

Great Escapes

Standard

Sept. 29, 1852

Escape from Prison

On Wednesday night last, Charles Hickey, charged with stealing from a shop in St. Stephen and confined in the County Jail here, made his escape from it in the following manner:

The Jail is undergoing repairs; several apartments are in consequence rendered unfit for use, and the jailor is compelled to occupy one near the prisoner's room and off the same passage. This passage is usually secured by fastening the doors at the end of it on the outside; but owing to the Jailor being obliged to sleep where he did, this could not be done. Hickey was the only prisoner on this floor. His room was, according to custom, examined the first thing at night; when this was done, Hickey was in bed and his light was extinguished. Everything appeared to be secure and the jailor retired to rest. Having ascertained this circumstance, the prisoner converted a tin pannikin filled with butter into a lamp and manufactured the iron bale of a water bucket into a small crow bar - then, taking down a long shelf and raising it against the wall, with one end raised on a tub and the other resting near the aperture in the brick wall, intended for the admission of a stove pipe, he contrived a seat by winding a blanket round the plank. Once astride of this with his crowbar, he soon made the opening large enough to admit his body. Before removing the brick, however, he forced through the stove pipe hole onto the passage floor, some bedding, and disposed his mattress in such a way in his own room as to receive and deaden the sound of the falling bricks and rubbish. He then let himself down into the passage, bolted the iron door on the outside, leaving the jailor within, and without molestation helped himself to sundry articles of apparel and a few knickknacks belonging to the jailor and obtained his freedom.

The Justices, being at the time in Session, investigated the affair and unanimously resolved that no blame was attributable to Capt. Law, the jailor.

Capt. Law has had charge of this Jail for 21 years, and this is the first instance of a prisoner escaping from it.

Pilot

Aug. 2, 1883

Escape from the County Jail of Waddell, the American House Incendiary and Three Others

A great general jail delivery, without the interposition of Court or Jury, took place here on Saturday evening under the following circumstances. It will be remembered that Hugh Waddell, bar keeper of the late American House in this town, was arrested here on the morning of Saturday the 16th of June, charged on the information of William H. Whitlock, livery stable keeper in St. Stephen, with having set fire to the American House, which with its contents was burned down on the morning of Friday the 15th of June, and that Waddell, on the 18th of June, after an investigation held before Justice C. E. O. Hatheway, was committed to take his trial at the County Court to be holden here in October next. Besides Waddell, there were four other persons confined in the jail - Charles McCarty, James Stevens and Gilbert Lauchlan, hailing here from Saint John, who were committed on the 10th inst. from St. Stephen on a charge of drunkenness and vagrancy, the two former for sixty days and Lauchlan for thirty days; and James McCarty of St. Andrews, committed for safe keeping.

Mrs. Murchie, proprietress of the American House, has at intervals since Waddell's commitment visited him at the jail. On Saturday evening last about a quarter past eight o'clock, she applied at the jail for admission to see Waddell, saying she had heard he was sick. Mrs. Paul, daughter of Mr. Mark Hall, the jailor, who had gone down street on business, answered the call and admitted her. While Mrs. Murchie was standing talking to Waddell through the grating, Mrs. Paul ran upstairs to see why her child was crying. She almost immediately came down again and, while coming down the stairs, heard a noise like what would be made by tapping the stick of an umbrella or cane on the flags. She quickened her pace and just as she turned the foot of the stairs into the hall she met Mrs. Murchie going in the direction of the outer door. She was looking very pale

and said as she passed: They have opened the door, or the door is open. Mrs. Paul ran and laid hold of the solid iron door, which is used to cover the grated door and is hung outside of it and tried to close it and nearly succeeded in doing so but the prisoners inside pushed against it, forced it open again, stepped out into the hall, and passed through the outer door to liberty. They ran into the street and round the corner of the Courthouse. Mrs. Paul immediately went downtown and, meeting Mr. Charles O'Neill, told him what had occurred and requested him to find Mr. Hall.

