



*Niagungitok the Esquimaux Indian from Baffins Bay  
now exhibiting at W. Peart's opposite Burlington House*

*Niagungitok the Esquimaux Indian from Baffins Bay  
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# Hadlock's Eskimos in New York (1821)

Hugh L. Dwelley

In 1934, noted novelist Rachel Field published a docu-novel, titled *God's Pocket*, that told of the adventures of Capt. Samuel Hadlock, Jr. of Cranberry Isles. She described his tour of Europe's country fairs and royal courts with a Barnum-&-Bailey-type show featuring performances by an Eskimo couple from the Arctic. While in Europe, Hadlock married a young Prussian girl who, when they returned to his home on Great Cranberry Island, became known as "the Prussian Lady." Neither of the Eskimos survived to return with Hadlock.

In 2003, the Islesford Historical Society published *Beyond God's Pocket*—a book that relates a great deal more about the Eskimos, George Niagungitok and Mary Coonunnak, and about the contents of Hadlock's show and their travels in Europe. This information would not have been available to Rachel Field. Artifacts from Hadlock's show have been discovered in a Berlin museum, and European scholars are continuing to research and report the details of this singular undertaking.

This article draws upon newly found material that tells us something of what happened between the time George and Mary (with an infant) went on board Hadlock's ship *Five Brothers* at Greedy Harbor, Labrador in October, 1820 and their arrival in England nearly a year later. This material consists of seven articles from New York and Philadelphia newspapers. Six of these articles are dated from February through April, 1821. The seventh was published on November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1821, probably after Hadlock and his troupe were already in England.

Samuel Hadlock, Jr. was the eldest of five sons of Samuel Hadlock of Little Cranberry Island. The elder Hadlock (1770-1854) ran a profitable ship chandlery and owned or had interests in a sizable fleet of vessels engaged in fishing, sealing, whaling and the coastal trade in lumber,

fish, and other produce. Sam Jr. had frequently commanded his father's ships on whaling and sealing expeditions in the Arctic. Ice for southern U.S. cities and the West Indies was also a frequent cargo.

The reader is urged to imagine the arrival of the *Five Brothers* at its anchorage at Great Cranberry Island carrying not only the valuable cargo of ice for which Sam had sailed to the coast of Labrador, but also a pair of Eskimos with an infant child! How excited and curious his neighbors on the little island must have been. What would have been the reaction



*Capt. Samuel Hadlock, Jr.*

of Sam's nine brothers and sisters, and especially of his wife Amah and her three young children? Perhaps they knew of Sam's ambition to become a showman, for during his brief stop at home he must have taken aboard the sizeable and well-prepared collection of artifacts and stuffed animals that would constitute what he called the "museum" portion of his show.

An article in the *New York Gazette & General Advertiser*, dated February 8, 1821, reports that

Capt. Hadlock with the Eskimos "arrived at New London on the 11<sup>th</sup> of December last [1820], in the schooner *Five Brothers*, of Mount Desert...." The day before, on February 7<sup>th</sup>, an item in the *New York Commercial Advertiser* noted: "Since the arrival of Captain Hadlock, with those natives, much curiosity has been excited, and many thousand persons have seen them...." Perhaps, initially, these performances in New London and New York and on down the coast were all that Hadlock had in mind when he took the Eskimos on in Labrador and when he left his family on Great Cranberry Island. Success, however, may

have broadened his horizons. Another event may also have influenced him: Rachel Field tells us (p. 12 of *God's Pocket*) that Sam's wife, Amah, died in 1821.\* If this is true, it may have freed Hadlock to undertake an adventure in Europe instead of returning home. Or he may well have had Europe in mind all along.

While Hadlock's show appears to have been a great success with the New York public, the newly-found newspaper articles report a good deal of trouble with city authorities and others.

George Niagungitok was not uneducated. In *Beyond God's Pocket* we are told that he attended a school run by Moravian missionaries in Hopedale, Labrador. He could read and write in his own language and he could speak English.

Moravians in New York were concerned when they learned that one of their parishioners was being shown as a curiosity. Accordingly, the February 7<sup>th</sup> article in the *New York Commercial Advertiser* reports that "the Rev. Mr. Mortimer, the Moravian Minister called to see them, and being acquainted with the language used on the coast of Labrador, he conversed with the man."

