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Walter Heron Taylor and His Era

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WALTER HERRON TAYLOR AND HIS ERA

by

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B.A. June 1957, University of Miami

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the
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ABSTRACT

WALTER HERRON TAYLOR AND HIS ERA

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This biography examines Colonel Walter Herron Taylor's involvement in the development of Norfolk, Virginia, into a modern urban seaport. Although this thesis depicts Taylor's role as Robert E. Lee's adjutant and Civil War historian, it clearly demonstrates that his civic accomplishments in the post-war era considerably outweighed his efforts for the Confederacy.

Colonel Taylor's lifetime career in banking and commerce reflected the changing society of the South from a backward province into a modern industrial and sophisticated section. The author illustrates the Colonel's participation in Norfolk's growth from the stormy Reconstruction period to the eve of World War I. Throughout these years many significant municipal and social reforms were aided by, or were a direct result of, Colonel Taylor's activities.
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Special mention should be made of the splendid cooperation and assistance of: Janet Taylor, Walter Herron Taylor's granddaughter; Lucille Portlock and Peggy Hale of Kirn Library's Sargeant Memorial Room (site of the Taylor Family Papers); as well as the guidance of my advisor and mentor, Dr. Peter C. Stewart, Associate Professor of History, Old Dominion University.
While searching for a suitable topic to meet the requirements for a thesis in History, this author discovered the Taylor Family Papers at the Kirn Memorial Library in Norfolk. These papers contain an invaluable perspective on Southern history extending from the antebellum era into the early twentieth century. This collection served as the main focus and motivating force behind the selection of "Walter Herron Taylor and His Era."

Colonel Taylor's life was a reflection of the changing society combined with the growth of Norfolk from a small provincial seaport into a major urban center. Indeed, it is the purpose of this paper to demonstrate the various contributions of Walter Herron Taylor toward the development of the city of Norfolk, including his involvement in the social, political, and economic history of Virginia.

This treatise will also show that Taylor's civic accomplishments far outweigh his more famous roles as Robert E. Lee's devoted adjutant during the Civil War and later the author of two books about his commander. Although this premise appeared as a formidable challenge, it eventually became a pleasant task to reveal the numerous achievements of the unassuming Colonel.
The Colonel's participation in Norfolk's development spanned over four decades, from the stormy Reconstruction era to the eve of America's entrance into World War I. This was a crucial period of growth for the old seaport, not equal in proportion to the "Boom periods" produced by the military expansion during the two World Wars, but significant in that it was the time during which the foundation of a modern city was established. Throughout these years many beneficial municipal and social reforms were aided by, or were a direct result of, Colonel Taylor's activities.

Although this paper will clearly emphasize Taylor's extraordinary avocation in commerce and civic advancement, it will not overlook his function as Civil War historian and his loyal service to the Confederacy. This military phase of Taylor's life will be thoroughly documented and will shed light on the Southern patriot's mystique. His pride and love of his region were continued during his distinguished career throughout the post-war period. In summary, Walter Herron Taylor, the personification of the Renaissance man, transferred defeat in war into triumph in peace.
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CHAPTER I

THE FORMATIVE YEARS

Walter Herron Taylor, who became Lee's "right hand," was born on 13 June 1838 in the Taylor-Whittle house at the corner of Freemason and Duke Streets. This was not only one of Norfolk's oldest houses but was also considered one of the finest examples of Federal architecture in the country. Walter's birthplace was shared by six generations of the Taylor family. Mention should be made that he was a direct descendant of Adam Thoroughgood, one of the first English settlers and major landowners of the lower Tidewater region.

His grandfather, Richard Taylor, emigrated to America in 1797 and eventually became one of Norfolk's most prominent

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citizens. After Richard and his brother, John, acquainted themselves with local conditions and business prospects, they entered the field of importing and merchandising dry goods. The brothers were profoundly influenced by Norfolk's flourishing trade with the West Indies, Europe, and the different states of the young republic. Richard Taylor became interested in commerce and finance, a trait which endured in the family members through the early twentieth century. This energetic immigrant from the British Isles personified the emerging merchant class in the late eighteenth century. Norfolk was a busy seaport in an agricultural colony and an entity apart from the rest of Virginia. The characteristics of its people had more in common with Boston or Philadelphia than with the planters of the James or the York Rivers.

Although they competed with the landed aristocracy in wealth, elaborate homes, possession of slaves, and adhered to the Anglican Church, while attaining a "certain degree of breadth and culture;" there were fundamental differences:


They were first of all practical, keen businessmen, lacking the taste for political life, the urge to study, and the philosophical view, which the plantation system fostered in their neighbors.7

The old seaport may not have produced the caliber of Washington, Jefferson, and Madison, but it did create its share of worthy citizens like Richard Taylor and his descendant, Walter Herron Taylor.

Richard Taylor soon entered the fertile field of marine and fire insurance and became associated with the Phoenix Fire Assurance Company of London, England.8 He was able to capitalize on numerous conflagrations that threatened the very existence of this small but growing seaport.9 With fire fighting rather primitive in those years, the local populace resorted to desperate measures, even the use of gunpowder.10 Such extreme action was caused by late arriving fire engines and a scarcity of fire buckets. Thus the fires were checked only by blowing up houses in its path. The result of this continuous crisis in municipal affairs encouraged Taylor and his colleagues to form the first volunteer fire department in Eastern

7Ibid, p. 25.
8Norfolk Gazette, 18 July 1808, p. 3.
Virginia. The volunteer firemen usually contained the leading political and social members of the community and were ultimately responsible for the organization and establishment of the first fire insurance companies in America. Unfortunately, in spite of all these efforts, insurance rates continued to climb, primarily due to the constant utilization of timber for the construction of new buildings. Richard Taylor's lineage, especially his grandson, Walter Herron Taylor II, inherited this legacy of diligence in the world of underwriting and pursued it into allied businesses.

Another aspect of Richard Taylor's almost unlimited activities was in the strategic realm of transportation and communication, symbolized by the Dismal Swamp Canal. He took an active role in the enterprise as a member of the Board of Directors during the crucial years of 1810 –


14Norfolk Herald, 8 May 1811, p. 3; 6 December 1811, p. 3.
Despite its many problems, the Dismal Swamp Canal saved Norfolk from complete ruin during the British blockade of the War of 1812. This involvement foreshadowed his ambitious grandson's interest in the railroad industry. As was to be the case, Walter Taylor became occupied in the progress of various local and interstate railroad systems throughout a major part of his lifetime.

Richard Taylor's career also included the acquisition of many profitable properties in Norfolk, Portsmouth, Gosport, and in the fertile wilderness of Kentucky. One of Taylor's wise investments was his purchase of 80 acres of land on the west bank of the Elizabeth River in the Portsmouth parish. A further example of his wisdom can be found in his purchase of land in Gosport. Gosport became the center for the shipbuilding business and was destined to exercise immense influence on the economic

15 Ibid, p. 3.

16 Wertenbaker, p. 163; Moses Meyers and Son to Ludlow Dashwood, 29 August 1814, Meyers Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, File #2605b17-18; Norfolk Gazette, 14 April 1808, p. 2.


18 Last Will and Testament of Richard Taylor, 5 July 1827, Norfolk City Clerk's Office, Norfolk; Norfolk Herald, 27 Oct. 1820, p.1; referring to "Gosport Property For Sale."
and social future of Portsmouth as well as her sister city of Norfolk.19

Walter Herron Taylor's grandfather died in Norfolk on 27 June 1827 in his fifth-sixth year, after a lingering illness of many months.20 This respected figure of the Norfolk community left a legacy of family leadership and moral courage, which was sustained through the next three generations.

Elizabeth Calvert Taylor outlasted her illustrious husband by thirty-three years and lived long enough to witness the Yellow Fever epidemic of 1855 as well as the eve of the Civil War. She gave birth to eleven children, including the father of Walter Herron Taylor II.21

The Colonel's father, Walter Herron Taylor, was born in 1809 and inherited Richard Taylor's home and property on Church Street, which included Calvert's Lane.22 But more importantly, Taylor emulated his father's gift for achieving success in the business world. He carried on


20American Beacon, 28 June 1827, p. 3.


the family interest in local civic affairs, a trait that his son, Walter Herron Taylor II, continued through the twentieth century. Both father and son forged a strong link of love and understanding which influenced Walter Herron Taylor II's long and productive life.

In addition to assisting his mother in the boarding house business, Taylor's father also dealt in land speculation—in lots situated in the "Sweet Country Seat on the neighboring Bayside," in what is now the western central section of Ocean View. Six months earlier, Taylor joined forces with some of the most prominent members of the Norfolk community, including investors from Portsmouth, Edenton, and Baltimore, to form the Ocean View Company. The company had chosen a most "delectable location for a rural settlement and a healthful summer retreat." Walter Taylor and his colleagues also invited proposals for the lease of a ten-acre parcel of land for construction of a hotel to accommodate the anticipated flow of tourists.

Unfortunately, a yellow fever epidemic later in 1855, followed by the "War Between the States" and Reconstruction, delayed significant resort development until the 1870s. Two decades later Taylor's son, Walter Herron Taylor II,


24Southern Argus, 8 June 1855, pp. 2-3.

25Norfolk Herald, 1 Jan. 1855, p. 2.

26Southern Argus, 23 March 1855, p. 3.
would carry out his father's dream of developing Ocean View into a first class vacation area.27

In 1849 Walter Taylor contributed prudent leadership to the infant gas industry after Norfolk, a city of 14,000 people, began to consider the use of gas for lighting thoroughfares and avenues.28 Thus, on 31 May 1849, at a meeting held at the office of Tazewell Taylor, the company was formally organized under the title of the City Gas Light Company of Norfolk.29 Taylor's father joined a distinguished Board of Directors which included: C.W. Newton, Richard Dickson, Tazewell Taylor, and Dr. A.T.M. Cooke.30

Problems arose for Taylor and his associates during the spring of 1850 due to crude manufacturing conditions and the hazardous nature of resin which led to the incineration of the plant.31 This continuous threat of inflammability finally eliminated resin in favor of coal. Despite these drawbacks, which resulted in danger to life and

27Colonel Taylor played a vital role in the development of Ocean View - see Chapter III.


30American Beacon, 1 May 1849, p.2; Southern Argus, 4 Oct. 1849, p. 2.

31H.W. Burton, pp. 214-15; W.S. Forrest, p. 245. Irate residents failed to obtain a verdict against Taylor's company for damages, but upon threatening further litigation, the company settled by arbitration.
property, the populace of Norfolk accepted this innovation with great enthusiasm.32

As his father before him, Walter Taylor was quite active in the Norfolk Common Council, and played a pivotal role in the city's pursuit of improved transportation.33 While serving on the City Council, Taylor and his prominent colleagues were instrumental in bringing the railroad to the Tidewater area.34 The Portsmouth and Roanoke Railroad, initiated in 1832, began service to Suffolk in 1834 and reached Weldon by 1836.35 However, due to poor management, inferior equipment and direct confrontation with the Petersburg and Roanoke Railroad, the rail line soon failed and was "abandoned."36

One of the most traumatic events in young Taylor's life was the premature death of his father during the yellow fever epidemic of 1855. Walter Herron Taylor fell victim to the "great pestilence" in the summer of 1855. Many Norfolkiains, including Taylor and Dr.

33Norfolk Herald, 5 April 1833, p. 2.
34Ibid, p. 2.
George D. Armstrong, the Norfolk Presbyterian minister, because of their untiring efforts, became legendary heroes during this epidemic. Armstrong later wrote a graphic account of his experiences in his work "A History of the Ravages of the Yellow Fever in Norfolk, Virginia, A.D. 1855," that described the ninety-day terror in vivid detail.

When the first frost finally halted the pestilence, two-thirds of the white population had been stricken, and one-third of the Blacks—2,000 persons had died.

Taylor's father had been secretly taken to Baltimore after being infected with the deadly malaise, but to no avail. As Reverend William N. Jackson sadly noted, "It is too true that our valued friend, Walter H. Taylor, has..."

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39 Ibid, p. 159; Lamb Diaries, 22 Aug. 1855; Winchester Watts to Samuel Watts, 8 Aug. 1855, Emmerson Papers, Portsmouth General Library, Portsmouth.

40 Interview with Janet Taylor, 31 July 1981; Norfolk Herald, 31 Jan 1856, p. 2. At the height of the epidemic, thousands of people fled to other cities such as Richmond, Baltimore and Washington; but soon many of these cities, which had first welcomed the refugees, refused to receive any more from the "pestilence"-stricken Norfolk area.
fallen before the destroyer." Many tributes were bestowed upon this Good Samaritan for his philanthropic activities: "The orphan and widow were almost daily seen at his place of business asking for aid and counsel."42

The Colonel's father bequeathed the family limited funds, in the form of life insurance. Taylor subscribed to the Norfolk Provident Society, which Forrest described, "as one of the most useful institutions ever established in the town."44 Incorporated in 1820, the Society's original assets by 1855 totaled $220,000 and it appeared by the records, that it contributed to the relief of the families of seventy-five of its deceased members.45

Walter Herron Taylor's mother, Cornelia Wickham Cowdery Taylor, lived an additional forty-four years, and was 88 years old at the time of her death in 1899.46 In commenting


43Last Will of Walter Herron Taylor I, 21 Aug. 1855, Norfolk Circuit Corporation Court Book #8, Norfolk City Clerk's Office, Norfolk. The actual cash assets have not been disclosed.

44W.S. Forrest, Sketches of Norfolk, pp. 152-53.


on her demise, the *Norfolk Dispatch* stated:

> In rearing sons to be useful and honorable men and daughters to be representatives of the social culture and delightful hospitality of Norfolk, she has done a work which stamps her as a remarkable strong and sweet character.47

Young Taylor's father was a staunch believer in education and during his brief but productive life encouraged the growth of free public schools. He participated as a trustee in the Lancastrian School in the early 1850s.48 For 41 years this was Norfolk's nearest approach to a free school, yet it resembled a free school chiefly in only one respect - it had both local and state financial support.49 Thus, Taylor's keen appreciation of schooling compelled him to seek out the finest education available for his sons, especially for Walter Herron Taylor II.

The future colonel spent his primary years at a private school operated by Miss Serena Holden from 1844 to 1847.50 Afterwards, he obtained his intermediate and secondary

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education at the Norfolk Academy. This venerable and prestigious center of education dating from 1728, is considered one of the oldest schools in the country. Its funding, comparable to the Lancastrian School, depended on both public and private sources.

Young Taylor attended the academy from 1848 to 1852, during which time he was the recipient of the General Merit Award for academic achievement during the school year of 1848. Moreover, at Norfolk Academy he acquired his first taste of military training, as Headmaster, John B. Strange introduced military science to the curriculum in 1845. "Walter Taylor entered into all our sports with spirit and zest," recalled his old friend, Reverend Giles Cook. He was also among the foremost in his studies and quite popular with his co-students - "boys and girls."

During Taylor's years at the Norfolk Academy, the school also played host to one of America's most famous

52 Ibid, p. 45.
writers, Edgar Allen Poe, as reported by the American Beacon:

Mr. Poe recited with fine affect, extracts from the poetic effusions of Longfellow, Bryant, Willis and Edward Pinkney, who said he was born too far South to be appreciated by the North American Quarterly Review - and from the works of Shelly, Byron, Moore, Hood and others.56

Thus, it can be seen that Taylor was exposed to the literary culture of his day and acquired respect for the arts. At the conclusion of Poe's lecture, Taylor's family and friends, seemed "highly gratified by the intellectual repast which had been set before them."57 With the completion of his preliminary studies at Norfolk Academy, Taylor became a member of a select club of Virginians, who obtained their education through the tuition-based system.58

In 1853 Young Taylor entered the West Point of the South - Virginia Military Institute. Situated in Lexington, Virginia, and located between the lofty Blue Ridge and Allegheny Mountains in the picturesque Shenandoah Valley, the Virginia Military Institute, a state-owned college of engineering and science, had been founded on the site


57Ibid, p. 2. In his later years, Taylor promoted and sponsored various cultural organizations in Norfolk.

58Dale Glenwood Robinson, The Academies of Virginia, 1776-1861 (Richmond: The Dietz Press, 1977), p. 59. All privately owned Norfolk schools operated on a tuition basis, making it difficult for the average poor child to obtain an education. Finally this condition was changed in 1850, when Norfolk by an act of the Virginia Assembly was authorized to establish a free public school system. It was not until 1858, however, that Norfolk's first four public schools for any white person between the ages of six and twenty-one were opened.
of a state arsenal in 1839. Francis H. Smith, who had
graduated from West Point in 1833 and subsequently became
an instructor at his alma mater, was at the time of Taylor's
arrival, the V.M.I. superintendent and professor of math-
ematics at Hampden-Sydney College. Beginning with Smith,
who doubled as professor of mathematics, and John Thomas
Lewis Preston, professor of French, the school enjoyed
a steady growth until the Civil War.

The young cadet's rather formal yet warm relationship
with his father, Walter Herron Taylor I, is revealed through
several letters written during this period. Taylor's father
mentioned:

> It is about time to shut the store. I would
however seize a few moments (for the mail not
occurring again for several days) to acknowledge
the receipt of your welcome letter to your dear
mother, of the 23rd, and furthermore, to take
that special notice of some of the contents which
you would expect from me, through your good
mother's reply.

His father showed Victorian frugality as he insisted
that Walter’s arrangements for the purchase of clothing
be deemed "judicious and economical." The older Taylor

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60 Ibid, p. 274.

also stressed the need to keep within the rules of the Institute, "however much they may be disregarded by other cadets." The Colonel's father was, however, delighted to learn that his son had gone regularly to work and promised to do well.62

On another occasion Taylor's father advised his son regarding finances:

In the instance of your purchase, all would have been well, yet all young men do not make the best and proper use of money. Devils might result to some from its too free use.63

The young cadet's father evidently asserted a powerful force on his son's moral character and scholastic development as he wrote:

Never be satisfied with a superficial knowledge of your lessons - your motto patience and perseverance, you will I think deserve the honors, and the finish of the race, which is far better than to obtain them by cheating. . . . You will have the same success as your brother had, and by great diligence and hard struggle he gained great credit as a cadet.64

During this period, Taylor's father also corresponded with the superintendent, Colonel Francis H. Smith. Both of these gentlemen shared a warm rapport in business and personal affairs. In one letter to Smith, Taylor reported that his family was overjoyed by the news that young Taylor said nothing of his ailment, and hoped he was entirely

62Ibid.


64Ibid.
free of "painful swelling." In this same note Taylor reminded the superintendent of an account past due and hoped it would be taken care of when it "shall suit your convenience," as he feared, "I shall begin to be in debt soon unless my usual good fortune attend, and some articles 'in my line' be required instantly." Taylor senior added one more "pitch" in his postscript:

Sugar, molasses and coffee - all advancing in price and it will be well if our stock is not already laid in for the spring - to purchase at once.

The Colonel's father continuously inquired into his son's academic career. On one occasion he wrote Colonel Smith that his family was most gratified at the stand taken by Walter in his last report card in regard to "merit" and scholastic achievement. The senior Taylor also thanked Smith for his good counsel, which he felt would encourage Walter to make a serious effort to maintain his grades.

Two months later the young cadet found himself in trouble with the Institute. As the elder Taylor wrote,

65 Walter Herron Taylor I to Colonel Francis H. Smith, 6 April 1855, V.M.I. Archives, Lexington.
66 Ibid.
67 Ibid.
68 Walter Herron Taylor I to Col. Francis H. Smith, 29 May 1855, V.M.I. Archives, Lexington; "Course of Studies at V.M.I." (1855), V.M.I. Archives, Lexington, pp. 11-13. This reveals Cadet Taylor's class and conduct standing for the academic year 1854-55. He was fourth out of 76 in conduct and finished with high grades in: Math, Latin, Drawing and Composition, and Declamation.
"Walter had so for forgotten what was due himself, his friends and the valuable institute over which you preside as to be guilty of the breach of one of its wholesome regulations." This violation of school principles prompted an immediate court martial hearing for the young cadet. It appears that Walter was involved in the ancient school custom of hazing, or as his father described it, "maltreating a plebe."69

Fortunately young Taylor was spared the shame of dismissal, as Walter Herron Taylor explained:

This narrow escape of punishment will, I trust, be a salutary lesson and a warning to him not to engage in what he may deem sport, when the act is positively forbidden by law and the consequences of his inattention to order made so serious to himself and friends.70

Taylor's father informed Smith that his son, now anxious about the consequences of his "indiscretion," was aware for the first time, the dangers of the loss of hard-earned honors just recently enjoyed, as "other 'officers' do, he must have shrunk from 'trial.' He hoped that Walter would make a serious effort to recover his position with the Institute and his friends,

... not only to save his doting parents all grief by reason of disgrace befalling him, but to make him the joy and pride of their hearts in his continuing as true cadet, a faithful officer, as far as in him lies, as ornament to the Institute.71

69Walter Herron Taylor I to Col. Francis Smith, 25 July 1855.
70Ibid.
71Ibid.
Unhappily, the future Colonel's academic experience was aborted by the death of his devoted father. Shortly after his passing, an old friend of the family, William E. Taylor, then visiting at the Healing Springs, corresponded to Superintendent Smith:

A letter from Robert rec'd today mentions that Walter Taylor's death must occasion the removal of his son, Walter, from the Institute and the consequent loss of education. I do not understand whether he has yet left or will leave at Xmas. Without circumlocution let me say to you that I will charge myself with the expenses of the boy till he graduates if his mother will allow him to remain. Will you communicate with her? You need not mention my name unless absolutely necessary, but say that a friend of her husband wishes to do it.  

Smith received a second letter on the same day of William Taylor's generous offer. The bereaved cadet advised his mentor, Superintendent Smith, that his board was already paid at the Institute, and that he would return to Lexington and then stay there until his family returned home, whereupon he would rejoin them. The young cadet stressed that when he returned, instead of employing his stay there by continuing his second class course, "I will study arithmetic and review my bookeeping." Even at this early stage of development, young Taylor demonstrated his alert and analytical mind when he mentioned that his father left


\footnote{Walter Herron Taylor II to Col. Francis Smith, 19 Sept. 1855, V.M.I. Archives, Lexington.}
several papers which presented an accurate account of the prevailing "state of affairs." He also requested advice from his friend, Colonel Smith.74

In a letter to Colonel Smith on 24 September 1855 the former cadet reluctantly turned down all efforts to finance the balance of his education. In referring to the various offers of assistance, including the one made by Judge Crump, Taylor was gratified to discover that his father's friends were "noble ones, indeed, and continue their kindness towards his children." Taylor gave two reasons why he could not accept these extremely generous offers:

One is that I'd necessarily feel under obligations and would not be satisfied until I had repaired them and in second place my presence is required at home to carry on the business of my dear sainted father.75

After examining his father's papers, Taylor made a brief assessment of the state of his business. From a balance sheet taken 1 July he discovered that the debits and credits at that time nearly balanced, and from an inventory rendered during the same period, Taylor concluded that there was on hand a stock amounting to $14,000 at "smallest possible calculation."76 "This all makes an excellent start and it seems," exclaimed the future banker

74Ibid.
75Ibid.
76Ibid.
and financier, "as if this was the path of my future life pointed out by providence."\textsuperscript{77}

Apparently, Taylor's father had utmost confidence in his son's intelligence and character, as he had made young Walter the sole executor of the estate. Additionally, young Walter attempted to support his mother and family in their battle for survival. Thus, at the early age of seventeen, Taylor assumed adult responsibilities.\textsuperscript{78}

In a later note to Smith, Taylor hinted about his financial insecurity, reminding him of an outstanding debt and requesting $30.00, "as we are short of funds." The former cadet was hesitant to draw from his mother's account, which was deposited in Baltimore. He then requested the remaining portion of his credit to be forwarded, "as you see best."\textsuperscript{79}

Despite the extensive and unselfish efforts of the "new head" of the family, business conditions created by the unhappy combination of the yellow fever epidemic and the Bank Panic of 1857 led to the liquidation of his father's company in the winter of 1857. Taylor again appealed to Colonel Smith for the balance of funds that were due him,

\textsuperscript{77}Walter Herron Taylor II to Col. Francis H. Smith, 9 Oct. 1855, V.M.I. Archives, Lexington.

