heaped on them by their captors left the men totally despondent. A wild barley field provided them with enough grain for some nourishment.



When a new tribe with horsemen suddenly descended on the group, the men were again searched for money and then marched to a tent encampment of 750 to 1000 men, women and children. Paddock described the encampment as containing 97 tents, 30 camels, 50 horses, and over 100 sheep and goats.

The people, who ranged in color from light copper to very dark, were sharp nosed and raw-boned. Their pride was their horses, which, Paddock admitted, were beautiful, but he envied the quantity of water allowed the animals, while the captives went thirsty.

There were three slaves already at the encampment—an English boy who had been a steward on the wrecked ship Martin Hall, and two black boys named Jack and Laura. Jack had learned the language and agreed to translate for Paddock.

With the arrival of Ahamed, the chief of the

tribe, Paddock and all his men were put up for sale. Through Jack, Paddock explained that a sizeable ransom would be paid for him and his men though the British Consul at

wrecked Christians for hiding their treasures from the true believers, to whom God had given it.

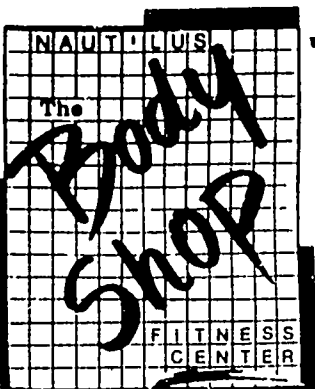
The women prayed each morning that another Christian ship would be

Mogadore. He swore that the chief would receive \$40 per man plus knives and tobacco, and his wives would get looking glasses, combs and beads. The chief bought all the men except the two black members of the crew, who were retained by their original captors. To Paddock's great distress, these two crew members were immediately marched off by their owners to be slaves forever.

The camp soon packed up and moved on. Paddock and his men, suffering from hunger and thirst, begged for food and water. They were fed a small amount of grain mixed with water which they called stir-about. They were constantly told they were a poor, miserable and degraded race of mortals, doomed to everlasting punishment of hell fire after death, and in this life, fit only for the company of dogs. Ahamed added to this diatribe by inveighing against ship-

cast on the shore loaded with cloth and money.

During their painful journey toward St. Cruz, a slave speculator visited the camp, trying to buy the men for resale. He proclaimed that there was plague at Mogadore and that the English Consul there no longer paid ransom, for he had no more money. Through the interpreter Jack, Paddock was able to reassure the chief that their ransom would indeed be paid and the speculator was sent on his way. They soon reached more fertile countryside, with trees and fields of grain. Sent to harvest barley, Paddock and his men deliberately made a bad job of the task and finally refused to work at all. The chief, in a rage, locked them in a building that was formerly a goat-pen. When they tried to sleep, they discovered the floor, covered with goat droppings, was swarming with fleas.—Margaret Schram
Next: Freedom



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Historic Columbia County

The Ordeal Of Captain Paddock

Part III

Judah Paddock was 27 years old when he was shipwrecked on the western coast of Morocco in the year 1800.

Only a man in his prime could have survived his six weeks as a slave. The forced marches averaged 30 to 40 miles a day and he estimated in his account of the trip—"Narratives"—that he had traveled 525 miles within Morocco. He did find that his need for water decreased because there was no salt in the grain and water gruel that constituted his infrequent rations. While he and his men were "reduced to mere skeletons," it is amazing that none became ill from drinking what had to be contaminated water.

After almost a week in the filthy goat-pen, Paddock and his fellow slaves were paraded before other natives who might buy them. He reassured his "master" that the ransom would be forthcoming in Mogadore, and they and their keepers began the journey to St. Cruz (Agadir).

As they moved northward, they passed more small villages, cultivated fields, and herds of flocks. The land was fertile, with wheat towering above their heads. They traveled through a swarm of locusts a half-mile wide and villages emptied by the plague.

