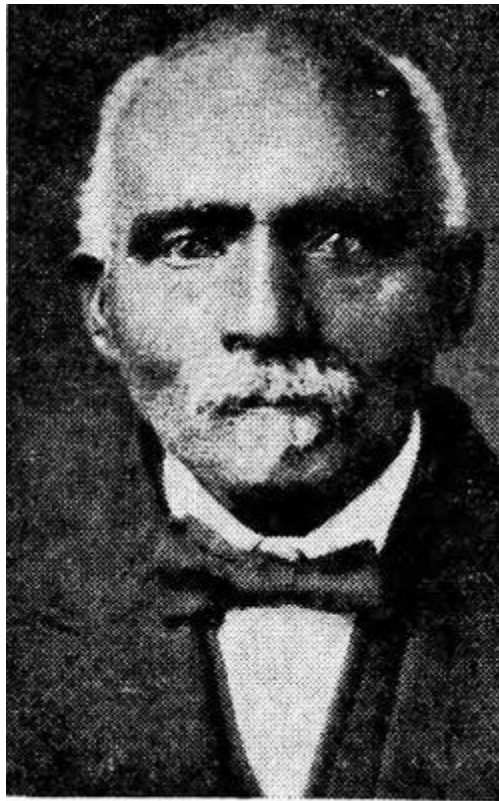


# **Black Kentucky Pioneers: John Basil Taylor (1840-1943)**

By Jerry Long, Owensboro, Ky., 1988

The following article was published in the Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, Ky., Tuesday, 25 November 1941, p5:

John Basil Taylor, 101, Never  
Drank Rum Nor Used Tobacco



**JOHN B. TAYLOR**

John Basil Taylor's recipe for living 100 years is to not use tobacco and liquor. John never drank intoxicants but did try to use tobacco. It made him sick and he didn't try any more. John has lived the 100 years and more. He was 101 on November 14. Born on the John Patterson farm in the Utility section of Hancock county November 14, 1840, his life, with the exception of 18 months with a niece, a school teacher, Lottie Lyles, in Bloomington, Ind., has been spent in Hancock and Daviess counties.

Born a slave of the Pattersons he was sold when five years old to Goldsberry Lawson, a neighbor. In settling the Patterson estate it became necessary to dispose of the negro slaves. They were sold in pairs. John was left when the other children had been disposed of. Lawson bought the little boy and his mother. They remained with him until Lincoln's emancipation proclamation freed the negroes.

John came down into Daviess county and worked a while, then returned to his old neighborhood. Later he returned to Daviess and until March, 1940, lived in and near Maceo. His wife, the mother of his eleven children, of whom three survive, died more than 40 years ago, and a sister, Mary Corley, kept house for him until her death. It was then, in his one hundredth year, the ex-slave moved to Bloomington. He returned to Kentucky in October this year and is living with a daughter, Katie Board, at 1525 Sweeney street, Owensboro.

John has two other children, Richard Taylor, Indianapolis, and Lula Grimes, Yelvington; 32 grandchildren; six great grandchildren and six great great grandchildren. One great grandson, Jimmy Smith, of Indianapolis, is a graduate of Indiana University, Bloomington. He made the track team and won a number of college honors. The old colored man is mighty proud of the young athlete, and his scholastic achievements, too. He didn't have the privilege of attending school, as did the young man, but at 101 his keen memory for names and facts associated with events long before the War Between the States, indicate he must have been a right smart young fellow for his times.

At 91 John quit farming and lived quietly in Maceo with the sister as housekeeper. The 1937 flood which overran his home village washed away many of the furnishings of their home. The most highly prized possessions of the old man were the papers issued in Virginia to his father, John Taylor, which certified the older Taylor had purchased his freedom. As he was a native of Virginia it was necessary for the father to return there to complete the purchase of his freedom. And he rode horseback to get the papers handed down to the son and lost by the latter in the flood.

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**Jerry, Long, Owensboro, Ky. compiled the following:**

John Basil Taylor, born 14 Nov. 1840 in Hancock County, Ky., was the son of John Basil & Lucinda Taylor. He was born in the Utility section of Hancock County on the plantation of John & Sarah (Boutcher) Patterson, on the same plantation which had been previously the property of James Gatewood. John's father, Basil Taylor, was a free black man, & his mother, Lucinda, had been a slave of James Gatewood and subsequently of his widow, Sarah Boutcher Gatewood Patterson Jagers, and still later of Goldsby Lawson.