\textsuperscript{78}Col. Francis H. Smith to Walter Herron Taylor II, 19 Aug. 1965, Taylor Papers. At the close of the Civil War, Smith offered his former cadet the position of Treasurer of the Institute.

as expenses while at the Virginia Military Institute "were much more than I imagined." Young Taylor confessed: "A very extravagant youth that Cadet Taylor, I would not trouble you but in these precarious times every dollar must tell."

Undoubtedly, Taylor was concerned about the Bank Panic of 1857, when he reported that the Farm and Exchange Bank of Richmond suspended premiums: "You have heard of it; all the New York City banks," he wrote to Francis Smith, "also those of Boston suspended specie payment, in fact suspension, North in general. The Norfolk Bank still firm, how long?"

During the autumn of 1857, not without warning, a serious day of reckoning arrived. Banks and corporations collapsed, railroads went bankrupt, land values dropped sharply, and building operations came to a sudden halt. This economic crisis was an outgrowth of the "Boom" decade that followed the Mexican War. State banking was poorly regulated and as panic spread from the Ohio Valley into the urban centers of the East, young Taylor observed that all but one of the New York banks suspended payment on

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81 Ibid. During the week of Sept. 5-12, stocks fell about 8 to 10 percent in a day.


83 Walter Herron Taylor II to Francis Smith, 16 Oct. 1859, V.M.I. Archives, Lexington.
In October the banking system of the country declared an enforced holiday. With the approach of winter, unemployment increased as bread lines formed; ominous signs of social unrest appeared in the industrialized cities. Confronted by English competitions and balked Southern low tariff policies, the industrial East turned to the new Republican Party. The Mid-West, stunned by bank failures, and faced by Southern hostility to free land, also moved closer to the new party.

The Cotton belt was less affected by the panic—cotton crops were stable, prices were high, and banks were generally sound. In the case of the Taylor family, however, small businesses located in seaports such as Norfolk depended heavily on trade with the Northern cities. Thus, many of the small establishments failed during this severe depression. The Bank Panic of 1857 not only influenced Taylor's future conservative financial practices but also reinforced the South's illusion of its superiority over the Northern capitalists.

In order to supplement the family income, young Taylor decided to seek employment in the Norfolk business com-

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85 Ibid, p. 207.


community. His first venture in the commercial world was with the Norfolk branch of the Bank of Virginia, where he was appointed a Note Clerk in the Office of Discounts and Deposits on 22 December 1855. With his good looks and appealing personality, Taylor became an astute businessman, very successful, with a highly organized and literate intelligence. This would be his first, but certainly not his last, association with the banking industry. Two decades later Taylor would became one of the state's leading financiers.

Young Taylor worked in an institution which belonged to the earliest Virginia branch banking system, which specialized in deposit and discount. While they were regularly chartered, few restrictions were imposed and they were conducted on a "go-as-you-please" plan. The broadest powers were given the board of directors in making rules and conducting the affairs of the bank. The failure to pay depositors on demand carried a penalty of 10 percent on the whole amount from the time of such failure until paid. Provision

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88 Appointment of Walter Herron Taylor, as Note Clerk, 22 Dec. 1855, Barton Myers Papers, O.D.U. Archives, Norfolk.


90 Colonel Taylor became President of the Marine Bank in 1877, one of the most prominent and influential banks of that period.

against speculation and the rate of discount to be charged were the principle restrictions in the charters.\(^92\)

By the critical year of 1860, the Bank of Virginia's sound banking system had become so prevalent that the Virginia banknotes were exchanged at a very trifling discount in New York. The discount was no more than what was necessary to send the note to Virginia and bring back the coin, say one-fourth of 1 percent.\(^93\)

Although Taylor appreciated the opportunity he received at the Bank of Virginia, his restless ambition turned him toward the rapidly growing railroad business.\(^94\) Hence, on 11 May 1858 the future Colonel handed in his resignation to the bank, in order to obtain an auditor's position with the newly built Norfolk and Petersburg Railroad.\(^95\) "Having had made to me an offer for my services elsewhere," Taylor

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\(^92\)Ibid, p. 9. It bears mentioning that the branch banking system referred to here is quite different from the system of banks and branches that would emerge in Virginia in the twentieth century. The early branch banks each had their own officers and directors, raised their own capital stock, issued their own notes of circulation, and generally functioned somewhat independantly of the other branches.

\(^93\)David C. Parcell, State Banks and the State Corporation Commission (New York Tech. Assoc. Inc., 1974), p. 11; Unfortunately, during the War all of Virginia's banks eventually came to hold most of their assets in the form of Confederate securities and dollars. Thus the fall of the Confederate States of America coincided with the complete and immediate collapse of the entire banking system of Virginia; Norfolk (City), Common Council Records, No. 8, 17 Dec. 1855, Norfolk.

\(^94\)Walter Herron Taylor II to the Board of Directors, Bank of Virginia, 11 May 1858, Taylor Papers.

\(^95\)Ibid.
wrote to the Board of Directors, "my interest demands that I should accept." In commenting on his resignation as Note and Collection Clerk, Taylor sadly noted:

To those of you to whom I am indebted for the offer of the situation, at the time when I so much needed assistance, I now hold in those of you whose sympathies were so excited for the fatherless boy of an old companion and friend.96

The Norfolk and Petersburg Railroad, chartered in 1852, to which the city subscribed a large block of stock, was organized in 1853 with Dr. Francis Mallory, President; George W. Camp, Treasurer; and William Mahone, Chief Engineer. To the latter goes the credit for the design and layout of the roadbed, which provided a passenger and freight terminal in Norfolk proper at the east end where Main and Wide Water streets met. A track down the middle of the road facilitated transfer of freight to the river wharfs.97

By July 1858 trains were running from Norfolk to Petersburg and soon the railroad could proudly boast:

This through freight route is now in operation, and bids fair to succeed beyond the highest expectations of its most sanguine friends. It opens up to Norfolk city, by means of these Western connections, a field for her enterprise, which, if they are properly embraced, would insure rapid ascendency among the emporiums of America.98

96Ibid.
97Whichard, p. 475. When the line was completed in 1858, a fifty-two mile stretch of its eighty miles was the longest piece of straight railroad track in the world.
98Norfolk City Directory, 1859, p. 146. Alas, it was too late for the line to develop any sizable traffic before the war began in 1861.
Taylor's role in the development of the Norfolk and Petersburg Railroad also produced the start of a long and fruitful relationship with William Mahone, the railroad builder and political leader. In writing to his fiance, Betty Saunders, Taylor displayed his reluctant admiration for Mahone as he complained:

I have not seen you for a young age, have promised myself the pleasure of being with you for the last two evenings, but Mr. Mahone has ruined all my calculations in this matter. By keeping very late hours - I live in hope of better days.

After his exposure to the railroad industry, Taylor was offered an advanced post in the Bank of Virginia, which he enthusiastically accepted. This opportunity arose by the death of Colonel Robert W. Bowden, Cashier of the Bank of Virginia. At a meeting of the Board of Directors on 15 March 1859 William D. Bagnall, who had for a number of years acted as bookkeeper in the Bank, was unanimously elected Cashier to fill the vacancy created by the death of Colonel Bowden.102

Whereupon Eli Barrot, the efficient Discount Clerk, was unanimously elected bookkeeper to fill the vacancy.

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99 In 1860, Mahone became both President and Chief Engineer; however, he was soon completely occupied with the Civil War and led the famous Mahone Brigade. After the war, Taylor became quite instrumental in furthering Mahone's railroad career.

100 Walter Herron Taylor II to Betty Saunders, 4 Aug. 1858, Taylor Papers.


102 Ibid, 19 Mar. 1859, p. 3.
occasioned by the election of Mr. Bagnall to the office of Cashier.\textsuperscript{103} He declined to accept the office and "Walter H. Taylor, Esq., of the Norfolk and Petersburg Road was then elected."\textsuperscript{104}

Thus at the age of twenty-one, Taylor was elevated to the lofty position of First Accountant of the Office of Discount and Deposit.\textsuperscript{105} The young auditor was well on his way toward success in the world of commerce.

\textsuperscript{103}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{104}Agreement of Board of Directors, Bank of Virginia, 21 Mar. 1859, Moses Myers Papers, Chrysler Museum Collection, O.D.U. Archives, Norfolk.

\textsuperscript{105}Ibid.
CHAPTER II

SOLDIER AND PATRIOT

The young auditor's life was transformed permanently as Norfolk observed with growing resentment and alarm the series of events which were rushing the country on to the tragedy of disunion and civil war. For a decade Norfolk's newspapers were full of stories about the troubles in Kansas, the Dred Scott decision, the Lincoln-Douglas debates, the John Brown raid, and the deep split in the Democratic party. When the break came, the Old Dominion had remained loyal to the Union for four months. However, it was not until 15 April 1861 that Lincoln forced upon her the choice of battling for or against the Confederacy, as he called for 70,000 volunteers for 90 days.¹

It should be added, however, that Taylor's initial experience with a military organization occurred soon after John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry when he joined a local militia group, the Southern Guard, which was organized

¹Norfolk Herald, 5 Dec. 1859, p. 2. John Brown, the fanatical Abolitionist, attempted to ignite a slave rebellion. This "bloody" act outraged the South. Captured and brought to trial, Brown was found guilty of treason, and conspiring with slaves and others to rebel, and murder in the first degree. H.W. Burton, History of Norfolk (Norfolk: Norfolk Virginian, 1877), pp. 36-37.
on 2 December 1859.\textsuperscript{2} Norfolk, as well as the majority of the slave-holding Southern states, fell into a state of panic as Governor Wise emotionally called for taking up arms.\textsuperscript{3} While firebrands like Edward Ruffin felt that the threat of a general slave insurrection was needed to "stir the sluggish blood of the South."\textsuperscript{4}

Following John Brown's execution, a martial spirit aroused in the "breasts of our young men," encouraging them to become soldiers. New companies were established and wartime preparations were made in earnest.\textsuperscript{5} In this atmosphere of patriotic fervor, young Taylor was elected Orderly Sergeant in his unit, the Southern Guard or "Company F," as the unit became known shortly after its incorporation into Norfolk's 54th Regiment of militia. When first created, the Southern Guard adopted a temporary uniform of red flannel hunting shirts, black pants, and glazed hats, as worn by Virginia Military Institute cadets. The uniform was required in order to receive equipment (such as arms), and it was further hoped that the Virginia legislature, then meet-

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{3}New York Times, 5 Dec. 1859, p. 4. The Times was citing the \textit{Richmond Enquirer}, 4 Dec. 1859.
\item \textsuperscript{5}H.W. Burton, p. 36.
\end{itemize}
ing, would repeal the old militia law and establish a uniform for all volunteer companies.\textsuperscript{6}

As his father before him, Taylor based his military service on the concept that all men had a duty to defend their society, and these militia organizations played an important part in the defense of this country. They were at least partially trained in limited military tactics for short terms of service, a feature which distinguished them from professional military forces.\textsuperscript{7}

Taylor and his fellow militiamen received no monetary compensation for their services except when called into active duty. On the other side of the ledger, the militiaman was required to pay dues, the amount varying within the organization. It is true that he received his arms and ammunition, but uniforms and accoutrements were to be paid for by the militiaman himself. The appearance of the latter became a serious point of pride among the various companies. Very often the appearance and quality of the uniform depended on the affluence of the men in the company.\textsuperscript{8}

Virginia's militia law provided an elaborate organization of staff and line composed of four divisions, each commanded by a major general. The high ranking officers


\textsuperscript{7}\textit{Minutes of the Norfolk Light Artillery Blues}, 22 Sept 1828 - 8 April 1841, Owned by the Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, on loan to the O.D.U. Archives; Carroll Walker, \textit{Norfolk: A Pictorial History} (Virginia Beach: Donning, 1975), p. 17.

\textsuperscript{8}Ibid, p. 17.
in these organizations were usually prominent citizens or elderly men of political influence.\(^9\)

On 13 March 1860 Taylor's company of young recruits drilled for the first time in full uniform, with fifty men present. It was further declared that the caps, cartridge box, and cross belts were modeled after the style of the 7th Regiment of New York.\(^10\) In the spirit of cooperation with the various militia groups, it was resolved unanimously that Company "F" accept the proffered escort of the Norfolk Blues for the final parade.\(^11\) Hence, a necessary rapport developed between the various militia units.

Though a continuing rivalry existed among them, leaders at the time hoped that successive years would find them exercising the proper feelings towards each other. Thus, R.C. Taylor, Secretary of the Norfolk Light Artillery Blues,

\(^9\)Douglas Southall Freeman, R.E. Lee, A biography, 4 vols. (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1936), 1:486. The militia's staff had never functioned and was incomplete in 1861. The volunteers, though numerous, had never been regimented and had no officers above the rank of captain.

\(^10\)Southern Argus, 13 March 1860, p. 2; H.W. Burton, p. 37; Richmond Daily Dispatch, 1 March 1861, p. 3. Although the Daily Dispatch noted that Company F's uniform consisted of a "blue frock coat, trimmed with gold cord, blue trousers, black cap and pompon," there is, however, no evidence of gold cord on Taylor's uniform; and with the exception of the epaulettes, the sash and sword, and perhaps the buckle, there is no indication of rank other than the fact that the subject is obviously an officer.

\(^11\)Minutes of the Norfolk Light Artillery Blues, 26 March 1856 - 4 April 1875, excerpt from 7 March 1860, O.D.U. Archives, Norfolk.
saw agreement in the "struggle to gain the supremacy in efficiency and discipline."\textsuperscript{12}

By the Summer of 1860, the dark clouds of war began to gather over the old seaport.\textsuperscript{13} After Lincoln's election Taylor fell into a deep melancholy and now regarded war as inevitable. However, his personal problems reappeared to overshadow the threat of warfare. Taylor's close friend, Julia Robertson, wrote that, "the expectation of trouble and that his services will be required here is all that keeps him in Norfolk."\textsuperscript{14} Heartsick over his apparent one-sided love for Betty Saunders, he was convinced that it would be better for him to leave Norfolk. In a letter to Betty, Julia Robertson quickly confirmed Walter's plans to leave his home town and it made her very sad to think of it. "What will I do without him?" exclaimed Julia. Walter did not expect to do any better, or even as well, in a business way at first, but could not be content in Norfolk.\textsuperscript{15} Young Taylor confessed to Julia:

\begin{quote}
I do not murmur but I have been unfortunate enough to form an ardent attachment for one who does not reciprocate it and I find I am incapable of overcoming the same as long as I remain here.
\end{quote}

Julia cautioned Betty against impulsive action:

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{12}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{13}Thomas Wertenbaker, \textit{Norfolk: Historic Southern Port}, p. 197.
\textsuperscript{14}Julia Robertson to Betty Saunders, undated, approximately late 1860, Taylor Family Papers.
\textsuperscript{15}Ibid.
You love Walter this minute but try to fight against it - I think from what he said, that he will shortly write you or go to see you at Hawood. Please don’t deceive yourself. If any of the old feeling gets possession of you, let it have its way, don’t resist it.16

This uneven courtship later developed into a permanent bond of love and devotion.

In the meantime, at the other end of the historic stage, Robert E. Lee was struggling with his conscience - torn between love for his country and devotion to the Old Dominion:

I can anticipate no greater calamity for the country than a dissolution of the Union. It would be an accumulation of all the evils we complain of, and I am willing to sacrifice everything but honor for its preservation. I hope, therefore, that all constitutional means will be exhausted before there is a resort to force. Secession is nothing but revolution.17

Although political, economic, and social interests drew Virginia toward the Confederacy, Virginians hesitated to withdraw from the Union their fathers had done so much to establish and maintain. Unionist sentiment was still strong in many areas, especially in the western part of the state, and Virginians participated in futile attempts to reach a compromise between the Lincoln administration

16Ibid.

7Ralston B. Lattimore, ed., The Story of Robert E. Lee (Washington, D.C.: Colortone Press, 1964), p. 23; Lattimore cited J. William Jones, ed., Life and Letters of R.E. Lee (New York: Neale Publishing Co., 1906), pp. 120-21. When asked whether a man’s first allegiance was due his state or the nation, Lee replied that he had been taught to believe and did believe that his first obligations were due Virginia.
and the Confederates. As a matter of record, a special session of the Virginia General Assembly, which began in Richmond on 2 February 1861, was still in session on 12 April when Confederate batteries in Charleston opened fire on Fort Sumter and forced the surrender of its Federal garrison. Three days later Lincoln called for troops from all the states still in the Union to put down the "insurrection" in the South. Governor Letcher refused to provide a single man for this purpose, and on 17 April the convention voted to secede rather than share in the "subjugation" of Virginia's sister states.18

Meanwhile, in Norfolk County, war's excitement and frenzy held high carnival. When the link which bound Virginia to the Union was severed,19 Taylor and his fellow militiamen assembled and paraded the streets with bands and Confederate flags. It should be mentioned that a few months before the outbreak of the war, Company F became a part of the 3rd Battalion of Virginia Volunteers, composed of the city's volunteer companies under Major William E. Taylor.20 As may be expected, Taylor's company enrolled for active service on 19 April 1861 and that night took part in the removal of the powder from the United States


19William H. Stewart, p. 68.

magazine at Fort Norfolk. Afterwards, the company was sent to Craney Island where it had charge of a battery of heavy guns. On 30 April 1861 Company F was mustered into State service, and in May 1861 was designated as Co. G, 6th Regiment of Virginia Volunteers. Taylor, a lieutenant by this time, served only a very short time with the company after the commencement of hostilities, for unknown to him at this time, family forces were working in his behalf. An uncle by marriage, General R.L. Page (who had resigned a captaincy in the U.S. Navy to serve his state), recommended Taylor to his first cousin, Robert E. Lee. On 2 May and at Lee's request, governor John Letcher ordered the serious-minded young officer to Richmond and assigned him to Lee's headquarters.

Thus, from the quiet and peace of a bank office the future adjutant passed at once to the "stirring scenes of the tented field." On 13 May 1861 Taylor wrote to Eli Barrot, his old friend at the Bank of Virginia that

21Ibid, p. 272-309.
22Interview with Janet Taylor, 31 July 1981; Calendar of Virginia State Papers and Other Manuscripts, 11 vols. (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1875-1893), 11:142; Norfolk Landmark, 2 Mar. 1916, pp. 1-3. Initially Taylor was called to Richmond to serve under the then Adjutant General of Virginia forces, Col. Robert S. Garnett. Lee was at that time in charge of organizing the troops that were to constitute the Army of Northern Virginia and Taylor in this way came under the observation of General Lee.

his resignation had been accepted by the Board of Directors. The young officer confessed that there was a great difference between his civilian and military occupations. He now began work in the morning after breakfast and kept constantly at it until 10 or 11 at night, only allowing himself a break for meals, and the "most amusing part of it," Taylor wrote, "is that it's for love and glory."

Taylor insisted that everyone must make the necessary sacrifices for the good of the Old Commonwealth and since "those in power decided that I must remain here, why here I must stay until they order one elsewhere."25

Walter Taylor viewed dimly Virginia's infantile provisional army as "all humbug" which "will be knocked into pie when we enter the Confederacy." He disagreed that officer appointments to the provisional army were permanent and thought that those commissioned as provisional (like himself) had nothing in advantage of those commissioned as volunteers. "So if I'm not put an end to by the Yankees," exclaimed the young aide, "I very much fear that I will find myself on the Parrish after the war and no officer at all." But Taylor made up his mind to one crucial point: "that is, never to starve."26

24 Walter Herron Taylor to Eli Barrot, 13 May 1861, Taylor Papers.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.
The young but prudent Confederate officer also took the required precautions to offset the unpredictable elements of warfare. In a letter he informed Eli Barrot of his debts to the bank and requested that he pay them immediately and to charge all the minor bills to his mother's account: "that is ma's account and will be O.K. even if I am killed."

Youthful impatience regarding desire for promotion was revealed in Taylor's appeal to Colonel Francis Smith for an officer's position in the Provisional Army. He requested that Smith use his influence to secure him the rank of Captain. Taylor complained that his present position and rank were nothing in advance of that held by him before he came to Richmond. Furthermore, he pointed out that previously he was a 1st Lieutenant with an excellent company and duties to perform and "not near so onerous as those now devolving upon me." Moreover, such an assignment put him on a promotion track, which was not the case in his present situation, as he had not opportunity of demonstrating his military capacities.27 The young impatient officer explained that gentlemen younger than himself and "no better qualified (pardon my seeming vanity)" had been appointed captains. Taylor also stipulated that he gave up an important position as accountant at the Bank of Virginia in order to serve the state in a military way.28

27 Walter Herron Taylor to Francis H. Smith, 27 May 1861, V.M.I. Archives, Lexington.

28 Ibid.
The future colonel, in a rare departure from his usual modesty, boasted that "For though I am pretty hard-worked, and I flatter myself, I can confidently refer you to either Gen. Lee or Col. Garnett as to my usefulness and steady application."29

Four days later, on 31 May 1861, Governor John Letcher officially appointed Walter Herron Taylor as Assistant Adjutant General, with the rank of Captain.30 At the time, Colonel Robert S. Garnett, Adjutant-General of the state forces, the best informed and most efficient man in military detail that Taylor had ever met, was Lee's right-hand man in organizing and marshaling the troops that constituted the Army of Virginia. Young Taylor would be greatly indebted for the experience then gained under Colonel Garnett in all matters of particular in active military service.31

Taylor had never encountered Lee before coming to Richmond and recorded his first impression of the noble Southern leader:

I was at breakfast at the Spotswood Hotel when he entered the room and was at once attracted and greatly impressed by his appearance. He was then at the zenith of his physical beauty. Admirably proportioned, of graceful and dignified carriage, with strikingly handsome features, bright and penetrating eyes, his iron-gray hair closely cut, his face cleanly shaved except a

29Ibid.

30Calendar of Virginia State Papers, 11:142.

mustache, he appeared every inch a soldier and a man born to command.32

From that time until the day he bade his chieftain farewell in Richmond after the return from Appomattox, Taylor was seldom separated from Lee. For two years Taylor was Lee's principal adjutant-general, in hourly communion with him. In Western Virginia, in South Carolina, and in the enemy's country, as well as on the battle-scarred hills and plains of Virginia, the young adjutant witnessed his commander's triumphs and defeats from Mechanicsville to Appomattox, the disharmony among his staff, as well as the creation of an efficient war machine. Taylor also observed Lee when hardships thinned his ranks until courage alone sustained them.33

Of all the personal staff at Army Headquarters, the man most known to visitors and on most intimate terms with the aides of other general officers was Lee's energetic adjutant. He was the youngest of Lee's official family, and much against his wishes had to serve as "inside man" because of his skill and accuracy in handling the official correspondence that Lee detested. Taylor's autograph is one of those most familiar to history students. This legible writing never suffered the changes of older years. It remained until his death almost precisely what it was,


when, in clear, concise script he wrote Lee's battle orders.  

