

Rebellion Document Uncovered: John “Daddy” Hall’s Involvement Confirmed

Peter Meyler¹

Researcher Guylaine Petrin has discovered one of the most interesting documents relating to John “Daddy” Hall.

Hall is one of the most well-known members of Grey County’s early African Canadian community, and had a very storied life. He was said to have been between 102 and 117 years old at the time of his death, had five or six wives, and up to 21 children. “Daddy” Hall was of First Nations and African heritage. He scouted for Tecumseh during the War of 1812, was captured and taken into slavery by Virginian soldiers and eventually escaped by swimming the Ohio River, after thirteen years in slavery. Hall subsequently migrated to the Toronto area and this is where Guylaine Petrin’s discovery comes into play.

During Hall’s time in the Toronto area, he was taken as a hostage by the rebels during the 1837 Rebellion. Two newspaper articles published while Hall was alive mention this event.

The first, from the *Toronto Evening Star* article entitled “John Hall, Aged 112” and subtitled “An Owen Sound Negro, Who Fought in 1812 and 1837 – A Slave in the South, was published on October 8, 1895. It includes the following information:

He also says that he served in the rebellion of 1837-38, under Captain Fuller of London, previous to which he had removed to Newmarket, where his home was raided by the rebels.

Prominent Owen Sound lawyer, H. G. Tucker, noted the following in an article published in the *Boston Globe* of October 5, 1897:

After the close of the war (of 1812) he made his way to Toronto, squatting on the Humber River, where he farmed, fished, and made Indian bark wood for a living.

¹All article photos by Laynna Meyler.

On the breaking out of the Upper Canada rebellion he was taken a prisoner December 5th, 1837 and was compelled to act as a guide to Mackenzie and his band. He was captured at Well's Hill on the Dovercourt Road near Toronto, and conveyed to Montgomery's Tavern, on Yonge Street, whence he escaped by night.



The Tollkeeper's Cottage, currently located at the northwest corner of Davenport Road and Bathurst Street, is dated to 1835. It was in this area that John Hall and Ephraim Livers were captured by the rebels, along "Davenport Lane" at "Wells Hill." Col. Joseph Wells' prominent home, Davenport House, was situated on his property on the north side of Davenport Road, east of current day Bathurst Street.

It was while researching the early African settlers in Toronto that Petrin found the sworn statement describing the capture of two men by William Lyon Mackenzie and his followers. The two men were Ephraim Livers and John Hall. Here is the text of the 1837 document:

City of Toronto to wit:

The Information and Complaint of Ephraim Livers of the Township of York
Laborer taken on oath this 8th day of Dec. 1837 before me Geo Gurnett Esq
Mayor of the said City

Information upon his oath saith that on Wednesday morning I and John Hall
were coming to town through Davenport Lane. Mackenzie met us there and
presenting a pistol at me ordered us to return, he took us as far as the Peacock
Tavern. About an hour after we had been there, the stage waggon drove up and

Mackenzie and a party of about 40 men stops it and took the Mail bags out, and having returned them, three or four men got in and ordered the driver to drive on fast threatening to shoot him if he did not. He drove towards Davenport Lane. He made us follow and we slipped from him a little before we got to Col. Well's.

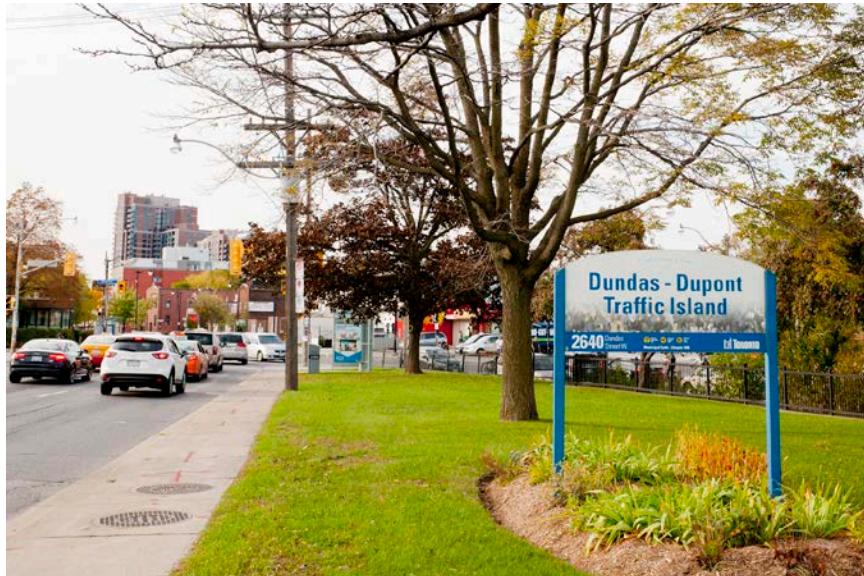
Saml Lount was with the party and appeared to be a leader of the rebels.
Sworn before me