Upon examination it was discovered that by some means, probably the lever in the hand of Mrs. Murchie, the large padlock attached to the grated door had been wrenched off, the link of the lock broken, the hinge pin forced out, and the keeper end of the link broken off. The dropping of the lock on the floor was doubtless the noise heard by Mrs. Paul. If Mrs. Murchie was not a party to the escape, it seems a strange coincidence that she should be on hand at the moment that it took place; and why she should display so much sympathy for Waddell, who beyond the shadow of a doubt set fire to her house, requires explanation. The plan of escape was well matured and effectively carried out, both as regards the method and time. The night was dark, the Telegraph Office was closed, no doubt Mr. Hall's movements were carefully watched and his temporary absence taken advantage of to carry out the scheme.

On being informed of the escape Sheriff Stuart immediately placed officers in motion and had a watch kept during the night, and at daybreak on Sunday morning started in pursuit of the fugitives. Their footprints were discovered in the mud on the road leading from Edward's Corner on the St. John Road across to the above road, and up to Johnson's Cove about three and a half miles from town. Enquiry at Mr. Thomas Johnson's elicited the fact that his boat, which was at anchor in the cove Saturday evening, had disappeared during the night. The boat has since been found at Red Beach on the United States side of the river, and it has been ascertained that Waddell and his comrades landed from her, having paddled the boat over with a pair of paddles, which they found in a punt which laid near the boat in the cove.

The escape of Waddell created a sensation in town; on Monday it was the general topic of conversation on the street. Public opinion demands that a strict investigation into the circumstances connected with the escape be made.

Pilot

July 17, 1884

Hugh Waddell, who escaped from the Charlotte County Jail in this town about nine o'clock pm Saturday July 28th, 1883, where he was confined on a charge of having on the morning of the 25th of June, set fire to the American House, was at the instance of the Attorney General of New Brunswick arrested by a United States Deputy Marshall, at Saco, Maine, on the 9th inst., on board the schooner *Anne Frye*, of which he was mate, and taken to Boston. Sheriff Stuart proceeded to Boston on the 9th inst. to identify Waddell. A hearing on the petition of Sheriff Stuart for the extradition of Waddell was held before Judge Nelson in the U. S. district Court on the 11th inst., which resulted in the granting of an order remanding Waddell to await proceedings in the usual form before the State Department at Washington. Sheriff Stuart arrived here Monday evening; he will return for Waddell, as soon as he receives notification from the U. S. authorities.

Pilot

Sept. 11, 1884

A Jail Breaker's Designs Foiled

Thursday last, Rebels, a prisoner [Rebels and one or two others escaped from jail earlier in this year and made it as far as Calais; see earlier issues] serving a sentence in the Charlotte Co. jail, advised Mr. Mark Hall, the jailer, to be on his guard, for that Hugh Waddell and Duel Marshall, prisoners, had torn an iron strap off the wood grating, which forms a division in the corridor or jail hall; that he, Rebels, had told Waddell, not to do it, as he had got enough of escaping, and was now being punished for breaking out of jail. Waddell told him with a profane expression to mind his own business; they would not interfere with him. The jailer demanded the iron to be given up, but compliance was refused, the cells of the conspirators were

searched, and the iron strap found in that occupied by Waddell. The presumption is that they intended when an opportunity should offer, to attack the jailer when he came into the corridor, and fell him with the iron, and either having stunned or killed him, to make their escape. The two men are now by order of the Sheriff kept in close confinement. We think that representation of Rebel's conduct should be made to the proper authorities with a view of securing a commutation of his sentence. Since the incident took place, Rebels has had to listen almost incessantly to abusive epithets hurled at him by Waddell, who feels enraged at the exposure of his villainous design.

Beacon

Oct. 24, 1889

The Story of Hugh Waddell's Escape and Recapture Told once More

The escape of Hugh Waddell with three other prisoners, on the 23rd of July 1883, caused one of the biggest sensations that St. Andrews has ever experienced. Waddell was awaiting trial on a charge of setting fire to the American House, in St. Andrews. On the day of his escape, he had been entertaining an old sweetheart of his. While she was conversing with him through the grated door, the jailer's family were alarmed by hearing a noise as if caused by something falling. Instantly, the woman screamed out, "They've gone, every one of them." And she had spoken truly! When the affrighted jailer reached the prison quarters every one of his four birds who had been caged so securely (as he thought) had flown. It was a general jail delivery in earnest, without any court ceremonies to lend *éclat* to it. The lock had been broken by the prisoners, though exactly how they had done it has not been discovered to this day.

