

Orchard Home

The Story of a Gracious Residence, and of the People Who Lived and Worked There

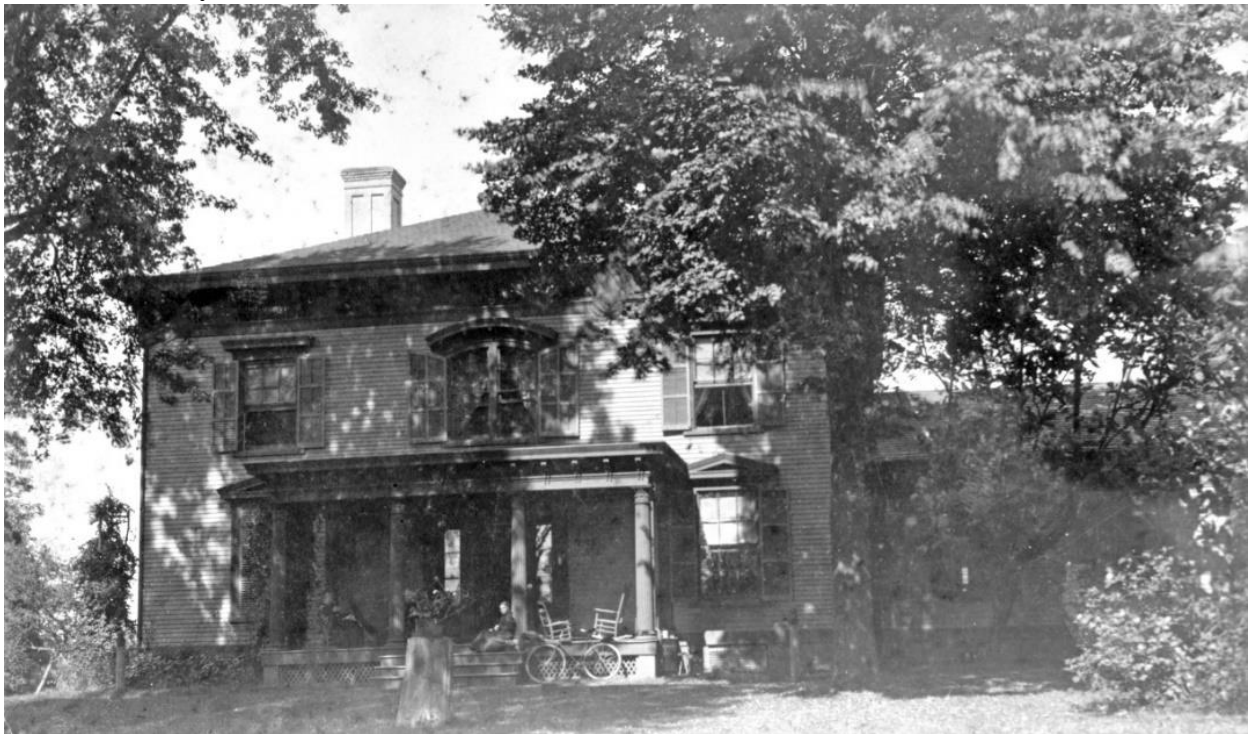
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This essay tells the story of Monmouth County's Orchard Home, the Taylor family who built it, the historic farm on which it sits, and the lives of many individuals who have worked for the estate since the mid-nineteenth century. It also covers subsequent owners of this stately residence in the twentieth century and beyond.

Introduction

In early 1854, Joseph Dorset Taylor, his wife Mary Holmes Taylor II, and their two young children, Edward and Mary Holmes Taylor III, moved into a grand new house at the west end of Middletown village in Monmouth County, New Jersey. They named it Orchard Home, an identification by which the restrained Italianate residence was known for almost one hundred and



Orchard Home as it appeared about 1890. Edward Taylor photograph. Taylor Family Papers.