In order to grasp Taylor's enormous responsibilities as Lee's indispensable adjutant, one must appreciate the inner working of the Confederate Army staff system. Lee organized the adjutant general's quartermaster, subsistence, medical, pay departments, and an engineers corps. By a series of brief general orders Lee sought to establish system as rapidly as practicable within the departments, and as a short cut he adopted the old regulations of the United States Army wherever applicable.

Virtually no attempt was made to set up an intelligence service as a department of the general staff. Reports of the plans and movements of the Federal forces were gleaned from Northern newspapers, travellers, or private letters. Some of the most crucial movements were incorrectly reported or were not discovered at all. The Virginia press, in its zeal to inform its readers, informed the enemy as well, and helped to create in Lee a distaste for newspaper methods. The personal staff of the commanding general, like the general staff, had to be constructed in an atmo-


36Ibid, p. 638.
sphere of impermanence. Although he had started without a single assistant, Lee was determined to employ only trained men, so far as they were procurable. "It is necessary," he wrote in an early veto of nepotism, "that persons on my staff should have a knowledge of their duties and an experience of the wants of the service to enable me to attend to other matters." It was an ideal he never fully realized.37

In March 1862 General Lee returned to Richmond and was assigned on the 13th, under the direction of President Jefferson Davis, to the command of all the armies of the Confederacy. This post created by special act of Congress, permitted Lee a personal staff of a military secretary, with the rank of colonel, and four aides-de-camp, with the rank of major. Whether assigned as aides or otherwise, the officers doubled in brass and functioned variously as military secretary, assistant adjutant general, engineer officer, or for whatever duties there appeared to be a current need.38

General Lee offered Taylor the choice between remaining in the adjutant-general's department or an appointment as major and aide-de-camp under the new law. Upon being pressed by Lee to declare his personal preference, Taylor selected the position of aide because he thought that he


38Taylor, p. 42.
would be spared much confinement in headquarters as well as the trouble of attending to papers and routine work. He felt that this would give him the opportunity to be more on the field of battle. Therefore, one of the positions of major and aide-de-camp was assigned to Taylor and the three others appointed were: Major T.M.R. Talcott, Major Charles Marshall, and Major Charles S. Venable. 39

Along with the annoying questions of promotion and discipline, Lee had to perform during the winter of 1863-64 the continuous duty of soothing the sensibilities of staff officers, whose minds the weariness of war was disturbing. 40 Taylor informed his fiance, Betty Saunders, that he expected to lose his tentmate, Venable: "He is the only congenial spirit I have here, and I shall miss him very much." Venable transferred to the Conscription Bureau with an increased rank. Taylor advised his comrade-in-arms to accept the appointment as "Lee doesn't make our time pleasant here and when promotion is offered his staff elsewhere, it is not to be wondered at if they accept the offer." He cautioned Betty not to say anything of this as Venable had requested this to be treated confidential. The young adjutant also stated not to expect his promotion in order to avoid disappointment: "I only care for it on your account but General Lee will not push us up tho everybody else

39Ibid.

40Walter H. Taylor to Betty Saunders, 27 April 1864, Taylor Papers.
goes." Taylor lamented that he had given up all hope of being more than a major - certainly as long as his "say governs the matter." As far as Lee was concerned, his first priority was the successful conclusion of the war rather than lifting the morale of his officers by offering them promotions in rank. He was in the habit of exploiting the members of his small staff as he saw fit, especially in the case of Major Taylor.

The young adjutant complained often to his fiance on the frustrating problems of Lee's personal staff. Revealing a glaring weakness in Lee's command, Taylor explained that Johnston, Beauregard, and others had "ten, twenty, and thirty Adjt. generals," whereas, Lee's army possessed only one. He admitted that at times he could hardly stand up under the pressure of work and although he did not care a great deal for rank, he wanted to hear that, "I please my general." Lee's aide confessed that he was happy to be of some use in spite of his commander's apparent lack of appreciation:

Everybody else makes me flattering speeches, but I want to satisfy him. They all say he appreciates my efforts but I don't believe it, you know how silly and sensitive I am?

41 W.H. Taylor to B. Saunders, 15 Nov. 1863, Taylor Papers.
42 Ibid. Taylor was eventually promoted to Lt. Colonel.
43 W.H. Taylor to B. Saunders, 21 Nov. 1863, Taylor Papers.
44 Ibid.
Despite his frustrations and grievances, Walter Taylor still maintained a veneration for his chieftain. Of those critical days in Richmond, when both he and his general were undertaking new and unfamiliar duties, he stated:

I had excellent opportunities at that time to observe General Lee as a worker, and I can say that I have never known a man more thorough and painstaking in all that he undertook.45

Early at his office, punctual in meeting all engagements, methodical to an extreme in his way of dispatching business, giving close attention to details – but not, as is sometimes the concomitant, if not the result of this trait, neglectful of the more important matters dependent upon his decision – he seemed to address himself to the accomplishment of every task that descended upon him in a conscientious and deliberate way, as if he himself was directly accountable to some higher power for the manner in which he performed his duty.46

One particular source of annoyance and anxiety was Lee's correspondence, especially since Taylor's leader did not enjoy writing. Indeed, he wrote with labor, and nothing seemed to tax his humor so much as the need for writing an interminable official communication.47

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45 W.H. Taylor to B. Saunders, 27 April 1864, Taylor Papers.

46 W.H. Taylor, p. 43.

47 Ibid, p. 44. With unlimited problems pressing down upon him, Lee worked long hours at his headquarters in the Mechanics Institute on Ninth Street in Richmond.
Even though there were moments of unhappiness in the dealings of the older man with the rapid, astute young assistant adjutant, Lee would usually relieve these by a kindly inquiry or by a friendly chat in a headquarters tent. 48 "The Tycoon," as his staff officers sometimes irreverently styled Lee, generally used only Major Marshall and Major Venable in the field except during action, and then he pressed into service all of his aides and the officers of the general staff attached to his headquarters. Major Taylor was left in charge of the paperwork, though whenever opportunity offered, he continued to indulge himself in daring feats on the field of battle. Colonel Chilton remained titular chief of staff, but either because he was not suited for the post, or because Lee was his own principle staff officer, Chilton gradually turned over the duties of that office to Taylor and acted as inspector general. 49

From previous experience, Taylor recognized Lee's dislike of reviewing army communications, as the general would never present a communique for his action unless it was very important and demanded his judgment and decision. 50 Once when he had not undergone an audience for several days, it became necessary to see his commander.

48 W.H. Taylor to B. Saunders, 20 March 1864, Taylor Papers.

49 W.H. Taylor to B. Saunders, 14 Nov. 1863, Taylor Papers.

As soon as Taylor entered the tent he noticed that Lee was not in a very pleasant mood, and while they discussed some details of irksome character, Lee's neck and head began to give a little "nervous twitch or jerk," a certain sign of bad humor, and his manner became harsh. Sensitive that his efforts to save Lee irritation were not appreciated, Taylor became angry, petulantly throwing down the offending papers, and started to walk off. At the tent door Lee stopped him, "Major Taylor, if I with all the burdens of the army on my shoulders, should forget myself, I hope you will not forget yourself." "Was there ever a more gentle and considerate and," wrote Taylor, "yet so positive a reproof?"\textsuperscript{51}

Some of Lee's officers felt that the General retained great austerity of manner, rendering him aloof. Such was not the case, for in their small circle of the personal staff, there was between Lee and his military family a degree of camaraderie that was "perfectly delightful."\textsuperscript{52}

The staff's conversation especially at table, was free from restraint, unreserved as between equals, and often of a bright and jocular vein. Lee never availed himself of the advantages of his position to obtain "dainties" for his table or any personal comfort for himself. The use of liquors, while not forbidden, was never habitual in their camp. There was no general mess-supply, and rarely,  

\textsuperscript{51}W.H. Taylor, \textit{General Lee}, p. 156.

\textsuperscript{52}Ibid.
if ever, "a private nip." Although Taylor used to think that General Lee would have been better off if at times he had taken a little stimulant.53

Upon one occasion, after a rather harsh exchange of words between Taylor and his commander, the adjutant wrote, "He is so unreasonable and provoking at times; I might serve under him for ten years to come and couldn't love him at the end of that period." Yet, when Lee left him that morning, he presented Taylor with a peach. "Ah! but he is a queer old genius. I suppose it is so with all great men."54

Despite their differences, these two historical figures developed a strong bond which lasted until the death of Marse Robert in 1870. This was exemplified by their experiences upon the battlefield. While serving in the ill-fated western Virginia campaign, snow began to fall, and several nights were so frigid that at bedtime Lee suggested to Taylor they sleep together for warmth. "And so it was vouchsafed to me to occupy very close relations with . . . my commander."55 Roads that had been impassable sloughs of mud now became slick with ice. Sickness prevailed among the men, none of whom had tents, and many were without blankets.

53Ibid, p. 158. Taylor recalled but one instance of Lee indulging in this way, and that was at Petersburg where he received from some admiring friends a few bottles of wine.


55W.H. Taylor, pp. 31-32.
It was futile, and, to Lee's mind, cruel to carry on active military operations under such conditions, so he brought the campaign to a close.\textsuperscript{56}

General Lee was furiously attacked by arm-chair critics such as E.A. Pollard for his management of affairs in western Virginia.\textsuperscript{57} Yet, Walter Taylor observed that nobody felt public judgment so sharply as Lee, although he characteristically refused to justify his position or come to his own defense. When Taylor called his attention to an especially venal attack which was as unjust in its conclusion as it was untrue in its statements, he asked Lee why he suffered such unwarranted slander in silence. Lee told him that while it was very hard to bear, it was perhaps quite natural that such "hasty" conclusions should be announced, and that it was better not to attempt a justification or defense, but to go steadily on in the discharge of duty to the "best of our ability, leaving all else to the calmer judgment of the future and to a kind Providence."\textsuperscript{58}

"Grandfather's deep and abiding faith in almighty God," recalled Janet Taylor, "carried him through every

\textsuperscript{56}\textit{Ibid}, p. 32.


\textsuperscript{58}\textit{W.H. Taylor, Four Years}, p. 201; Taylor, \textit{General Lee}, pp. 34-35.
crisis." The young adjutant wrote in detail of the religious services which were held at Camp Violet Bank, and in one of the more revealing notes he described a Sunday when he accompanied General Lee to church in Petersburg. Although Taylor enjoyed their visits to church, he was quite distressed over his preoccupation with protecting his chief from an adoring populace.59

On 7 January 1863, General Lee recommended his trusted aide be promoted to Lieutenant Colonel as:

Major Taylor has been on my staff since July 1861 and has for the greater part of the time performed the duties of A.A.G. He is intelligent, industrious, and acquainted in the discharge of his duties, and his character irreproachable - I know of no better person for the appointment.60

Some time later, Taylor became quite indignant when certain friends implied that this new promotion had inflated his self-esteem. "The idea of imagining that I was 'stuck up' as sistress would say, why I am indeed wounded and can almost cry." The Colonel insisted that a Lieutenant Colonelcy was not such an exalted position even if the individual was at the "right hand of the greatest man of the day." Furthermore, he was flattered that his old friends


60Robert E. Lee to Confederate War Department, 7 Jan. 1863, Lee Family Papers, Washington and Lee University Archives, Lexington, File #L5114d28, #L51C737; Taylor, p.viii. On 31 Jan. 1861, Taylor was elevated to major and thus entitled to the "imposing" salary of $162 per month. His final promotion - to Lt. Colonel - came on 7 Oct. 1863, and raised his monthly stipend to $182.
placed stability and humility amongst his many attractive characteristics - "to say nothing of a fair degree of common sense." 61

From 1 June 1862 until the end of the war, this conscientious young Virginian with above-average intelligence and high sense of organization performed the most valuable tasks at Lee's headquarters. Taylor wrote dispatches for Lee and often carried messages in person to corps and division commanders; he greeted all persons who came to see Lee, and he usually decided whether or not they would be announced to the General; he attended to a host of details on his own initiative; and he had the sole responsibility for preparing and submitting the monthly returns of the Army of Northern Virginia. 62 In that last capacity, Taylor, more than any man in the Confederate armies, knew the effective strength of Lee's forces in all the engagements. These valuable statistics, along with personal reminiscences and extracts from his wartime letters, were to lead to Taylor's first book, Four Years with Lee. 63

As adjutant general of the Army of Northern Virginia, Taylor's duties were onerous and difficult. How he managed to be so popular with the rank and file of the army remains

61 W.H. Taylor to B. Saunders, 22 July 1864, Taylor Papers.

62 Taylor, Four Years, p. vii.

a mystery. Perhaps the answer was related to a burning desire to fight, which on occasion Taylor could not control.64

On 10 May 1864 during the struggle near Spotsylvania Courthouse, which was one of the most sanguinary battles of the war, Grant sent Sheridan's cavalry against Stuart, who had been hovering on Grant's flanks and reporting his movements to Lee. Shortly after 6 P.M., Federal infantry smashed through Dole's brigade and threatened to turn Lee's whole line. Lee prepared to ride to the sector, but his staff insisted that it was too dangerous. Obviously dejected, the General muttered: "Then you must see to it that the ground is recovered." In a flash Taylor was on his horse and riding into the midst of the fighting. He dismounted, seized a flag, and led a group of Confederates in a counterattack that succeeded in stunting the Federal advance until nightfall, when the "bluecoats" withdrew back to their own works.65

Lee's losses in this engagement, which took place hardly more than six miles north of Richmond, were only about one-third of Grant's, but Grant could replace them and Lee could not. Possibly the greatest casualty in this battle was the death of J.B. Stuart. Lee lost the man

65V. Dabney, p. 343.
on whom he had relied to keep him informed of Union movements. Thus, the people of Virginia and the South had sustained one more "shattering blow."66

Grant, now pursuing his attrition policy to the maximum effort, declared that:

I shall take no backward steps. We can maintain ourselves at least, and in the end beat Lee's army, I believe. Send to Belle Plain all the infantry you can rake and scrape.67

Grant's casualties in the Wilderness alone came to 60,000.68

Although the Grey Fox's strategy had been brilliant, Grant's mystifying tactics from Spotsylvania to Cold Harbor were equally so. The Wilderness campaign was long and savage, and in the course of it, Grant's numerically superior army lost more troops than the total of Lee's entire force. Yet in spite of the grim toll, Grant apparently had the correct idea — to pin Lee down and compel him to fight the kind of war Grant could win.69

By June 1864 Grant faced the Confederates at Petersburg, twenty miles south of Richmond, his object being to approach the capital from the rear and cut its links with the rest of the South. In the initial attack on Petersburg, Grant again suffered heavy losses, after which he

66D.S. Freeman, 3:313-14.
67V. Dabney, p. 343; W.H. Taylor to B. Saunders, 15 May 1864, Taylor Papers.
69Ibid.
was forced to dig in for what proved to be a nine-month siege – the longest of the war. The siege of Petersburg provided another opportunity to demonstrate the young colonel's courage and tenacity.

On 31 March 1865 the Federals suddenly attacked, and obtained possession of the White Oak Road which threatened the flank of Lee's army. At this moment, Colonel Taylor,

. . . a fine looking young man, distinguished for his superb gallantry, rode up. He galloped in front and between the lines, waved his hat, and shouted "Come ahead boys! God bless your hearts, I love everyone of you. Come ahead. God bless you all!" The scene cannot be pictured and the enthusiasm cannot be imagined. With one redoubled and unceasing cheer, the line went forward and crushed everything in its path.

One eyewitness to this battle observed that he could recall no more "pleasant incident in the war." Taylor wore a black cape and looked every inch a soldier, as he proved himself to be. "We trust he has a good wife and a family of fine boys who may emulate the actions of the father," remarked the Abbeville Medium war correspondent. One decade later, the Norfolk Landmark, in referring to Taylor's wartime exploit, concluded that not a few others


could be added, but "we hesitate to mention them because Colonel Taylor is obstinately modest and we might wound his sensibilities."\textsuperscript{73}

The bootless, ragged Southern troops faced the painful reality of "no food, no horses, no reinforcement."\textsuperscript{74} Despite the threat of ultimate defeat, Lee managed to find time to seek provisions to keep his men from starvation, while he wrestled with strategic problems.\textsuperscript{75}

Earlier in the war, the South began to experience serious desertion in the ranks.\textsuperscript{76} As the war continued, the neglected Southern farmlands caused an increase of desertions and led to a demand for stringent measures against the offenders:

> Labor and confinement is no punishment to a coward, or to a man so devoid of principle as to desert. If the deserters in any command was found to be injurious to his comrades, then they should extend the duration of punishment to five years hard labor at Richmond.\textsuperscript{77}

\textsuperscript{73}Ibid, p. 7.

\textsuperscript{74}D.S. Freeman, 4:47.

\textsuperscript{75}Ibid. Freeman cited Jubal A. Early, C.S.A. Autobiographical Sketch and Narrative of the War (Philadelphia: Lipponcott, 1912). V. Dabney, p. 348.


"Unless some measures can be devised to replace our losses," Lee sadly noted, "the consequences may be disastrous." The General was concerned with the natural military results of the "enemy's numerical superiority." During the final campaign of the war, there were enough deserters and draft dodgers in the back country of Carolina to have doubled the numerical strength of his forces.

As the war progressed towards its inevitable climax, the Colonel admitted that shortages of food limited the proud Confederate cavalry. Alarmed over the lack of forage for the animals, he wrote: "This depends on the departments in Richmond." Ironically, there was food in the Confederate warehouses but it was difficult to procure trains to ship the needed supplies to the front lines.

The Federal Army's policy of "Total War," resulting in the destruction of vast areas of Southern farmland and confiscation of valuable livestock, was graphically expressed in a letter to Colonel Taylor from Private James M. Holladay, Co. D, 30th Virginia Infantry, requesting forty-eight hours

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79 Ibid, p. 150.

80 W. H. Taylor to B. Saunders, 15 Nov. 1863, Taylor Papers. Taylor was apparently referring to the inefficient Confederate bureaucracy, which along with major logistical problems contributed to the South's defeat. *Official Records*, 4:615-16.
leave of absence to visit his family in Spotsylvania County. Holladay's family consisting of eight "white females and an infant son," endured for two consecutive years losses of their livestock, Negroes, crops, and literally all provisions. Sheridan's army sacked his house and destroyed papers and accounts of value and reduced his family to a "want of bread and meat, which they find it difficult to supply."81 This impassioned plea of solicitude for his family, which included "four sisters deaf and partially blind," came to Taylor's attention and leave of absence was authorized immediately.82

The death rattle of the Confederacy had become obvious to Taylor, although on 5 March 1865 he lamented that he could not accept the conviction that the cause was lost; that four precious years had been wasted and that "our whole future is blighted."83 Earlier, the Colonel confessed to the serious demise in military leadership, "I only wish the General had good lieutenants. We miss Jackson and Longstreet terribly, Poor Ewell - a cripple - is now laid up and unable to be in the field."84


82 Ibid. Leave was approved on 26 Dec 1864 and issued by Capt. B. Rawlings, Co. D., 30th Va. Infantry.

83 W.H. Taylor to B. Saunders, 5 Mar. 1865, Taylor Papers.

84 W.H. Taylor to B. Saunders, 15 Nov. 1863, Taylor Papers.
In desperation, Lee, who was now commander-in-chief of all Confederate forces, urged his government to arrange for the enlistment of 200,000 slaves in the army; the slaves to be freed after the war. This radical idea had been discussed for some months. From the outset of the war, the South had employed Negroes as laborers and servants in its armies. The slaves had been used quite frequently in building up Confederate fortifications. The Richmond Enquirer urged the plan the preceding October. Contrary to this conception, the Richmond Examiner asserted:

The existence of a Negro soldier is totally inconsistent with our political aim, and with our social as well as political system. We surrender our position whenever we introduce the negro to arms. If a negro is fit to be a soldier, he is not fit to be a slave.

Nevertheless, Lee's dubious opinion of the fighting quality of Negro troops was overshadowed by expediency; thus, in February 1865, he declared himself for their enlistment, coupled with a system of gradual and general emancipation. Congress hesitated and debated long, but at last, on 13 March, the President signed a bill to bring Negroes into the ranks, though without any pledge of emancipation, such as Lee had considered necessary to the success of the new policy. Bad as the fortunes of war were going,

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85 Richmond Enquirer, 27 Oct. 1864, p. 2; Richmond Enquirer, 2 Nov. 1864, p. 3; Frederick S. Daniel, ed., The Richmond Examiner, During the War; or the Writing of John M Daniel (New York: F.S. Daniel, 1868), pp. 213-14.

Lee undertook at once to set up a proper organization for the Negro troops. 87

Colonel Taylor acknowledged many ways in which the Negroes could be made useful, and various positions "now filled by white men" to which they could be assigned and their masters released for service in the army. The Negroes could do duty as cooks, teamsters, laborers, and in other like occupations; and "already some were talking of making soldiers of them, but for this," Taylor confessed, "I am not quite ready." 88 Taylor, indeed, reflected the average Southerner's viewpoint of that day. Finally, public sentiment became reconciled to the enlistment of the Negroes as soldiers, and several companies were organized, though, "as far as is known to me, they were never put in the field nor under fire." Influenced by over two hundred years of slavery in Virginia, Taylor was convinced that, individually, alongside of their masters and encouraged by them, they would have made suitable soldiers and rendered good service. 89

By the month of March 1865 the strain of four years of war was reflected in Taylor's letters to his fiancé:


88W.H. Taylor, General Lee, p. 266.

Come what will, Bette, we will both be brave, remembering the cause in which we are called upon to make these sacrifices. Better this, better anything, than submission to Northern rule!

The Colonel was concerned with the possibility of the Yankee conquest of Richmond as he remarked, "Oh, if I can only secure you against any annoyance from those wretches!"

In this letter of 19 March 1865, Taylor also showed his love and devotion to his own family, who resided in Richmond for the entire war.90

One week later, the young aide wrote his fiance that the future of the war might end in disaster within a month's time and he would attempt one great effort to return to Richmond again. "Indeed, Bette, these are trying times. But sooner n' later the end must come. Then," promised Taylor, "we shall be paid for all these trials. We shall have a home, and be spared the pain of cruel separation."91

Colonel Taylor's despair was reinforced as far greater Union hordes converged on the dwindling Confederate Army defending Petersburg and Richmond. A last-ditch Confederate attack on Fort Stedman, one of Grant's strongholds in his line around Petersburg, failed. Then came the crushing Union victory at Five Forks on 1 April.92 During this engagement, A.P. Hill, one of the most brilliant and suc-

90W.H. Taylor to B. Saunders, 19 Mar. 1865, Taylor Papers.