The newspaper reports that, after others interviewed George, the Mayor was applied to "who immediately issued an Habeas Corpus, and the man, woman and child were brought before him." According to the article, George claimed that, when visiting Hadlock's ship, Hadlock had detained him and his canoe against his will and then, fifty miles down the coast, had brought off the woman and child who were now being palmed off on the public as his wife and child. Accordingly, the article reports: "the Mayor issued a warrant for the apprehension of Hadlock..." and he was committed for trial. "The Indians are given in charge of the overseers of the poor."

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\*Note: It is not at all clear that Field was correct as to the year of Amah Richardson Hadlock's death. Two other dates – one in 1823 and another on August 16, 1824 – have been claimed. No cemetery stone or formal record of her death has been found in the Cranberry Isles or among her family at Bass Harbor on Mount Desert. The graves of her two youngest children, Smith Cobb and Sally, are in the Brackett cemetery on Peaks Island. Her eldest child, Samuel T., would be a member of his father's crew in the schooner *Minerva* when it was lost with all hands at the ice in Greenland in 1829.

An article dated February 8<sup>th</sup> in the *New York Gazette & General Advertiser* reports the same story together with an interview with Hadlock in debtor's prison in which he denied the story (debtor's prison because he had been unable to pay the \$4000 bail that had been set).

### **Hadlock lands in debtor's prison**

Captain Hadlock was in trouble indeed! Incidentally, what happened to the schooner *Five Brothers* with that valuable load of ice during all of this? Read on.

As reported in a February 13<sup>th</sup> article in the *New York American*, the plot thickens in the person of one Charles T. Butler, keeper of an inn in which Hadlock and the Eskimos have been staying. Butler stated in an affidavit submitted to the court that the defendant (Capt. Hadlock) had made about \$1500 from exhibiting the Eskimos, which amount the Eskimos should be able to claim if they knew enough English to do so.

The story is further confused in that the action before the court is shown to be between George and Mary and one Epps Hadlock! What has become of Captain Samuel Hadlock? Did he, perhaps, sail on to the West Indies with the load of ice, leaving his Uncle Epps in New York to begin showing the Eskimos? It is very possible that Epps was mate for the entire cruise and thus well acquainted with George and Mary. The Hadlocks often included two family members when crewing their ships.

The article in the *New York American* went on to report a series of hearings in which the first and second mates from Hadlock's crew testified by affidavits that George and Mary had come voluntarily and had been well treated. A sailing master of the United States Navy also testified as to Captain Hadlock's character. Hadlock was "discharged on common bail."

The next item that appeared in the *New York Commercial Advertiser* on February 21<sup>st</sup> doesn't answer any of our questions. It simply and sadly reports the Christian burial of "the remains of the infant Esquimaux." Perhaps George and Mary were still in the care of the overseers of the poor when the infant died?

Although Hadlock had been released from jail, he no longer had control of the Eskimos. An article appearing in the March 17<sup>th</sup> issue of the *New York Mercantile Advertiser* reported that,

A respectable committee was appointed a short time since, to take measures for the protection of the Esquimaux's who were brought from Labrador, and exhibited in this city by Captain Hadlock, and for transporting them to their native country in case it should be their wish to return. Before the duties of the committee commenced, the Esquimaux had been placed in the house of Charles T.

Butler [by the overseers of the poor?], an innkeeper near the Park Theatre. The committee, believing that it would be better to put them with a private family, procured for them a suitable situation, where they remained

two or three days; but it was soon ascertained that Mr. Butler had acquired such ascendancy over them, that the efforts of the committee, to protect, support and instruct them, and especially to preserve them from the destructive consequences of spirituous liquors, were unavailing; they returned to Mr. Butler; and to the surprise and regret of the committee, it is now believed that these unfortunate and ignorant strangers have been induced by this designing man to leave the city with him, and probably for the purpose of being exhibited in some other parts of the U. States....[It was yesterday ascertained that the Indians were advertised for exhibition at New Brunswick, NJ.]