The grand main staircase in the reception hall at Orchard Home taken on 6 November 1886. Furnishings include a Chinese table and chair, Chinese porcelains, and a hanging oil lamp in the Chinese taste. Edward Taylor photograph. Taylor Family Papers.

fifty years. Money was clearly no obstacle in the design and construction of Orchard Home. Every imaginable extra went into its layout and fabric. Entrance through the front door led to a broad reception hall with a grand staircase, the central focus of those rooms in which the Taylor family spent their lives - formal parlor, informal family parlor, dining room, and study on the first floor, and four bedrooms on the second. Few contemporary private residences in the area dedicated such a large percentage of their overall square footage to such an imposing entrance hall. And most of the rooms which flanked it were also of very generous dimension.¹

¹ As this manuscript was being finalized, a very large collection of Taylor family manuscripts and photographs from Orchard Home was donated to the Monmouth County Historical Association (MCHA). Named the Taylor Family Papers and assigned archive number 1277, it is presently being organized. Considerable last minute use has been

Each main room of the house featured a marble mantelpiece surrounding a fireplace that burned cannel coal for heat. Several of them were elaborately carved, or of an unusual color. High ceilings and bold, elaborate woodwork enriched the interior setting further. Every window was also set into a paneled recess with folding shutters top and bottom. Even such construction details as the spacing of floor joists revealed that the Taylors wanted the best new home that money could buy. They were spaced only twelve inches apart. And between the subfloor and the finish flooring of the first floor, a 1.5 inch void was filled with plaster to prevent the smells and dampness of the basement from filtering up into the principal living spaces. That particular detail was found in only a very small percentage of high end construction projects in the mid-nineteenth century. Yet despite its advanced architectural detailing, Orchard Home reflected a very traditional “Georgian” floor plan consisting of a central hallway flanked by two rooms on each side per floor, a



**Detail of the carved marble mantelpiece in the front parlor.
MCHA image.**

symmetrical three bay facade, and a hipped roof. This particular spatial arrangement had been popular in Monmouth County for more than a century. Other exterior features of Orchard Home included a broad front porch with four graceful fluted columns and carved Corinthian order capitals, prominent pediments above the windows, and heavily bracketed cornices.

made of this incredible resource, especially the photographs taken by Edward Taylor and others which illustrate this article.

Throughout the principal rooms of Orchard Home, small handles were installed which, by a complicated network of wiring, were connected to a row of call bells in a sitting room next to the kitchen. These handles linked the family's living spaces with those support areas which were the domain of domestic servants. By its very design, Orchard Home was meant to function with live-in help. A back staircase ran from the basement to the third floor, allowing staff to move throughout the house without using the grand staircase in the reception hall. Their spaces included the kitchen and adjacent sitting room in a wing of the first floor, the basement where foodstuffs and other supplies were stored, and four finished rooms on the third floor, at least one of which was used for storage. A back hallway led to a second exterior doorway which opened into a service courtyard that included a well, a storage building, and an unusual two-story necessary or outhouse that the family could reach via a bridge over the courtyard from the main residence. Near this important service area were located the kitchen garden, a smoke house, and an ice house. Orchard Home was truly divided into two worlds - that occupied by the Taylor family, and those spaces that provided support to them. To run the house properly and as intended, the Taylors engaged servants. Federal and New Jersey state census schedules provide the names of twenty-one individuals employed by the family between 1850 and 1930. Of that total, sixteen were African-Americans. This essay tells the story of Orchard Home, the Taylor family who built it, the historic farm on which it sits, and the lives of many individuals who have worked for the estate since the mid-nineteenth century. It also covers subsequent owners of this stately residence in the twentieth century and beyond.



