

The Taylor Family Part 3 – “Opportunity”

At the age of 18, Jessie Walls wrote and gave a speech titled “Opportunity” to the members and friends of the Baptist Sunday School Convention held from September 15-18, 1910 at the First Baptist Church in Buxton (Document generously provided to Taylor family member by Tamara Muise). In Jessie’s speech she says “To the Members and Friends of the Baptist Sunday School Convention” –“DEAR FRIENDS: - The subject which I have chosen for my paper is ‘Opportunity,’ and while I feel my inability to do justice to the subject, yet I can say in the words of a Biblical character, that ‘The spirit is willing though the flesh is weak.’ Life is full of opportunities for all, and especially to us who are engaged in Church and Sunday School work. To every human being whom God has made, He has given the opportunity to make the best of himself or herself. There is not one of us but has dreams of success in life. Not one of us is willing to live a life of uselessness, and to go down to death with no one to regret that we have died. And by grasping our opportunities we can all leave behind us a record of good deeds well done, of little acts of kindness that have done good to our friends, as well as ourselves, giving those who know us cause to remember us gratefully.”

Her speech continues with “But unfortunately all of us do not recognize our opportunities when they appear before us. Many of us fail to take advantage of the propitious hour when it presents itself. Many of us let the golden moments for improvements pass unheeded, and mourn for them when it is too late. Dame Fortune is a sensitive lady, and if you don’t receive her cordially when she calls she is very likely not to call again, but to send her daughter, Miss Fortune, to see you instead. She is also a modest guest, and will not linger and sue for welcome if we treat her coldly.”

“Many of us make the mistake of waiting for great opportunities let the little ones slip by. We should not forget that he that is faithful over a few things may expect to be made ruler over many. The use that we can make of our future opportunities will be largely determined by the ability we show in managing the affairs of the present. Grand chances of progress will come by and by to many of us, and perhaps to all, and our manner of meeting them depends upon the way in which we have met the little everyday tests that seem so unimportant. There is an old saying that the bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, and a small opportunity at hand is worth many larger ones that may never come.”

“The question comes – how shall we know our opportunities when we meet them. First of all we must let the guiding hand of God be the chief factor in all our undertakings. In everything we do and in all our methods we should seek wisdom from the Eternal Fountain of knowledge. Everything that is worth doing is worth doing well, and in everything worth doing well there lies an opportunity. We should prepare ourselves faithfully to meet the future and the demands it will impose upon us. In the church and Sunday School, in our homes, and at our work whatever our occupation may be, we should learn the lessons of life thoroughly, and train ourselves into a habit of readiness and skillfulness in putting our knowledge into use. Opportunity is after all little more than a thorough knowledge of existing conditions, and a capacity our knowledge to to [sic] good advantage. If we endeavor to obtain useful knowledge of the things that we encounter, and train ourselves to apply that knowledge quickly and readily, we cannot fail to take advantage of our opportunities whenever they present themselves.” What a talented writer and wise woman Jessie was.

Michael Taylor also shared the following comments about his grandmother and how her message is so representative of the Taylor family. He says “When I read Grandma Jessie Walls-

Taylor's speech "Opportunity", it gave me a whole new perspective on her. As a young boy, I found her kind, approachable, and fun to be with. I remember when she came to stay with us in Sarnia for a few months just before she passed in 1969. I was 11 years old and attending public school. My school was a 5-minute walk from home, and I used to come home for lunch every day. Grandma would make lunch and we sat down and ate together. She would talk, tell me stories, and ask questions. After which, we would both end up laughing. Then I got up gave her a hug and kiss on the cheek to thank her for the nice lunch and went back to school. At other times, I would walk by her room on the first floor of our home. She saw me and said come in and sit down beside me. We would talk. I do not remember all the conversations, but I remember enjoying the time she spent with us. My sister Ann told me, recently, that she loved grandma's long straight hair and asked grandma if she could curl her hair. Grandma said sure. So, Ann went ahead and curled grandma's hair. Both were laughing and enjoying each other's company. Everyone in our home enjoyed having her there. Unfortunately, she passed later that year on October 3, 1969 at Mount Sinai Hospital in Detroit. After reading Grandma's speech on "Opportunity", I find it showed her views on the value of work, respect for the Lord, caring for others, and being wise enough to recognize and take advantage of opportunities. From what I have seen doing research, I believe Grandma and Grandpa Taylor passed those values on to their children. Grandpa James George Isaac was an entrepreneur. He involved his sons in the farm business and other entrepreneurial endeavors he was involved in. He showed them how they should approach their lives and business. Once the boys were old enough, he called his business James Taylor & Sons. I found several ads in the *Amherstburg Echo* advertising James Taylor & Sons and the services or goods they were providing. Grandma Jessie Taylor used her life to help her family and others. She was guided by the word of the Lord, her Christian values, and beliefs.