Of the four prisoners who gained their liberty that time, but one, Waddell, ever saw the inside of a St. Andrews jail again. They got across into Uncle Sam's territory as speedily as possible, and from that day to this the whereabouts of those three missing jailbirds have been unknown to the authorities. Waddell was out a year and a month before Sheriff Stuart got his fingers closed on him again. It was some months after he had flown that the Sheriff heard that he

was in Boston. By the consent of the Attorney General proceedings were at once begun looking to his extradition. The papers were made out, and the Sheriff, with Mr. James G. Stevens, started off to Boston to collar the prisoner and bring him back. But the task proved a more difficult one that they had anticipated. They enlisted the services of the United States and Boston detective forces, but not a clue could they get concerning him. After a long and weary search, the Boston detectives had to declare themselves beaten for once, and the Sheriff and his companion were obliged to return home empty-handed.

Time went on. The extradition papers were mildewing in the Sheriff's desk, and the Sheriff himself had about made up his mind that he and the St. Andrews firebug had parted company forever. But one day, the townspeople noticed a sudden change come over the usually stoic features of the Sheriff. All at once he seemed to be full of business. His step became buoyant; there was a flash in his eye that had not been seen there for some time before, and the number of constables that were observed hastening in and out of his presence betokened something unusual in the wind. But the officers of the law were as dumb as clams, and the curious citizens were obliged to satisfy their curiosity by indulging in surmise and speculation. The presence of constables about the wharves night after night, evidently lying in wait for someone they expected to arrive by water, roused the curiosity of the people almost to fever heat. By degrees it leaked out that the Sheriff had received information that Waddell was on his way to St. Andrews, and that to see his sweetheart he was willing to risk liberty and even his life.

But he did not land. One night, while watching along the riverbank, the constables observed a boat being rowed cautiously towards the shore. It was not more than a hundred yards from the beach when a shrill whistle from the land was heard. In a twinkling the bow of the approaching boat was turned seaward, and the craft was rowed silently and quickly away into the darkness. It was afterwards learned that Waddell was in this boat, and that his watchful friends on shore had given the signal which had caused the boatmen to turn about so quickly. After watching in vain for his return the constables abandoned their vigil.



Sheriff Robert
A. Stuart,
7th Sheriff
of Charlotte
County.
Charlotte
County
Archives
p33.24

A day or two afterward, Sheriff Stuart went to Saint John and, with the assistance of two Saint John detectives, made a search of two vessels in which it was thought the fugitive might be concealed. But beyond hearing that the man he was after had come as far as Eastport in one of the vessels, the officers of the law left Saint John littler wiser than when he went here. Coming home in the steamer he accidentally met a party who was acquainted with Waddell's haunts in Boston. Again, the Boston Detective Machine was set to work, and this time with better results. Ascertaining that Waddell's mother was living in Boston, the detective visited her, and on the pretence of securing her son's services as a bartender for a Nantasket

Beach hotel, he learned that his man was on the way from New York in the schooner *Annie Frye*. The detective kept track of the schooner until she arrived at Biddeford, Maine, and then hastening thither he had little difficulty in picking Waddell out from the crew. He was arrested, taken to Boston, the extradition proceedings were renewed, resulting in his return to St. Andrews jail, on the 20th of August, 1884.

After he had got back to his old quarters, and while waiting for trial, he and another prisoner conspired to attack the jailer and gain their freedom. Another prisoner let the secret out. The Sheriff, on making an investigation, found that an iron bar had been wrenched off the drunkard's cage in the jail, and with this the jailer was to receive his *quietus*. All the prisoners denied any knowledge of the bar, and it was only found when the rotten flooring in one of the cells was lifted up. The prisoners were kept closely confined until their trial took place when Waddell was sent to Dorchester penitentiary for fourteen years. He went to prison as meek as a mouse, and is still an inmate of it.