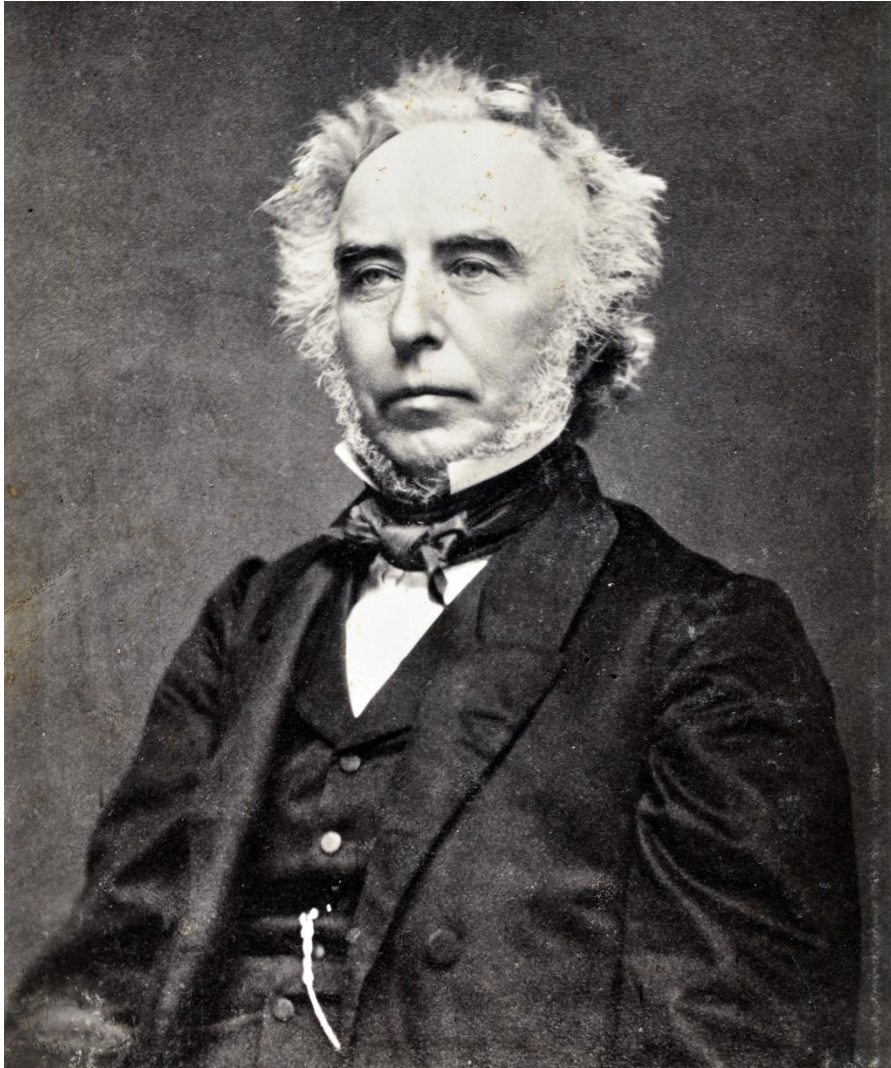
Detail from a larger photograph which shows the ice house and smoke house at Orchard Home, taken about 1890. Although in severely deteriorated condition, the smoke house still stands. Note the unusual manner in which the picket fence along the driveway goes over the gable end of the ice house. Edward Taylor photograph. Taylor Family Papers.

The Road to Prosperity

Joseph Dorset Taylor was born in Middletown village on 27 May 1802, the fourth of five sons and eight daughters of Joseph Taylor (1771 - 1836) and Martha Dorset (1775 - 1850).² At an early age, he went to seek his fortune in New York City. The city directory for 1828/29 indicates that Taylor was then living with his uncle Edward at 174 Water Street, with a business at 194 Front

² John E. Stillwell, M. D., *Historical and Genealogical Miscellany: Early Settlers of New Jersey and Their Descendants*, (New York: Printed Privately, 1903 - 1932), vol. V, 63 - 71.

Street. Edward Taylor (1779 - 1845) had become a city dry goods merchant by 1805, and continued in that business until 1840. He had also served from 1834 to 1839 as an elected Alderman of the Second Ward, which earned him a seat on the city's Common Council. In 1843, Taylor retired to the family farm in Middletown, where he died on 12 April 1845.



**Joseph Dorset Taylor, photograph taken on 14 March 1861.
Taylor Family Papers.**

By November 1827, young Joseph D. Taylor had entered into a partnership with N. Dane Ellingwood at 194 Front Street in New York where they advertised the sale of fine black teas – “Souchong, Padra Souchong, Powchong and Pecco, in fancy boxes, containing from 6 to 20 lbs. of superior quality.”³ Taylor had entered the China trade at the age of twenty-five. Unfortunately, the partnership did not last long. On 2 August 1828, they placed a notice in the *New York Evening Post* announcing that the “copartnership existing between the subscribers under the firm of Ellingwood & Taylor is this day dissolved by mutual consent. Joseph D. Taylor will attend to the settlement of the business.”⁴ It may have taken him some time to wind up their affairs. But a new opportunity presented itself in 1832.