**Innkeeper  
Charles Butler  
gains custody  
of the Eskimos.**

Where was Hadlock – Epps or Sam? Clearly they no longer had custody of the Eskimos who were now to be shown in New Jersey by Mr. Butler.

Our next evidence is an article dated April 26<sup>th</sup> which appeared in the *Franklin Gazette* of Philadelphia. Epps Hadlock must have followed Mr. Butler and the Eskimos to Philadelphia, where he obtained

a writ of *habeas corpus* requiring Butler to bring them before a justice of the Supreme Court. Hadlock testified to the circumstances of the Eskimos having voluntarily come with him from Labrador. Hadlock also mentioned a bond, which he had entered into to take them back again “in the course of the approaching summer.” During questioning by the Chief Justice, George stated his wish to return home but, presently, to live with Captain Hadlock.

Accordingly, near the end of April 1821, George and Mary were returned to the custody of Epps Hadlock, who had testified to the judge of his obligation to return them home in the course of the approaching summer. Instead, in the fall, they would sail with Samuel Hadlock, Jr. to Liverpool to embark on a four-year show-tour during which Mary would die in England and George in Strasbourg.

Sam Hadlock, however, returned to the Cranberry Isles with the proceeds from the tour, a young Prussian wife, a new child, and a number of golden trinkets presented to him by European kings.

At least two questions remain for further research:

- Were the Eskimos involuntarily detained on the *Five Brothers* as reported to the New York court after the Moravian minister spoke with George in February 1821? Or, did they go with Hadlock voluntarily, as claimed by Hadlock and as reported in the letter written to the *Eastern Argus* by John McPherson of Greedy Harbor on September 14, 1821?

- Did Sam Hadlock’s first wife, Amah, die in 1821 before he left for Europe, and, if so, where are the records of her death and where is a cemetery stone?



Hugh Dwelley is president of the Islesford Historical Society, which he co-founded in 1990. Mr. Dwelley grew up on Islesford. For 28 years, he served with the U.S. Agency for International Development in Turkey, India, Sri Lanka, and Italy as well as in Washington. He is the author of *A History of Little Cranberry Island* and other publications of the Islesford Historical Society.

## ENDNOTES

Copies of the newspaper articles upon which this piece is based appear on the following pages. They were all copied from microfilm archives at the U.S. Library of Congress.

The broadside of Niagungitok is courtesy of the Islesford Historical Society, from the Barthelmess Whaling & Sealing Collection, Cologne, Germany.

The portrait of Capt. Samuel Hadlock, Jr. of Cranberry Isles is a digitization of an original pen and ink and pastel drawing done by the artist Krugge in Hamburg, Germany in 1824. The original is owned by Constance Aygun. It was photographed by Wini Smart and edited by Bruce Komusin, both of the Great Cranberry Island Historical Society ([gcihs.org](http://gcihs.org)).



THE NEW YORK GAZETTE & GENERAL ADVERTISER  
Thursday, February 8, 1821  
THE ESQUIMAUX INDIANS

The male and female Indians, which have been exhibited in this city for some weeks past, by a Capt. Hadlock, it appears were kidnapped, and that they were, when taken strangers to each other.

Suspicious to this effect, have existed for some time; but, from the threats of Captain Hadlock to take their lives if they divulged the secret, (for it appears that they Both speak the English language,) it was difficult to obtain any information from them.

Since the arrival of Captain Hadlock, with these natives, much curiosity has been excited, and many thousand persons have seen them; many of whom have expressed a belief that they have been stolen from the coast. Facts have now been developed, that induces a belief that Captain Hadlock has taken these poor creatures from their country, and brought them to a land of strangers, contrary to their inclinations.

The circumstances as related to us are these—

The Rev. Mr. Mortimer, the Moravian Minister, called to see them, and being acquainted with the language used on the coast of Labrador, he conversed with the man. At first he evinced a great unwillingness to answer any questions; but, on the Reverend gentleman mentioning the name of one of the Moravian missionaries, he caught hold of Mr. Mortimer's arm and expressed much surprise.

