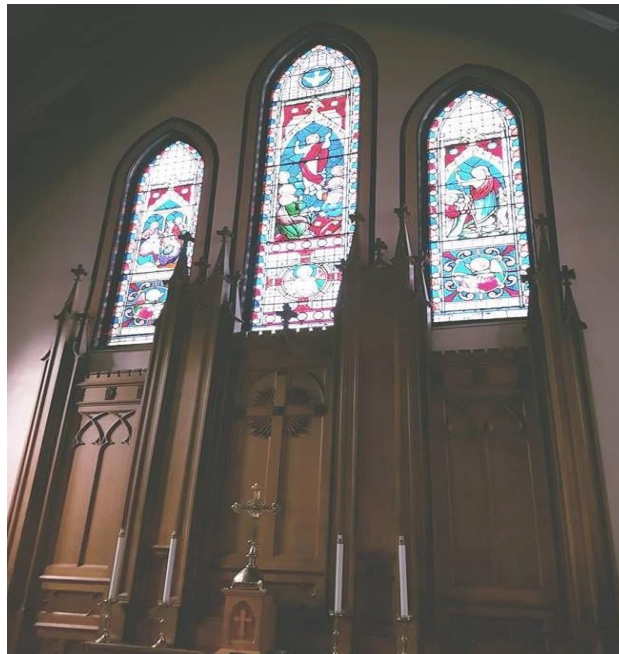
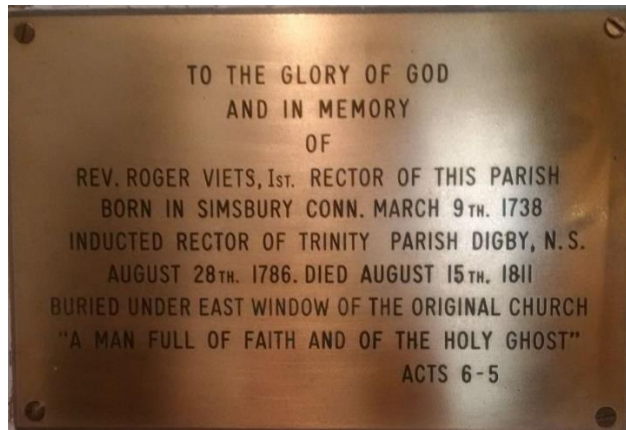


The Loyalist Rector who helped establish a School for Blacks in Digby

By Brian McConnell, UE

Reverend Roger Viets (1738 – 1811) was a Loyalist from Connecticut who ministered at Digby, Nova Scotia to Loyalist refugees. (1) His ministry included Black Loyalists as well as White. Within the historic Trinity Anglican Church in Digby is a plaque to him and also large colourful stained glass windows dedicated to his memory and his son Roger Moore Viets who succeeded him there as Rector of the Anglican Church. (2)



In 1792 the Blacks living in Digby were desirous of schooling their children and prepared a Petition which was supported by Reverend Roger Viets and others. It was signed by three Black Loyalists on behalf of 22 Blacks and their 28 children. Support was made by prominent United Empire Loyalists who had settled in Digby. The Petition has been digitalized in the archives of the Associates of Dr. Bray in Britain held by the British Online Archives. (3) It states:

***To the Right Reverend the Bishop of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, etc, etc.***

**The humble Petition of the Black People of Digby in Nova Scotia, Sheweth**

**That your Petitioners sensible of the great happiness and many Privileges they enjoy and being strongly attached to their present eligible Situation, preferred an Abode in this place when much the greater part of the Blacks with our late Schoolmaster returned to Africa, and being sincerely grieved at the loss of the Benefits of a School for our Children, and earnestly desiring that our rising Generation may be instructed in the common and necessary rudiments of learning so far as to become capable of being good Christians and profitable Members of Society. Do with all Deference and Regard apply to you, begging you to use your influence with the pious and worthy Associates and the Reverend Mr. Lyttleton to procure a continuation of the School among us.**

**We have no less than twenty – eight Children who are of a proper Age to attend on a School and desirous of being instructed. By obtaining the Benefits of a School they will be trained up as devout Members of the Established Church and good Subjects of his Majesty.**

**We would further humbly represent to the venerable Bishop that we have no none of our own Colour at present among us sufficiently qualified to teach us; and would beg the favour of a White School Master, who we imagine would answer the purpose much better than Leonard the black Man, our former Instructor. We regret your Approbation and Promotion of our Petition and your Petitioners, as in Duty bound, will ever pray.**

**Digby 1 June 1792**

**A list of Free Black People now Resident in Digby**

Mens Names	No. of Women	No. of Children
Thomas Byng	1	1
John Williams	1	2
John Custus	1	2
Henry Redick	1	3
John Erwin	1	1
Adam Bush	1	1
Abidnigo Jordan	1	3
William Barton	1	2
Henry Wright	1	2
Catchpole	1	
Robert Johnston	1	
John Shepherd	1	
Bristol Godfrey	1	

Jacob Brummel	1	
Sam Farmer	1	
Glasgo Griggs	1	5
John Buff	1	1
Charles Francis	1	2
Charles Faire		
Liberty Legree	1	
Francis Rabett	1	1
Richard Holstead	1	1
Cuffy Bush	1	2
Douglas		

**We the subscribers put our names to this Petition on behalf of ourselves and all the others here mentioned.**

**Thomas Byng**

**John Custus**

**William Catchpoll**

**We whose names are underwritten do hereby certify that the within is a true representation and that much the greater part of the Blacks there inserted are very well known to us and appear to be desirous to have Instruction and Christian Education for their Children.**

**Roger Viets, Rector & Missionary**

**Andrew Snodgrass, Justice of the Peace**

**Isaac Bonnell, Justice of the Peace**

**Fred William Hecht**

**Isaac Hatfield, Church Warden**

**James Wilmot, Church Warden**

**June 29<sup>th</sup> 1792**

**P.S. Since the within List was delivered to us; No less than six men, six women and nine children of Blacks have come into the settlement.**

**Roger Viets**

**Richard Hill**

**We the undersigned to recommend to the Right Reverend Bishop, Mr. James Forman as a proper Person to teach the black children in Digby. Mr. Foreman’s Character and Abilities are well known to the venerable Prelate, and he has signified his willingness to undertake the task, as likewise to prepare an Apartment in his own House, at his own Expense, to accommodate them. Mr. Foreman will devote as much of this Time to the Tuition of the Blacks as is compatible with his Duty to other part of his School.**

**Roger Viets**

**Richard Hill**

The result of the Petition was a recommendation from Bishop Charles Inglis that teachers be retained. This was the case and a school established.

NOTES:

- (1) Thomas B. Vincent, “VIETS, ROGER,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed June 16, 2024, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/viets\\_roger\\_5E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/viets_roger_5E.html).
- (2) “Trinity Anglican Church” in Canada’s Historic Places, accessed June 16, 2024. <https://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=7266>
- (3) “Bray Schools in Canada, America, and the Bahamas 1645 – 1900”, in British Online Archives, accessed January 29, 2024 , <https://microform.digital/boa/collections/30/bray-schools-in-canada-america-and-the-bahamas-1645-1900>