She showed application of those values by helping others. I have seen postings in the *Amherstburg Echo* of her attending Baptist Association Convention in Toronto, her attending a prayer meeting at Central Grove Church, and Christian women conventions. One notice was posted on August 16, 1929 in the *Amherstburg Echo* page 5 stating, "The Harrow branch of the W.C.T.U. (Women's Christian Temperance Union) will meet at the home of Mrs. James Taylor on Tuesday afternoon, August 20th. A good attendance is requested as there are several items of importance to be dealt with among which, is the Provincial Convention, which is to be held in Windsor the first of October, the South Essex Union will take part in this." There is no doubt that she spent her life spreading her knowledge and a helping hand to others. Grandma and Grandpa's male children all had their own businesses at some point on their journey. Whether it be in farming, or in other industries or endeavors such as being a minister. Their son's Orville and Lloyd were members of the Prince Hall Masonic Lodge, Harrow. The Masonic Order, one of the oldest fraternities in the world, allowed men to associate with other men of honour and integrity who set high personal and moral standards. Their son Warden had his own successful businesses as did their son Wellington. He later became a minister and founded his own church. I understand where the things my parents taught my sibling and me came from." The Amherstburg Freedom Museum is grateful to Michael for sharing these personal stories which are rarely documented. It is memories like these that further help us learn about the amazing pioneers who settled in this area.

James and Jessie Taylor had at least ten children: Orville Isaac, Lloyd, Jessie Freed, Gwendolyn Mae, Warden C., Phyllis Parthenia, Wallace Henry, Juanita Hellen, Maria Noumi or "Mitzie," and Wellington. Sadly, a few of the children passed away at young ages including Jessie Freed Taylor who was born on August 5, 1917, but sadly passed a few days later on

August 14, 1917. A similar tragedy happened for Gwendolyn who was born on June 2, 1918, but sadly passed a few days later on June 8th. Wallace Henry Taylor was born on November 5, 1922 and also sadly passed on January 22, 1923.

What we publish is not a complete history of any family and is based on the documents that are available. We welcome photos and information to fill in the gaps. See you next week for part 4 where we will discuss the rest of Jessie and James' children.

REFERENCES by Michael Taylor: Part 3

1) W.T.C.U meeting held by Jessie Walls-Taylor on Tuesday afternoon; August 20, 1929 was posted in the *Amherstburg Echo* August 16, 1929 on page 5.

http://ink.scholarsportal.info/viewer/cecil/focus/ink/newspapers/echo/01_1929/001561-x0-y0-z1-r0-0-0?q=W.+C.+T.+U.+Meet+James+Taylor

2) James George Isaac & Jessie Walls-Taylor attended the Baptist Association Convention was posted in the *Amherstburg Echo* on September 5, 1941 on page 3

http://ink.scholarsportal.info/viewer/cecil/focus/ink/newspapers/echo/01_1941/001831-x0-y0-z1-r0-0-0?q=James+Guy+Lloyd+Phyllis+Taylor+Jackson

3) Jessie Taylor attended a prayer meeting at the Central Grove Church was posted in the *Amherstburg Echo* on March 6, 1936 on page 2.

http://ink.scholarsportal.info/viewer/cecil/focus/ink/newspapers/echo/01_1935/003140-x0-y0-z1-r0-0-0?q=Day+of+Prayer+at+Central+Grove%2C+Jessie+Taylor

4) The dates of the births and passing of Jessie Freed Taylor, Gwendolyn Mae Taylor, and Wallace Henry Taylor come from the personal Birth and Death records that Jessie Walls-Taylor kept. I received a copy of the records from Renard Taylor.