Frederick A. Tallmadge, Esq., in order to be convinced as to their real situation, prevailed upon the keeper of the house where they lodged, to visit their room in the night after Capt. Hadlock had gone to bed. He did so; and after a long interview, succeeded in inspiring the Indians with confidence, who related to him the following facts:

That the man called an Indian Chief by Captain Hadlock, was out in his canoe fishing on the coast of Labrador, which was his occupation. That he had been long in the habit of boarding English and American vessels, and had learned the English language. That he was invited alongside of Capt. Hadlock's vessel, when he was immediately taken on board, and put into the hold, and his canoe hoisted on board and concealed.

After this, Capt. H. sailed some distance down the coast, and sent five men on shore, and stole the woman and her infant from her father's hut. Then when she came on board, it was discovered that she also spoke English, and remonstrated, but without effect; and that before she was awed into silence, the Captain knocked her down on the deck, and ultimately put her into confinement. The man also states, that the dress and seal skins with

which they are now clad, is not the dress that they wear in the country of their nativity, but were made on board for the purpose of imposing them upon the public as natives of some other part of the coast.

This information obtained, Mr. Tallmadge made His Honor the Mayor acquainted with the facts, who, immediately, by habeas corpus, ordered the Captain and Indians to be brought before him at the City Hall, where a full examination took place on Tuesday, in the presence of the Recorder. All the above facts being fully confirmed, the Mayor issued two writs against Capt. Hadlock, for the false imprisonment of the two persons. His Honor then offered to take bail of two thousand dollars on each writ, which Capt. H being unable to give, he was sent to prison to await the result.

We are glad to be able to state, that although this man and woman have been shut up together, they have conducted towards each other as perfect strangers, and no improper familiarity has taken place between them.

On turning to our files, we find that Capt. Hadlock, with the above persons, arrived at New London on the 11<sup>th</sup> of December last in the schooner Five Brothers, of Mount Desert, from a sealing voyage in Davis' Straits, with an Indian Chief, his wife and child, who were persuaded to accompany him on his promise to return them.

Since the above was in type, we waited upon Captain Hadlock, in the Debtor's Prison. We made him acquainted with the above statement, which he denies in toto, and informs us that his attorney, Gen. Bogardus, has been furnished with facts to disprove all the above allegations, as will be made to appear on his trial. Captain H. expressly told us, that the Indians not only came away with him voluntarily, but that he left with their friends \$80 in money, and a considerable quantity of provisions, with a promise that he would return them to their homes in June next.

Immediately after the above interview with Capt. Hadlock, we visited the Indians at Butler's Hotel, No. 7 Park, near the old Theatre; but they both appeared embarrassed, and did not seem inclined to say any thing to implicate the Captain, evidently avoiding answers to questions tending to incriminate him.

Understanding from Mr. Butler, that the Indian had been educated by one of the Missionaries, we asked him to write his name, and handed him a pencil and a piece of paper, on which he wrote, in a decent hand, and legibly, NIKUNGITUK. We then asked him to write the name of the squaw, who, he said, was not his wife. He wrote TONNUJAK, and being requested to write the name of his male child, he wrote EKELOAK. He held his pencil well, and the handwriting may be seen at this office. After this a gentleman present asked him to chalk out the Labrador coast, which

he did, including Bell-Isle, which he named, and pointed out the residence of the nation to which he belonged.

Thus, without prejudice, and without any wish to give an improper bias on this subject, we have honestly and faithfully given the particulars which have come to our knowledge.



## THE NEW YORK AMERICAN

Tuesday, February 13, 1821

THE ESQUIMAUX INDIANS

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George	]	
v's	]	
Epps Hadlock	]	In assumpait for money had
	}	and received by the defendant
Mary	]	to the use of the plaintiffs.
v's	]	
The Same	]	