91W.H. Taylor to B. Saunders, 23 March 1865, Taylor Papers.

cessful commanders in the Southern Army, was killed. Colonel Taylor recalled that the troops that fired on General Hill were the skirmishers of the Federal line of battle which now advanced. Grant's tactics had been to extend his lines to the west, using his superior manpower to force Lee to stretch his own army past the breaking point. The Confederate line was so thin that it had been penetrated with little opposition and so "little excitement," that the fact was not known to either Lee or Hill.93

It became clear to Lee that Petersburg could not be held any longer; therefore, he dictated to his adjutant general a telegram for the Secretary of War, reviewing the harsh facts and outlining his plan. He concluded ominously, that all preparations be made for leaving Richmond that night. Taylor in his turn, probably from his rough notes, dictated this fateful message to the telegraph operator, who transmitted it directly to the War Department in Richmond, where it was received at 10:40 A.M.94

Two weeks before Lee's determination to leave Richmond, Betty Saunders received a letter from Taylor asking if in such an event she would consent to marry him at once. He had secured her mother's permission and thought as his

93 Ibid, p. 274. Seeing the imminent danger of his sergeant, Gen. Hill rode forward to his assistance. When he reached his side, the Federal troops opened fire. Sgt. Tucker, catching the riderless horse of his general, rode back into Confederate lines and reported the presence of the enemy and the slaying of Hill.

wife, she could pass more safely through the Union lines.95

"My heart was with the South," Betty explained, "and I wrote my glad assent."96 Hence, on the eve of 3 April 1865, when all was in readiness for the evacuation of the Confederate lines under cover of the darkness of night, Taylor requested permission of Lee to ride over to Richmond and to rejoin him early the next morning. "My mother and sister are there, Sir, and I want to tell them good-bye. And Betsy, Miss Saunders, my fiancée. We want to get married tonight." Lee replied in astonishment, "Married, what ever for?" Taylor explained that her home was behind the enemy lines, and that she was alone in Richmond. "If we hold a line somewhere South, then she could come to us." Actually, he desired to give "Miss Bettie" the protection of his name. General Lee then promptly gave approval to Taylor's plans.97

The young Colonel and a courier galloped from Petersburg to Dunlop's Station, north of the Appomattox. On

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95Ibid, p. 1378; Freeman, 4:49; Giles B. Cooke, "W.H. Taylor, A.A.G., Army of Northern Virginia: An Appreciation," Confederate Veteran, 24, 1916, pp. 234-35. Taylor also notified his brother, Maj. Robinson Taylor of Mahone's staff, encamped near Richmond, to go at once to Richmond and make "all the necessary arrangements for a very important event."

96Elizabeth Saunders Taylor, "My Wedding," Norfolk Landmark, 3 March 1916, p. 4; F. Moore, Surgeon General, C.S.A., to Betty Saunders, 24 Nov. 1863, Appointment as Clerk in the Confederate Medical Bureau, Taylor Papers. Betty Taylor lived during the war with the family of Lewis Crenshaw in Richmond, where she worked in the Confederate Medical Department and Confederate Mint.

97Taylor, p. 276; Interview with Janet Taylor.
the north side of the river Taylor found a locomotive and several cars, constituting the ambulance train, designed to carry to Richmond the last of the wounded requiring hospital treatment. He asked the agent if he had another engine. While pointing to one rapidly receding in the direction of the Confederate capital, he replied, "Yonder goes the only locomotive we have besides the one attached to this train." Turning his horse over to the courier who accompanied Taylor, with directions to join him in Richmond as soon as he could, he mounted the locomotive in waiting, ordered the engineer to detach it from the cars, and proceeded to overtake the engine ahead of them.98

In the meantime, Taylor had sent a special message to his fiance in the form of a telegram to his brother, Bob Taylor. "I will be over sometime today. See Bette and have her explain. Make all needed preparations." 99 Betty Saunders expounded to Taylor's brother that she promised to marry Walter if Richmond was to be left to the enemy: "This means our capital is to be evacuated. Make all preparations at once."100

In conjunction with pre-arranged plans, Colonel Taylor instructed Betty Saunders to go at once to St. Paul's Epis-

99 Ibid, p. 277. Taylor had exposed himself to extreme danger while attempting to transmit these vital messages.
100 E.S. Taylor, "My Wedding," p. 4; Frederick K. Maurice, ed., An Aide-de-Camp of Lee (Boston: Little & Brown, 1927), pp. 253-55.
copal Church and ask the rector to be at the Crenshaw house Sunday night at midnight to perform the marriage ceremony. 101

Miss Saunders went to the church just before the morning service was about to begin and met Dr. Charles Minnigerode, the rector, on the church portico. While she was talking to him, President Davis arrived for Morning Prayer. Overhearing the conversation, Davis asked for more details. And according to the story as is has been handed down in the Taylor family, Miss Saunders told him that Taylor would hardly have bothered to send a special messenger to her if conditions did not warrant it. 102

Davis, greatly disturbed by the news, went into the church and took his special seat. A few minutes later, General Lee's official courier walked down the aisle and whispered to the Confederate President, who arose and left immediately. Then other officials were summoned and all departed as the alarm bell began to toll. Dr. Minnigerode, the pastor, announced that the warning bell for all women to return at once to their homes was tolling. "There is some fearful trouble, I fear." 103 After services the future bride hurried back to Mr. Crenshaw to find everyone "feeding our poor, ragged, hungry" soldiers as they passed. They

101 Ibid, p. 4.


all worked until late at night and with "sore hearts, bidding them do their duty and come home victorious."

Betty Saunders was indeed a splendid example of the gallant women of Richmond who served an important role in Confederate history. After the battle of First Manassas, they threw open the doors of their homes to the refugees and the wounded. From all sections of the South women arrived to fill positions in the many government departments, to volunteer their services to the always-crowded hospitals, or to nurse members of their own families. These ladies of the South strengthened the morale of their men in office and in the field.

The young bridegroom came on the last engine that departed Petersburg that night and arrived with his family and Dr. Minnigerode at 12:30 A.M. They were then married in Mrs. Crenshaw's sitting room upstairs so that she might be present. The Colonel remembered of the moment that the occasion was not of great hilarity, though, "I was

104 Ibid.

105 Burke Davis, To Appomattox: Nine April Days, 1865 (New York: Rinehart & Co., 1959), p. 71; Kathrine M. Jones, Ladies of Richmond, Confederate Capital (New York: Bobb's Merrill, Co., 1961), p. xiv. Aside from ministering to the sick and dying, these ladies worked in government offices, munitions plants, and powder mills. They knitted and darned, and made bandages from old sheets and from party dresses. The ladies discovered ingenious substitutes for food, and often they went hungry.

106 E.S. Taylor, p. 4. Mrs. Crenshaw was ill in bed and could not go downstairs for the ceremony.
very happy; my eyes were the only dry ones in the company."107 After a delicious repast the newlyweds visited Taylor's mother and his brothers, Richard and John, who had just been released from Northern prisons.108

There was universal gloom and despair at the thought that at the next rising of the sun, the "detested" Federal soldiers would take possession of the city and occupy its streets.109 Before 4:00 A.M. on 3 April, after an abbreviated honeymoon, the Colonel bade farewell to all his dear ones, and in company with his new brother-in-law, Colonel John S. Saunders, galloped off to rejoin the army, leaving the city by Mayo's Bridge in the glare of the fire and within the sound of several heavy explosions. They both assumed that this was the final episode in the career of the Confederate Navy, then disappearing in smoke on the James River near Rockets.110

Shortly afterwards, all bridges that crossed the James River and connected with Manchester on the opposite side were in flames.111 The most remarkable scenes, however, occurred at the commissary depot. Hundreds of government

107 Taylor, p. 278.
108 E.S. Taylor, p. 4.
109 Taylor, p. 278.
wagons loaded with bacon, flour, and whiskey were driven off in "hot haste" to join the retreating army. About sunrise the doors were thrown open to the people and with a rush that seemed almost sufficient to "bear off the building itself," they soon swept away all that remained of the Confederate Commissariat of Richmond.112

By two o'clock the city was officially informed of immediate evacuation. The President, his Cabinet, the archives, and the specie of the Confederacy left the city on the Danville Railroad (the only line intact that evening). Many citizens also left the city. The City Council issued orders to destroy all the liquor in the city; also commissioners Joseph Mayo, Judge James Lyons, and Judge J.A. Merideth were to go as commissioners to surrender the city as soon as the last Confederate troops had withdrawn from the lines and had safely crossed to the south side of the river.113

The army of Northern Virginia, meanwhile, was in its death agony.114 Lee's last hope was for collaboration with Johnston's forces in North Carolina, as he intended to go to Danville and turn to his advantage the good line for resistance offered by the Dan and Staunton Rivers. The activity of the Federal Cavalry and the shortage of supplies com-


113Ibid; V. Dabney, p. 353. They carried a piece of wallpaper, on the unflowered side of which they set forth their formal request to the Federals to take possession, put out the fire, and restore order.

pelled a different course. Thus, the retreat continued up the South Side Railroad toward Lynchburg.

Despite the overwhelming superiority of the Union Army and their huge resources, Lee managed to check their pursuit from time to time, and to continue his retreat for seven days until on the morning of 9 April, the enemy confronted them in the neighborhood of Appomattox Courthouse. Taylor's close friend and colleague on General Lee's staff, Major Giles B. Cooke remembered that:

As soon as General Grant found out through his skirmishers that General Lee had evacuated Petersburg, he took possession of the city and started in pursuit of our army, which was six or eight hours ahead on its retreat. Because of the failure of the authorities at Richmond to meet us at Amelia Court House with rations for our army, we spent nearly a day in the neighborhood gathering something to eat for our men.115

Meanwhile, Taylor had ridden ahead with Lee, leaving the headquarter's wagons behind. Owing to frequent raids by Union cavalry on the slowly moving wagon train, the young adjutant placed all headquarter's records in a small chest and ordered the guards to destroy them should the danger arise of their falling into Federal hands. On 6 April a Federal force attacked the caravan near the headquarters wagon; nervous guards burned the chest and its contents. Taylor complained after the war that this action was a precaution quite unnecessary and occasioning "irreparable loss."116


Earlier, Colonel Taylor had become separated from his commander and did not rejoin him until the morning of 9 April. After making his report the General said to Taylor, "Well, Colonel, what are we to do?" In reply, Taylor expressed fear that it would be necessary to abandon the wagon trains which had already created such great inconvenience. Relieved of this burden, the army could "make good its escape." "Yes," replied the General, "perhaps we could, but I have had a conference with these gentlemen around me, and they agreed that the time has come for capitulation." "Well, Sir, I can only speak for myself," stated Taylor, "to me any other fate is preferable." "Such is my individual way of thinking," interrupted the General. "However," Taylor immediately added, "of course, General, it is different with you. You have to think of these brave men and decide not only for yourself, but for them."

Lee responded that it would be useless and therefore cruel to provoke the further waste of blood, and he arranged to meet General Grant with a view to surrender and asked Taylor to accompany him. Later the General, escorted by Colonels Marshall and Taylor, started back in the direction from which they had originally come, to meet Grant as had been agreed.117

On such a painful mission as he was now about to begin, Lee naturally would be accompanied by his adjutant general and by his military secretary, but Colonel Taylor had no

heart for being present at a surrender. He begged off on the ground that he had ridden twice through the lines that morning. Lee excused him with his usual consideration for the feelings of others. In the company of Marshall, Babcock, and Tucker, the daring orderly, Lee started up the road and beyond the thin and silent line of battle on the hillside.

"General Lee rightly divined that there would be far greater reason to hope for real peace," Taylor asserted, and the restoration of good feeling between the two sections of the country, under the conditions likely to be agreed upon between the two commanders of the armies in the field, who had learned to respect each other, than could be hoped for if the terms of a restoration of the Union were left to the determination of the politicians of the successful side.

"As far as we could learn from General Marshall considering the disagreeable nature of the business," remarked Major Giles Cooke, "nothing happened during the interview to humiliate General Lee or even to wound his feelings." Although

118 Interview with Janet Taylor, 31 July 1981. Col. Taylor shrank from this painful moment: "While I could not then, and cannot now, justify my conduct, I availed myself of the excuse of having taken two rides through our lines and to those of the enemy, and did not accompany my chief in this trying ordeal."

Janet Taylor revealed that her grandfather was afraid to show his emotions at the surrender ceremony: "We (Taylor family) are all very emotional people - We weep at the drop of a hat!"


120 Taylor, General Lee, p. 291.

121 Giles B. Cooke, p. 6.
General Lee asked several times for the terms of surrender, General Grant avoided the question by talking about old army friends and other affairs. Finally, Grant handed a paper to Lee with a request to read it and tell him whether the terms suited him. General Lee agreed to the conditions but added one more appeal:

I should like an exception to be made as to the men's horses so that when they return to their homes they would be able to put in spring crops, and also the officer's side arms.

Before leaving, Grant asked Lee if his men had anything to eat. Lee informed him that his troops had nothing to eat for two or three days. Grant then directed Sheridan to issue as many rations to Lee's men as they needed.122

In retrospect, the Grey Fox noted in his final official report to the Confederate government:

If we could have forced our way one day longer, it would have been at a great sacrifice of life, and at its end I did not see how a surrender could have been avoided.

Lee pointed out that the troops had no subsistence for man or horse, and it could not be gathered in the country. The supplies ordered to Pamplin's Station from Lynchburg were not able to reach the battered troops, thus the Confederates, deprived of food and sleep for many days, were worn out and exhausted.123

122Ibid, pp. 6-7.

When word spread that surrender had been finalized, hardened but exhausted Southern soldiers wept openly. Lee's usual self-control failed him, too, as he rode back to his headquarters. Officers and men pressed about him, trying to touch their beloved commander or his horse. His deep voice trembled and his eyes filled with tears as he told them over and over to go home, plant their crops, and obey the law.\(^\text{124}\)

On the next day General Lee issued General Order No. 9, the farewell address to his army:

> After four years of arduous service marked by unsurpassed courage and fortitude, the Army of Northern Virginia has been compelled to yield to overwhelming numbers and resources. I need not tell the survivors of so many hard-fought battles who have remained steadfast to the last that I have consented to this result from no distrust of them; but feeling that valor and devotion could accomplish nothing that would compensate for the loss that must have attended the continuance of the contest, I determined to avoid the useless sacrifice of those whose past service have endeared them to their countrymen. By the terms of the agreement, officers and men can return to their homes and remain until exchanged. You may take with you the satisfaction that proceeds from the consciousness of duty faithfully performed, and I earnestly pray that a merciful God will extend to you His blessing and protection. With an unceasing admiration of your constancy and devotion to your country, and a grateful remembrance of your kind and generous


> "How easily I could be rid of this, and be at rest.
> I have only to ride along the line and all will be over."

But in the next breath he spoke of the people of the South, their bleak future, and the need to help their recovery.
consideration of myself, I bid you all an affectionate farewell.125

Thus, "Attrition had done its work," wrote Taylor; the career of the Army of Northern Virginia was closed and its banners furled; but the record of its achievements "glows with undiminished splendor and constrains the admiration of the world."126

With the disbanding of the Confederate Army, all staff officers said farewell to General Lee except Taylor, who rode with him back to Richmond and posed on the back porch of the Lee house on Franklin Street for the famous Brady photograph with Lee and son Curtis.127 Taylor and his bride of two weeks borrowed General Lee's ambulance and mules and began their wedding tour to Goochland. "We spent a happy month in the country with our relations and came to Norfolk in June, where we started life anew," wrote the new bride,

... poor but proud, for though our men were paroled, our ladies owed no allegiance to the Federal government. They fought with their tongues and will do until they die.128

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125Ibid, p. 293. The famous message was declared on 10 April 1865.
127Ibid, p. viii; E.S. Taylor, p. 4.
CHAPTER III

RECONSTRUCTION AND RENAISSANCE OF NORFOLK

In the despair that clutched most of Virginia after the war, it was hardly surprising that many white citizens remained "unreconstructed." An extreme example was the secessionist fanatic, Edward Ruffin, who upon hearing of the South's surrender, shot himself immediately after committing to paper his "unmitigated hatred . . . of the perfidious, malignant and vile Yankee race."2

However, there existed voices of reason in this troubled land. The pro-Andrew Johnson Norfolk Post insisted that:

Our Southern contemporaries appear determined to pursue a course calculated to drive every conservative Union man of the Border states into the ranks of the radicals. They forgot that, if it had not been for the conservatism of Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Johnson every single dollar of their estates would have been confiscated long since, and that instead of losing negroes only, they would have lost everything else.3

Regardless of personal opinion, there is no question that the war left Virginia prostrate. Few would deny that

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3Norfolk Post, 13 Dec. 1865, p. 2.
it would require generations for the Commonwealth to recover from the effects of the strife and paralysis of its merchants and farmers, as well as the consequent starvation of the people. In spite of these hard conditions, the populace refused to complain. They accepted their situation with fortitude and dignity and refrained from giving public expression of indignation or from nursing old grudges.4 Although Norfolk was spared the horrors of warfare that beset other sections of the state, her commerce was almost nonexistent, her tributary railways broken, her finances deranged, her streets and buildings out of repair, and her citizens impoverished.5

In addition to these major problems, Colonel Taylor and his fellow Virginians faced a significant change in the political and social order. The emancipation of the slaves set in motion various post-war reforms which resulted in the Reconstruction Acts of 1867. These new laws stipulated, among other things, that each of the former states of the Confederacy would remain under Federal military rule until a popularly elected convention drew up a state constitution acceptable to Congress. Furthermore, blacks were to be given the right to vote for delegates to the conventions and to be delegates themselves, and no state


constitution which failed to provide for black suffrage would be agreeable to Congress.\(^6\) While the state's Constitutional Convention was still in session, civil government was partially aborted and many offices consisted of military appointees. Those who refused the Oath of Allegiance were removed from office. Those who could take the oath, including many Northerners, stayed in office.\(^7\) It should be noted that these men were not mere political adventurers seeking personal gain and plunder. Most of them, though not native Virginians, had made Norfolk their permanent home, held real estate there, and were deeply interested in its advancements.\(^8\)

This was fortunate indeed, for there was urgent need of energy, foresight, and wisdom. The city treasury was empty, a debt of nearly two million dollars hung over the people, taxes were high, the police were inefficient, and there were no water works. Although, in the two years they were in power, it was impossible for the military appointees to rectify all the evils. These officials, ably assisted by Walter Taylor, gave the city an efficient administration and earned the gratitude of the local populace.\(^9\)

Unlike some of their fellow Virginians, the people of Norfolk accepted the war's verdict in good faith and were

\(^6\)Ibid, p. 72.
\(^7\)Ibid, p. 96.
\(^8\)Norfolk Journal, 4 Jan. 1867, p. 2
\(^9\)H.W. Burton, p. 96.
willing and happy to be rid of slavery. However, the bitterness occasioned by the unnecessary cruelties of the three years of Federal occupation died out slowly.  

Respected Southerners such as Taylor's former commander, Robert E. Lee, advised all his old officers and men to submit to the authority of the land and to remain at home, now that their native states needed them more than ever.

I am sorry to hear that our returned soldiers cannot obtain employment. Tell them they must all set to work, and if they cannot do what they prefer, do what they can. Virginia wants all their aid, all their support, and the presence of all her sons to sustain and recuperate her. They must therefore put themselves in a position to take part in her government, and not be deterred by obstacles in their way. There is much to be done which they only can do.

While many of Norfolk's brave sons settled down to hard work upon returning to their homes, others like Colonel Taylor, left the state to seek employment elsewhere. Taylor travelled to Baltimore only to discover that the public institutions, as in Norfolk, stood in dread of the Federal authorities. It appeared that he was too well known as a rebel and feared that he would be compelled to migrate to New York City, where he was told that a man's Southern proclivities were rather in his favor.

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Despite the young Colonel's difficulties, he managed to find time to recover the confiscated home of his mother-in-law. However, Taylor was somewhat fearful that he would prejudice her claims if he took any action at all and hesitated about appearing in this matter.\textsuperscript{13}

In his next letter the former aide to Lee continued his description of searching for a new career with the realization that:

\begin{quote}
My fame (?) has followed me - even to Baltimore: Here, as in from Norfolk, the public institutions pay great regard to the sentiments and good opinions of the powers that be.
\end{quote}

The Colonel discovered many kind friends who interested themselves in his behalf. Nevertheless, the banks were afraid to offend the "gallant conquerers" by placing in position so "deeply dyed a rebel as your old man," wrote Taylor. If he failed in his efforts, Taylor promised to rejoin his "little darling" and try something else. The young Colonel also vowed to locate a ginger cake for his adoring wife: "You shall have some if they can be had in the city."\textsuperscript{14}

Fortunately, it was advantageous to the city of Norfolk that the Colonel was not successful in locating a position

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid; E.S. Parker to Walter H. Taylor, 21 Oct. 1965, Lee Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, File #L5114d28, #L51C737. After returning to Norfolk, Taylor took steps in the eventual return of the confiscated property to Mrs. Martha Selden Saunders. Col. E.S. Parker, military secretary to General Grant, advised Taylor that the "property in question is now in the hands of the Freedman's Bureau, to whom, application must be made."

\textsuperscript{14}Walter H. Taylor to Betty Saunders Taylor, 22 July 1865, Taylor Papers.
elsewhere and thus returned to his native town. After coming back to Norfolk, Walter Taylor resumed his peacetime ambitions and embarked upon the beginning of a life-long successful career in the business community. He first ventured into the hardware industry as a member of the firm of Taylor, Martin and Company. By 1881 this evolved into the Taylor, Elliot and Watters Company, whose warehouse stood prominently at the corner of Main Street and Market Square. "When our people were just returning to their mercantile vocations in 1865," noted Carey W. Jones,

... and all branches of trade were in a demoralized state, this 'house' entered the field, and its success may be inferred from the fact, that it is the largest and foremost hardware establishment here, and equally as large as any in the state.16

During this period of economic revival Taylor received numerous offers of employment from insurance companies, including even a proposal from his old school, Virginia Military Institute, to assume the role of school treasurer.17

15Norfolk Virginian, 16 Dec. 1865, p. 1; Norfolk Directory, 1866.

16Carey W. Jones, Norfolk as a Business Center (Norfolk: Virginian Presses, 1881), p. 177; Taylor-Parker Company, "100th Anniversary, formal Opening-Showroom-Warehouses and Offices," Taylor Papers, 21 April 1965. Eventually Taylor sold the business, then known as W.H. Taylor Co., in 1913 to Eugene L. Parker; it was renamed as the Taylor-Parker Co. By 1965, the net worth exceeded two million dollars and the corporation had become one of the leading industrial distributors in Virginia and the mid-Atlantic states.

But by then, Taylor had made other arrangements in the business world. At this particular stage in Norfolk's development, the Colonel and his fellow veterans went to work with a determination to rebuild their shattered fortunes and to make Norfolk more prominent than it had ever been before to the commerce of the country.18

The resumption of railway and canal connections had a magical effect on the old seaport's morale and led to an improvement in commerce. The restored railroads brought in key products such as cotton, corn, peanuts, potatoes, flour, tobacco, wheat, and lumber.19 But it was "King Cotton" that caused excitement on the wharves of Norfolk. The Norfolk Virginian declared:

Cotton is coming in so fast from the interior that our merchants find great difficulty in sending it forward. The demand has been so great upon the New York steamers that they have advanced their freights from seventy-five cents to $1.75 per bale.20

In addition to his extensive business activities, the Colonel entered the political arena as well by ably serving in the Common Council in 1866 and 1867. His financially oriented mind aided the nearly bankrupt city


19Norfolk Virginian, 20 Nov. 1865, p. 2; Norfolk Virginian, 19 Feb. 1866, p. 2.

immeasurably. In this capacity Taylor faced one of the supreme challenges of his lifetime, restoring his municipality to a stable fiscal situation. "Sadly reduced, was the people's taxpaying capacity by the abolition of slavery and of the 'Confederate debt,'" said the Commercial and Financial Chronicle, nearly the whole of the accumulated and available capital of the South was practically annihilated. Of the rest, that which had been invested directly in the public works brought little return or none, and that which had been invested in state bonds, perhaps the greater part of the whole debt, was shrunk two-thirds in market value.

Colonel Taylor and his associates were confronted with many problems. One in particular was the need for a new water supply. In October 1865 the voters, by a three to one ratio, authorized the loan of $500,000 for a city water system. The source of the water was still not determined and the city's status in the money market was low. Although Norfolk required funding for major

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21Norfolk, City of, Common Council Record, No. 9, 3 July 1866 - 17 July 1866. Taylor was appointed to the Committee of Finance on 3 July 1866.