Life Changed

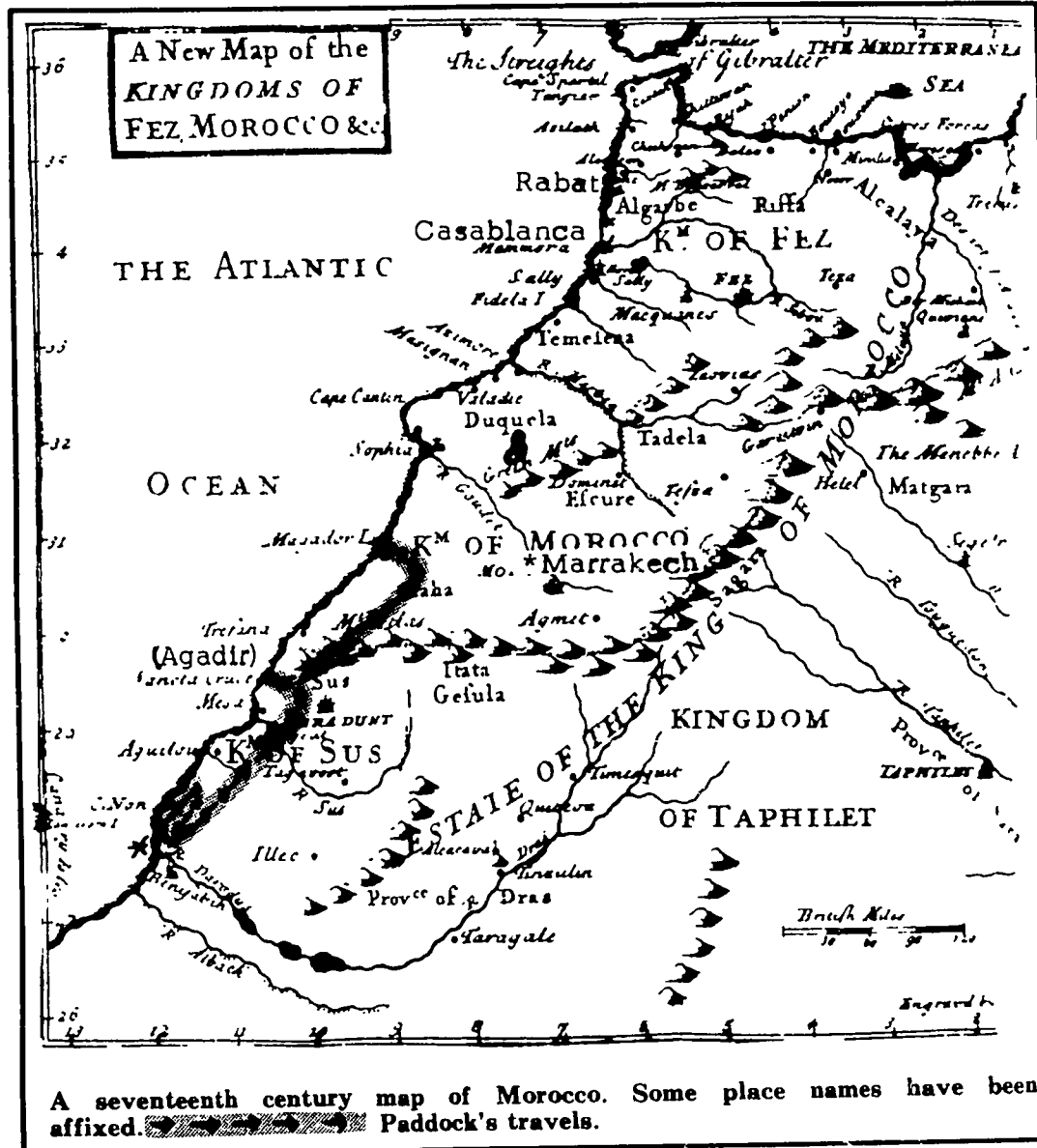
At St. Cruz, life changed for the better for the officials there took over. Paddock was interviewed by the "Moorish" governor who chastised Ahamed for his brutality and ordered him to take

Paddock and his fellow slaves to Mogadore immediately. (From this point on, Paddock refers more and more to "Moorish" officials. Moor originally meant the natives of western Algeria and Morocco, but it later came to be defined as rich, educated, city dwelling Berbers or Arabs who had accumulated the refinements of civilization, especially those of Spain.)