Basil Taylor is listed as a free man of color in the 1849, 1850 & 1852 Hancock County, Ky. tax lists. In the 1850 census of Hancock County Basil Taylor was enumerated in the household of Goldsby & Penelope (Gatewood) Lawson. Basil Taylor was listed as being 60 years of age and a native of Maryland; John Taylor on his marriage record and on the 1880

census also reported that his father was born in Maryland. In 1850 Basil Taylor's wife, Lucinda, & several of their children, including, John, aged 9, were slaves of the same Lawson family.

Lucinda, the wife of Basil Taylor, was a native of Kentucky & was born about 1810. She is listed as being a slave of James Gatewood, who died in Hancock County, Ky. in 1838. An inventory & appraisement of the estate of James Gatewood, deceased, was recorded in Hancock County on 31 Dec. 1838 (Marriage Book 1A, p.330). The, following 15 slaves were listed as belonging to his estate: Westly, a man, valued \$700; Perry, a man, \$700; Bill, a boy, \$500; Frankie, a woman, \$350; Lucinda, a woman, \$400; Jane, a woman, \$350; Alfred, a boy, \$600; Margaret, a girl, \$400; Henry, a boy, \$250; Westley, a boy, \$250; Edward, a boy, \$200; Johnston, a boy, \$200; Martha, a small girl, \$150; Mary, a small girl, \$150; & Hattie, a small child, \$100. In the same book (p. 343) on 31 Dec. 1838 an allotment to James Gatewood's widow, Sarah, was recorded. She received 206 ½ acres, which included the mansion house where James Gatewood resided at his death, and the following five slaves: Wesley, a man; Lucinda, a woman; Wesley, a boy; Henry, a boy; & Martha, a girl (the latter was a daughter of Lucinda). Lucinda may have accompanied the Gatewood family when they moved to Hancock County from Warren County, Ky. seven years earlier (1831).

James Gatewood, a Virginian, was born 1775-1780 & in Jefferson County, Ky. on 22 Jan. 1811 he married Sarah, the daughter of Alexander Smoot. By 1820 he was living at Bowling Green in Warren County, Ky. A widower at the time he came to Hancock County, James Gatewood, married William Boutcher's daughter, Sarah, 30 March 1832 in Hancock County, Ky. By his first wife he had five surviving children: Alexander S., Penelope wife of Goldsby Lawson, Griffin, Elizabeth wife of Burton P. Chambers, & Fullington J.; and by his second wife he had four children: Elzera wife of William H. Williams, Evaline wife of John L. Chambers & Daniel Jagers; George Ann wife of Richard Colbert; & Samuel Davis. His widow, Sarah, married second John Patterson, Jr. on 2 June 1839 (they had John James & Rebecca) and she married third James M. Jagers on 18 June 1845 (they had Joseph C., Benjamin C., David C. & Minor M.). She died in Hancock County in 1865; her will was written 16 May 1865 and recorded 11 July 1865 Hancock County will book 4, p.77.

Sarah Gatewood, the widow of James Gatewood, married John Patterson, Jr • in 1839. The next year born on John & Sarah Patterson's plantation to their slave, Lucinda, & Basil Taylor, was John Basil Taylor. John Patterson died in 1845 and in Hancock County will book 2, p.146 on 12 April 1845 was a list of 6 slaves belonging to Sarah Patterson, administratrix of John Patterson, which had been allotted to her as the widow of James Gatewood & which at her death were to be inherited by the 9 children of James Gatewood, who were named therein. The slaves listed were: Lucinda, a woman aged about 34; Westley, a man aged about 30; Henry, a boy aged 14 yrs.; Martha Ann, a girl aged 9 yrs.; Eliza Jane, a girl aged 5 yrs.; & John, a boy aged 3 yrs. The last three were children of Lucinda & the last named was John Basil Taylor, the subject of the preceding newspaper article written 96 years later. A short time after this document was recorded, John Taylor & his mother Lucinda became the property of Goldsby & Penelope

