



The Nine Lives of Charlotte Taylor

Sally Armstrong

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Charlotte Taylor lived in the front row of history. In 1775, at the young age of twenty, she fled her English country house and boarded a ship to Jamaica with her lover, the family's black butler. Soon after reaching shore, Charlotte's lover died of yellow fever, leaving her alone and pregnant in Jamaica. In the sixty-six years that followed, she would find refuge with the Mi'kmaq of what is present-day New Brunswick, have three husbands, nine more children and a lifelong relationship with an aboriginal man. Using a seamless blend of fact and fiction, Charlotte Taylor's great-great-great-granddaughter, Sally Armstrong, reclaims the life of a dauntless and unusual woman and delivers living history with all the drama and sweep of a novel.

Excerpt from from **The Nine Lives of Charlotte Taylor**:

“Every summer of my youth, we would travel from the family cottage at Youghall Beach to visit my mother’s extended clan in Tabusintac near the Miramichi River. And at every gathering, just as much as there would be chickens to chase and newly cut hay to leap in, so there would be an ample serving of stories about Charlotte Taylor. . .

She was a woman with a “past.” The potboilers about her ran like serials from summer to summer, at weddings and funerals and whenever the clan came together. She wasn’t exactly presented as a gentlewoman, although it was said that she came from an aristocratic family in England. Nor was there much that seemed genteel about the person they always referred to as “old Charlotte.” Words like “lover” and “land grabber” drifted down from the supper table to where we kids sat on the floor. There were whoops of laughter at her indiscretions, followed by sideways glances at us. But for all the stories passed around, it was clear the family still had a powerful respect for a woman long dead. We owed our very existence to her, and the anecdotes the older generation told suggested that their own fortitude and guile were family traits passed down from the ancestral matriarch. For as long as I can remember, I’ve tried to imagine the real life Charlotte Taylor lived and, more, how she ever survived.”

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