The captain was mounted on a camel, and the slaves and their keepers traveled the precarious trail over the western Atlas mountains. After spending another night in a filthy, flea infested house, their northward journey took them to a region filled with gardens, olive trees and vineyards. His "masters" again locked them up and refused to go further until the ransom was paid. They were overheard discussing taking the slaves back to St. Cruz to resell, and there were threats to get rid of Rais, their name for Paddock, for he was "the worst to manage."

Locked In A Goat-Pen

An agreement was finally reached to allow Paddock, accompanied by Ahamed and another native, to go ahead by horseback to Mogadore, where arrangements would be made with the consul for the ransom payment and other "expenses." That journey was particularly arduous, with the Captain enduring hunger, cold, and another night locked in a goat-pen. He began to believe that he had been duped into leaving his



A seventeenth century map of Morocco. Some place names have been affixed. Paddock's travels.

men so that they could be sent back to St Cruz for resale.

The trek continued over sand hills until they reached the city of Mogadore with ships lying at anchor in the harbor and the flags of many nations flying above their embassies.

At the office of the English Consul, Paddock met eight other seamen who had recently been ransomed. After furnishing him with a non-native breakfast, Consul Gwyn informed him that the American Consular agent had been ordered to leave by the Emperor and the consul-general resided in Tangier, far to the north.

A Soft Bed

Because of the distance, it took nearly a month to get word back from Tangier to have the ransom and expenses paid to Ahamed. While waiting for word Paddock lived at the home of Consul Gwyn, who furnished him with clothes. It took a full hour, Paddock reported, to rid himself of his long, thick beard and to cut his hair. Paddock's first view of himself in a mirror gave him a shock—"such a ghastliness I think I never saw, in a body that had life and motion." It took him some time to get used to sleeping in a soft bed. The consul told him that his six weeks in captivity was short; most captives were held for up to eight months.

On hearing that Paddock had permission to draw on any account for

the ransom, the English merchants of Mogadore advanced all the necessary funds and the rest of the crew was brought to the city and reunited. Paddock learned that the natives had carefully and laboriously removed all the earth ballast from his ship Oswego, thinking it must be some valuable cargo.

While waiting for some means to sail from Mogadore, a native visited peddling cloth. From his bundle rolled the two gown patterns of tabinet that Paddock had purchased for his wife in Ireland and were last seen with his servant Jack. Noticing his tears, the would-be purchasers of the cloth offered to let Paddock buy them. He declined, but later found the gown pattern hidden in his trunk.

Quarantined

On the 27th of July, he took passage for himself and his crew (except Pat, who refused to return) on a Portuguese schooner bound for Lisbon, sailing for British merchants. Twenty days later, arriving at the port near Lisbon, everyone aboard was quarantined for 40 days because of the plague in Morocco. The American consul general there supplied them with food, but Paddock reported it was a very tedious time.

On the 27th of September quarantine ended and Paddock arranged for his men to sail home. He borrowed more money and took passage on the

Baltimore ship *Perseverance*, arriving on November 18th in Baltimore with exactly one dollar left. After borrowing money from an old friend he met—Jonathan Macy of Nantucket—he went to Washington to arrange to have the monies used for the ransoms and expenses repaid. He also made a report to the Secretary of State. From there he journeyed home, arriving in Hudson on December 1, 1800, exactly a year from the day he had left that city.

Judah Paddock's "Narrative" contains 329 pages of text. The copy of the "Narrative" that I used for this capsule account is at the Columbia County Museum's library in Kinderhook. Captain Paddock is buried in the Hudson cemetery, and his stone reads that he died in 1823 at the age of 50.—Margaret Schram. Next: Columbia County's Court Houses

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April Schedule:

- April 8 Regular Board Meeting
- April 13 County Government Division
- April 14 Health Division
- April 15 Legal Division
- April 20 Public Works Division
- April 21 Planning Division
- April 22 Finance Division

All meetings are at 7.30 p.m. at 401 State Street, Hudson.