On 17 September 1832, an enterprising entrepreneur named David Washington Cincinnatus Olyphant (1789 - 1851) formed a partnership with Charles N. Talbot (1802 - 1874) and Charles W. King (d. 1845) as Talbot, Olyphant & Co. in New York and as Olyphant & Co. in Canton, China.⁵ Olyphant had been engaged in the China trade since the early 1820s, and had lived there for some time, returning to the United States in 1824. A publication with the lengthy title of *Shipping and Commercial List and New-York Prices Current* announced on 15 September 1832 that the merchant ship *Roman* had arrived in port with “Teas, &c. young hyson 2072 chests, 1575 hf do, 100 20 lb bxs, 700 13 lb do, 250 6 lb do, 60 bxs, canisters, hyson 464 chests, 46 hf do, 835 13 lb bxs, hyson skin 1142 chests, tonkay 49 do, gunpowder 70 do, 157 hf do, 835 13 lb bxs, 750 6 lb do, 480 bxs, canisters, imperial 97 chests, 132 hf do, 1240 13 lb bxs, 400 6 lb do, 480 bxs, canisters, souchong 769 chests, 350 hf do, 20 cases, 120 bxs, bohea 400 chests, cassia 5900 mats,

³ *New York Evening Post*, 12 November 1827.

⁴ *New York Evening Post*, 4 August 1828.

⁵ William M. MacBean, *Biographical Register of the Saint Andrews Society of the State of New York*, vol. II (New York: Printed for the Society, 1925), 106. Much of the subsequent commentary on the Olyphants and the China Trade is derived from this biographical sketch of David W. C. Olyphant.

silks 390 cases, mdse 750 pkgs, Talbot, Olyphant & Co.”⁶ With that massive cargo of tea and other merchandise, the new firm organized only two days later was off to a solid start in the China trade.

Joseph D. Taylor apparently joined that firm from its formation, as the New York City directory for 1833/34 notes that he was in business at 66 South Street, the same address as Talbot, Olyphant & Co. This prime business location was situated on the bustling East River waterfront facing the docks, two blocks south of what is now the South Street Seaport Museum. Taylor remained affiliated with that firm until the end of his business career in 1854. A perusal of New York newspaper advertisements placed by Talbot, Olyphant & Co. over the years gives an idea of the merchandise which they imported from China and elsewhere. In addition to a wide array of teas, they dealt in fabrics such as several varieties of silks and satins, grass cloth, fans, rhubarb, china ware and dinner sets, split rattan, preserved ginger, as well as American sewing silk [silk thread] from New England “equal, if not superior, to any Italian, put up in a neat manner.” All of their goods were offered in bulk quantities, indicating that they were wholesale commission merchants and importers, not consumer retailers.⁷

On 4 September 1839, Talbot, Olyphant & Co. reorganized. David W. C. Olyphant and Charles Talbot joined with Olyphant's son David (1816 - 1886) to form a new firm in New York City under the old name. Charles King teamed up with William Howard Morss to continue the business in Canton.⁸ The two firms engaged in many joint ventures, and made consignments of goods to each other on a regular basis. Further changes took place in the makeup of the New York firm seven years later. On 2 February 1846, the younger David Olyphant withdrew from the

⁶ *Shipping and Commercial List and New-York Prices Current*, 15 September 1832.

⁷ *New York Evening Post*, 30 August 1834; *New-York American for the Country*, 17 April 1838; *New York Commercial Advertiser*, 22 January 1844, 30 November 1844, 11 April 1845, 2 May 1845, 2 April 1846, 11 October 1847, 12 January 1848, 18 February 1848, 19 April 1848, and 16 November 1848.

⁸ *New York Commercial Advertiser*, 5 September 1839.

business, while Talbot became a special partner. The elder David Olyphant then joined with another son, Robert Morrison Olyphant (1824 - 1918), to form Olyphant & Son. At this time they also admitted Joseph D. Taylor to the partnership, a testament to his many years of service to the firm as well as to his business acumen in the China trade. David W. C. Olyphant died at sea on 10 June 1851 while on a return trip from China. That left Taylor as the senior member of the business.

