

COL. GEORGE TAYLOR  
RACHEL GIBSON

George was the fifth child and third son of James Taylor II and Martha Thompson's nine children. I wonder if he had "middle child syndrome" which is reputed to be important in character and personality formation?

We assume with good reason that George had lived with his family in Caroline and Spotsylvania counties - areas closely entwined in changing boundaries, politics and similar lives of their upper-class residents. He was 11 when his father built 'Bloomsbury' in Orange, county seat of Orange County, and probably then the only town of any substance, set in softly rolling hills and "beginner" mountains. The Taylors were surrounded geographically and emotionally by a large and close family whose life, according to diaries and other accounts, was full of parties, dances, hunting, fishing, musicals, visiting, and hosting many guests, some of them very important persons.

George was 27 when he married his bride of 20. Her parents were Jonathan Gibson and Margaret Catlett Gibson. Rachel came from as fine a background as her spouse, and one that had enough other marital connections with the Taylors through half a century that there will be a special addendum at the end of this section. It's foolishly important for me to set it down in print to make the connection for myself and for those who would never do it themselves. Small relics of the Gibson - perhaps even Catlett - generations, are two small silver spoons, well bitten and bent, always referred to in the Taylor family as "the Gibson spoons." Bitten and bent? Oh yes! The "silver spoon in the mouth," a common teething tool for the babies as well as a feeding implement. They are in my possession and to be respected if not used.

FATHER AND CITIZEN

As prominent as George was in the political life of the colony of Virginia,<sup>1</sup> his unrivaled distinction was in giving ten of his eleven sons to fight for the patriot cause in the Revolution. Remember his father James II had the distinction of great-grandfathering two presidents? Some further attention will be given each of these sons instead of, or in addition to, the usual few lines of significant facts on the Family Group Sheets.

George was a warden and vestryman of St. Mary's Parish in Caroline County for several years, and served in other parishes as well in those same positions which, it has been explained earlier, were political roles in colonial taxation. George was described by one writer as broad-minded and public spirited. His commitments were to some of the very fundamentals of colonial life.

1742.....Commissioned Captain in the Orange County militia at age 31, and saw some minimal action in regional skirmishes in the French-Indian Wars which continued from 1689 to 1763  
1747-1758..Virginia House of Burgesses as one of two representatives from Orange County  
1748-1758...Justice of the Peace and Magistrate, Orange County

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<sup>1</sup>"Our" George Taylor must not be confused with another of the same name and era who was born in Ireland, the son of a clergyman. After his arrival in America he served on the Continental Congress and was a signer of the Declaration of Independence.

- 1749.....Commissioned Lt. Col., Orange County militia, age 38  
 1749-1772 Clerk of Court, Orange Co., a position appointed by the governor on recommendation of County Court and held by George Taylor for 23 years\*  
 1755.....Commissioned Col., Orange County militia, age 44  
 1774.....Committee of Safety, Orange Co., a prelude to organization for independence<sup>2</sup>  
 1775.....Member of the Virginia Convention, a further step toward independence

Campbell had another interesting view of the Taylors, noting they were one of three families dominating the area, holding eight magistrates for twenty percent of the total, and an even larger percentage of the length of service.

\*The Taylor "dynasty" as Clerk of Court:

1740-1745.....George Taylor's father-in-law, Jonathan Gibson

1749-1772.....George Taylor

1772-1798.....George's eldest son, James

1798-1801.....George's only son by his second marriage, George Conway Taylor

#### FLAGS FLYING AT THE TAYLOR HOMES –

four of them within signaling distance of each other – indicated an invitation or a need for communication. The diary of Francis Taylor, fifth son of George and Rachel, and other tales of the era relate expansive hospitality and cordial socializing among the homes. Travelers from afar, expected or not, local guests, invited or by happenstance, or even just the large family gathered so often that we find it rare (and inviting?) in our hustle-bustle life. The homes were at first smaller than our visions of palatial residences. Think of some of the places in Williamsburg - exclusive of the Governor's Palace - where even a small tour group crowds the entry and rooms. Of course there were a number of servants, most of them slaves and some already earning toward their freedom.

According to Francis' diary, the distances between homes were such that the men, and sometimes the women too, often walked. Otherwise they rode horseback. "A Sketch of Colonial Orange: 1734-1776" by Bessie Grinnan, an early descendant of the Taylors,<sup>3</sup> relates that "The roads then were very bad. There was a tax on pleasure vehicles and very few people had them. In 1775 there were only ten pleasure vehicles in the county. [*We know from Francis that George owned one of them, and surely their friends, the Madison family, at least one other.*] The most common vehicle was the stick buggy or chaise (a two-wheeled vehicle something like a dog cart with a top). The only Chariot before the Revolution is said to have been "Maj. Wm. Moore's chariot, a handsome affair with a gilt moulding around the top, much admired by the good people of Orange, who, for the most part, rode on horseback."

