

Taylors In the Making of a Nation

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As Historian of The Taylor Family Association, I have been requested to call attention to the important part that our early forebears played in the making of this nation.

Perhaps from no other early settler in America could be traced more descendants than from that one known as James Taylor I., and it has seemed to me from my personal acquaintance and investigations into the genealogical lines of other families, that the Taylor connections are more wide spread and far reaching than those of any other name in this country.

In the summer of 1924, I was sent by this Association to Virginia for six weeks to do research work in the early county records. I visited fourteen counties, where I secured much valuable data, but the complete destruction of the contents of the Court Houses in New Kent and King and Queen counties, and the partial destruction in Caroline, during the War between the States, made it impossible to discover many definite facts relative to the founder of our Taylor family in America. For this reason, the first of whom we have definite knowledge was James Taylor I. of St. Stephen's Parish, New Kent County, Virginia, that state long known as "the mother of States and Statesmen". He was a Lawyer, vestryman of the Church of England, and in 1693 deeded to the trustees of South Farnham Parish two acres and 50 perches of land on the south side of Hoskins Creek on which to erect a church. The deed shows it to have been at the edge of the present town of Tappahannock, Essex County, though the church has long since disappeared. The records also show a patent of 950 acres in New Kent for his home place. By the division of the county lines of King and Queen in 1691, King William in 1701—by 1727, this domicile was finally located in the boundary of Caroline, where it continued in the possession of his descendants for several generations.

James Taylor I. was twice married, and from each of these marriages have come many men of distinction throughout the succeeding generations. For the first one hundred years and

more, including the French and Indian Wars and Revolutionary periods, a remarkable fact regarding this family is that as each generation attained manhood, they have almost to a man been found in high places of trust. They were commanding officers of their county, members of the House of Burgesses, county Lieutenants and the leading men in church and state.

Col. James Taylor II. the only son of James I. by his first wife Frances, held many high offices. He was Colonel of a regiment of Colonial Militia, and probably did active duty during the Indian Wars. As member of the "Knights of the Golden Horse Shoe", he accompanied Gov. Spottswood on his Tramontane Expedition over the Blue Ridge; was also, member of the House of Burgesses; vestryman of St. Stephen's Parish, and as Surveyor General of the Colony of Virginia, he ran the boundary lines between Caroline, Spottsylvania and Orange counties, and laid out for himself a baronial estate of approximately one third of Orange County upon which he erected his home "Bloomsbury", about 1720-22. This is still standing in a fair state of preservation. Two of his great grandsons, James Madison and Zachary Taylor became Presidents of the United States. Madison is generally known as the father of our Constitution, a document pronounced by Gladstone "The greatest instrument ever struck off at a given time by the brain and purpose of man." Madison's famous home of Montpelier which he inherited from his father, is still one of the beautiful historical homes in Virginia. Zachary Taylor's wonderful military ability, courage and determination in winning for us the Mexican War, we so well know; and he is thus described as early as 1819 in an old letter written by the wife of Hon. John Brown of "Liberty Hall," Frankfort, Ky. "President Monroe breakfasted with us in company with General Jackson and that hero whose cool determined and successful courage has never been rivalled in ancient and modern times, who so bravely defended Fort Benjamin Harrison—Major Zachary Taylor. (War 1812.)

(Pres. Taylor's father Colonel Richard Taylor) served with distinction in the Revolution, removing to Kentucky about 1784, and became a large land owner. "Springfield," which he founded some six miles out of Louisville, has the family burial ground located upon it. For the government appropriation for the upkeep of the burial ground besides the handsome new morseum, we are indebted to the efforts of the Hon. Maurice

Thatcher, M. C., and the Out Door Art League of Louisville. Col. Richard Taylor represented his county of Jefferson in the conventions of 1792 and 1799. He was a member of the Legislature of both Virginia and Kentucky, and of the Electoral College 1813 and 1825, and was Naval officer at the Falls of the Ohio. His brother Zachary Jr. was, also, an officer of the Revolution, and prominent in Orange County Virginia, where he continued to make his home. Another brother Hancock Taylor one of the most famous surveyors in early Kentucky, was killed by the Indians in July, 1774. His will written just before he died was the first legal document recorded in Kentucky. These three were sons of Zachary Taylor Sr. for whom the President was named.