C	CHINA SILKS —5 cases black Satins. 8 cases black Sinchews. 2 do white Sarsnetts, extra. 1 do 4-4 black Levantine Hdks. 2 do 7 8 do, extra red borders. 4 do Floss Silk. 10 do Saddlers' Sewings. For sale by ap 25 TALBOT, OLYPHANT & CO. 66 South st.
P	PEARL BUTTONS —15 cases figured and plain, for sale by ap 25 TALBOT, OLYPHANT & CO. 66 South st.
S	SPLIT RATTAN —50 bales, for sale by TALBOT, OLYPHANT & CO. 66 South st.
C	CHINA WARE —40 cases consisting of dinner sets, 1st and 2d size flat plates, 14, 16, 18 and 20 inch dishes; 1st size soup tureens and 1st size vegetable dishes, for sale by TALBOT, OLYPHANT & CO. 66 South st.
G	GINGER PRESERVES —250 cases young gin- ger entitled to debenture, for sale by ap 25 TALBOT, OLYPHANT & CO. 26 South st.
G	GRASS CLOTHS —4 cases brown 29 and 32 inch. fine for tailors use; 3 do 27 and 26 inch Hdks. for sale by TALBOT, OLYPHANT & CO. 66 South st.
R	RAW SILKS —15 cases brown; 10 do white, suit- able for manufacturers, for sale by ap 25 TALBOT, OLYPHANT & CO. 63 South st.
M	MUSLIN DE LAINES —6 cases mullin de laines

Talbot, Olyphant & Co. advertisements from the *New York Commercial Advertiser*,
25 April 1845.

To move their merchandise around the globe, Talbot, Olyphant & Co. and its successor owned a fleet of merchant ships. They included the first vessel named *Roman* already in their service in 1832, the *Morrison*, and the *Huntress*. The firm also maintained interests in other vessels. Still others were chartered and flew under the red and white swallowtail house flag that bore the letters O and T. Between 1850 and 1853, Olyphant & Son purchased four clipper ships built at Portsmouth, NH, in the shipyard of George Raynes. The first vessel was named *Roman*, successor to the first of that name. It was launched in 1850. In 1851, Olyphant & Son took ownership of the famous extreme clipper ship *Wild Pigeon*, which set some admirable voyage records such as an 1854 trip from Whampoa to New York in 107 days, and in 1857 from Shanghai to New York in 98 days. Olyphant & Son also assumed ownership from Raynes of the *Tinqua* launched in 1852, and the *Wild Duck* of 1853.⁹

By 1851, the business career of Joseph Dorset Taylor was drawing to a close. With his fortune secured, he relocated his residence in that year to Middletown, NJ. But his name continued to be associated with Olyphant & Co. at 66 South Street until it disappeared with the 1855/56 edition of the New York City directory. Robert M. Olyphant remained in the China trade until 1873. He later served for twenty years as the President of the Delaware & Hudson Railroad.¹⁰ In its heyday, Talbot, Olyphant & Co. and Olyphant & Son were considered among the three or four most important New York firms engaged in the China trade. They also took a moral high ground, refusing to deal in opium like nearly all other Western merchant houses in Canton. The firm also offered free passage to China on their vessels for any Christian missionaries headed there.¹¹

⁹ "Clipper Ships built in the United States,"

[http://www.bruzelius.info/Nautica/Shipbuilding/Shipyards/Clippers\(NH\).html](http://www.bruzelius.info/Nautica/Shipbuilding/Shipyards/Clippers(NH).html) [retrieved 16 July 2018].

¹⁰ "Robert Morrison Olyphant," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Morrison_Olyphant [retrieved 16 July 2018].

¹¹ Jacques M. Downs, *The American Commercial Community at Canton and the Shaping of American China Policy, 1784 – 1844* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2014, 198 – 209. This is the most detailed discussion of Talbot, Olyphant & Co. and their various affiliated or successor firms involved in the China Trade.