The four Taylor homes were, of course, Bloomsbury and Greenfield; "Collina," George's early home preceding Midland, and the early Meadowfarm. Midland ranks next to Bloomsbury in

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<sup>2</sup>Historian Campbell states colonial records of Committees of Safety exist for only two (unnamed) counties of Virginia. Originals were deposited after the Civil War in Huntington Library and Art Gallery, San Merino CA.

<sup>3</sup>Published 1922 in Tyler's Quarterly Historical and Genealogical Magazine, v4 p113.

personal sentiment because of known details of its construction, and life there of George and his bachelor son Francis, as detailed in Francis' diary.<sup>4</sup> The dwellings formed something of a broad based triangle with Meadowfarm at the apex, southeast of Orange. The other three formed the base to the east of Orange with Greenfield closest to the town, then Bloomsbury, then Midland.

#### MOTHER LOVE KILLED RACHEL

in what seems a particularly tragic way. She insisted on personally caring for young George, her second son, through his fatal illness with smallpox, brought home from the French Indian Wars. Refusing to leave the nursing to the slaves, some of whom were probably immune from having survived other incursions of the disease, she became infected and followed her 20-year-old son in death two weeks later. [*We mothers would have done the same wouldn't we?*] She was 43, leaving of her ten surviving sons three young adults, and seven in an age spread from 14 to under two years.

#### THOSE TAYLOR SONS

bring us truly into the Revolution. All born in Orange County, each was in the military and because of the impact of that number from a single family George and Rachel were honored often in print for the "gift of their sons to the cause of freedom." The ten in the Revolution, and young George, often unacclaimed and unnoticed for his action in the French-Indian Wars, rate a few more details here than the usual few lines in the Family Group Sheets. There were no daughters in the family.

But first let us touch on recently (2002) researched and published data regarding three of those eleven sons before the Revolution.<sup>5</sup> In May 1775 Edmund and Reuben (sons #4 and #10), aged 31 and 18 respectively, were among nine men who, in two dugout canoes, journeyed up the Kentucky River to create, with Hancock Lee, an early settlement at Leestown, near Frankfort. Nicolas Cresswell, an English traveler and Loyalist, led the expedition which included also for part of the way, Capt. George Rogers Clark. Edmund was described as "a red hot liberty man" involved in one heated exchange with Cresswell as "threatening to tar and feather" the Englishman.

Whether or not they had intended to proceed further, Leestown was their sojourning place. On Lee's death in 1776 the town was mostly abandoned, occupied only sporadically until the end of the Revolution. Edmund and Reuben returned to Virginia to enlist in the Continental Line. Edmund is covered separately at T34 as a lineal progenitor.

Another brother, Richard, (a lineal grandfather covered in detail at T32) probably was not in Kentucky before the Revolution as were his brothers, but settled there after the war. He was a captain in Virginia's Colonial Navy, and in retirement was awarded the rank of Commodore

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<sup>4</sup>Photocopies of a typescript made in early 1900s are in two large dark blue notebooks in my collection, and cover the years 1786-1799, lacking only 1793.

<sup>5</sup>Taylor, Richard: *The Great Crossing: A Historic Journey to Buffalo Trace Distillery*, in JTP library

(though never the appropriate perks and money). Leestown was again flourishing, especially as a distillery center for Kentucky's famous bourbons, which because of the prime location with river and springs was probably a mini-industry from the area's earliest habitation. Old Taylor whisky centered there for many years under the name of Edmund H. Taylor Jr., a lineal uncle, not grandparent. The first "substantial building" in Leestown was built by the Commodore. "Though altered in appearance it still stands on the grounds of Buffalo Trace Distillery"<sup>6</sup> under the name "Riverside" on the National Register of Historic Places. During that time the Commodore was appointed by Kentucky's first governor as Superintendent of Navigation on the Kentucky River. He had authority, but almost no funds for success and subsequently moved westward to settle near Louisville. In later years, one of the Commodore's sons, Richard Jr. or "Black Dick" had his large brick home, "Stony Point," on Rock Hill overlooking the river. (Richard Jr. is a lineal grandparent, covered at T16.)

