

175 years later, the Amistad affair lives on in the Yale Library's collections



March 10, 2016

William H. Townsend's pencil sketches of the Amistad captives portray people full of character, who when robbed of their freedom, fought to regain it.

The 43 captives' arrival in New Haven in September 1839 caused a sensation. Townspeople lined the streets as the Africans were marched from the Long Wharf to the jail. Colonel Stanton Pendleton, the jailer, charged curiosity seekers a shilling each to view his unusual prisoners. Phrenologists visited the jail to measure the captives' skulls.

Townsend captured their humanity. His drawings depict distinct individuals: Margru, a young girl, hints at a smile. Kimbo seems suspicious. Pona is handsome. Saby smokes a pipe.

Townsend had difficulty persuading the Africans to sit for him and bribed them with candy, according to an article published in the Yale Library Gazette in January 1935. Read more in this [YaleNews article](#). [1]

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[1] <http://news.yale.edu/2016/03/07/175-years-later-amistad-affair-lives-yale-library-s-collections>