23Ibid, p. 7.


projects badly, it was unable to borrow the money. Therefore, it resumed the old system of drinking water from wells and cisterns.26

Some years later when Norfolk was once again in financial difficulty, good fortune smiled on the old seaport as Taylor saved the situation by reforming the finances, establishing a sinking fund and making it possible to liquidate the debt.27 Taylor became Chairman of the Board of the Sinking Fund Commission from its inception in 1881 and resigned in 1911.28 He was determined to improve the credit of his beloved city.29

The Finance Committee recommended the issue of bonds bearing five percent to redeem a series of bonds about to mature, and Marshall Parks of the Common Council was sent to New York while W.A. Graves of the other branch went to Baltimore to place the bonds. They reported on their return that the bonds could not be marketed at par, principally because Norfolk had no sinking fund.30 "This fact and the inadvisability of increasing the taxes made the situation one of great interest," asserted the Norfolk

27Norfolk Virginian-Pilot, 26 June 1940, p. 2.
Ledger-Dispatch. Norfolk's city government concluded that there was only one sound and "sane method" of building up sinking funds, and that was to do so on an actuarial basis. The city fathers followed the theory by which insurance risks are estimated, and the premiums adjusted. Taylor and his associates projected the principle that such an amount should be paid into the sinking fund each year and not only distribute the burden over the duration of the bond's lifetime for which the sinking funds were established, but be such that at maturity of the bonds the sinking funds would contain an amount comprised of the annual installments plus the annual increment - sufficient to pay the bonds.31

Thus the success of the sinking fund reflected not increased taxes but decreased interest and resulted in a surplus of one million dollars by 1911. The Ledger-Dispatch announced with pride that "the sinking fund strengthened the credit of the city and that her bonds now sell at par on a still smaller rate of interest."32

Although the Colonel was proud of his public devotion to the community after having rendered uninterrupted service in this capacity for thirty years, he strongly felt that he was justified in resigning his position.33

32 Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch, 11 July 1911, p. 4.
33 Norfolk Landmark, 29 June 1911, p. 3; Norfolk, City of, Common Council Record, No. 24, p. 74, 27 June 1911; p. 76, 28 June 1911.
most respected citizen would not withdraw his resignation despite protests from the Board of Aldermen. "As a member of the Council of the Finance Committee," declared Judge Wilcox, "and as a citizen, it would prove a severe loss to the city to lose the services of Colonel Taylor."

Occupied as the Colonel was in his varied affairs, public and private, he still managed to find time for a brief but productive career in the Virginia Legislature. The vote in the 1869 election was the largest that had ever been cast in the history of the Commonwealth. Candidate Taylor joined an unusual coalition of Confederate Democrats, ex-Whigs, a few Negroes, and moderate Republicans to form the Conservative faction, which defeated the radical Republicans. This new political force faced numerous and complex problems which included

... a new and cumbersome government, the provision for an expensive public school system, a large public debt, and other new and fearful obstacles — social, political and racial.

Prior to the election, Colonel Taylor was nominated by acclamation — unanimously by the Norfolk City and Princess Anne County Conservative Convention. "We are very glad to see that the good people of Norfolk City and Princess Anne

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34 Ibid, p. 3.
35 The Richmond Dispatch, 5 July 1869, p. 2.
have nominated Colonel Walter H. Taylor as the conservative candidate for the Senate of Virginia. We have known Colonel Taylor from boyhood almost, and we know of no compliment too high to pay him on the score of character and moral worth. Intimately associated with General Lee as a member of his military family during the war, Colonel Taylor is a truly representative man of the class of young Virginians into whose hands the destiny of the old Commonwealth is to pass as our fathers pass away, and the people of Norfolk and Princess Anne County have honored themselves in selecting him as their standard-bearer. 38

On 5 July the young candidate made a speech which fully sustained his reputation as a gallant soldier. "No man who had the pleasure of being his auditor will disagree with this opinion," observed the Norfolk Journal. "It was really a gem of practical wisdom and was loudly applauded. He will receive a large vote in this county." 39

This highly controversial election focused on the radical Underwood Constitution. The sections of the new constitution which most distressed Virginia's traditional leaders provided for adult suffrage, including Negroes, along with articles which would have denied the right to vote or to hold office to anyone who had assisted the Confederate cause during the war. It was apparent to all that such provisions would place Virginia in the


39 Ibid, 6 July 1869, p. 2.
control of the Negroes, a small proportion of native whites, and the carpetbaggers who had come to the state.  

In this tense situation which threatened the basic structure of ante-bellum Virginia, a group of the Old Dominion's leaders headed by Alexander H. Stuart offered a compromise. They would make no objection to Negro suffrage if the disfranchisement and test-oath clauses in the Underwood constitution could be voted on separately from the main body of that document. The proposal was violently opposed by some white Virginians who were unable to bring themselves to accept unlimited Negro suffrage, and even regarded the proposal as treason. However, Stuart and his committee went ahead, and they gained the approval of President-elect Grant. He commended the compromise to Congress, which accepted it.

It was also clear by 1869 that party lines were solidifying around the contending railroad interests. The radical Republicans directed by General Henry H. Wells, the

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42 George Rye to William Mahone, 3 March 1869, and J.C. Taylor to William Mahone, 18 March 1869, William Mahone Papers, University of Virginia Library & Archives, Charlottesville.

former military governor of Virginia, became identified with the Pennsylvania Railroad. Mahone's Atlantic, Mississippi and Ohio, on the other hand, won the support of Conservatives and the moderate Republican wing headed by Gilbert C. Walker. Hence, the redemption of Virginia was thus inextricably tied to the struggle for railroad supremacy in the state. General Mahone played a major role in the creation of the compromise which propelled the Old Dominion back into the Union and he was clearly "the life and soul" of the Walker Party that won the state in 1869. Under the Machiavellian manipulations of Mahone, who shifted parties and backed anyone who favored his interests, a combination of Democrats and dissatisfied Republicans achieved both home rule for Virginia and triumph for Mahone's Southside Railroad.

In the election of 6 July Taylor's conservative coalition scored an impressive victory and obtained control of both houses of the General Assembly. Finally, on 6 January

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44Ibid, p. 28.


46Gilbert C. Walker to William Mahone, 31 March 1868, Mahone Papers, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville; L.Q. Washington to R.M.T. Hunter, Hunter Papers, University of Virginia Library.


48Norfolk Journal, 9 July 1869, p. 1. Although Walker won over Wells by a vote of 119,535 to 101,204, Walter Taylor just barely achieved victory by 61 votes over Crott (2,004 against 1,943) but crushed the other candidate, Hodges, by 1,880 votes. H.W. Burton, p. 127.
1870, Virginia's statehood was restored and Reconstruction officially came to an end.49

The Colonel immediately became involved in the turbulent battle of railroad consolidation. The most important piece of legislation of that period, so far as Norfolk was concerned, was the consolidation of the Norfolk and Petersburg, Southside, and Virginia and Tennessee railroads, making the present trunk line from Norfolk to Bristol.50 Taylor, named Chairman of the potent Senate Committee on Roads and Internal Navigation, championed General Mahone's plan for consolidation in the Senate.51

Despite a bitter political fight by anti-Mahone factions,52 consolidation of the three roads came in 1870 after a three-year battle in the General Assembly against opposition by Richmond and Alexandria interests.53 Spearheaded by Mahone and the indomitable Taylor, the adherents of consolidation played on the fear that the roads might otherwise fall into the hands of John W. Garrett, the aggres-


52H.W. Burton, p. 132.

sive head of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad which already controlled the Orange, Alexandria and Manassas Railroad between Alexandria and Lynchburg, and who was building a railroad in the Shenandoah Valley.54

The young Senator pointed out that this crucial bill had been postponed under the plea of the precedence of general legislation, and yet the Senate had taken up, considered, and passed statutes which were insignificant compared with this particular one. In fact, this bill had been twice deferred out of "deference to certain Senators who oppose it," protested Taylor. "It is so evident that they do not wish it to be heard upon its merits," insisted Taylor, "that I think we owe them nothing."55

When the Richmond Whig questioned the integrity of the General Assembly and specified that the best interests of the Commonwealth had been "bartered for foreign gold,"56 Taylor, angrily refuting these charges, insisted that an investigation should be instituted. "Having discovered this, it would ill become me to try and stop it," argued the young Senator. Taylor was opposed to the Senate taking any notice of these critical articles. "Are we here to

54"Letter from General Mahone to Richmond Whig In Defense of its Policy," Richmond Whig, 20 April 1870, p. 2; Richmond Whig, 24 May 1870, p. 2.


56Ibid, p. 2; Lexington Virginia Gazette, 17 June 1870, p. 2. The Senate appointed a committee for an investigation, but it took no action.
stop our important legislation to every newspaper article impugning the motives of the Senate?" The young Legislator, convinced that the General Assembly should not be intimidated by the news media in spite of the Whig's inflammatory article on the alleged corruption in the Senate, felt that the proper way to treat it would be to ignore it. Furthermore, the appointment of an investigating committee would look as if there were some ground for the charges. He pointed out that five days had elapsed since the publication of the article, and it had not occurred to anyone until then to bring the matter up. Taylor was opposed to any investigation that was stimulated by the pressure of the press. 57

The Richmond Whig managed to overlook their crusade against corruption in the Senate by reminding its readers about the importance of the consolidation of the railroads:

The success of consolidation prevents Baltimore from aggrandizing the trade of the Mississippi Valley and divides it among the Virginia cities. Now is the time for Richmond, Petersburg, Lynchburg, Norfolk, and all other cities in Virginia to give up unworthy rivalry, and work for each other as a band of brothers. 58

When Norfolk received the good news the people became jubilant, and in the afternoon handbills were circulated noting that there would be a grand mass meeting of the populace at City Hall for the purpose of stating their approval. In the evening a salute of 111 guns (one for every vote in

57 Ibid, 9 June 1870, p. 2.
58 Ibid, p. 2.
the Senate and House for the bill) was fired and at night the streets were illuminated by flaming tar barrels.59

Colonel J.W. Hinton, a prominent Conservative, acknowledged that Norfolk owed a debt of gratitude to the men who accomplished this legislation. He singled out the leaders of this movement that would result in making "Norfolk the Pilot City."

To Walter H. Taylor and Henry M. Bowden and General Mahone, we owe a great debt of gratitude, and it is proper on an occasion such as this to rejoice.60

Later, in 1873, Edward King, the noted journalist, observed that the trains of the Atlantic, Mississippi and Ohio Railroad discharged their precious freight of cotton and grain directly upon wharves at the steamer's sides and the "unusual" facilities were yearly increased and improved. The people of Norfolk fully appreciated the prosperous effects of the consolidation policy.61

The General Assembly of 1870-1871 passed two other notable bills. One provided for the sale at a sacrifice of the Commonwealth's interest in her railroads, and the other was the famous Funding Act of March 1871. This crucial legislation was procured by an "unholy" combination of bankers, brokers, speculators, and railroads – aided by a few dedicated


60Richmond Whig, 10 June 1870, p. 3.

men such as Walter Taylor, who were influenced by a desire to protect what they believed to be the essential credit and "unsullied" honor of the state.62

At the conclusion of the session, the Colonel decided not to run for re-election to the legislature, even though his party had strengthened its power in the General Assembly. Following the campaign of 1873 the Conservatives solidified their control over the legislature, their majority being 89 on a joint ballot.63 Taylor's primary obligations now were to remain with his family and business, both of which he reluctantly neglected while serving in the Senate.64

The Colonel also faced the troubles created by the Panic of 1873. Just as the South was regaining command of its local affairs after the hardships of political Reconstruction, economic collapse threatened to hamper its recovery.65 Although the local effects of the panic were felt severely for several years, it is to Norfolk's credit that the financial storms of the 1870's were weathered in good shape, and

62Allen W. Moger, "The Origin of the Democratic Machine in Virginia," Journal of Southern History (May 1942), Vol. 8, no. 2, p. 184. During the next few years at least two bills to repeal or modify the Funding Act were vetoed by Conservative governors. There was always a close relationship between the personal interests of the state's leaders, the debt and the liberal legislation that was consistently proposed and defeated.


64Interview with Janet Taylor.

the city forged ahead during the seven hard years which began with the crash of 18 September 1873.66

Despite the panic, the year of 1873 proved to be eventful for the ex-senator, for it was in that year that he assisted in the establishment of the Seaboard Fire Insurance Company and the Norfolk Landmark, and accepted the presidency of the newly founded Virginian Club.

The Colonel became president of the Seaboard Fire Insurance Company, whose board contained some of Norfolk's most prestigious citizens, from its inception until its unfortunate failure in 1880.67 Later in 1876, Taylor appealed to the common council to repair an injustice concerning the taxation of his insurance company. He requested that the collector of city taxes be instructed to refrain from enforcing the payment of a tax bill on the grounds that his company was a "home institution."68 Therefore the common council ruled in the Colonel's favor and thus proceeded to charge each party resident in the city for amounts of stock held by him as required by law in case of other stock companies.69


68 Norfolk, City of, Common Council Record #1, 1876-1873. The Seaboard Insurance Company was chartered 27 May 1873.

69 Norfolk, City of, Common Council Record #11, 1873-1878, p. 251, p. 265. The Council's decision was based on "improper assessment" of tax.
In the shadow of a noteworthy business career, Colonel Taylor's reputation was greatly enhanced by his actions in founding one of Norfolk's most influential newspapers of the late nineteenth century - the Norfolk Landmark. The Landmark's generous competitor, the Norfolk Virginian, was pleased to see that its new rival gave

... evidence in its advertising department of considerable increase of patronage compared with its predecessor, while vigor, energy and talent are abundantly shown in its editorial and local departments. We pronounce the paper a decided hit and worthy of the support of the entire community.70

This publication, under the able editorship of Captain James Barron Hope, author, historian, journalist, and Virginia's Poet Laureate, later played a pivotal role as Norfolk's spokesman for the Readjuster movement.71 The incorporators besides Hope and Taylor included George P. Scarborough, later a judge, and his partner, Major Duffield, an associate of Mahone and Commodore Samuel Barron (Hope's uncle). These were obviously friends of Hope but not newspaper operators.72

Throughout Taylor's long and productive life, he belonged to many honored societies and organizations such as the Phi Beta Kappa Society and the United Sons of the

70Norfolk Virginian, 3 Oct. 1873, p. 2.
Confederacy, but the Colonel appeared to attain his greatest pleasure with the Virginia Club. What would become Norfolk's "oldest male coterie," the Virginia Club, was founded on 23 June 1873 by Colonel Taylor and a group of leading citizens. According to a copy of its constitution and bylaws published in 1891, the society had its beginning when a party of bon vivants met by chance one evening in the rooms of John Vermillion above Taylor's Drug Store at Bank and Freemason Streets. Before the night was over, they decided to establish a permanent social organization that would bring the men of the city into closer contact. The original board of governors, including the Colonel as the first President, comprised several outstanding leaders.

Declaring that he had seen many costlier and more "pretentious and statelier" clubhouses, George Nowitzky made the observation, however, that he had never recognized one that could better "adapt itself to the


76 W.H. Bright, "Club Life of Norfolk," p. 29.
seasons." Furthermore, he noticed that the members of the club were

... gentlemen who have had the good sense to correct some of the errors into which other clubs have unwittingly fallen, as it is less exclusive to strangers whose literary or social merits are acknowledged than the celebrated Somersett of Boston, or Westmoreland of Richmond.

Essentially, the club demanded an honest Virginia hospitality which was exceedingly refreshing in "an age when people are too prone to gauge the man by the amount of capital he commands." The club emphasized proper behavior from the outset, as the following excerpts from its 1891 by-laws will illustrate:

- Crockery and glassware, furniture, or other property of the Club, broken or injured by a member, must be paid for at the time.
- No dog shall be allowed in the Club house.
- No member will be permitted to lie or sleep on any sofa or lounge in the Club house.

During the same year that the club passed these rather stringent by-laws, they violated one of Virginia's laws of morality. The Norfolk Grand Jury reported that this highly respected institution, "through what seems to be a misapprehension of the privileges enjoyed by it, does not strictly comply with the Sunday Liquor Law." However, after the reading of the report, Judge Brooke thanked the

78Ibid, p. 55.
Grand Jury for the services they had performed to the community and the court and apparently issued a warning to the Colonel's club. No formal action was taken.80

On 9 January 1876 the Colonel and his fellow club members including Walter H. Doyle, President of the Citizens Bank; John B. Whitehead, President of the old Exchange Bank and perennial Mayor of Norfolk; Thomas B. Rowland; and Richard H. Chamberlain participated in the "Great Feast of 1876." The lavishness of this repast achieved a permanent place in local banqueting lore.81 After reading the exotic and epicurean bill of fare that was printed in the Norfolk Virginian on 9 January 1876, local historian, George H. Tucker stated,

> It's enough to set one's taste buds working over­time; while one is also inclined to speculate if any of the present members could survive for long after partaking a similar setup of edibles and beverages.82

Throughout the mid-1870's Taylor was rapidly building up his stature in the business community. During this time he kept up his close relationship with "Billy" Mahone, the fiery railroad builder and politician. In one instance, learning that Mahone was arrested on a charge of conspiring to duel General Bradley T. Johnson, Taylor and his col-

80 *Public Ledger*, 2 Dec 1891, p. 1.
81 *Virginia Club*, p. 13; George Tucker, *Norfolk Highlights*, pp. 115-16.
82 Ibid, pp. 115-16; *Norfolk Virginian*, 9 Jan 1876, p. 2. The present Virginia Club meets in the Selden Arcade on Main Street in Norfolk.
leagues, Richard C. Taylor and Benjamin P. Loyall, pro-
vided a bond of $10,000 for his release. Fortunately, the proposed affair of honor never materialized between the two political rivals. In later years the incident was cited among other threats of duels that did not occur as evidence of more "bluster than blood" in these affairs.

The year of 1877 was to prove a milestone in the professional career of Walter Herron Taylor. On 21 May 1877 Taylor's cousin, Richard C. Taylor, first president of the Marine Bank, died unexpectedly and created a vacancy that Walter filled. Thus, in order to concentrate all his energies upon this financial institution, he severed all ties with his hardware company. From this point on Colonel Taylor's lifework included the effective leadership of the Marine Bank of Norfolk. He took charge of this enterprise when the stocks of all financial establishments in the South were below par. Southern banks, never sufficient for the South's requirements even in ante-bellum days, had practically disappeared

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83 Norfolk Virginian, 1 Oct. 1874, p. 1; Chambers and Shank, pp. 96-97.
84 Ibid, p. 97.
85 Norfolk Landmark, 27 May 1877, p. 2.
86 Norfolk Virginian, A Great Maritime Port and Railroad Center . . . Portsmouth, its Sister City (Norfolk: Norfolk Virginian, 1897), p. 44.
87 Lyon G. Tyler, p. 386.
by the end of the war. All of the existing banks in Virginia were forced out of business and records indicate that none of the older banks attempted to reorganize after the Civil War. During the difficult post war era, the growth of the state banking system was somewhat slow, primarily due to the effects of the war on the monetary status of the Commonwealth. Consequently, many of the new banks collapsed in the Norfolk area.

Shortly after Taylor's promotion to the presidency, the Norfolk Landmark shared the confidence of the community as they congratulated the directors on the wisdom of their choice. The Landmark felt that the Colonel was

... by nature, habits, and education, fitted to conduct conservative banking, and his success in everything he has undertaken justifies our opinion.

Perhaps the greatest compliment to Taylor's character was that, apart from his business capacity, he was possessed of a courtesy "borne of his heart," rather than of the "arts of society," which added new strength to the bank.

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91 Norfolk Landmark, 27 May 1877, p. 2.

92 Ibid, p. 2.
President Taylor was considered an ultra-conservative in banking circles and so by 1908, Lyon G. Tyler declared that his institution was "solid and safe beyond question. The stock of the Marine Bank is first." Moreover, the Marine Bank was organized under a state charter in 1882, whose building was a solid structure of dressed granite noted for its Greek architecture. It indeed reflected the bank's character of solidity and sound administration.

While presiding over his prestigious institution the Colonel became the caretaker of many trust funds and estates placed in his hands by will and by the direction of the courts. Many Norfolkians, including friends and relatives, sought advice from the ethical and compassionate banker.

A classic example engaged the Colonel's cousin, Dr. Southgate Leigh, and the doctor's concern over the financial affairs of his old devoted servant, Margaret O'Donnell. Taylor allayed his cousin's fears by revealing that she had a bank book in which her deposits were regularly entered and "at times, it has been in my possession," insisted the Colonel. The respected financier strongly lectured

93 Lyon G. Tyler, p. 386. The stock had risen to $300 per share in 1908.
95 George Nowitzky, p. 116.
96 Lyon G. Tyler, p. 387.
97 Dr. Southgate Leigh to Walter H. Taylor, 6 Aug. 1909, Taylor Papers.
his cousin about secondhand information regarding an individual's personal affairs: "There is no truth whatever in the one concerning Margaret's loss, that I ever heard of." 98

In the course of his thirty-nine years as president of the Marine Bank, Taylor devoted much of his time to obtaining pensions and other benefits for his former comrades-in-arms. 99 Unlike the energetic Colonel, many of the Confederate veterans were maimed and destitute. However, Virginia's opposition to radical policies, especially liberal expenditures, tended to diminish the funds spent on services to the people. If the state administrations possessed any social consciousness in regard to their unfortunate citizens, they generally justified their neglect as a sacrifice to the more important policy of economic retrenchment. 100 Still demands for state aid to indigent and disabled Confederate veterans continued to come from many regions. They were not without organized support, nor were they lacking in able leadership, exemplified by men of Taylor's loyalty and perseverance.

Thanks to the efforts of Colonel Taylor and organizations particularly like the United Confederate Veterans, the necessary pressure was put upon office seekers and

98 Walter H. Taylor to Dr. Southgate Leigh, 7 Aug. 1909, Taylor Papers.

99 Interview with Janet Taylor, 31 July 1981. Many of Taylor's bank depositors were veterans of the Civil War.

officeholders to achieve their goals. Thus the Old Dominion began paying pensions to veterans and widows in 1886, and also a small pension of $90.00 per year to dependent needy daughters of Confederate veterans.101

Taylor's role in obtaining a Mexican War pension for his mother-in-law, Martha Saunders, revealed the Colonel's determination for justice and proper regard for veteran's widows.102 His battle with the federal bureaucracy commenced 11 July 1865 and finally ceased with victory on 5 March 1885.103 The Colonel was also able to acquire additional relief for Mrs. Saunders from the Department of Interior in the amount of $30.00 per month beginning 1 January 1861 and $2.00 more for each child under the age of sixteen years commencing 25 July 1866.104

In actuality, Taylor faced the same problem that all veteran's families were confronted with, and based on the Act of Congress of 4 February 1862:

An act authorizing the Secretary of the Interior to strike from the pension roles the names of such persons as have taken up arms against the


102Walter H. Taylor to Martha Saunders, 13 July 1865; Oath of Allegiance from Martha Saunders, 11 July 1865, Taylor Papers.

103Ibid; Adam Beardsley, Auditor to Martha Saunders, 5 Mar. 1885, Taylor Papers.

government, or who may have in any manner encour-aged the rebels.  