And now, back to individual attention to those eleven sons as Revolutionary patriots, family men and settlers:

1. James was born 16 December 1738. He was a Sergeant Major in the Continental Line, received approximately 300 land grant acres in Kentucky and lived there, rearing about 13 children, with his wife Ann Pendleton. A granddaughter, Sarah Strother, married US Army Colonel William R. Jouette, thus bringing that new name into generations of family heritage. James died in 1799 in Jefferson County KY.
2. George was born 08 January 1741. Unmarried, he came home with smallpox from French-Indian Wars and died at age 20 in February 1761,
3. Jonathan was born 03 December 1742. He was a lieutenant in the Convention Guards, the same unit as were his younger brothers Francis and Charles. Jonathan received an unknown size of land grant in Kentucky, married Ann Berry and they had about 13 children in Clark County KY where he died in 1804.
4. **Edmund Taylor** warrants bold face as a linear forebear and will have his own separate section at T34. He was born 21 October 1744, moved to Kentucky on war service land grants and died 01 July 1786, pre-deceasing his father. His daughter, Sarah Stubbs Taylor, married her first cousin, **Richard**, son of child #6 on this list.
5. Francis was born 09 March 1747. He earns his own pages following in this section. His great claim on importance to posterity, although he remained a bachelor, is his "gentleman farmer's" diary of the family and local Orange Co. scene from 1786 through 1799. Small original leather volumes for each year are in the Virginia State Library in Richmond. Francis inherited Midland from his father's portion of James II's legacy. He was granted 5,333 acres in Kentucky for his service as a colonel in the Convention Guards,<sup>7</sup> but he never moved west and the land passed to his bachelor brother Benjamin. Francis died in Orange County in November 1799 only a short while after ceasing his diary entries.
6. **Richard Taylor** was born 06 January 1749 and has been the most frequently used patriot for Taylor admission to the Daughters of the American Revolution. He was instrumental in forging the small but active Virginia colonial navy, and has his own extensive bio at T32. His son

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<sup>6</sup>Buffalo Trace became, in 1992, the latest in a long and familiar legend of distilleries on that site in Leestown.

<sup>7</sup>Explanation of this unit's somewhat particular service is in Francis' bio following.

Richard married a first cousin, daughter of Edmund, #4 in this list. The elder Richard, "the Commodore," took his land grants in Kentucky and died in Oldham County 30 August 1825.

7. John was born 27 January 1751. An unmarried lieutenant in Richard's navy flotilla, he was captured by the British in an engagement of which I have never found specific details. He died in 1781 on the British prison ship "Jersey" in New York harbor. An accompanying news clipping details some of that rank horror.

8. William was born 23 January 1753. He was first lieutenant, then captain in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Virginia Regiment in 1776; major in the 9<sup>th</sup> Virginia Regiment 1779-1781. His first marriage was to Lucy Hord, second to Elizabeth Coats. He had seven children. He died in Kentucky 14 April 1830 where he had taken up his land grant after the Revolution.

9. Charles was born 03 January 1755. He was a surgeon's mate in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Virginia Regiment in 1776, and a surgeon in the Convention Guards, 1779-1780. He married his step-sister, Sarah Conway, daughter of his father's second wife. They had ten children. He received 100 acre land grant in Kentucky. I have not confirmed whether he lived there.

10. Reuben was born 14 January 1757. He was a captain in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Regiment 1776-1778. He married Rebecca Moore and they lived in Kentucky where he had received a 4,000 acre land grant.

11. Benjamin was born 11 November 1759. He was a navy midshipman at age 17 in service in the Revolution with his brother Richard. For that he received 2,666 acres in Kentucky. He moved there and remained single.

A large and devoted family apparently fostered these children who were young at their mother's death so that George was not in the usual need to marry simply to give his children a mother. He remained single for six years, then married in 1767 Sarah Taliaferro, widow of Capt. Francis Conway. It was Conway's daughter Sarah who later married her step-brother Charles Taylor. Two years after George's marriage he fathered his twelfth son, George Conway Taylor. This son married but died at 36 without issue.

#### MIDLAND THROUGH TWO-PLUS CENTURIES

underwent far more changes than Bloomsbury. Built on the 1,000 acres given to George by his father, this followed an earlier home of George's called Collina. Maybe the house was already on the land when it was deeded to him, but new construction started in 1786 when George and his son Francis decided to live there together. George was then 75 and his second wife had died two years earlier. Francis, 39, was forever a bachelor, and started his diary the year of building Midland. A reader may be surprised, as I was, to feel some intimacy with Midland as progress was reported regularly in the diary. George's final illness and death in the upstairs room is also detailed.

It was built as a full two-story house whereas Bloomsbury was one and a half. But Midland was two rooms, one up and one down, a staircase and a particularly fine chimney! Yes, in due respect there was a basement and an attic as well. The rooms each measured 26 by 28 feet. The chimney of Flemish bond has survived intact with occasional pointing up. Attached pictures in black and white show the original house with its first addition on the left, added in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Wings to the north and east were circa 1900; considerable remodeling was in 1935; renovation and redecorating were as recent as the early 1990s. The earliest recorded structure on the site was called Midland, followed by Collina, Midland again with George and

Francis, later Yattan, Ashland and Middleburn. The Detwiler owners in the 1990s returned the name to Midland. Unfortunately, we never saw them again before (or since) their divorce and departure from Midland.