A Private Life & Return to Middletown

For almost two decades, Joseph D. Taylor focused on his New York business career, perhaps at the expense of developing a family life. But that all changed in 1846. On 20 May of that year, Taylor, just a few days short of his forty-fourth birthday, married his thirty-two year old first cousin Mary Holmes Taylor, known hereafter as Mary Holmes Taylor II. Born on 18 January 1814 in New York City, she was the only child of his uncle Edward, who had died the previous year and with whom he had once resided. It's likely that the two newlyweds had known each other since they were both young. Mary Holmes Taylor II was named after her mother, Mary Grover



Carte-de-visite photograph of Mary Holmes Taylor II, taken about 1860. Taylor Family Papers.

Holmes Taylor. She had died in New York City on 5 February 1814 at the age of twenty-five, only eighteen days after the birth of her daughter. It appears probable then that her untimely death resulted from childbirth complications. The elder Mary Holmes Taylor was interred in the Friends' Burying Ground on Houston Street in New York.¹² Her namesake daughter was taken to the family homestead in Middletown, where she was raised until age eleven by her two maiden aunts, Mary (1783 - 1849) and Huldah Taylor (1785 - 1857). Samuel Taylor (1773 - 1843), an uncle who also remained single, resided in the household as well, and was responsible for working the farm.¹³

¹² Stillwell, op. cit., 64 - 65.

¹³ Asher Taylor, *Liber Taylorensis: Book of the Generations of the Taylors of New Jersey, with their Kindred, Connexions & Allies*, manuscript compiled in 1861, with later annotations added by his nephew, Edward Taylor. Taylor Family Papers, collection 1277, MCHA Archives [hereafter referred to as Taylor Family Papers].

In 1825 Mary Holmes II rejoined her father in New York City, where they boarded at several addresses for almost twenty-five years. She attended Mr. Picket's school one year, and then transferred to a boarding school on Walker Street run by Mrs. Roberts and Mrs. Mulligan. She remained there until 1834, although no doubt serving as a teacher's aide or matron as she approached age twenty. In 1843, Mary accompanied her father Edward back to Middletown following the death of her uncle Samuel. She lived there until her marriage in 1846, which took place at Christ Episcopal Church in Middletown, the Rev. Harry Finch officiating. Following their wedding, Joseph D. and Mary Holmes Taylor made their home at 56 Lispenard Street in Manhattan. That address was located one block south of Canal Street and west of Broadway. Taylor had to commute roughly twenty city blocks to his place business at 66 South Street. Three children were soon born to the couple: an unnamed daughter who died at birth on 14 May 1847,¹⁴ a son named Edward on 26 September 1848, and a daughter named Mary Holmes Taylor on 6 December 1850, hereafter identified as Mary Holmes Taylor III.¹⁵

Joseph D. Taylor's new wife enjoyed resources of her own. That included a 2/6 share of the farm in Middletown which had been purchased in 1771 by her great-grandfather Edward Taylor (1712 - 1783). This property, located at the west end of Middletown village, included a house built in part about 1686 but greatly enlarged about 1756. That structure is known today as Marlpit Hall, a historic house museum owned since 1936 by the Monmouth County Historical Association. Edward's son John Taylor (1740 - 1818) succeeded his father as owner of the farm, receiving title to it in 1787. When John died in 1818, he divided his estate equally among his six surviving children, including Mary's father, Edward. Three of the six heirs already named remained single,

¹⁴ The unnamed infant was buried in the yard of the Middletown Baptist Church, with an inscription added to the tombstone of her grandfather Edward Taylor.

¹⁵ Asher Taylor, *op. cit.*

and continued to live on the farm for the rest of their lives. However, the property was kept intact through a complicated series of real estate transactions. In 1821, heir Joseph Taylor sold his 1/6 share to his brother Samuel, and sister Sarah conveyed her 1/6 share to brother Edward. When Samuel died in 1843, he devised his 2/6 share to sisters Mary and Huldah Taylor jointly. At Edward's death in 1845, his 2/6 share went to his daughter Mary Holmes Taylor II. Edward's sister Mary died in 1849, leaving her 2/6 interest to Huldah, who then held a 4/6 part of the estate.¹⁶ Finally, on 2 February 1850, Huldah sold to her niece Mary Holmes Taylor II the remaining 4/6 share of the farm for \$7,333.34, giving her complete title.¹⁷ The transaction was subject to a bond and mortgage. When Huldah died in 1857, \$6,633.34 in principal and \$802.63 in interest remained due to her estate.¹⁸



Marlpit Hall as it appeared in 1887, then being used as a farm tenant residence. Edward Taylor photograph. Taylor Family Papers.