Charles Stotesbury
Alderman

Ephraim Livers (his X mark)
3rd Con. back of Mulholland's York Township

John Hall sworn. I was present with the last witness during the whole time and the facts as described by him are substantially correct.

John Hall (his X mark)
Sworn before me
Charles Stotesbury
Alderman



Dundas Dupont: The Peacock Inn was a two-storey, wooden building with an attic and was destroyed by fire in 1878. It was located where Dundas Street met the original Weston Road. It was in the vicinity of the current Dundas Dupont Traffic Island.

The events surrounding the Peacock Tavern or Inn are some of the most well-known of the 1837 Rebellion. The 1862 book *The Life and Times of Wm. Lyon Mackenzie* by Charles Lindsey includes the following passage:

Mackenzie, Lount, Alves, and several others set off on horseback to collect arms to intercept the western mail, which would convey intelligence which it was desirable should not be communicated to friends of the Government, and to make prisoners of persons who might be carrying information for the Government to the disadvantage of the insurgents. The mail-stage, coming into Dundas Street, the principal western entrance into Toronto, was captured and with the driver, mails, and several prisoners was taken to the rebel camp. Among the letters were some addressed by the President of the Executive Council to persons in the country, and containing information that the Government expected soon to be able to make an attack at Montgomery's. This exploit, which has sometimes been described as a vulgar mail robbery, was a natural incident of insurrection.

A firsthand account of the mail stage hold-up was provided by rebel sympathizer Charles Durand in the book *Reminiscences of Charles Durand of Toronto, Barrister* published in 1897. Durand, who was a passenger in the stage recounted:

I will speak of meeting W.L. McKenzie on my journey to Hamilton on the 6th December, 1837, when the stage and mails were taken by McKenzie and Colonel Lount at the Peacock Inn, five miles west of Toronto, on my journey with other passengers to Hamilton... We passengers started early in the morning, ... We went quietly along Queen Street, all wooded then, and through the woods of the after-part of the road until we came to the hotel the Peacock Inn. Then suddenly there came out Mr. McKenzie and two armed men; one was Captain Adam Graham and the other a man named Alves. I did not know the stage passengers; one was a woman, one a Dutchman, and the third a gentleman named Whiting, as I afterwards learned. I merely saluted McKenzie and shook hands with him; I had known him a long time and was an agent for his newspaper in Hamilton.

Durand also noted the weather at the time:

Luckily at this time the weather had been and was then quite mild, unusually so for December, and the roads and country bare of snow.

The 1895 *Evening Star* article mentions that John Hall served under a Captain Fuller. Both Hall and Ephraim Livers are listed on the pay list of the Toronto Volunteer Coloured Company which was under the command of Captain Stephen John Fuller.

Pay List of the Toronto Volunteer Coloured Company

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Under the command of Captain Stephen John Fuller
Stephen John Fuller, Captain
George W. Carter, Sergeant
David Gaines, Corporal
James Johnson, Corporal
Wilson Abbott, private
Willm R. Johnson
Douglas Smith
Will'm Alexander
John B. Johnson
John Bolin
James O'Fields
Henry Locker
John Hoit
Joseph Smith
Isaac Liverpool
Nehemiah Smith
Charles Davis
George Jones
John Hall
Ephraim Livers
Henry Moore
Will'm Preston
Will'm Bovie
Will'm Harris
John Hooper
Will'm Boyle
John Blakely
Will'm Ash
Michael Reed

N.B. John Saxon served as sergeant from the 5 to the 16th of January but was returned in the Queen's Rangers and with two other men also transferred to Captn Powel's Company, will draw pay there. S. J. Fuller.

The Volunteer Coloured Company disbanded in January, 1838. By the summer of 1843, John Hall and his family had moved to the Rocky Saugeen settlement on Lot 13 on the First Concession of Glenelg Township.