

THE VIOLA FACTOR

Chapter 3 Bertie County, North Carolina November 1836

"Nobody knows the trouble I've seen Nobody knows my sorrow."

Slave Songs of the United States

Mr. Pugh turned bright red. His cheeks puffed up like the galls of shad from the nearby river. His green- monster eyes rolled around his face, and he pounded both fists down on the table, and through grinding teeth and snorting gasps hollered, "INDEED NOT, MISS KNAPP! Slaves are not allowed to read and write. We have you here with good and steady pay to instruct our children and nothing else. Going near that boy, or any other slave, with chalk or book learnin' is strictly forbidden! Do you understand me?"

Viola lifted her chin and with both hands pushed her chair back from the table. She nodded curtly at the family. Her heart was beating fast. She was tempted to fire back at him; instead, she said to herself with deep self-control, "I must retain this job to repay my debts and send money home to Father." She excused herself and walked away with her head high and skirts swishing into the evening air to catch her breath.

This edict of slaves not being allowed to read was so unfair. She never looked back but could feel the Pughs' family eyes follow her from the room. She heard one of the Pugh daughters hiss behind her, "Who does Vermont Vi think she is? Will you send her away Father? Doesn't she know our laws here?"

THE VIOLA FACTOR:

Chapter 5 Louisville, Kentucky December, 1843

"Join me in glad adoration." Praise to The Lord the Almighty"

Joachim Neander

Letter from Lewis Ruffner's nephew WH Ruffner who was staying in the Ruffner home to his wife Harriett on Friday P.M. January 19, 1866

"Aunt Viola has been whiling my hours today with answering my questions about her early life. Her parents were of small means and 7 children. Lived in Arlington Vermont. She went to school near home until she was 17- then she taught 26 weeks for \$26 and board. Then went off to Bennington where was a larger school she wished to attend. Asked an acquaintance who lived near there if he would board her for three years & trust her for his pay until she could earn it to pay him back to which he cheerfully consented. She taught 2 years in the same school after she had studied there for three years as pupil. Her pay as a teacher was \$1 a week, which was the usual pay for teachers in New England, whilst servant girls got two dollars a week! Seeing that she could never repay her debts at that rate she wrote to a Phila. Teachers' association & rec'd an appointment in Pa. She was detained 6 weeks by ice and reached Phila. alone the same day her place had been filled by another! She hadn't another dollar! But by a good Providence she attained almost immediately a situation in Bertie Co., North Carolina & borrowed money to go. There she got \$300 a year & board, out of which she soon paid her debts. In two years. she rec'd the appointment of principal of the English department in Bishop Doane's famous Burlington school New Jersey (the amt of 2 1/2 years). But she & the Bishop had quarreled, & she set up an opposition school, which was entirely successful, but at the end of two years her health gave way so far as to render it necessary to silence her cares. Just then Mr. Atwood of Phila. sent her Uncle Lewis' letter inquiring for a governess. She came to resurrect her health for a single season with no thought of remaining. Unexpectedly she accepted the offer of marriage after having previously declined many of the kind called eligible and since her marriage has strived to fulfill her duty tho' born down by opposition, ill health & many trials in other forms and she continues in all good conscience till this day. She tells me that my attention to my old sweetheart Harriet Hallet caused some trouble at the time between his and

her lover who I knew nothing about at the time & which I hope all has been made right as they have been married for 20 years." ~WHR