Research Guide to the “Amistad Affair”

In 1839, fifty-three African captives, illegally sold into slavery and being transported off Cuba, revolted and took *La Amistad* north. Near Long Island, they were seized by a U. S. Navy vessel and brought to Connecticut. Spain pressed for the return of the ship and its cargo, including the Africans. Over the next two years, their story and the legal case that ensued captured the imagination of the public, and abolitionists, churches, townspeople and college students mobilized in their support. Roger Sherman Baldwin and former President John Quincy Adams won a landmark United States Supreme Court case freeing the Africans, who were eventually able to realize their wish to return to Africa.

Constructed at Mystic Seaport, and launched in 2000, a replica of the Cuban ship *La Amistad*, the *Amistad*, was designated Connecticut’s State Flagship and Tall Ship Ambassador by vote of the General Assembly in 2003. The Freedom Schooner *Amistad* sails on an educational mission to ports around the country from its homeport in New Haven. Freedom Schooner *Amistad* is owned by AMISTAD America, Inc., a non-profit educational organization. It was built through the cooperation of several Connecticut institutions, with the support of numerous corporate and non-profit sponsors, to commemorate the story of the *Amistad*, to symbolize freedom and to promote tolerance and goodwill through its voyages and educational programs.

This research guide was created to assist researchers in identifying materials relating to *La Amistad* held by the State Library. They include:

- Pettibone, Giles. Copy of Translation of License to Capt. Ramon Ferrer of Schooner Amistad to Make a Voyage from Havana to Guanaja and Return [CSL call number Main Vault 326 Am57].


See also the History and Genealogy Unit's Connecticut history clipping file under the headings “Connecticut – Amistad” and “Connecticut – Slavery”.

Other Institutions With Relevant Collections

- Amistad America
- Exploring Amistad: Race and Boundaries of Slavery in Antebellum Maritime America
- Legal Information Institute's Amistad Page
- State of Connecticut Sites – Seals – Symbols page, from the Connecticut Secretary of the State. Scroll down to “State Flagship and Tall Ship Ambassador Freedom Schooner Amistad”, which includes a photograph of the ship.