

Northern Kentucky
Views presents . . .

General James Taylor

AYLOR, GEN. JAMES, of Newport, Kentucky, was born April 19, 1769, in Caroline County, Virginia. James Taylor, the head of the family, came from England and settled in the Colony of Virginia, in 1682, and from him descended two of the Presidents, James Madison and Zachary Taylor. His father was Col. James Taylor, of Caroline County, a lieutenant-colonel and high sheriff under the British Crown; was an officer in the war of the Revolution; was a member of the Convention of Virginia that adopted the Constitution of the United States; and was one of the wealthy, influential, and valuable men of his State. Gen. Taylor's mother was Ann Hubbard. He was educated in a private school, and at Rappahannock Academy; in 1788, was commissioned Surveyor of Caroline County, by Governor Peyton Randolph; was also deputy sheriff, and carried the returns of the election of President Washington; in 1792, made his first visit to Kentucky, to explore a tract of land which belonged to his father, at the mouth of the Licking river, and on which a part of the town of Newport had been laid out. He passed only a month in the vicinity, spending most of his time at old Fort Washington. In May 3, 1793, he returned to Newport; brought with him his three colored servants; began at once to open a farm and make permanent improvements on his estate, which he had previously named Bellevue; and resided there until his death. In 1793, in company with Jacob Fowler, an old settler, he marked out the first road from Newport towards Lexington; was the first clerk of both courts of Campbell County; was appointed in 1795, and held the office until 1830; in 1799, began to purchase and locate land warrants north of the Ohio; continued to do so for many years, and by this means made a great fortune. He had a taste for military life; was Brigadier-General, afterwards Major-General, of the Kentucky Militia; in 1812, was appointed quartermaster-general, also paymaster-general, and attached to the army of Gen. Hull; was taken prisoner at Detroit, and paroled; was a witness against Hull in his trial at Albany, N. Y.; was also a witness for the prosecution, in the trial of Aaron Burr; and, in 1804, he built the United States Barracks and Arsenal at Newport. He was a Whig, of the Clay school, and cast his last Presidential vote, on the day of his death, for his friend and relative, General Zachary Taylor. He was violently opposed to the surrender of Hull, at Detroit; was undoubtedly brave and patriotic, in the purest sense of the terms; and, during the war of 1812, pledged his individual fortune and credit for the support of the army of the country, when funds were not found in the hands of the officers of the Government. He was a member of the African Colonization Society, warmly advocated emancipation, and set all his own slaves free. In religion, he was Episcopalian. He was a man of warm and generous heart; possessed of superior social qualities; fond of anecdote and song, in which he often entertained his friends, even in his old age; had large benevolence; and the hospitality of Bellevue was proverbial. At the age of twenty-six, in 1795, Gen. Taylor was married to Mrs. Keturah Leitch, née Moss, who had emigrated from Virginia, in 1783, at the age of eleven, and was the widow of Major David Leitch. They had eleven children, four of whom grew up to be married: Mrs. Horatio T. Harris, Mrs. John W. Tibbatts, Mrs. Geo. T. Williamson; and Col. James Taylor, who alone survives. He died at his residence, universally esteemed, November 7, 1848.