

# William and Ann Taylor

Written by Thomas M. Taylor

William Taylor was born at Ballymena, in the County Antrim, Ireland, in 1777. A short digression must be made to show the condition of that country for 200 years previous to that time.

In 1601 a bloody rebellion occurred, terrible slaughter ensued and 20,000 Irishmen were sold as slaves and 40,000 entered foreign service to escape from tyranny at home. In 1690 another rebellion took place, when the battle of the Boyne decided the fate of Ireland. Irish subjects outlawed were 300,000, and their possessions confiscated amounted to one-million six-hundred-thousand acres.

Next came the rebellion of 1796-8. Insurgents, excluded from all quarter, fled and were pursued with great slaughter, and sacrificed their lives for devotion to their country. Many Irishmen who had not been in active rebellion, but had given aid and sympathy to the insurgents were marked for vengeance. Among those were William Taylor and James Wilson, near neighbors and about the same age. My father had an additional reason for haste in getting out of the country. I never heard him speak of it, but a son of James Wilson related the circumstances to me during the past year, as he had gotten them from his father. It seems that a British officer was berating the Irish in general—said they were all cowards and ought to be hanged—when my father promptly knocked him down, and as promptly got out of the way. There was no safety for them in Ireland, and they determined to leave for America at once. They started for the nearest seaport, about 30 miles distant, carrying with them

sufficient provisions for the voyage; took a steerage passage and went aboard.

From some unforeseen cause the ship was delayed in port two or three weeks, and their stock of provisions was running low. Here was a quandary. They had no money with which to buy more, and it was dangerous for either to return home for a fresh supply. But the situation was desperate, and it was finally decided that my father, who was the more active and vigorous, should go. He disguised himself as well as he could, changing clothes with one of the sailors, travelled in the night, kept out the most public highways, reached home, got a fresh supply of provisions and returned safely in time for the sailing of the vessel.

In due time they landed near Philadelphia, glad to have escaped from the iron heel of British oppression and full of hope for the future in the land of freedom.

From here father worked his way up into Northumberland County, Pennsylvania, where in 1802 he married Miss Ann Wilson, a farmer's daughter, of whom hereafter.

In 1808, after four children had been born to them, they embarked in a two-horse wagon with their children and all their worldly possessions and came to Beaver county. Here seven more children were born to them, making eleven, all of whom grew up healthy and all married and had families.

About the year 1815 they bought a farm near Enon, with poor improvements, having only about half enough money to pay for the land. Here commenced the great struggle. Land to be paid for, improvements to be made, and such a family to be fed, clothed and educated.

Clothing was emphatically of domestic manufacture. Not only was it made up at home, but the material out of which it was made was grown on the farm, namely, flax for summer

and wool for winter, and all had to be spun and woven at home.

Father had enjoyed but poor opportunities for schooling and therefore was all the more anxious to secure for his children a good common school education.

There was no school house in reach. One must be built, and he was among the foremost in helping to build a log school house in the woods near our home, when for many years there was a school for three months in the winter and the same in summer. Here the writer graduated about the year 1830, at the age of 12. The teachers had to be paid and no money was in the treasury. I well remember of four or five different teachers who boarded at our house during the whole term. They paid nothing for boarding and got no money for schooling, and thus the account was squared satisfactorily to all.

During the hard struggle of 20 years on that place mother bore uncomplainingly her full share. She had excellent health, a fair education for the times, a retentive memory. She was well read in the Scriptures, and especially in the Old Testament, and could quote from memory the greater portion of David's Psalms in metre. Under more favorable circumstances she would have been a model of the proprieties of life. As it was her influence was limited by her surroundings and by stern poverty.

The great Senator Benton, in speaking of the influence of his mother, who had lived a widow for 50 years and whose house had been the abode of many eminent men of the times, says "a pack of cards was never seen in her house". I cannot say that of my mother. She found out that a young man who was then stopping at her house had a pack of cards in his possession. She charged him with it. He did not deny. She insisted that they be burned. He objected, alleging that they had cost 25 cents. She proposed to pay for them.

He assented and the cards were committed to the flames then and there. I think it might be truthfully added that it would have been better for that young man had that been the only pack of cards he ever handled.

Father and mother were both in their youth members of the church in the places where they were born, viz., the one in Ireland, the other in Northumberland county, Pa. Old certificates of membership, in a good state of preservation, are now in my possession, as follows viz.:

\* \* \* \* \*

I do certify that the bearer, William Taylor, was a regular member of this congregation, is the son of respectable parents, and a young man of a fair and unexceptionable character. Given by me at Cullybackey May 28, 1799.

Robt. Christy, Dep. Mm.

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These are to certify that the bearer hereof, Ann Taylor, was when she left our bounds, about a year ago, a person of unblemished character, was in full communion with us, and free from scandal or anything exposing her to church censure known to us, and might have been received into any society of Christians where God in his Providence ordered her lot. Given at Chillisquaque, with advice of session, this 29th day of July, 1810, by John Bryson, V. D. M.

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Father was a man of liberal feelings and benevolent disposition—always thoughtful of the poor and needy and ready to divide his last loaf of bread with the hungry. He had an inborn hatred of tyranny, oppression and slavery—hence was found among the early anti-slavery men of his day.

In their latter years they both lived in comparative ease and comfort, not being so hampered for want of means as they had been in their younger days. They both lived to a good old age—seeing their children all married—and

grandchildren to the number of about 60, growing up around them. Father died in 1856 at the age of near 80 and mother in 1863 at the age of near 83. They died at the old homestead now owned and occupied by Thomas Charles Taylor.