(Gatewood) Lawson; in the 1941 newspaper article it was stated that John Taylor "was sold when five years old to Goldsberry Lawson", which would have been in 1845-1846, a deed finalizing the transfer was not, however, recorded until 1859. In the 1850 slave schedule of Hancock County Goldsby Lawson was shown as owning 7 slaves: an adult man aged 24, an adult woman aged 35 & 5 children, 3 girls & 2 boys. The adult female was most likely, Lucinda, & two of the children were her son, John, & her daughter, Mary. In the same record Mrs. Sarah Jagers (formerly the wife of James Gatewood & John Patterson) was listed as having 3 slaves, a man aged 36 & two females, aged 14 & 9. Hancock County deed books 5, p.154 & 10, p.119 indicate that these three were: Wesley, Martha Ann & Eliza Jane, & that the two girls were daughters of Lucinda.

Of the nine children of James Gatewood, deeds were recorded by three of them whereby they sold their interests in the slaves & land which had been allotted to his widow, Sarah; the other heirs had either transferred their notes for the same or possibly still owned an interest at the time the slaves were freed in 1863. On 27 Feb. 1841 Elizabeth & her husband, Burton P. Chambers sold their interest to John & Sarah Patterson (Hancock County deed book 2, p.464). Alexander Gatewood on 8 May 1841 sold his interest to the same (Hancock County deed book 2, p.508). And Evaline & her husband Daniel Jagers sold to her brother-in-law, Goldsby Lawson, the slaves belonging to the estate of James Gatewood, dec'd, & which had been allotted to his widow, Sarah, on 10 Sep. 1859 for \$600 (Hancock County deed book 10, p.119). The slaves as named in the first two deeds were: Westley, Lucinda, Henry & Martha Ann. In the latter deed the following were named: Westley, a man; Lucinda, a woman; Martha Ann, Mary & Eliza Jane, daughters of the said Lucinda; "John Taylor" & Frank, sons of the said Lucinda; Lewis & Matilda, children of said Martha Ann; & their increase. In the 1859 document it was stated that all of the slaves were then in the possession of Goldsby Lawson, except Martha Ann, her two children, & Eliza Jane, who were then in the possession of Sarah Jagers, late widow of James Gatewood.

John Taylor's father, Basil Taylor, died after 1852, & his mother, Lucinda, died after 1880. John Taylor had sisters: Martha Ann, born about 1836, Eliza Jane, born about 1839, & Mary, born about 1848; and a brother, Frank, born 1845-1859; Basil & Lucinda Taylor may have had other children. John's sister, Mary Taylor, married Frank Corley in Daviess County, Ky. on 12 Jan. 1869. On her marriage bond she reported she was 20 years old, born Ky., her father was born Maryland & her mother was both Ky.; her marriage bond was paid by John Taylor. Mary Taylor Corley died in Daviess County, Ky. about 1939, she would have been about 90 years old. John Taylor's brother may have been the Frank Taylor, who married Miss Rebecca Gibbs at Lewisport in Hancock County, Ky. on 21 Jan. 1875. (Note: Frank & Mary Corley in the 1870 & 1880 Daviess County censuses were listed as "McCauley" and were enumerated near John Taylor).

John Taylor lived on the plantation of Goldsby Lawson in Hancock County from about 1845 until the slaves were freed by Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation on 1 Jan. 1863. By

1869 John Taylor had moved to Daviess County, Ky., where he made his home & his living as a farmer in the Yelvington Precinct. In Daviess County on 1 Feb. 1870 he married Rose Gray. On their marriage bond it was recorded that they both resided in Daviess County, the groom was age 27, his first marriage, born in Hancock County, Ky., his father was born Md. & his mother in Ky.; the bride was age 18, her first marriage, she & her parents were born in Ky. Rose was the daughter of Grandison & Lottie A. Gray, and was born about May 1851. In the 1870, 1880 & 1900 censuses of Daviess County, Ky. John & Rose Taylor were listed in the Yelvington Precinct. In the 1870 census (p. 365, #218) listed as living in their home was Lucinda Taylor, age 60, born Ky. Living with them in 1880 were five children & his "mother" Lucinda, age 60, she & her parents were listed as being born in Ky. In 1900 four children were still living at home & John Taylor was listed as renting a farm.