St. Croix Courier

June 30, 1949

"Shiretown Items"

[Hugh Waddell and the American House Arson]

China Chest is now located at the corner of Frederick and Water Streets. It is over 65 years since there has been a building on that lot. The "American House" which formerly occupied this corner was burned in the early eighties - not later than '84 but I have been unable to learn the exact date. It made some excitement at the time as it was supposed to have been set by the proprietress and an assistant in order to collect insurance on the furniture. The building was said to belong to Harris Hatch. The proprietress skipped the country and the assistant, who stood trial, was sent up for 14 years, though he only served seven. All the arguments of the defense counsel, Mr. M. N. Cockburn, a very young man at the time but already a master in points of law, fluency of speech and eloquence of appeal, failed to convince the jury of the prisoner's innocence in the face of the incriminating evidence produced by the prosecuting attorney.

*Pilot***Dec. 27, 1888****Prisoners' Escape**

Gallagher and Walker, the latter known by the soubriquet of "shy Walker," recently committed to the county jail from St. Stephen, escaped from that institution on Wednesday evening 19th and found their way to Calais, Maine. The jailer after putting a hod of coal, for the night's use, into the corridor, omitted to fully bolt the door, which being discovered by the above named prisoners, they opened it and stood not upon the order of their going. Walker was captured in St. Stephen on Christmas day by Deputy Sheriff Robinson, brought back to St. Andrews yesterday, and put back in his old quarters again.

*Beacon***March 10, 1892**

Pine, the jail breaker, who declared he would not be taken alive, was captured in St. Stephen on Tuesday morning by Marshall McClure. He tried to draw a revolver on the officer, but in his haste to escape he dropped the weapon and did not have time to pick it up. McClure fired two or three shots at him before he hove to. He is now ensconced in St. Andrews jail once more. Pine was indicted before the Grand Jury for theft in October, 1889, but before his case came up for trial, he had made his escape. He is an accomplished thief. Numerous robberies have taken place since he regained his freedom, in which he is believed to have been the principal. The Wren robbery at Bocabec is supposed to be one of them.

*Beacon***May 13, 1897****Escaped from Jail**

Robert Pye Opens Bolts and Bars and Secures His Freedom But is Captured within Sight of his Prison Walls. An Ingenious Prisoner

One of the most ingenious and successful attempts at jail-breaking ever made by a prisoner was carried out by Robert Pye, a prisoner in St. Andrews jail on Saturday afternoon last. By means of some keys

and other instruments of his own making, Pye opened the bolts and bars of three massive doors which restrained him, and then having obtained an entrance to the office of the jail, he leaped out of the open window and in a trice was breathing the free air of heaven. Unfortunately for his plans, though the jailer and his wife were both absent at the time, the prisoner's departure was noticed by a little girl, the adopted daughter of the jailer. She gave the alarm, which resulted five minutes later in the recapture and return of this prisoner.

To aid him in his escape, Pye had blackened his features. This deception proved so successful that although the jailer noticed the man on the street, he did not recognize him as the prisoner until the little girl told him. To jailer Kendrick, Pye said that he had been planning his escape all winter. He expressed regret that all his ingenuity and labor had been thrown away.

In order to gain an entrance into the hallway of the jail, the prisoner had to open three doors. The first one was of latticed iron, which was fastened on the outside by a padlock four pounds in weight. The key to open the lock was of peculiar construction, but the prisoner, after several attempts, succeeded in making a hardwood key the exact counterpart of the original. After opening this door, he encountered a wooden door with a steel face, which is secured with a huge bolt outside a few inches from the floor. The only opening in this door is in the middle. It is about two inches square. Through this small aperture, he dropped out a wire which pulled the link of the bolt up in shooting the bolt. Door No. 3 was of iron bars fastened with a lock. This door he unfastened with a key which he had constructed out of the blade of a knife. To obtain an impression of this lock while the other doors were fastened, he had to reach out through the openings in the two doors a distance of about three feet using the handle of a white-wash brush. Sheriff Stuart had no idea that man's ingenuity could secure an opening through three massive doors, but this opinion on that subject has considerably altered since Saturday.