

# Daddy Hall: A Biography in 80 Linocuts

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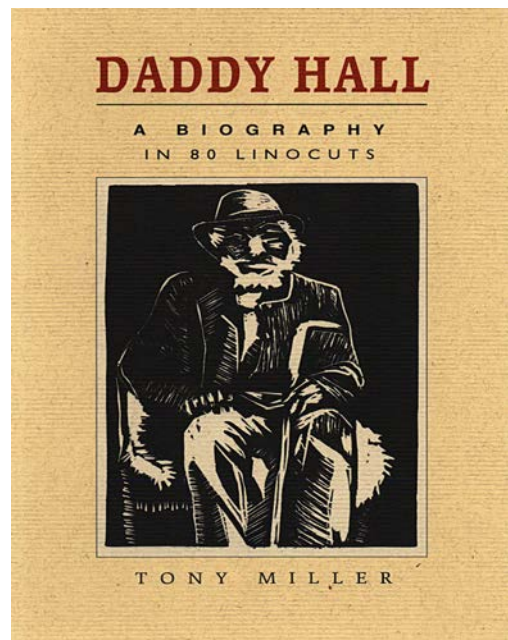
**Tony Miller**

The Porcupine's Quill

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The linocuts in this biography depict the remarkable life of a remarkable man. Without knowing anything about John “Daddy” Hall, you could look through the book and see the journey of his life.

The first half of the book’s pictures detail the journey of his mother, a slave. There are pictures of African tribesmen in various dress. One picture shows his mother hiding. She is captured, shackled, and taken on a boat to America, where she is enslaved. There are pictures of picking cotton and beatings. The difference between the mansion of the masters and the cabins of the slaves shows the extreme difference in the lives they led. John’s mother finally escapes and makes her journey to freedom — meeting John’s father of the First Nations. The linocuts are so well executed that no words are needed to describe the events unfolding graphically. His mother’s pregnancy follows; then, an image of “Daddy” as an infant.



This is where John “Daddy” Hall’s life goes from being typical of others in his community to being the stuff that makes him a local legend. The second half of the book illustrates the events that began during the War of 1812, when he was recruited as a scout for Tecumseh. He was captured by soldiers from Virginia and taken into slavery.

There are pictures of “Daddy” in the cotton fields, much like his mother’s life before she escaped. There are more images of beatings and hardship. After about 13 years he escaped from slavery. The portrait of the bloodhound makes you feel the adrenaline he must have felt, risking drowning to avoid returning to slavery. His journey continues by night. He finally reaches Canada again by schooner.

The last pages are of John being married and becoming the town crier for the city of Owen Sound. With his reported five or six wives and 21 children, he truly lived up to his reputation of being industrious.

Tony Miller does an excellent job capturing some of the many events that made John “Daddy” Hall such an iconic figure. The details of the linocuts build the story of a man who went through so many remarkable experiences. From the scenes depicting the shackles, branding, and beating of slaves to those depicting the beauty of the scenery, the quality of the artwork belies the simple elegance of the finished product. For those interested in local history, Black history, or are simply lovers of art, this book is a must-have.



**Sandie King**