Martha Saunders, whose late husband John L. Saunders served as commander in the United States Navy until his death in 1860, was compelled to sign an oath of allegiance in order to qualify for pension eligibility. "I do hereby solemnly affirm that I was not an advocate of seces­sion," wrote Mrs. Saunders on 11 July 1865, "and that the commencement of hostilities between the South and the North in 1861, in the attempt to sever the union, occasioned me the deepest regret." The Colonel's aunt reminded the authorities that she never committed a disloyal act and never did in any way "aid, abet or encourage the late rebel­tion."

Finally, on 5 March 1885, Martha Saunders received extra funding appropriated for officers and troops who served in the Mexican War in the amount of $625.00. Hence, Taylor championed one of many claims stemming from

105Dept. of the Interior, Pension in States Heretofore in Insurrection, 10 June 1865, Taylor Papers; Form of Appli­cation for Restoration to the Pension Rolls by Persons Dropped Under Act of 4 Feb. 1862, Taylor Papers.

106Ibid.


the recent conflict. He also joined several organizations such as the Sons of the Confederacy, Association of the Army of Northern Virginia, and the influential United Confederate Veterans. Many of these patriotic groups aided their unfortunate comrades and widows. Money for pensions usually came from the state's general revenues, from special property taxes, or from combinations of the two.

The first veterans group that Taylor joined was the Association of the Army of Northern Virginia, founded 4 November 1870 at a meeting called primarily to construct a memorial to General Lee. With a leadership including former Lee staff officers such as Walter Taylor and Charles Marshall, the Association of the Army of Northern Virginia was the most powerful veteran's group in the South prior to the emergence of the United Confederate Veterans decades later. Much of its strength came from its superior organization. An executive committee headed by General Bradley Johnson supervised thirteen state divisions, which in turn were controlled by thirty-nine vice-presidents and their assistants.

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Veteran associations made important contributions to the preservation of historical material, both military and civil. Confederate veterans were convinced that if only the facts were gathered and maintained, their actions would find a just and honorable position in the history of a re-united nation.\textsuperscript{111}

Even before the close of the Reconstruction period it was obvious to Walter Taylor that Norfolk's rapidly growing commerce would ultimately double and triple the seaport's population.\textsuperscript{112} It was men of vision like Taylor who grasped the importance of a viable communication system, not only for the Tidewater region, but for the entire Southern area as well.\textsuperscript{113} During this period of prosperity, expansion and optimism, the Colonel contributed his talents and energy towards a modern transportation system. At one time of another he controlled or shared management of many companies such as the Twin City Ferry and Railway Company, the Norfolk City Railroad Company, the Norfolk and Ocean View Railway, and the Albemarle and Pantego Railroad. He also served as director of the Norfolk and Western Railroad from 1881 until his death in 1916.\textsuperscript{114}

\textsuperscript{111}Ibid, p. 117.
\textsuperscript{112}Thomas Wertenbaker, p. 280.
\textsuperscript{113}Ibid, p. 286.
\textsuperscript{114}Interview with Janet Taylor; \textit{Virginian-Pilot}, 3 Mar. 1916, p. 1.
As in other cities of the country, the advent of the streetcar was to spearhead the growth of the suburbs and lead to the expansion of Norfolk. However, the old seaport's transit history, like that of many other cities steeped in romance, exhibited its share of heartaches and difficulties. In fact, Norfolk's first railway company went through a four-year period of legal and financial entanglements before the first streetcar was actually operated.\textsuperscript{115}

Taylor's associates such as John B. Whitehead, a central figure in Norfolk's transit history, assisted by Thomas Corprew and Cicero Burness, organized the Norfolk City Railroad in 1866 with a capital outlay of $100,000.\textsuperscript{116} The city granted the company permission to construct a track of not more than six miles from the western end of Main Street along Church Street, from the intersection of Main Street to the old fairgrounds north of the city. Later the six-mile limitation was extended to twenty miles, and it should be mentioned that the City Council required the company to maintain not only the track area but also two feet on either side of the flat rails. Ultimately, in April 1870, after four years of negotiations and controversy, the first rail was laid.\textsuperscript{117}

\textsuperscript{115}Julian C. Houseman, "Norfolk's Transit History is traced from 1870 to 1951," \textit{Transit Times}, Vol. 6, no. 38, 23 Sept. 1951, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{116}Ibid, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{117}Norfolk Virginian, 20 Apr. 1870, p. 2.
What the *Norfolk-Virginian* entitled "Our City Railroad," later known as the "horse cars" began regular service on 13 August 1870. The cars were constantly crowded during the day with persons anxious to get a cheap ride, "just for the novelty of the thing."119

By 1893 the Norfolk City Railroad was operating one mile of double track and four and one-half miles of single track, with cars running on a five minute schedule from Market Street to Brambleton, Huntersville, and Atlantic City.120 One of Norfolk's milestones in transit history occurred on 19 December 1889 when the city was given state approval to use electric cable, or any other power it so desired. Five years later the first electric car ran over Norfolk rails, and six months afterwards all of the horse cars were gone.121

Transportation boomed at the turn of the century. Standard gauge electric tracks were laid to Ocean View via Granby Street by the Bay Shore Terminal, while Willoughby was served by a short road with a long name, the Norfolk, Willoughby Spit and Old Point, which utilized tiny steam

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119H.W. Burton, p. 137. These was but a single track on Main Street, with switches at Bank Street, at Peter Smith and Co.'s store, and elsewhere.

120Ibid, p. 137.

engines and coaches rescued from New York City and Chicago elevated tracks.\footnote{122}

In the meantime, Taylor became interested in building a railway line that would connect bustling Norfolk with the "Atlantic City of the South"—Ocean View.\footnote{123} Established as a private summer resort in 1854, Ocean View grew steadily after the Civil War. By 1880 the sick and handicapped from the North selected Norfolk as their favorite winter retreat. Stopping over for a rest on their way to Florida, they had been pleased with the "genial climate as to give up the idea of going further south," boasted Carey W. Jones.\footnote{124} The resort atmosphere was enhanced with the construction of a hotel at Ocean View which enjoyed capacity booking from the very beginning. The Colonel observed that many of the out-of-town visitors were attracted, not only by the mildness of the climate, but by the facilities for hunting, fishing, boating, and riding. Furthermore,

\footnote{122}{Samuel Borum, \textit{Norfolk: A Port and a City} (Norfolk: Chamber of Commerce, 1896), p. 26; "Passing of Street Cars Recalls Transit History," \textit{Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch}, 18 May 1947, p. 3; Norfolk, City of, \textit{Corporation Court}, 21 July 1887, Norfolk City R.R. Co. versus The Exchange National Bank of Norfolk and others, Taylor Papers. Taylor was also Trustee of 25 bonds ($25,000) of the Norfolk City Railroad Co. — which was deposited with him as custodian under decree of the Corporation Court and surrendered to the railroad company.}

\footnote{123}{Ibid, p. 3; Norfolk & Ocean View Railroad and Hotel Co., \textit{Annual Report to The Interstate Commerce Commission, 1888-1899} (Norfolk: Norfolk & Ocean View Railroad and Hotel Co., 1899).}

\footnote{124}{Carey W. Jones, \textit{Norfolk As a Business Center} (Norfolk: Virginian Presses, 1881), p. 30, 37.}
the beach served as a playground for Norfolkians and during the summer months huge crowds took advantage of these recreational pursuits. Colonel Taylor, being a wise and astute businessman, became part owner of the Norfolk and Ocean View Hotel, which was incorporated on 27 February 1879.125

Some months later, Taylor and his colleagues were in the process of raising the necessary funds for the construction of the Norfolk and Ocean View Railroad as the Public Ledger pointed out that

... those who wish the road completed at an early day and are willing to aid it, and thus secure for themselves a profitable investment will best accomplish the desired end by calling on John B. Whitehead, Esq. at the Exchange Bank, or Colonel Walter H. Taylor, of the Marine Bank.126

Furthermore, the newspaper declared that, "when the railroad has been finished to Ocean View it will be to the twin cities (Norfolk and Portsmouth) what Central Park is to New York."127

By 6 June 1879 Taylor reported that a right of way for the route to Ocean View had been obtained for the entire road and that there was no longer any reason why the road should not be started.128 It was then agreed to begin


126Norfolk Public Ledger, 24 May 1879, p. 2.


128Norfolk Virginian, 6 June 1879, p. 2; Norfolk, City of, Common Council Record #13, 25 July 1879.
operations immediately. The Colonel convinced the Common Council that the railway would be completed in sixty days or before the middle of August.\textsuperscript{129}

Although the construction crew experienced a savage August storm which caused considerable harm to buildings and ships, they escaped serious damage and converted an "ideal thing into a reality." Hence, by 18 September 1879, the Norfolk and Ocean View Railroad was finally completed and passengers made their first trip over the new road.\textsuperscript{130}

On the following day the stockbroker's train drew up at Ocean View after an uneventful run of thirty minutes. Among the distinguished passengers of this premier excursion was Colonel Taylor, president of the company.

The Ocean View Railroad Company ran trains from its station at Church and Henry Streets eight times a day. The "wheezing and puffing little coffeepot engines" covered the eight miles in twenty minutes. Its equipment consisted of one narrow gauge, single tract, small locomotive and three passenger coaches, all open type construction.\textsuperscript{131}

It should be noted that the locomotive, built in the Norfolk shop of Thomas Godwin and Company, was named for Colonel Taylor. For many years this miniature locomotive

\textsuperscript{129}Ibid, p. 2.


\textsuperscript{131}Norfolk Virginian, 18 Sept. 1879, p. 2.
was the sole source of power for the railroad, sometimes handling as many as ten or twelve cars loaded with passengers. Some years later, as the popularity of the resort increased, another engine was added; this one had been named for John B. Whitehead, mayor of Norfolk from 1874 to 1876.132

The road was a huge success despite the fact that anticipated traffic in farm produce did not materialize. However, a baggage car had to be constructed to carry the fish sent home by proud anglers during the summer. One of the main reasons for the popularity of the railroad was that its owners did not attempt to create commerce; they were satisfied with that available. The train schedule depended on demand; however, during the summer season a strict schedule was maintained with extra trains sandwiched in between the regular run. For almost two decades, this primitive equipment offered nearly the only means of transportation between Norfolk and Ocean View.133

Some years later, in 1896, the eight-and-a-half-mile railway was converted to electric power, with hourly and even half-hourly trains in the summer months. Besides transporting tourists and local vacationers, the trains brought to Norfolk large quantities of fish, oysters, eggs, eggs,
lambs, poultry, and other country produce of the choicest quality.134

The electric line early encountered financial difficulties and after a two-year receivership, was purchased by the Norfolk Railway and Light Company, which changed the line to match its five-foot-two-inch gauge and abandoned the Henry Street station for passenger service. The old railway line to Ocean View eventually became part of the Virginia Electric Power Company.135

Taylor's endeavors in the railroad industry were not restricted solely to local lines. In later years he contributed his expertise to the Norfolk and Southern Railroad, which connected Norfolk to the rich agricultural and lumber lands of North Carolina. The Colonel's interest in the Norfolk and Southern Railroad can be traced as early as 24 July 1872 when Taylor wrote to his close friend and business associate, James Barron Hope, concerning the construction of this vital road.136 It was his dream to connect


136Walter H. Taylor to James Barron Hope, 24 Jan 1872, James Barron Hope Papers, Swem Library Archives, College of William & Mary, Williamsburg, File #65H77.
a route from Norfolk to Charleston. "Of course, if such a road was constructed," stressed the civic-minded Taylor, "it would have a great benefit to our city." Obviously, the Colonel was aware of the enormous advantages that would be gained by commercial links between Carolina and Norfolk. Taylor acknowledged that most of Tidewater's trade originated from the section of North Carolina, "west of the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad," and that a railway was badly needed to service this area. Furthermore, the Colonel, being cognizant of the intense rivalry of the railroads, desired as much as possible to draft the charter in such a way as to be of service only for the building of a road and not to be used as a "threat against anyone." Taylor was determined to overcome the intense rivalry of Petersburg and Richmond for control of the railroads of Virginia.

Taylor's involvement with the operation of the Norfolk and Southern Railroad derived from his role as vice-president and treasurer of the Albemarle and Pantego Railroad. The Albemarle and Pantego was originally a logging road administered by the John L. Roper Lumber Company of Norfolk, which had been organized by Northern capitalists shortly after the Civil War. The company

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eventually acquired well over half a million acres of timberland in the forested coastal low country of Virginia and North Carolina.\textsuperscript{139}

Unsound business practices forced the original Norfolk and Southern Railroad into receivership, an event which in 1891 led to the merger of the Norfolk and Southern Railroad with the Albemarle and Pantego. These two companies, including John L. Roper's steamboats, were consolidated to form the new 103 mile Norfolk and Southern Railroad, providing both rail and water service to the people of southeastern Virginia and northeastern North Carolina.\textsuperscript{140} Eventually, by 1906, the Roper Lumber Company became a subsidiary of the Norfolk and Southern Railroad, which was then owned by the Virginia and Carolina Coast Railroad.\textsuperscript{141}

The Colonel's association with the Roper Lumber Company was by no means his only experience in the lumber industry. In 1902 Taylor and R.S. Cohn were appointed trustees of the Greenleaf Johnson Lumber Company, as well as the Cashie and Chowan Railroad and Lumber Company, by the late President

\textsuperscript{139}Norfolk and Southern Railroad Company, Plan and Reorganization, 26 May 1890, (Norfolk: Norfolk & Southern R.R.); Virginia, State Corporation Commission Annual Report, 1908.


\textsuperscript{141}Richard E. Prince, p. 8.
Howard Johnson.¹⁴² Taylor acted as executor of the estate and carefully scrutinized Johnson's affairs in order to safeguard the family's assets.

No doubt, the Colonel shared John R. Walker's viewpoint that the present prosperity of the South and that of the past fifteen years, was inseparably linked to the lumber business.¹⁴³ Furthermore, Walker reflected the opinion of many responsible southern businessmen, such as Walter Taylor, when he noted that practically all of the 162,000 laborers were Negro men with many dependents.¹⁴⁴ In commenting on the racial situation, Walker declared:

> When it is considered that employment of this nature is healthy, regenerating outdoor work, removed from the demoralizing influences of congested city life, and when it is further regarded what a giant despair this army of unemployed would be, the South should render a tribute of thanks to the lumber industry for what it has done toward the solution of the Negro problem.¹⁴⁵

Fifteen years after the consolidation of the Albemarle and Pantego Railroad with the Norfolk Southern, Taylor's dream of a westward connection with Charlotte, North Carolina.

¹⁴²Last Will and Testament of Howard N. Johnson, 16 Oct. 1894, Probated 28 Aug. 1902, Taylor Papers; The JohnsonGreenleaf Lumber Company operated between 1888-1921 and was located in Berkley. Taylor also served as vice-president of the company.


¹⁴⁴Ibid, p. 158.

¹⁴⁵Ibid, p. 158.
lina, finally materialized. Thus, the Norfolk and Southern to some extent superseded the two canals as the artery of commerce from the North Carolina sounds to Norfolk, and great quantities of cotton, lumber, naval stores, corn, peanuts, and early vegetables flowed into its terminus at Berkley.

During this tempestuous era of industrial expansion, Norfolk reaped the benefit of the country's demand for coal, cotton, and other raw materials. The discovery of rich coal deposits in southwest Virginia caused industrialists to pour millions into coal mining and railroad building. In no time at all, the Norfolk and Western, formerly the Atlantic, Mississippi and Ohio, was sending its coal trains running across Virginia and into the port of Norfolk. Moreover, numerous towns and factories sprang up along its line, especially in the southwest, and they too contributed to the state's development.

The boom reflected itself in all quarters of the Commonwealth, especially Norfolk. "Norfolk can become one of the great coal-marts of the Union," predicted the Norfolk

146 Henry Poor, 1907, p. 380.
147 Ibid, p. 380; William H. Stewart, p. 304; W.H.T. Squires, Through The Years in Norfolk, pp. 130-32. In 1920, the company constructed what then was and today still is claimed as the longest railroad trestle bridge in the United States. This is the bridge across Albemarle Sound linking Edenton with Mackeys.
148 E. Merton Coulter, p. 272.
Journal in April 1870, "and compete with Baltimore and Philadelphia in furnishing the whole seaboard. The English mines are going deeper, and the time will come when Virginia coal can be exported." 150

Some years later, in 1881, the Colonel began his long association with the Norfolk and Western Railway. Afterwards, on 17 March 1883, the railroad delivered its first carload of coal to the old seaport. This memorable event demonstrated that the appearance of "cheap" coal gave Norfolk an advantage over other Atlantic harbors. 151

Colonel Taylor proved to be indispensable to the railroad. He served on the Board of Directors for a span of thirty-five years, 152 representing the interests of the Norfolk and Western in such matters as the construction of bridges, coal piers, and spur tracks in the Tidewater area. 153 Even as late as 1913, Taylor was arguing Norfolk and Western's case before the Norfolk Common Council. 154

150 Norfolk Journal, 25 April 1870, p. 3.


152 L.E. Johnson to W.H. Taylor, 23 Dec. 1911, Norfolk & Western R.R. Papers, Norfolk & Western R.R. files, Roanoke. Taylor was an active member of the Board of Directors as well as an extensive stockholder.

153 Norfolk Public Ledger, 24 Jan. 1901, p. 1; Norfolk Landmark, 18 Aug. 1900, p. 3; Norfolk, City of, Board of Aldermen Record #19, 10 June 1913 - 27 June 1913; Norfolk, City of, Common Council Record #26, 10 June 1913, #19, 10 Oct. 1902.

154 Ibid.
however, old age and illness compelled him to sever his relations with the railroad. Although the Colonel attempted to resign two months before his death due to declining health, President Lucius E. Johnson rejected his resignation:

> We cannot spare you from the Board of Directors of the Norfolk and Western Railway as long as you live. There should be a representative of the State of Virginia on the Board, you have been that representative for many many years, and you shall continue as that representative on the Board as long as you live.\(^\text{155}\)

Johnson insisted that it would not be fair to the company or his associates for Taylor to resign. Every member had complete confidence in Taylor's ability and judgement and his knowledge of the company's history. Perhaps more importantly, Johnson's letter emphasized admiration for the company's senior member:

> Your personal relations with these gentlemen have been such that they have so high a regard, and in fact love, for you that it would be a personal sorrow to each of them to even think that you had at any time considered the question of severing your connection with the Board.\(^\text{156}\)

Colonel Taylor agreed to this impassioned appeal and remained on the Board until his death.\(^\text{157}\)


\(^{156}\)Ibid.

The Colonel's role in the development of Norfolk's commerce was further illustrated in his active involvement in the Norfolk and Portsmouth Cotton Exchange. At the close of the Civil War, Norfolk began to benefit from a cotton market of some consequence. The local cotton mills and commission houses grew rapidly, and by 1874 the Norfolk and Portsmouth Cotton Exchange was organized. Later, in 1892 the cotton commission enterprise was decidedly the largest business in Norfolk with fourteen commission houses and five mills engaging in commerce with a capital investment of $2,000,000. As a cotton center, Norfolk ranked fourth in the United States. Hence, cotton, almost unknown to Norfolk before 1855, now restored the city's foreign trade and brought prosperity.

Another one of the Colonel's numerous projects was the development of suburbs. The most important of these was located across Smith's Creek near Atlantic City and

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160Norfolk Landmark, 11 Mar. 1874, p. 3; 2 Sept. 1888.

came to be called Ghent. In 1890 Taylor and several co-investors who had large blocks of stock in the Norfolk and Western Railway, demonstrated their interest in the growth and development of Norfolk. Local capitalists also joined with them in the proposed development of the Drummond tract. The company placed the tract on the market and it became an instant success. Other real estate subdivisions which were not a part of the original Ghent tract also used the name until now "we have a City of Ghent within the City of Norfolk" remarked W.H.T. Squires.

Taylor's group, the Norfolk Land Company, was responsible for the city's first planned sub-division of approximately 250 acres of real estate on Norfolk's west side. This new concept in land development was designed for the municipality's upper class, as no house costing less than $7500 could be built and real estate sold for $1,400 per acre. The original layout of the streets was entirely

163Virginia, General Assembly, Acts Passed at Session, 1891-1892 (Richmond: W.F. Ritchie), p. 91; Approved Act of Corporation by Norfolk Corporation Court (21 May 1891) on 14 Jan. 1892; Deed: Charter of the Norfolk Company, 21 May 1890, Sargeant Memorial Room, Kirn Library. Original premise of company: "Capital stock shall not be less than $300,000 nor more than $5,000,000, dividend with shares of stock of $100,00 each."
166Ibid, p. 18.
eradicated—the old buildings were destroyed and a new arrangement of streets, parks, and avenues was set up, covering the whole property. Old Botetourt Street was extended across Paradise Creek by means of a wide paved iron bridge.167

After the filling in of Colley Creek and the creation of the Hague in 1900, expansion quickly spread to the west. The west branch of the creek, which had extended back across Princess Anne Road, was filled in to Olney Road, and the lower part, lined with a stone buttress, was rechristened the Hague. In 1893 only a few houses, all of handsome and modern design, had been erected or were in course of construction; yet one decade later, the entire suburb was completed.168

To the people involved in the Norfolk Company, such as Colonel Taylor, the creation of Ghent was a very personal enterprise. Many of the investors subsequently made Ghent their place of residence.169 In fact, the first house to be constructed was for Taylor and his family at Stockley Gardens between Olney Road and Boissevain. Although the Colonel gave each of his adult children a new house, he exercised his philosophy on self-reliance by charging them a modest rent for this privilege.170

170 Ibid, p. 11; Interview with Janet Taylor.
In order to provide for greater efficiency of this rapidly growing enterprise, the Norfolk Company transferred to a new corporation, the Ghent Company, a certain portion of its property. That section now owned and conducted by the Ghent Company represented the greater portion of Ghent. All the land of the two companies stood within the city limits in the sixth ward and was reached within ten minutes from the business center by electric street car lines. As population and development pushed north and hence outside the borough boundaries, Norfolk gradually annexed these suburbs into the city.

Walter Taylor and his contemporaries who lived in Ghent rebuilt the trade on which most of the city's power and influence rested and were instrumental in transforming the city from a regional to a national urban center during the prosperous post-war period.

During this same period of municipal expansion Taylor became one of the pioneers of building and loan associations in his section of the state, thus enabling wage earners

171 Norfolk Virginian, Norfolk, Va.: A Great Maritime Port and Railroad Center ... Portsmouth, Its Sister City (Norfolk: Norfolk Virginian, 1897), p. 10. At the time, lots in Ghent sold for $2500 each and houses for up to $20,000.

172 Ibid, p. 10.

to became the owners of their own homes. The banking practices of the period did not offer facilities to accommodate the man of limited means to finance his domicile on small weekly payments commensurate with his income, and at the same time there were few opportunities for regular small savings by wage earners.

To meet these requirements the Colonel introduced the idea of a building and loan association to Norfolk. This type of financial institution directly descended from the British building societies which flourished in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and had existed in America since 1832. Thus in 1891, Taylor founded the Tidewater Perpetual Building and Loan Association, which originally contained a small but dedicated group of officers and directors who met once a week in the store or office of one of the members. The Colonel's organization began with an impressive capital asset of $10,000,000 in shares of $100 each, payable in monthly installments of 50 cents per share.

