

# Black Violet

IN THE CENSUS of 1851 listing residents along what is now Cedar Lane, then a poor community of Irish and blacks known later as Slabtown, in the household of John Stewart, a black man, is an old lady by the name of Violet Alexander, African, aged 96. This Violet is probably the Violet mentioned by Grace Helen Mowat in her *Diverting History of a Loyalist Town* (1932) and the Black Violet of Frances Wren's pictorial history of St. Andrews, c. 1937. Ms. Mowat writes that Col. Christopher Hatch, a Loyalist who came to Saint John from Boston and later settled in St. Andrews, had "among his various retainers an old colored slave named Violet, who was unsurpassed as a cook and served up many a sumptuous dinner for the Colonel's parties. This old woman lived to a great age and was in later days a source of much interesting information of Revolutionary times." According to Wren, Violet could remember having been taken away from her African village as a child.

A little archival digging reveals that in the daybook of Reverend Samuel Andrews, now at the Provincial Archives, there is recorded the marriage of a Violet Tucker to Rueben Alexander, a black man, in 1792. The Deeds Office records that Rueben and Violet bought a small plot of land on the site of the present-day New Brunswick Community college in 1799 for one pound, which they sold ten years later to Joseph Walton for the same amount. All Saints baptismal records show that Rueben and Violet had quite a few children. One of them, to commemorate a famous British naval victory of 1799, was named Horatio Nelson Alexander.

Now what was Violet Alexander doing in the house of John Stewart? Well, just next door to John Stewart lives Joseph Alexander, black mariner, with his wife and five children. Joseph Alexander married Sarah Stewart, also black, in 1839. Somehow John Stewart, and for that matter Moses and Charles Stewart, black men, who live on the same road, are probably related to Sarah Stewart. All Saints records quite a number of births, marriages, baptisms and burials of black Alexanders in St. Andrews. For example, Edward Bannister, a black man whose son of the same name became famous



Depiction of  
Black Violet  
in Frances  
Wren's pictorial  
history of St.  
Andrews, circa  
1937

as a painter in Providence, Rhode Island and is well remembered in the artistic history of the United States, married Hannah Alexander in 1826. Hannah was the probably the child of Jeffrey Alexander, who may well have been the brother of Rueben and Violet.

Violet Alexander died in 1852 and was buried in the Loyalist cemetery. No marker exists. ~

### **Reverend Andrews Daybook**

**May 20, 1792**

Violet, wife of Rueben, christened

### **Reverend Andrews Daybook**

**May 20, 1792**

Rubin Alexander married to Violet Tucker

### **Reverend Andrews Daybook**

**May 5, 1793**

Mary Daughter of Rubin Alexander, christened

### **Reverend Andrews Daybook**

**Dec. 20, 1795**

Son of Rubin, Black, christened

## Saint John, 1787

*Royal Gazette*

**Saint John, N. B.**

**Sept. 4, 1787**

To be sold, a wench about 23 years old, is well acquainted with all kinds of household business, and particularly is an excellent cook. To be disposed of for no fault, but want of employ. Enquire as above. (Dissolution of partnership of William Donaldson and Co.)

*Royal Gazette*

**Saint John, N. B.**

**Sept. 11, 1787**

To be sold, a likely healthy negro wench, of about 17 years of age, is well calculated for the country, and sold for want of employ. The title is indisputable. If not sold within 8 days from the date hereof by private sale, she will be sold at public auction. Enquire of Thomas Mallard.

*Royal Gazette*

**Saint John, N. B.**

**Oct. 7, 1787**

To be sold or let, that pleasantly situated house and lot in Germain Street, lately occupied by Capt. Christopher Hatch, the property of Capt. De Peyster [Sheriff].

**Reverend Andrews Daybook**

**June 15, 1788**

Christened June 15, 1788 Joseph and Charles, adult negroes. [The year Christopher Hatch comes to St. Andrews from Saint John with Violet Tucker, according to Grace Helen Mowat. Violet would have been 26 at the time.]

**Reverend Andrews Daybook****April 2, 1797**

Henrietta, daughter of Black Rubin, christened

**Deed****June, 1799****Nivan McVicar to Rueben Alexander**

Lot 7, Block P, Morris Division. 1 pound, 6 pence. X his mark.

**Reverend Andrews Daybook****July 14, 1799**

Horatio Nelson, son of Black Rubin, christened

**Reverend Andrews Daybook****Sept. 20, 1801**

James Rubin, son of Black Rubin, christened

**Reverend Andrews Daybook****no date but about 1800**

- ? daughter of Black Rubin, christened

**Reverend Andrews Daybook****May 14, 1808**

Andrew and Jane son and daughter of Black Rubin christened

**Deed****July 21, 1810 -****Rueben Alexander to Joseph Walton**

Lot 7 Block P Morris Division [site of N.B.C.C.], 1 pound, 2 shillings, 6 pence. "Know all Men by these Presents, that I, Rueben Alexander, of Saint Andrews, in the County of Charlotte, and Province of New Brunswick, Black man, for and in consideration of the sum of one pound, two shillings and six pence lawful money of the province aforesaid to me in hand with and truly paid by Joseph Walton of Saint Andrews aforesaid, yeoman, the weight whereof is hereby acknowledged, have granted bargained and sold, and by these presents do grant, bargain and sell unto the said Joseph Walton

his Heirs and assigns, all that certain lot of ground, situate lying and being in the Town Plat of Saint Andrews, in the County and Province aforesaid, known and described by the name of town lot number seven in block letter P in Morris's division together with the appurtenances to have and to hold the said town lot with . . . ."

[Alexander paid the same for this lot in 1799 from Nivan McVicar, Book B, p. 589-90, but Walton, a substantial land speculator, sold it to James Turnbull in 1819 for 10 pounds. Book E, p. 455.]

### **Reverend Andrews Daybook**

**Feb. 10, 1811**

Abigail, daughter of Black Rubin christened

### **Deed**

May 5, 1813 - Rueben Alexander, "Black man," to William McCan, for five pounds [Lot number left blank.] X his mark.

### **All Saints Marriages**

**August 11, 1816**

**Joseph Brush and Julia Myres (or Mires?)**

In presence of Rubin Alexander

### **#27 All Saints Burial**

**Oct. 8, 1817.**

Kesiah (?) daughter of Rubin a black man. 7 yrs.

### **#56 All Saints Burial**

**1819**

William Alexander - a black boy. Son of Robert.

### **#57 All Saints Burial**

**July 1, 1819**

Robert Alexander, a black man

### **All Saints Marriages**

**1839**

Joseph Alexander and Sarah Ann Stewart. Illiterate

**#8 All Saints Baptismal****Feb. 16, 1840**

William Henry, son of Joseph and Sarah Alexander. Mariner. Born  
Oct. 26, 1839

**All Saints Baptisms****Oct. 3, 1841**

Harriet Ann, child of colour

Daughter of Joseph and Sarah Alexander. Farmer

Born March 27, 1841

**#578 All Saints Burial****March 30, 1843**

Jane Alexander, a woman of colour

**#707 All Saints Burial****July 28, 1852**

Violet Alexander, coloured woman. 90 yrs.