### GEORGE'S DEATH AND BURYING

is excerpted here from Francis' diary, with notations added by descendants of George's brother Erasmus. From November of 1792...

"Nov. 4, Sunday, – My father died about 4 o'clock on this afternoon after a painful sickness from the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of last month. [*a disease of the bladder*] Brother James and myself were present with him and George Conway Taylor [*son of GT's second marriage*] in the house.

"He retained his senses until a few moments before he expired, being in his 82 year. We sent for Capt. Burnley who assisted in laying out and dressing the corpse. Brothers James and Charles went home in the evening, Brother Reuben stayed with us.

"Nov. 6 – After breakfast my father's body being in a coffin was carried to James Taylor's in his chair carriage and deposited in the grave in the graveyard [*behind Greenfield*], between my grandmother's [*Martha Thompson Taylor*] and my mother's [*Rachel Gibson Taylor*] graves. Brothers James, Reuben and George, Capt. Burnley, Judge Bell and myself were all the white persons present. ... We opened our Father's desk and found a will in his own handwriting dated September 1789. I found only seven Guineas, six dollars and three shillings in the desk. Benj[*amin*] and myself named executors.

"Nov. 7, – I wrote tickets last night to request attendance to my Father's burial on Friday. [*Prevailing custom was that burial was almost immediate, but the term "burial" referred to the later religious funeral services.*]

"Sent Sye [*a colored man*] with tickets of invitation to [*eight men*]. Sent the other tickets to J. Taylor.

"Nov. 8, – Sent ½ of a Mutton and gammon of bacon and a middling to J. Taylor's for the burying, with a gallon of wine and a gallon of peach brandy.

"Nov. 9, – I, with George C. Taylor, went to my brother James' to the Burying of my deceased Father. ... A respectable Company was present and about half of them dined there." [*Col. Madison, father of the President, family friend and neighbor, attended.*]

George was predeceased by three sons: George from smallpox; John on a British prison ship during the Revolution; Edmund in Kentucky. Some other sons were already in Kentucky.

Francis' inheritance, determined earlier, was Midland, and on his death in 1799 he willed it to his youngest brother Benjamin in Kentucky. It has never returned to the Taylor family.

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### LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT OF GEORGE TAYLOR

In the name of God, Amen.

I, George Taylor of the County of Orange, being in good health and of sound and disposing memory, thanks be to God for the same, do make and ordain this my last Will and Testament, in manner and form following:

Imprimis. I desire all my just debts to be first paid.

Item. I give to my son, James, all the household furniture that were mine, where he now lives, and a young negro woman, named Rachel, now in his possession; also two young negroes, between the ages of five and fifteen, such as my executors shall chuse, to him and his

heirs forever.

Item. I give to my son, Jonathan, five pounds current money.

Item. I give to the executors of my son, Edmund, five pounds current money.

Item. I give to my son, Richard, five pounds current money.

Item. I give to my son, William, five pounds current money.; also three negroes, Phil, Aaron and Doll, now in his possession, the three said negroes being of equal value to four such as I gave to my other children; also thirty-three pounds cur't money, being the balance of one hundred fifty pounds cur't money.

Item. I give to my son, Charles, five pounds cur't money.

Item. I give to my son, Reuben, five pounds cur't money.

Item. I give to my son, Francis, five hundred acres of land, including the plantation I now live on; also a negro man named Frank, now in his possession; also one other grown negro and two young negroes, such as my ex'ors shall chuse to make them equal in value to such four I give to the other of my children, which said land and negroes I give to him and his heirs forever.

Item. I give to my son, Benjamin, four negroes, two of them to be grown, and the other two to be young ones; also I give him four other negroes, such as my ex'ors shall chuse, in lieu of my not giving him land or money, which said negroes I give to him and his heirs forever.

Item. I give to my son, George Conway Taylor [*only son of second wife*] five hundred and twenty-five acres of land in Fayette County, on Kentucky River, to him and his heirs forever, he paying to the executors of his brother, Edmund, the expenses attending the taking up and surveying of the same.

Item. I leave the remaining part of the tract of land I live on, with one hundred and fourteen acres I purchased, adjoining the lower part of my tract, to be sold by my executors, or the survivor of them, for raising money for the payment of my debts and legacies.

Item. I give all the rest of my estate to be equally divided among all my before-mentioned sons and their representatives, to them and their heirs forever.

And, lastly, I do nominate and appoint my sons, Francis and Benjamin, executors of this, my last will and Testament, revoking all Wills by me heretofore made.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and seal this fifth day of September, 1789.

Signed: Geo. Taylor

N.B. – As the Will contained in this paper is wrote by my own hand, it requires no witnesses.

Geo. Taylor

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This will was made three years before George Taylor's death. Three weeks after his death it was presented to Orange County Court and admitted to probate. James and Charles Taylor joined with Francis and Benjamin in bond of 5,000 pounds.