This innovation, which provided for loans to be repaid over a term of years in modest weekly or monthly payments

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175 "The Tidewater Perpetual," Norfolk Public Ledger, 7 July 1891, p. 3.
176 W.H.T. Squires, Through the Years, p. 269.
177 Ibid.
178 Ibid.
and with the provision that no greater payment would be asked for, met with immediate success. Soon afterwards other associations were formed as the old seaport grew and prospered. Three decades later, the Virginian-Pilot pointed out that the associations

... are not running in competition with the banks, but rather are operating hand in hand with the banks, reaching the class of investor, the banks in many instances would be unable to reach.179

As the nineteenth century drew to its close, many Virginians were quite anxious that some deserving celebration be held to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the first landing at Cape Henry, 26 April 1607, the settlement of Jamestown and the inauguration of civil government in the new world.180

Walter Herron Taylor, one of those concerned Virginians, advocated the construction of an exposition to celebrate this historic event. His active role in the selection of his home city for the Jamestown Exposition of 1907 proved to be Taylor's crowning achievement.181

At the instigation of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities and the Tidewater Commercial League, the General Assembly of Virginia passed a bill


in 1901 authorizing the Governor to proclaim that the tercen­
ten­nial of the landing at Jamestown would be celebrated in 1907. This bill also invited various cities and sections of Virginia to show how and in what manner they proposed to hold this celebration.182

In the meantime, many public-minded Norfolk citizens such as Colonel Taylor, prevailed upon the City Council to appoint a committee from its members for the purpose of obtaining the event for the city. This was expanded into a much larger committee which convinced other interested Tidewater cities that only by the selection of one of its own number and the support of all would the Tidewater area secure the celebration. It also persuaded these cities that Norfolk, because of its location, was the logical choice.183 Events moved quickly. "Already there are rumors of stock companies being formed," reported the Norfolk Landmark, "to hold the exposition. It is understood that they will organize a stock company and allow anyone to take stock who desires it."184

Taylor and his associates were compelled to battle the old inter-city feuds in 1901 and 1902 in the state legislature, where Norfolk fought off the rival claims


183Norfolk Landmark, 15 Sept. 1901, p. 3.

184Ibid, 14 Sept. 1901, p. 3.
of Richmond and Newport News to receive official designation as the exposition site.\textsuperscript{185} Plans for a commercial, historical, and maritime festival almost failed the following year when subscriptions to the stock of the exposition company lagged, but the admonitions of newspapers and the energy of boosters saved the city from dishonor on the last day before the charter was to expire.\textsuperscript{186} Apparently, Norfolk had a habit of awaiting the very last minute on affairs of vital importance. Just before midnight on 31 December 1903, $996,000 had been secured. Fortunately, Taylor's colleague, David Lowenberg, one of Norfolk's most successful merchants and president of the Norfolk Knitting and Cotton Manufacturing Company, arose at the last minute and subscribed the $4,000 needed when the clock struck twelve. The charter and the exposition were saved.\textsuperscript{187}

Despite the appointment of the popular General Fitzhugh Lee as president of the exposition company and the eagerness for the project in the Tidewater community, many problems arose in the raising of additional funding from the Federal

\textsuperscript{185}W.H.T. Squires, "How Norfolk Secured the Exposition," p. 517.

\textsuperscript{186}Ibid; Jamestown Exposition Company, Minutes of the Jamestown Exposition Co., 1904-5, Sargeant Memorial Room, Kirn Memorial Library.

\textsuperscript{187}Norfolk Dispatch, 12 Sept. and 14 Dec. 1901, p. 3; Virginian-Pilot, 10 Dec. 1901, p. 2; David Lowenberg to Walter H. Taylor, 18 Feb. 1903, Taylor Papers. Lowenberg was also president of the Monticello Realty Co. and the Norfolk-Hampton Roads Co.
Eventually, the United States Congress appropriated a loan of one million dollars to the company, which was granted just before the scheduled opening on 26 April 1907. No doubt, the support of the dynamic President, Teddy Roosevelt, and his Cabinet was of incalculable importance to the exposition.

Although the Exposition was plagued by bad weather, internal dissension, and construction delays, it was nonetheless an impressive accomplishment. "The grounds at the Exposition are in a very bad condition," observed Federal bureaucrat, Mary Greer, on 10 April 1907, and in many places she found the water "three feet deep" on the pavements.

As the Exposition approached the long-expected opening, demand for office and sales space set off a downtown real estate boom which saw the erection of new office buildings and the expansion of the business district into Granby.

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191 Ibid, pp. 142-43.

192 Mary Greer to M. Denby, 10 April 1907, Jamestown Exposition Papers, National Archives, Washington, D.C.
Street and other residential areas. Real estate investors like Walter Taylor were the first of Norfolk's own businessmen to profit from the exposition as suburban property values skyrocketed. Many real estate ventures were designed to exploit the tercentennial celebration, wherein speculators asked $1,000 for lots between the pier and the Exposition entrance. Norfolk property owners with vacant lots were invited to erect an "M and M Portable House" for rental to visitors, and householders with a spare room listed with the Tourist and Hotel Exchange.

In spite of almost insurmountable obstacles, the Jamestown Exposition generated great enthusiasm and appreciation for an exposition regarded as "architecturally, scenically, educationally, and in some respects unique." Unfortunately, a major crisis developed within the hierarchy that supervised this mammoth spectacle. The source of the problem lay in the conflict of authority between the Director-General, James M. Barr, and the President of the Jamestown Exposition Company, Henry St. George Tucker. Although Barr's autocratic methods of management created friction among the exposition officials, he was able to achieve constructive results. However, his feud with Tucker finally

193Ibid; Virginian-Pilot, 13 June 1907, p. 1.
195Chambers and Shank, pp. 216-17.
led to his removal from the company. At this time, the Colonel was seriously considered to replace Barr as director-general of the exposition after Mr. Barr resigned "under fire." It is quite apparent that Taylor desired to avoid the political interactions affecting the company. Therefore, the Board of Directors picked Alvah H. Martin, first vice-president of the Jamestown Tercentennial Company and president of the Merchants and Planters Bank of Norfolk. Martin proved a worthy successor to Barr and worked cooperatively with the Board of Directors.

The Jamestown Exposition remained open until the end of November 1907 to exploit the remnants of vacationers and sightseers of the season. Although the structures built for the Exposition, like those erected for similar events, were intended to be temporary, fifteen state buildings and four other exhibition structures have been preserved. In spite of drawing 2,850,735 admissions, of which less than half were paid, the Exposition was not financially lucrative. Within a week after it closed, an attempt was made to sell it to the Federal government, which refused

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196 "Pick Colonel Taylor to Succeed Barr," Richmond Times-Dispatch, 19 Sept. 1907, p. 1; Virginian-Pilot, 18 Sept. 1907, p. 1. Taylor was also aware of the U.S. Treasury Department's preference of Mr. Barr. Apparently, the federal officials feared that the withdrawal of Mr. Barr might cause the receipts to drop off, and therefore tried to prevent "swapping horses in the middle of a stream."

197 Virginian-Pilot, 6 Oct. 1907, p. 1; Interview with Janet Taylor.

198 Charles Keiley, p. 771.
the offer; the company then fell into receivership. These efforts were renewed in 1914 at the start of World War I, but it was not until the United States entered the war in 1917 that the government finally purchased the grounds and those buildings that remained.199

The Jamestown Exhibition was more than a simple enterprise of "boosterism." In actuality, it was a manifestation of a civic optimism which dominated Norfolk for a generation.200 Local citizens dated a surge of growth from the middle 1880s. In the nineties its spokesmen marveled at recent increases in population, construction, and trade—all signs of the restoration and evolution of the city as one of the metropolitan centers of the South Atlantic coast.201

Although Walter Taylor lost more than $1,000 in this spectacular venture, he could take pride in focusing the nation's attention towards the renaissance of Norfolk.202 No longer was Norfolk depicted as

... that decrepit victim of the slave power, poor old imbecile granny Norfolk, who spends her feeble breath in sighing still for the system

199Ibid, p. 774.

200Ibid.

201Carl Abbott, "Norfolk in the New Century," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, 85 (Jan. 1977): 93. The city's population rose by forty-five percent between 1900 and 1910 after a thirty-four percent increase in the 1890s.

202Interview with Janet Taylor.
which made her a municipal specimen of what the naturalists call arrested development.\textsuperscript{203}

It was finally a city of the New South.

\textsuperscript{203}Thomas Wertenbaker, pp. 286-87.
CHAPTER IV

A MAN OF MANY TALENTS

During the years from 1865 to 1916 Taylor made a remark­able record of accomplishment in the world of commerce and government. Throughout his life he was a leader in the affairs of the city of Norfolk as well as a civic-minded Virginian. In personality and character Taylor was complex and highly sensitive to the needs of his fellowman. Intel­ligent and able, he was extremely self-disciplined and exceptionally industrious, a person of impeccable honesty and integrity.¹

Although Taylor's wide range of activities, which stimulated the growth of the old seaport, gained him local and state recognition, it was his role as Civil War historian and confidante of Lee that gained Taylor national respect and admiration. One of Colonel Taylor's major contributions to society came out of his wartime experiences as Lee's one-man staff. This contribution took form in a book entitled Four Years with Lee. Due to his professional rapport with his commander, Taylor's writings retain signal importance in any study of Robert E. Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia.

¹Interview with Janet Taylor.
It should be noted that Taylor's motivation for writing his first book developed out of Lee's own initial attempt to write an accurate history of the Army of Northern Virginia.2

After the Civil War, Lee hoped that the bravery and devotion of the Army of Northern Virginia would be correctly transmitted to posterity. Writing to Walter Taylor in a printed circular, the Grey Fox insisted that:

... this is the only tribute that can now be paid to the worth of its noble officers and soldiers; and I am anxious to collect the necessary data for the history of the campaigns in Virginia from the commencement of its organization to its final surrender. I am particularly anxious that its actual strength in the different battles it has fought be correctly stated.3

This appeal for information on the Lost Cause forwarded to all of Lee's general officers, showed Lee's intentions not so much to set the record straight as to pay a last tribute to his troops.4 Much of the correspondence varied, but usually the circular was followed by a postscript of personal note explaining what he wished the recipient to send him. What each officer was requested to supply depended on what battles and campaigns that particular officer fought in, or what position he had held in the army. Since Colonel Taylor had for a long duration prepared the trimonthly


3Ibid.

statements of the strength of the army, he thought his
former aide could provide data concerning the numbers engaged
in the various campaigns.5

On another occasion, Lee asked his former adjutant
if he could obtain from Burton Harrison copies of his letters
with Jefferson Davis. Lee maintained that, "It will be
of great use to me to speak more fully of movements and
their results."6

For a while, Lee set about collecting material, but
he found it increasingly difficult to secure the necessary
papers, especially since the War Department apparently
refused him the use of certain documents in its possession.7

Amid his many labors at Washington College, General
Lee found little time to pursue the collection of material
from other sources, and apparently he never wrote any part
of his intended narrative. He may have decided that passion
still deafened the ears of the nation.8 Possibly, he

5Robert E. Lee to W.H. Taylor, 31 July 1865, Lee Family
Papers, Washington & Lee Archives, Lexington, Va.; Walter

6R.E. Lee to W.H. Taylor, 25 May 1866, Taylor Family
Papers. Lee was referring to his letters written to Jeffer­
son 1861-1865.

7Douglas S. Freeman, The South to Posterity (New York:
Scribner's, 1939), p. 42.

8Allen W. Moger, "General Lee's Unwritten History,"
Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, 71 (July 1963):
358. While the available evidence does not show that Lee
was personally denied access to these captured papers,
Taylor wrote shortly after Lee's death that "several unsuc­
cessful attempts had been made to obtain permission to
examine the Confederate papers" in Washington.
realized that truth could not be told without damaging the reputation of men he respected. Historians, Link and Patrick, were convinced that "his character was such that he never could have brought himself to place blame where it was due. Any detailed military account from his pen would have raised more questions than it answered." Although General Lee failed to record for posterity the courage and loyalty of the Army of Northern Virginia, one of his most trusted aides, Walter Herron Taylor, made a significant contribution toward preserving for future generations the Southern view of the war. The Colonel was dedicated to carry out Lee's objectives and inform the nation of the strength of the Confederate and Federal armies that were engaged in the operations in Virginia. Unlike his old chieftain, Taylor received the coveted permission and was the first Southern student to delve into the unpublished papers captured in Richmond. The estimates he compiled remain among the most accurate we have and have been consulted by many researchers and scholars since their publication in 1877.

Thus Taylor embarked upon a career of proving "the great numerical odds" faced by Lee. When Lee died before

9Ibid, p. 42.
10Link and Patrick, p. 278.
11Ibid.
12Walter Taylor, Four Years With Lee, p. 1.
making use of Taylor's statistics, the young aide felt charged with a special mission. He believed that "all-wise Providence" had prevented Lee from giving a true statement of the odds against which they had to contend. Now, Taylor wrote, "the duty seemed logically to devolve upon me."  

The Colonel's determination for historical documentation involved him in a number of projects. He worked on his memoir, *Four Years with General Lee*, and also took it upon himself to defend Lee in Southern magazines and Northern newspapers, such as the *Philadelphia Times*. Furthermore, he worked arduously for the Lee Monument Association and maintained a network of correspondence with J. William Jones, Jubal Early, Fitzhugh Lee, Charles Marshall, and many others, constantly furnishing them with statistics.  

Taylor's main objective in his historical writing can be best described by his statement, "Historical accuracy being my great aim, is all that I have to say upon this subject."  

Owing to his intimate relationship with his commander, Taylor devoted a considerable portion of his postwar years

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15Walter H. Taylor to George Rogers, 22 May 1896, Taylor Papers.
to settling controversies about the Army of Northern Virginia. Rarely were his conclusions disputed because he possessed a memory that was both cohesive and accurate.\textsuperscript{16} Noted Civil War historian, Douglas Freeman, in his definitive work, \textit{R.E. Lee}, cited two examples when Taylor, fifty years after the war, not only recalled correspondence concerning a particular battle, but was also able to quote the letters almost verbatim. This is why the Colonel became an unofficial "court of last resort" in the multitude of historical arguments that abounded in the half-century after Appomattox.\textsuperscript{17}

It was only natural that Colonel Taylor, "in reality but a boy," insisted the \textit{Virginian-Pilot}, "should have seen things that others overlooked," and that he, in admiration for his esteemed commander, should have written of those incidents in books that will remain among the classics of Southern history.\textsuperscript{18}

Seven years before his book was printed, Taylor met his revered chieftain for the final time. On 30 April 1870, as Lee arrived in Norfolk for a brief visit, crowds in Norfolk and Portsmouth received him with rebel yells. Many of his old comrades-in-arms came to shake his hand.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{16}Walter H. Taylor, \textit{Four Years With Gen. Lee}, edited by James I. Robertson, pp. viii-ix.
  \item \textsuperscript{17}Southern Historical Society Papers, "Col. Taylor, A.A.G.", p. 86.
  \item \textsuperscript{18}Norfolk-Virginian-Pilot, 3 Mar 1916, p. 1.
\end{itemize}
and to gaze once more— and for the last time— on his calm expression. Colonel Taylor conducted the General, accompanied by his daughter,

... through the dense throng to the ferry-boat. The air, during his passage through the assemblage, was vocal with shouts of welcome to the old chieftain. It may be also remarked that those shouts were not of the measured 'hip-hip-hurray' kind now in vogue, but were the genuine, Confederate yells, which quickened the pulses at all the battles in this state, from Big Bethel to Appomattox Courthouse, and which doubtless awakened a host of memories in the breast of him in whose honor they were uttered.

General Lee remained in Norfolk for several days, the guest of Dr. William Seldon, during which he received calls from many friends and admirers. Six months later, on 12 October 1870, Robert E. Lee passed quietly away at his home in Lexington. Marse Robert was not only mourned by the South but by the entire country as well. It is unlikely that history affords another instance where the leader of a losing cause succeeded in retaining the love, admiration, and respect of his followers, and even of his enemies, to the extent noted in the case of General Robert E. Lee. In addition to his fame as a noble and brilliant military commander, Lee earned universal respect in his role as President of Washington College.
and as a conciliator during the stormy Reconstruction era.22

After the General's death Taylor put together his estimates, procured documents from the United States War Department, and prepared the first reliable figures on the ceaselessly debated question of comparative strength.23 Although there were many methods of comparing the strength of opposing armies, Taylor chose the effective total, or the sum of the officers and enlisted men present for duty, excluding all attention of the extra duty men, those sick, and those in arrest. "As this manner of estimating was applied to both armies," wrote Taylor, "it seemed to me the most equitable and satisfactory."24

The Colonel's initial work, Four Years with General Lee, contained numerous incidents that have since become a part of every biography of Robert E. Lee. This historical contribution was received quite favorably by the majority of literary and academic critics. Thus, by the turn of the twentieth century, the book became a collector's item and for many years was a standard authority on Confederate history; more than that, it consisted of previously unpublished material that revealed insight into Lee's character.

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The *Southern Historical Society Papers* cheerfully declared:

> With such opportunities for knowing the inside history of our grand old army, we expected Colonel Taylor to give us a book of great historical value, and we have not been disappointed.\(^25\)

This critic read it twice with increasing interest and placed it on a convenient shelf for frequent consultation. Although he was impressed with the fresh information on Lee, the reviewer wished that Taylor's narrative had been much fuller in detail. Despite that one failing, he acknowledged that the author brought out invaluable material to depict a correct understanding of Lee's military campaigns. Furthermore, "the main object of his book was to determine the relative numbers of the Confederate and Federal armies in all of the principle battles," remarked the writer, "and this he has certainly settled beyond all dispute."\(^26\)

When the Colonel's book was reprinted in 1962, he was once again certified as the "unchallenged" postwar authority on numbers and losses in Lee's army.\(^27\) The editor, James I. Robertson, in preparing this new edition, incorporated into the notes and introduction not only additional excerpts from Taylor's letters, but also select passages from Taylor's later memoir, *General Lee, 1861-1865*.\(^28\)


\(^26\) *Ibid.*


In promoting Taylor's second book, *General Lee, 1861-1865*, the publisher exploited one major factor that in matters official, he was almost said to speak, as if, by authority of his late chief, and his personal recollections of men and matters during that eventful period contribute materially to the attractiveness of his work.29

It was to be expected that publications of Lee's reminiscences would commemorate the centenary of his birth.30 Thus in 1907, the first of these made its appearance when Taylor published his second work devoted to the memory of his fallen comrades-in-arms. Taylor's book, *General Lee, 1861-1865*, added substantially to the facts that were presented twenty-nine years previously in his *Four Years with Lee*.31 In response to repeated requests from many friends, Taylor revised his original narrative, adding new material gleaned from the Official Records and similar sources printed after 1877. Ironically, Taylor experienced some difficulty in locating a publisher compatible to his philosophy. "We wish to publish the book for you, provided," wrote Doubleday-Page and Company, "you will be kind enough to make two changes in it."32 Doubleday insisted that the Colonel elimi-
nate the first two chapters relating to the South's attitude in 1860. It was implied that, "the public now considers that question settled, and it takes only an academic interest in it." The second proposed omission turned out to be a rather strange one and revealed the publisher's ignorance of Taylor's contribution to the study of the American Civil War. "Since your book was distinctly a book of the military events in General Lee's life," wrote Doubleday, "you omit as far as possible the parts of this manuscript which have to do wholly or chiefly with military affairs." 33

Taylor rejected these recommendations and after considerable correspondence with other publishers, he agreed to have his treatise printed by Braunworth of Brooklyn, New York. The Colonel had finally contacted a publisher that appreciated his intricate and accurate documentation of the noble Lee and his role in the "recent unpleasantness." 34

It should also be mentioned that both of Taylor's books on Lee have been greatly used as reference material by historians and journalists, especially on the subject of controversial Civil War battles. 35

Most importantly, Walter Herron Taylor should be regarded as a literary figure of impeccable integrity. One par-

33 Ibid.

34 Doubleday to W.H. Taylor, 17 Jan. 1906, Taylor Papers. Some of the publishers were unsure of the commercial prospects of Taylor's book.

35 Interview with Janet Taylor; Clifford Miread to Walter Herron Taylor III, 1 July 1938, Taylor Papers.
ticular illustration of Taylor's quest for authenticity was his criticism of Colonel Charles Marshall. In referring to his former co-staff officer's speech on the "Surrender at Appomattox," Taylor brought up one point in his address about which, "I would like to refresh your memory." 36 Marshall had failed to mention Colonel Taylor's role in the preliminary stages of the surrender negotiations between Lee and Grant: "You say that no one accompanied him (Lee) but you and one orderly," exclaimed Taylor. The Colonel reminded Marshall that he, too, had escorted General Forsyth through their lines in order to obtain the sanction of General Meade to the truce between Gordon and Sheridan, and therefore returned to Lee — before Babcock rode up to announce Grant's readiness to meet him. The Colonel concluded his letter by declaring:

This is certainly unimportant, but it is desirable to be as nearly accurate as possible, even in small matters, when dealing with the incidents of that period. 37

Colonel Taylor shared the views of Josephus, the ancient Hebrew statesman and historian, who believed that historical writers by necessity and force, had to be concerned with the facts and should not excuse themselves from committing them to the "written word, for the advantage of posterity."

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37 Ibid.
He was convinced that the historian's responsibility was to produce facts for the benefit of mankind.38

In what Taylor had written, he strove, first, to assist in making clear certain details touching the history of General Lee, heretofore shrouded in obscurity or doubt; secondly, to present an accurate statement of the army's power which he commanded. Indeed, he wrote as "if under the supervision of Lee himself." The Colonel fully realized that, "were that illustrious man now living, he would scorn any advantage obtained through injustice to others, or the sacrifice of truth." Finally, he wanted to document the role of the Confederate veterans in order to justify their pension claims. These convictions controlled Taylor's mind throughout his entire narrative.39

Taylor attempted to preserve for posterity the memory of the Lost Cause and its unforgotten dead through his books, articles, and the construction of monuments in Norfolk and Richmond. In an abstract way, Confederate veterans like Walter Taylor shaped the mind of the South. By means of memorial activities he left behind constant reminders of his past. It should be noted that the Confederate veteran handed down an ideal of gallantry and self-sacrifice by which any future sacrifice "paled in comparison."40

38 W. Taylor, p. 188.
39 Ibid, pp. 188-89.
While reading of the ceremonies soon to take place in Raleigh at the unveiling of a monument in 1895, Taylor asked, "Is Norfolk alone to be without a monument?"\textsuperscript{41} The Colonel was quite instrumental in the erection of monuments commemorating the soldiers of the "War Between the States." As chairman of the Norfolk Monument Committee he worked tirelessly in his efforts to construct a Confederate memorial in his home town. The funds for the monument began to be collected as early as 1866 but "effort and generosity lagged."\textsuperscript{42} Although many of the memorials that are observed today were built long after the war had ended, this does not mean that Southerners were reluctant to honor those who had fought and died for them. However, money was difficult to come by for even the most essential commodities of everyday living. And even when conditions became better the monuments erected represented years of scrimping and saving.\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{41}Walter H. Taylor to Blanche Baker, 15 May 1895, Taylor Papers.

\textsuperscript{42}W.H.T. Squires, "Our Monument of Love," Squires Scrapbooks, p. 221. The Norfolk Monumental Association was organized in Norfolk on 14 February 1866. It was intended to "commemorate the dead of Norfolk who were slain in defense of the rights of the state." The officers first chosen included: President, Gen. R.L. Page, first vice-president, Maj. William E. Taylor, second vice-president, Col. Water Herron Taylor, and other distinguished citizens.