The elder brother of Zachary Sr. was James³ Taylor III. who inherited "Bloomsbury", and represented Orange in the House of Burgesses. His several sons were officers in the Revolution, and from one of them, Col. James⁴ Taylor IV., whose civil and military services were equally prominent for over forty years, is a continuous and unbroken line of James Taylors to the tenth generation. Col. James⁴ Taylor IV. was a contemporary and friend of Washington, and was with him in Braddock's campaign. As an adjutant or inspector, he served with him six months fortifying the frontier. He was commissioned Lieut. Col. of Caroline prior to the Revolution; was member of the House of Burgesses, and continued to serve in that capacity and in the senate of Virginia until old age induced him to retire. He was chairman of the committee of Safety, and was with his famous kinsman Judge Edmund Pendleton, a member of the Conventions from Caroline to consider the adoption of the Constitution of the United States. Most of his children were pioneers and large land owners in Kentucky. His eldest son Hubbard⁵ Taylor, when but a youth of sixteen, served in the Revolution. In the spring of 1780, he procured the position of deputy surveyor for the county of Kentucky and came from Virginia to locate Revolutionary grants for his father and others. At the mouth of the Licking in Campbell county, he laid off the town and called it Newport. He was a large land owner and founded his home "Spring Hill," in Clark County. He was elected to the first constitutional convention of 1791, and to the first Legislature 1792; he was a member of the State Senate 1796, 1800, 1815, 1819, and was Presidential elector 1815 and 1825. His brother General James⁵ Taylor V. called

“the father and founder of Newport, Ky.,” was generally conceded to have been the richest and most influential man in Campbell county, whither he came as an early pioneer. With his large fortune, he assumed heavy responsibilities to prevent the public service from suffering during the War of 1812, and through his efforts we are greatly indebted for the protection of the frontier after the fall of Detroit. He was commissioned a Brigadier-General.

In returning again to Col. James² Taylor II. and his beautiful wife Martha Thompson, we have his third son Col. George³ Taylor, who was commissioned Colonel of his county in 1755 by Gov. Dinwiddie, and served in the French and Indian Wars. He was a member of the House of Burgesses, of the Committee of Safety, and of the conventions of 1774. He holds a distinction that is probably unexcelled, if equaled in any war—he sent ten sons out of his eleven into the Revolution, nine of whom were commissioned officers of either army or navy. His eleventh son was but a lad of seven years at the time. His son Commodore Richard⁴ Taylor, commissioned Captain in the Virginia State Navy, served gallantly and with great distinction throughout the War. He commanded several flotillas off Chesapeake Bay and captured a number of British ships. At the end of the War, he was commissioned Commodore of Virginia's Navy. He removed to Jefferson County, Ky. and settled on a large grant of land east of Louisville.

Erasmus³ Taylor, youngest son of Col. James² Taylor II., though prominent in the affairs of his county, was of a retiring disposition, and declined all public offices. His son Hon. Robert Taylor was a prominent Lawyer, and served as speaker of the Virginia State Senate of which he was a member from 1804-1815; was also elected to the Nineteenth Congress 1825-27. He died on his estate “Meadow Farm” July 3, 1845, which is now the property of his grandson Mr. Jacquelin⁵ P. Taylor. This land is part of the original grant to Col. James² Taylor II. of eight thousand acres and which has never been out of the family as it was the home of Zachary³ Taylor Sr., grand father of President Zachary Taylor.

Capt. John Taylor, another son of Erasmus³ was an officer in the Revolution.

Of the descendants of James Taylor I. and Mary Gregory there were Judge Edmund Pendleton, the noted chancellor of

Virginia, neighbor and friend of Washington, and to whom Jefferson referred as the most brilliant debater that he had ever encountered; Col. John Taylor of Caroline, an officer of the Revolution and famous Virginia Senator, who introduced into the Virginia Senate in 1798, and so brilliantly defended, the Resolutions assailing the Alien and Sedition Laws, and was also, an author of much note; John Penn, Signer of the Declaration of Independence from North Carolina, and Major-General Edmund Pendleton Gaines. To enumerate the public services of these and other noted descendants who constitute a very celebrated branch of the family, would require more space than has been allotted for this article, but a task to which the writer looks forward with a great deal of pleasure in a future publication.

Of more recent years we have been represented in the navy by Rear Admiral John Crittenden Watson; Rear Admiral Robert Mallory Berry, who commanded Relief Expeditions to the Artic Regions; Rear Admiral David Watson Taylor, whose ability in the Construction Corps was so internationally recognized during the World War; Rear Admiral Montgomery Meigs Taylor, Rear Admiral John S. Carpenter and lastly, Rear Admiral Hugh Rodman who commanded the Battleship Division of our Naval Fleet, which co-operated with the British Grand-Fleet under Sir David Beatty, when he received the final surrender of the whole of the German's High Sea Fleet, in November 1918.

Needless to say, that a family descending from a race of people so strong in their characteristics of courage and patriotic statesmanship should even today give the goodly showing of representatives in the Army and Navy as can be seen at a glance in the list of members here in printed.