In 1889 John Taylor was living in the village of Yelvington in Daviess County, Ky. By 1897 he was residing in the village now known as Maceo in Daviess County. He was among several Black families who moved to Maceo shortly after it was established in 1888, when the Louisville, St. Louis & Texas Railroad was constructed there. The little hamlet was first called Power's Station, in honor of Col. J. D. Powers, an agent of the railroad. About the turn of the century the name was changed to Maco, in honor of the Cuban mulatto, Captain Antonio Maceo, who was killed in leading the native revolt against the tyranny of Spain; in 1896 just prior to the U.S.'s entrance into the Spanish American War he was slain & subsequently became a folk hero. John Taylor continued to live at Maceo until 1940. The last three years of his life were spent in Bloomington, Ind. & in Owensboro, Daviess County, Ky. He died in the latter place on 17 Jan. 1943 at the age of 102.

The following obituary was published in the Owensboro Messenger, Tuesday, 19 January 1943, p3:

John Basel Taylor

"John Basel Taylor, respected colored resident of Maceo, died at 928 Hall Street at 2 A.M. Sunday. Surviving are three children, a son, Richard Taylor, of Indianapolis, Ind.; two daughters, Lula Grimes, Yelvington, and Katie Board, Owensboro. Funeral services will be held at the Maceo Baptist Church at 11 A.M. today, Rev. George Green officiating. Burial will be in Yelvington Cemetery,"

John Taylor's wife, Rose Gray Taylor, died about 1900-1901. To them were born eleven children:

Mary A., born 24 March 1871 Ky., married Julius Hawes 1 Feb. 1889 at Yelvington, Daviess County, Ky.; died 31 March 1920 Owensboro, Daviess County, Ky.

Lula Lucinda , born 11 July 1873 Ky., married Edward Grimes 13 June 1889 at Yelvington, Daviess County, Ky., died 26 Sep. 1953 Maceo, Daviess County, Ky.; buried Yelvington Cemetery.

John W., born about 1875 Ky. & died 1880-1941.

Margaret, born about 1877 Ky., married Henry Moorman 24 Oct. 1897 at Powers Station, Daviess County, Ky., died 1897-1941.

George G., born about 1879 Ky. & died 1880-1941.

Catherine/Kate, born Jan. 1881 Daviess County, Ky., married Eugene Merriwether 28 Jan. 1901 Daviess County, Ky., married second George Allie Board 1 April 1922 in Owensboro, Daviess County, Ky.; she died in Owensboro, Ky. on 14 July 1966 & was buried in Elmwood Cemetery in that city.

Henry, born Oct. 1883 Ky. & died 1900-1941.

Richard, born Jan. 1888 Ky., married Emma Valentine 20 Jan. 1913 at Maceo, Daviess County, Ky., died 2 July 1951 Indianapolis, Ind.

Cora, born Sept. 1889 Ky., married Wallace Woods 7 April 1910 in Owensboro, Daviess County, Ky., & died 7 Aug 1927 Maceo, Daviess County, KY; buried Yelvington Cemetery.

And two other children who died prior to 1941.

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The following free blacks were enumerated in the 1850 census of Hancock County, Ky.:

#184	Bruce, Mary A.		28	Va.
	Jesse		5	Ky.
	George		3	Ky.
	Betsey A.		1	Ky.
#245	Shaw, Milford		26	Ky.
	Elizabeth		19	Ky.
	Andrew T.		1	Ky.
	Shaw, Andrew J.		24	Ky.
	Meredith, Susan		45	Ky.
#246	Standaford, Charles	(farmer)	60	Md.
#332	In the household of	Goldsby & Penelope (Gatewood) Lawson:		
	Taylor, Bazil		60	Md.
#405	Hill, Manuel	(farmer)	60	Ky.
	Phebe		62	Va.
#568	In the household of	George M. & Elinora (Crawford) Younger:		
	Rooks, William		32	Ky.

At the end of the 1852 Hancock County, Ky. tax book is a list entitled "free colored persons", those appearing & their ages as recorded in this list are as follows:

Milford Shaw	28	Jesse Washer	6
Andrew J. Shaw	27	George Washer	4
John A. Shaw	22	Harry	45
Elizabeth Shaw	21	Basil Taylor	-
Susan M.	42	Manual	60
Adam Taylor	3	Phoebe	55
Andrew Jackson	2	Rebecca	72
Charles Standerford	60	William Rooks	55
Mary Washer	30		

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