

Taylor, John papers

John Taylor Papers

1786, 1820

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Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

Mss. 39.2 T21

Unit ID

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Unit Date

1786, 1820

Language

English

Creator

Taylor, John, 1753-1824

Extent

0.01 Linear Foot

Repository

Special Collections Research Center

Administrative Information

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Biographical Information:

John Taylor (December 19, 1753 -- August 21, 1824) of Caroline County, Virginia was a politician and writer. He served in the Virginia House of Delegates (1779-81, 1783-85, 1796-1800) and in the United States Senate (1792-94, 1803, 1822-24). He was the author of several books on politics and agriculture. He was a Jeffersonian Democrat and his works provided inspiration to the later state's rights and libertarian movements.

His father died when he was a small child and he was raised by his uncle Edmund Pendleton, a leading Virginia politician. He attended a school sponsored by his uncle with fellow students: James Madison (a distant cousin), and George Rogers Clark. Taylor attended the College of William and Mary and then studied law under his uncle. He served in the American Revolutionary War, rising to the rank of colonel, and serving under Patrick Henry and General William Woodford, and leading a regiment under the Marquis de Lafayette.

After the war Taylor lived as a lawyer, slave-holding farmer and part-time politician, serving several partial U.S. Senate terms. He was a leader of the Quids, opposing the election of Madison as President and supporting James Monroe.

Taylor wrote in defense of slavery and called for the deportation of free African Americans. He criticized Thomas Jefferson's ambivalence towards slavery in *Notes on the State of Virginia*. Taylor agreed with Jefferson that the institution was an evil, but argued that it was "incapable of removal, and only within reach of palliation," and took issue with Jefferson's repeated references to the specific cruelties of slavery, arguing that "slaves are docile, useful and happy, if they are well managed," and that "the individual is restrained by his property in the slave, and susceptible of humanity . . . Religion assails him both with her blandishments and terrors. It indissolubly binds his, and his slaves happiness or misery together." His approach, defending the preservation of slavery as it was and claiming that proper management could benefit the slave as well as the master, anticipated the more emphatic defenses of slavery as a "positive good" by later writers such as John C. Calhoun, Edmund Ruffin, and George Fitzhugh.

Taylor's estate, Hazelwood, is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Taylor County, West Virginia was formed in 1844 and named in Senator Taylor's honor.

Content Description

Letter, 1820 December 30, of John Taylor of Caroline to an unidentified recipient, opposing the formation of a geographical party because of the possibility of the dissolution of the Union and discussing a just system of weights and measures as one step towards the cementing of the Union. Also, assignment, 1786 September 4, of the right to a bond of George Mitchell, by Nicolas Brumm to Sarah Huston, witnessed by John Reynolds and John Taylor.

Keywords

Correspondence

Virginia--Politics and Government

Legal documents

Political parties--United States--History--19th century
Jeffersonian Democrats
Virginia House of Delegates

Description of Subordinate Components

Papers

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Unit Date 1786, 1820

Mixed Materials Manuscripts Group 2 Box 30 (Box)

Container 1 (folder)

Scope and Contents

4 Sept. 1786. Document signed by Nicholas Brumm, assigning Sarah Huston his right and interest in a bond executed by George Mitchell. Witnessed by John Reynolds and John Taylor. 30 Dec[embe]r 1820. John Taylor, Port Royal, Virginia, to [?], opposing the formation of a geographical party because of the possibility of the dissolution of the Union, and concerning a just system of weights and measures as one step towards the cementing of the Union.