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These cases have been the subject of conversation in this city for the last week. It has been reported that these Indians have been kidnapped, and the public indignation has been much excited by stories of their supposed ill usage. On Friday morning at 11 o'clock the plaintiffs' counsel appeared before the honorable Recorder to show cause of action. The defendant's counsel objected that they had no authority to commence the suits in behalf of plaintiffs, but the honorable Recorder decided that an attorney need not show his power of attorney to enable him to appear for a person. They read the affidavit of Charles T. Butler, an inn keeper, who stated that, from what the defendant had told him, he believed that the defendant had received from exhibiting the plaintiffs \$1,500; and after producing an advertisement in which the defendant called himself the agent of the plaintiffs, concluded by stating positively that, as such agent the defendant was indebted to the plaintiffs \$1,500 after deducting the expenses of their exhibition. They also produced evidence of the plaintiffs' ignorance of the English language, and of their inability to make an affidavit of their claim. The defendant's counsel contended, that a showing cause of action, the affidavit of the plaintiff must be made unless he were absent, and that it must be positive as to the existence of the debt, except in the case of executors, &c. where

an affidavit can be made only to the best of deponent's belief. After hearing counsel on both sides, the honorable Recorder said that the rule was correct, but an exception had always been made whenever the plaintiff was unable to make an affidavit, and this case fell within that exemption; but as the affidavit only raised a presumption of the indebtedness of the defendant, he would allow him to introduce explanatory evidence, and accordingly adjourned the causes until Saturday, at 10 o'clock. The defendants counsel, upon the adjourned hearing produced the affidavits of the first and second mates of Captain Hadlock, who stated, that last fall, when at Greedy Harbor, on the coast of Labrador, Capt. H requested of a Mr. McPherson, a Scotch trader who had resided at that place for seven years, to take two Indians to the United States to exhibit them; after inquiring of two American captains who were then there concerning the character of Captain H., he told him if these Indians were willing, he might take them. Afterward at a meeting, Captain H. agreed with the parents of the woman and with George, that he would treat them well, return the next fall, and present them certain trinkets and provisions; and they agreed that he might exhibit them, and retain the proceeds of the exhibition. He also left with Mary's parents some provisions &c. He then went with George to Hare Harbour, about fifteen miles further up the coast, where George's mother lived; there several of his relations and friends came on board, and in the evening they had a dance. He also made George's mother several presents. He then returned to Greedy Harbour, where he entered into bonds to Mr. McPherson to return the Indians the next summer, and Mr. McPherson gave him a certificate to prevent the British cruisers from taking the Indians out of his vessel. On his home passage he stopped at Hawke Harbour, where several of George's relations lived, and they came on board to see him. George went on shore with them, no white person being with him, and in about three hours returned to the shore, and was taken on board. He then piloted the schooner out of the harbour. The deponents also stated, that the Indians were well treated on the passage, and have never been abused by the defendant to their knowledge. The affidavit of the defendant was then read, which stated that the above relation was true, and that the defendant had hitherto fulfilled in all parts the above contract with the plaintiffs. Captain Rich, sailing-master in the United States' navy testified, that he had known the first and second mates of Captain H. for many years, and that they were men of veracity and character. Captain Cummings, late master of the Brig Mariner, testified to the respectability of the defendant. One of the police justices testified in his affidavit, that in consequence of the public reports relative to the Esquimaux, he visited them, and having told them that they were among people that would protect and take care of them, requested

them to answer him truly and without fear. He then asked them the following questions, which George answered thus, viz. – Q. Did the Captain take you away by force? A. No! Q. Did he treat you well? A. Yes! Q. Did he beat you? A. No! Q. Do you want to go with the Captain? A. I want to go home! Q. Did you come away willingly? A. A little! Upon hearing counsel upon both sides again, the Honourable Recorder decided, that the defendant had entirely destroyed the assumption of his indebtedness, but as he had made a misstatement to the public in the advertisements as to the place from which he brought these people, and had represented them to be wild, he would give the plaintiffs further time to produce supplementary affidavits. The case was accordingly adjourned to Monday at 11 o'clock. Yesterday, the plaintiff's counsel produced additional testimony, that the second mate had said that the Captain's statement in his was true. The Rev. Mr. Mortimer also made an affidavit to the truth of the communication in the *Commercial*, signed by him, stating that the Esquimaux man could read a book in his own language, and recollected the names of two of the Moravian missionaries, and that the man converses with him familiarly in the English language, except that by conversing familiarly with him, the deponent meant that the Indian had familiar intercourse with him. The counsel then commented with great force upon the testimony, and after another hearing of three hours, his honour decided, that as the prima facie evidence of the plaintiff's cause of action had been explained away by unimpeached testimony, and not a particle of proof produced of kidnapping, he should discharge the defendant upon common bail. The counsel for the plaintiff had suggested that the agreement between the defendant and the plaintiff was illegal on account of the incapacity of the plaintiff to make a contract; but it appeared by their own showing, that they were sufficiently civilized for that purpose—the man could read and write in his own language, and having entered into a contract of that sort, he was not aware of any principle of law, which prohibited the plaintiffs from performing it.