After many years of fund raising campaigns, the Colonel concluded his 1898 report by declaring:

Your committee regrets that after several years of earnest endeavor it cannot submit a more favorable report. The desire to have a Confederate Monument in our city through the voluntary offerings of our people does not seem to be generally felt and discouragement and indifference were encountered in many instances, when least expected.44

Still, Taylor persisted that the work begin at once. He also urged that the monument be placed at the head of old Market Square and that all the money "now available" be expended in the construction of a granite shaft, complete in itself, "somewhat after the design submitted by the Couper Marble Works with provisions for heroic statues at the base and on the top of the monument, for which "we have funds in hand for their purchase."45 Hence, the Colonel, fearful that the generation that recalled the sacrifices and heroism of the war between the states was now rapidly passing away, accelerated his efforts to complete the erection of the monument.46

On 28 January 1898 the city granted permission to utilize the space at the head of Commercial Place for the statue. Later, on 22 February 1899, the cornerstone was laid on the thirty-ninth anniversary of Jefferson Davis'
inauguration as President of the Confederacy.47

The original plan designed by the Couper Marble Works of Norfolk called for the monument to be topped with a heroic bronze figure of Peace, while four life-sized bronze figures representing a Confederate sailor, infantryman, cavalryman, and artilleryman were intended to adorn the base. But funding being limited, the committee finally settled for a handsome fifteen foot bronze statue of a defiant Johnny Reb sculptured by Norfolkian, William Couper, as the crowning feature of the monument that was unveiled on 16 May 1907.48

When the day of dedication finally arrived, Colonel Taylor drew the veil aside as the spokesman of Pickett-Buchanan Camp in the presence of a great multitude which included the now-aging members of that famous brigade, the Sons of the Confederate Veterans, the Confederate Choir, and the Daughters of the Confederacy as guests of honor. Afterwards, there was an adjournment to Elmwood Cemetery where the exercises were concluded. These were preceded by a parade through the principal streets with music furnished by the Navy Yard Band.49

47"Laying of the cornerstone," Public Ledger, 22 Feb. 1899. p. 2. The Civil War monuments were usually chaste in design and true to the region in their emblematic figures such as plants and leaves.


49Virginian-Pilot, 17 May 1907, p. 2. Col. William H. Stewart, noted local historian, was the main orator and delivered the ovation.
In addition to Taylor's contribution to Norfolk's monument, the Colonel played a key role in the creation of the memorial to his former chieftain - Robert E. Lee. Taylor also participated with many dignitaries in both the laying of the cornerstone in 1887 and the final unveiling of the Lee statue in 1890 in Richmond, "Late capital of the Confederacy." The statue was sculptured by a young Parisian artist, Marius Jean Antoine Mercie, who had previously carved the "La Fayette" which stood directly opposite the White House in Washington.

The celebration of the unveiling of the Confederate memorial of the revered General began with a military ball on 28 May 1890, to which 600 socialites were invited, and concluded with a grand march on the following day witnessed by 100,000 cheering people. The parade contained many of the former military and government officials of the late Confederacy, including Taylor and his former co-staff officers.

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50 Interview with Janet Taylor.


53 Ibid; Richmond Times, 30 May 1890, p. 1; Richmond Dispatch, 30 May 1890, p. 2; Ulrich Troubetzkoy, "Lee Monument," Virginia Cavalcade, 11 (Spring 1962), pp. 5-10. Gen. Fitzhugh Lee was chief marshall of the Parade.
Despite the energetic Colonel's public and private activities, he still managed to find time for an astonishing range of civic usefulness. To mention a few: He served on the Board of Directors of the Jackson Orphan Asylum, an Episcopal home and school; as a Visitor of the Virginia Military Institute;\(^5\) as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Norfolk Symphony Society; as President of the Board of the Eastern State Lunatic Asylum, wherein he encouraged many needed reforms for the mental patients;\(^5\) as the executor of the Mary Ludlow Von Zollicoffer estate, wherein Taylor organized the planning and funding of the Mary Ludlow Home for the Aged; and member on the Board of Directors of the Ballentine Home For Old Ladies.\(^5\)

The Colonel's philanthropic interests included charter membership in the United Charities and a vital role in


\(^5\)The last Will and Testament of Mary E. Zollicoffer, 4 June 1903; William H. Stewart, pp. 577-78; "Open the Ludlow Home today," *Ledger-Dispatch*, 1 Apr. 1918, p. 2; "Ballantine Home for Aged Women," *Virginian-Pilot*, 2 Apr. 1918, p. 3; *Norfolk Landmark*, 3 Dec. 1911, pp. 13-16. Col. Taylor was also Chairman of the Ballantine House Committee. The charter was approved on 21 Jan. 1896; dedicatory exercises, 24 Apr. 1896. It was located on Park Ave. between Bond and Corpren Avenue.
his church's council. For several years he represented the vestry of Christ Church, Norfolk, in the Diocesan Council, in addition to the Diocesan Council in the General Convention. Taylor became a charter member of St. Lukes Church on 22 January 1874, wherein he scrutinized the church's finances in the same efficient manner as those of his bank.\textsuperscript{57} The Colonel also was quite helpful in assisting the "Colored Grace Church P.E." with the purchase of a new dwelling. This charitable act was an example of Taylor's benevolent attitude toward the emancipated Negro.\textsuperscript{58}

Despite the Colonel's dim view of the Negro's "premature" enfranchisement and its repercussions on the Reconstruction era, he tended to overcome his prejudices and assist in the rehabilitation of the former slaves. Like many Southerners, Taylor argued that during the entire war the Negroes were universally loyal and their conduct in "all respects admirable."\textsuperscript{59} Even while the white masters went to the front, the women and children were left at home and on plantations with Negroes without fear or apprehension. And although the Blacks then possessed the "same

\textsuperscript{57}"Church Consecrated," Virginian-Pilot, 29 May 1900, p. 3; William Stewart, p. 212. The church was located on the corner of Granby & Bute Streets.

\textsuperscript{58}W.H. Taylor to the Vestry of Christ Church, 16 Nov. 1911, Christ Church, Norfolk City Vestry Minutes: 1828-1905, Norfolk. Grace Episcopal Church, originally called The Church of the Holy Innocents, was founded in 1883 by Negroes who had formerly been communicants of Old Christ Church.

\textsuperscript{59}Walter H. Taylor, General Lee, p. 266.
racial instincts and passions as the Negro of to-day," wrote the Colonel in 1906, "so far as my knowledge and observation enable me to speak, not a single case of assault was ever recorded or ever occurred in the South during that period."60

Taylor expressed his philosophy on the racial issue which was influenced by the ante-bellum slaveowner's opinion combined with the deep bitterness of Reconstruction:

The Negro under a condition of servitude, acknowledging his subordination to his superiors, is well mannered and contains himself within the bounds of perfect and unaltering respect for the white race, even when no one is near to make him afraid. The same Negro, with the supposed advantages of freedom and education, after the expenditure of much money and time in the effort to elevate him, becomes a wild beast and a terror, a prey to uncontrollable passion. How shall this be explained? Is it not fairly chargeable to the vicious legislation at the close of the war, - by which it was sought to humiliate the people of the South, - to the unqualified enfranchisement of the blacks and to the corrupt teaching of the meddling and misguided fanatics who came among the Negroes and implanted in their minds erroneous and dangerous notions as to their rights and privileges, so that, with vast numbers of them, their conception of freedom is unbridled license, and their tendency to a life of idleness, immorality, and crime is truly sad and disheartening.61

However, in spite of this racist sentiment, Taylor devoted considerable time and energy to Negro education and welfare during the latter part of the nineteenth

60Ibid.
The Colonel was convinced that a country "is as strong as its weakest link," and was in favor of education for all people.\textsuperscript{63}

His interest in Negro education was exemplified by Taylor's multitudinous activities for the St. Paul's Normal and Industrial School in Lawrenceville, Virginia.\textsuperscript{64} Shortly after the Colonel's death, James S. Russell, Black educator and founder of St. Paul's School wrote, "The school will miss his kindly words of counsel and advice as well as his financial aid, which he has been giving to the school for a number of years."\textsuperscript{65}

Dr. Russell, a follower of Booker T. Washington's theme of trade education for the race, firmly believed that industrial schools were a "great blessing to the colored youth" in the South and would do much to destroy the antagonism which seemed to exist between "learning and manual labor."\textsuperscript{66}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{62}Interview with Janet Taylor; James S. Russell to Betty Taylor, 4 Mar. 1916, Taylor Papers.
  \item \textsuperscript{63}Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{64}St. Paul's Normal and Industrial School, Annual Reports of the Principal, 1889-1890, 1890-1891, Lawrenceville; Interview with Janet Taylor; Virginius Dabney, pp. 414-15.
  \item \textsuperscript{65}James S. Russell to Betty Taylor, 4 Mar. 1916, Taylor Papers. Russell was the first Negro elected a bishop in the Episcopal Church, an honor he declined to remain at St. Paul's.
\end{itemize}
St. Paul's Normal and Industrial School had a profound influence on the improvement of race relations and was held in high esteem by whites and Negroes alike. In the intervening years, it has evolved into a progressive Liberal Arts college, offering degrees in the arts and sciences. Moreover, the school's program was compatible with the Colonel's racial attitude. He declared that "an uneducated Negro was a menace to society - They should be all educated as soon as possible."

In addition to the Colonel's numerous humanitarian activities, he also found time to assist in the development of Hampton Roads into a major trade center and seaport. In 1900 Colonel William Stewart was confident about the future of Tidewater's commercial success when he declared that:

... the greater port of the cities of Hampton-Roads so closely connected by suburban sections tributary to each and by electric railways and steamers as to be practically now what in the near future they inevitably must become, one commercial metropolis.

These ideas were shared by Walter Taylor and such public-spirited associates as Barton Myers, Goodrich Hatton, and David Lowenberg. In one particular instance they formed


69 William Stewart, p. 297.
a committee that emerged from a meeting attended by the representatives of banks, steamship lines, railways, and merchantile interests of Norfolk and Portsmouth. The origin of this meeting stemmed from a controversy over the proper location for the Chief Office of Customs.

The Colonel and his fellow committeemen opposed any suggestion by the Federal government to relocate the customs office at another harbor. Apparently, the sentiment of Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Norfolk County,

... embracing a total of over 150,000 people would keenly feel the stigma put upon this port which for 112 years has held first place as a customs district of Virginia; we hope that whatever may be your decision as to the consolidation of the customs districts of Virginia, the chief officer of customs shall be located at this port.71

Taylor and his colleagues were ultimately successful in demonstrating to the Department of Commerce and Labor many logistical and economic advantages of the old seaport, and thus the issue was settled in Norfolk's favor.72

During this same time period of municipal expansion, Taylor donated his services to one of the most influential maritime lobbies of its day – the Atlantic Deeper Waterways.

70 "Norfolk as a Customs Port," Virginian-Pilot, 26 Jan. 1913, pp. 13-16.

71 Ibid, p. 16.

As Chairman of the Virginia delegation, the Colonel advocated many needed improvements of the vital waterway systems of the southeast region. On 17 November 1909, as part of his drive to link the waters of Virginia and North Carolina, Taylor urged the second annual convention of the Atlantic Deeper Waterways Association to use its influence and therefore compel the United States Congress to act upon the Association's recommendations for advancement of the inland waterways. Taylor's humanitarian traits were again illustrated by his concern for the "wives and children of seamen, during the prevalence of storm and tempest, by the elimination of the passage around Cape Hatteras."

He said that in considering the subject, it should not be approached from a sectional point of view or from a sectional spirit, but upon the broad principle of "the greatest good to the greatest number."74

The Colonel's role as France's consular agent in the port of Norfolk was but another example of his contribution to the commercial growth of the Hampton Roads area.75

Article 40 of the French Diplomat and Consular Laws and Regulations clearly specified that:

73Ledger-Dispatch, 18 Nov. 1909, p. 1, p. 11.


75Department of State, Index to Equaturs, Vol. 2, 4 Dec. 1906, p. 205, National Archives, File #285. Recognition of Walter H. Taylor as Consular Agent of France with "Powers and privileges as allowed to the Consular Agents of the most favored nations in the United States."
... they shall choose these delegates as far as possible among the notable Frenchmen established in the country of their residence, and in default of these from among the most reputable merchants or inhabitants of the place.76

Thus, it was France's good fortune to choose one of Norfolk's leading citizens, who represented her interests from 1890 through 1911.77 Taylor's fluency in French, combined with his expertise in finance and commerce, provided the French government with a strategic advantage in diplomatic and economic relations in the Virginia-North Carolina region.78

One of the Colonel's primary functions in this capacity involved document certification (manifest) on merchant ships travelling to France. He was also responsible for performing a census of the French subjects in the city in conjunction with the French Census of 1890.79 During Taylor's tenure as French Consular Agent, Franco-American trade increased quite rapidly.80


77 Norfolk and Portsmouth City Directory, 1890 through 1912.

78 Interview with Janet Taylor.

79 Norfolk Public Ledger, 14 April 1891, p. 1.

Although Colonel Taylor's career in business, finance, government, and civic affairs represents a remarkable achievement, it is also quite pertinent to mention his personal role as the admired patriarch of the Taylor family. In the midst of Taylor's extraordinary life, he and his devoted spouse managed to raise eight children. After the birth of the fourth daughter, Mrs. Taylor received a letter from General Lee stating that, "She must now have four boys to go with the four girls." This she proceeded to do and named the youngest and fourth son, Robert E. Lee Taylor. Betty Taylor noted that she had accomplished this amazing feat, "by order of R.E. Lee, General," which was the way Colonel Taylor signed the General's wartime correspondence.

Taylor's descendants followed in the family tradition by serving their community in various degrees of civic duty. A perfect example of the Taylor devotion to civic development was illustrated by his son, Walter Herron Taylor III. The Colonel's son contributed his talents to the city of Norfolk for almost a half century as the Director of Public Works. He had a major part in mapping and directing the physical progress of the city, whereby he supervised the construction of waterworks and shaped the municipality's first modern streets and sewers. Taylor's study of street

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82 Ibid.
and drainage problems peculiar to low-lying seaport areas won him widespread recognition as an expert in this field. At the time of his retirement in 1945, he was assistant to the City Manager. 83

The Colonel's granddaughter, Janet Taylor, performed with great distinction for forty years in Norfolk Juvenile Court. She has been an inspiration to such institutions as the Norfolk Historical Society and the Norfolk Public Library. Miss Taylor also contributed to important historical research by donating the Taylor Family Papers to the Norfolk Public Library in 1964. 84

"Colonel Taylor has a happy home where hospitality is genuine without ostentation," recalled Lyon Tyler in 1908. 85 His old home at the northwest corner of York and Yarmouth Streets was famous for its "good living." One of Taylor's specialities was his punch, celebrated throughout the "length and breadth of the Old Dominion." 86 It was quite difficult for Janet Taylor to forget her grandfather's house, especially during the Yuletide Season. "Christmas was the real occasion. Everybody in the Neighborhood came


84 Interview with Janet Taylor.

85 Lyon G. Tyler, Men of Mark, p. 387.

86 Interview with Janet Taylor.
and there were presents for everyone . . . oysters, ham, turkey. All this wonderful stuff," she said, slipping briefly into fond memories.\textsuperscript{87} The Colonel's granddaughter was quite amused, when remembering the punch that was served that day - "guaranteed to knock your eyes out. It was fish house punch and I can remember 80- and 90-year-old aunts doing the Highland fling after a couple of glasses."\textsuperscript{88}

The family remained extremely close - kissing kin - attending family gatherings on holidays and in the summer vacationing together at Blue Ridge Summit in Pennsylvania. It wasn't unusual for third cousins to marry, "every once in a while second cousins," reminisced Miss Taylor. "Grandfather thought the dry climate in Western Pennsylvania would combat whooping cough which plagued some of his children." Colonel Taylor, the patriarch, acted as advisor and arbitrator to the vast Taylor clan.\textsuperscript{89}

The Colonel continued to lead a very active career until the last year of his life when he encountered a serious illness. On 8 January 1915 Key Compton, President of the Chesapeake Steamship Company, wrote to L.E. Johnson, Presi-

\textsuperscript{89}Interview with Janet Taylor; Ledger-Dispatch, 7 Mar. 1916, p. 1. Taylor's summer home was probably the oldest and one of the largest at this widely known summer resort. It contained fourteen rooms and was purchased by Col. Taylor in 1882.
dent of the Norfolk and Western Railway, that, "Colonel Taylor had very perceptibly failed and looked like a sick man." Compton had discovered that Taylor had been quietly taking radium treatments in a private sanatorium in Baltimore, having traveled there at the advice of his Norfolk doctors. Although the diagnosis was "ulcers of a long standing in the lower bowel," the symptoms appeared to be a case of cancer. Some days later, President Compton discussed the Colonel's condition with his son-in-law, Dr. A.D. Atkinson. "He told me that he had very little hope," admitted Compton, "but very often they got a miraculous result from the radium treatment. Of course, Col. Taylor's age is very much against him," added Taylor's saddened friend, "and I very much fear that it is, as you state, the beginning of the end of a long and valuable life."

Taylor confessed to his close friend, L.E. Johnson, that he was unsure of the effectiveness of the radium treatment, but, "Meanwhile, Thank God, I am not suffering any pain." The obstruction in the intestines proved not

90 Key Compton to L.E. Johnson, 8 Jan. 1915, Norfolk & Western R.R. Papers, Roanoke.

91 Ibid.


to be malignant. Apparently, the radium treatments arrested
the cancer, for he managed to survive one more year. 94

The gallant Colonel finally died, after several months
of failing health and two weeks of extreme illness, on
1 March 1916. He was surrounded by his loved ones as the
end came, "To whom this breaking of the family circle,"
declared the Virginian-Pilot:

is one of the deepest of sorrows, in which they
have the most genuine sympathy of the entire
community, the people of Norfolk having through
the many years of their association with him
not only greatly esteemed Colonel Taylor, but
by reason of his gentle, courtly and generous
manner had come to love him, and to whom, one
and all, his death is a personal loss. 95

Curiously, there was no eulogy at the Colonel's
funeral. In fact, the minister of his church, Reverend
Steinmetz, did not appear at the funeral services due to
his resentment at the Taylor family's invitation to two
highly respected Episcopal clericals. 96 The controversial
Steinmetz had a bitter feud with Bishops A.M. Randolph
and B.D. Tucker of the Southeastern Virginia Diocese.
A simple, but impressive service was conducted by the two
bishops with the assistance of Reverend Giles Cooke, rector
of All Saints' Episcopal Church, Portsmouth, who was also

94 Ibid; Portsmouth Star, 3 Mar. 1916, p. 1; Virginian-

95 Virginian-Pilot, 2 Mar. 1916, p. 1.

96 Interview with Janet Taylor. Steinmetz resented the
Taylor family because they insisted that the two Bishops
be allowed to conduct the service.
a former member of Robert E. Lee's staff and an intimate friend of Colonel Taylor.

The burial in Elmwood Cemetery was attended only by the pallbearers and the members of the family, who followed the body to the burial ground in a long cortege of carriages.97

In honor of the Colonel's memory, not only were the flags of the city at half mast, but also those on the state buildings in Richmond, in accordance with a joint resolution passed by both branches of the State Legislature.98

Taylor left a rather sizable estate, valued at $185,966.67, to his cherished wife.99 Three months later, the Colonel's widow died at her summer home in Blue Ridge Summit, Pennsylvania. "The news of her demise will carry sorrow to the hearts of many Norfolk people," remarked the Ledger-Dispatch,

... for she was a lady of the most beautiful life and character and by her many lovely qualities had endeared herself to all who had the privilege of her acquaintance.100

The family's admiration for the Colonel and his wife was graphically expressed in a poem written by their grandchildren in honor of their fiftieth anniversary on 15 April

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97Ibid.


99Last Will and Testament of Walter Herron Taylor, 7 Sept. 1907.

1915 entitled, "To the Bride and Groom of Sixty-five and a Childhood Love That is Still Alive":

So here's to the health of the family tribe
Here's to the groom, and here's to the bride.

Golden, indeed, their life has been,
Flowing in one unbroken stream.

Sweethearts from early childhood days,
Sweethearts still in their old age;

Sweethearts may they ever be,
Sweethearts through eternity.101

"Few men have been honored in life more than was Col. Walter H. Taylor of Norfolk, and few have been more honored in memory than he," concluded the Richmond Times-Dispatch. The Times-Dispatch's sentiments were shared throughout the entire state and most of the nation, for:

To have lived so that all men gave him reverence
To the day of his death is memory fine enough,
But to have lived so that in his youth he was
The trusted adjutant of Robert E. Lee sets his name apart and emblazons it. His books, his work in later years, his service to the community will live after him. But after those will live what may be carved on his tomb: 'He was the adjutant of Lee'.102


102Times-Dispatch, 20 June 1916, p. 3.
CONCLUSION

If Walter Herron Taylor's life can be measured by his innumerable accomplishments, then one must evaluate his contributions to his fellow man and to his community. Taylor was usually remembered as Lee's devoted adjutant as well as his chieftain's confidante and biographer. Many historians have agreed that the Colonel's greatest service to the cause of Southern history was his scrupulous statistical compilation of the strength of the Confederate armies and of the odds against which they had fought.

However, Taylor's role in the restoration and growth of Norfolk must be regarded as his finest achievement. After the conclusion of the Civil War, the Colonel went to work in an almost hopeless economic situation, setting an example for other Southerners. He demonstrated an adaptability to the changed society and was willing to accept new concepts and business methods. It was through Taylor's efforts that the city of Norfolk restored fiscal stability. This was reflected by his role as Chairman of the Sinking Fund combined with his earlier activities in the city council's finance committee. Taylor's reputation as one of Norfolk's most prominent financiers originated mainly from
his long and productive career as president of the Marine Bank.

From his vantage point as a leader in the local banking business, he was able to advise and assist various commercial enterprises of the old seaport as well as individuals in need of sound financial wisdom. During his thirty-nine years as president of the Marine Bank, Taylor and his civic-minded colleagues introduced new industries and modern forms of transportation which accelerated Norfolk's progress as a major urban center.

While serving in the Virginia legislature, Taylor secured the passage of the Consolidation bill, which proved a milestone in the history of Norfolk's growth. Consolidation meant the linking of Norfolk with three railroads, which extended 408 miles across southern Virginia. This was the initial step towards building up the port of Norfolk, which now became the exporter of lumber, wheat, tobacco, and above all, the cotton of the South.

For over three decades the Colonel served as an energetic and loyal director of the Norfolk and Western Railroad. He was most instrumental in obtaining vast improvements for the railway, which in turn furthered the development of Norfolk into a major seaport. By 1900 Norfolk already was the biggest coal port in the world. The people of Norfolk were indebted to the great railroad interests such as the Norfolk and Western for achieving this economic triumph.
Taylor also spearheaded an inner-city transportation system, which led to the growth of the suburbs and the expansion of the city. He later advanced the development of the Jamestown Exposition, which enhanced the suburban evolution.

The finest compliment to the Colonel's character was that, apart from his commercial proficiency, he possessed a strong compassion for the oppressed and underprivileged. His humanitarianism was illustrated by his successful attempts in obtaining pensions for Confederate veterans and widows and by his encouragement of better care for the mentally ill patients of the Eastern State Lunatic Asylum. Taylor's keen interest in the improvement of the emancipated Negro was shown by his personal and financial assistance to the St. Paul's Normal and Industrial School. The Colonel insisted that education was a cornerstone in the advancement of all citizens in a democratic society.

The Colonel also showed concern for the aged and invalid in his activities, which led among other things to the creation of the Ballantine and Ludlow institutions for the elderly.

Walter Herron Taylor's legacy can be found in his indefatigable service to his native town and state, which included the task of repairing the moral and economic devastations caused by the Civil War. Adding more luster to this legacy was the patience and undaunted courage that he had demonstrated as Lee's trusted and efficient adjutant.
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