The defendant was accordingly discharged upon common bail.

Counsel for the plaintiffs, Messers. Tallmadge, Sampson and Wilson

For the defendants, Messers. Bogardus and Blont.



# FRANKLIN GAZETTE

(Philadelphia)

Thursday, April 26, 1821

## THE ESQUIMAUX INDIANS

On Tuesday morning, last, upon affidavit made by Capt. Epps S. . . . Hadlock, Chief Justice Tilghman directed a writ of habeas corpus to issue addressed to the late keeper of these Indians, and agreeably to the order, they were brought before the supreme court yesterday morning.

The petition of Captain Hadlock, supported by his oath and an offer to adduce evidence in confirmation of the facts it contained, stated that these natives of the coast of Labrador had voluntarily accompanied him from their homes, with the knowledge and consent of their parents for the purpose of making money by being publicly exhibited as objects of curiosity, he entered into a bond with one McPherson, their former employer, to take them back again in the course of the approaching summer.

The return to the writ of habeas corpus merely denied that the Indians had been held in custody without their consent, and alleged that they were then, as before, at perfect liberty to go where they liked.

The Chief Justice asked the man George, who is said to be about seventeen years of age, "where he wanted to go?" and was promptly answered "home" and, when asked with whom he wanted to live, George as readily replied, "Captain Hadlock." He was repeatedly apprised of his right to go where he pleased; but neither he nor the woman Mary, evinced any wish to quit the protection of Captain Hadlock.

Being discharged by the court from the custody of Charles T. Butler, George and Mary very cheerfully accompanied Captain Hadlock to his lodgings; and will no doubt prepare themselves to receive the visits of the citizens.

## THE NEWYORK COMMERCIAL ADVERTISER

November 11, 1821

### ESQUIMAUX INDIANS

(The following letter was received a few days ago, and is now published as an act of justice to Capt. Hadlock. It will be seen that the facts stated in this letter, coincide with the statement made by Capt. Hadlock on his examination before the Mayor of New York.)

*“To the Editor of the Eastern Argus.*

“Sir—Having observed in the Public Ledger of the Newfoundland General Advertiser an abstract from your paper, dated New York 7<sup>th</sup> Feb. last, respecting, Captain Samuel Hadlock of Mount Desert and Eskimaux Indians, I take the liberty (in justice to Hadlock) to state the following facts, which I trust you will have the goodness to make public. The information given to his honor, the Mayor of N. York, was very incorrect. The facts are truly these: Capt. S. Hadlock, as near as I can recollect, arrived here early in September 1820, in quest of ice for the West-India market. He repeatedly requested that I would let him have an Indian man and woman to take with him to the United States, and said he would give a bond or obligation to return them safe the Spring or Summer following. On Captain Gott and Tucker’s, of Mount Desert, recommendation of Hadlock, I procured him an Indian man, whose mother received from Hadlock flour, bread, pork and molasses, which the mother considered as ample recompense for her son’s absence for 10 or 11 months. The man’s name is George—I have taken one of his brothers, as the mother is unable to support him. The woman you saw with Hadlock, and her parents, have lived with me nearly five years: they are now in my employ. Her name is Mary; her father’s name is Coonnanock. He was perfectly willing that his daughter should accompany Hadlock to the United States. Coonnanock, his wife and family, came from Cape North to this Harbor in order to see their daughter on board, and requested that I should go with them; which I did.

Having delivered the Indians to Hadlock, I took his obligation to return them safe to me this spring or summer. He, however, has not, as yet, appeared nor the Indians. I merely make this statement to exonerate Hadlock from blame. I would write more fully but that the vessel by which I send this is on the point of sailing. Excuse haste.

I am, with respect, Sir,

Your humble servant,

JOHN McPHERSON

Greedy Harbor, Coast of Labrador, 14<sup>th</sup> of September, 1821