¹⁶ Watson & Henry Associates, Historic Structure Report: Marlpit Hall, Middletown Township, Monmouth County, New Jersey, 15.

¹⁷ Monmouth County Clerk's Office, Deeds, book P-5, page 291 [hereafter cited as Monmouth Deeds].

¹⁸ Monmouth County Surrogate's Office, Inventories, book V, page 173.

The property then consisted of 185 36/100 acres as surveyed at the time of sale by Ezra A. Osborn, plus a salt meadow parcel located at Port Monmouth. The main Middletown tract extended from Kings Highway in the village north across what is now Highway 35 to a V-shaped intersection of Harmony Road and Old Country Road. The latter formed its northern boundary. Along most of this distance, the farm lay west of the old road to Keyport. The ancient family homestead was located in the extreme southeast corner of the farm at the east side of the intersection of Kings Highway and the Keyport road. The barns and other outbuildings were situated on the opposite side of the road.¹⁹



A view of Marlpit Hall and the Taylor farm taken on 8 February 1886 from the roof of Orchard Home. The open fields to the right of the house and barns were developed after World War II into a residential neighborhood. Edward Taylor photograph. Taylor Family Papers.

¹⁹ The Osborn survey was copied along with the deed into book P-5 of deeds cited above.

No doubt it was access to Joseph D. Taylor's substantial fortune that allowed Mary Holmes Taylor II to buy out her aunt Huldah's majority interests in the family farm. But it appears to have been part of a larger plan to leave Manhattan and raise their two children in a more relaxed country environment. Accordingly, in 1851 the Taylors relocated to their newly-acquired property in New Jersey. The 1852/53 New York City directory reflected this change in residence, listing Joseph D. as a merchant at 66 South Street in New York, with his home in Middletown, NJ. At first the Taylors occupied what they called the "Grandfather Homestead," meaning Marlpit Hall. But plans were soon put in place to erect a large new home on the hillside above the old manse. They named it Orchard Home because it was literally situated in the farm's apple orchard. A structure of this size with all of its bold moldings, custom woodwork, and other architectural enrichments would take more than a year to construct. Work must have begun at some point in mid-1852 as the Taylors moved into their elegant new residence on 6 February 1854.²⁰

Given its grand scale and elaborate architectural detailing, the Taylors may well have engaged an architect and contractor from New York to take on their building project. Although documentation is lacking, there is ample local precedence for seeking such services from the city as urban craftsmen were believed to possess a higher degree level of familiarity with the latest design trends as well as possessing advanced trade skills. Nothing like Orchard Home had been built in the Middletown area up to that time. Two examples of large Middletown houses being designed and built by New York talent will suffice. On 30 July 1834, the eighteenth century residence of Robert Hartshorne (1798 - 1872) at Portland was completely destroyed by fire. Hartshorne engaged William Sprague, a builder from New York, to design and erect a new three-story residence in a restrained Greek Revival style. On 1 August 1854, his brother-in-law Edward

²⁰ Asher Taylor, *op. cit.*

Minturn (1806 - 1879) signed a contract with John L. Taylor of New York to erect a large new residence in the Italianate style for him that had been designed by New York architect Thomas R. Jackson. Situated at Lower Rocky Point near Highlands on land sold to Minturn by Hartshorne, this large house with a tower and commanding ocean view cost \$8,120 and took more than a year to complete.

Before construction of Orchard Home commenced, Joseph D. Taylor apparently began to consider its design, setting and landscaping. To assist in his planning, Taylor purchased a fourth edition copy of *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening adapted to North America; with a view to the Improvement of County Residences . . . with Remarks on Rural Architecture* by Andrew Jackson Downing, then the leading landscape architect in the United States. This seminal work, which went through many editions, is more popularly known by its short title *Landscape Gardening and Rural Architecture*. Taylor boldly signed the book on a front free end paper, and dated it 1852. Torn paper bookmarks placed in the text early on suggest issues that concerned Taylor. The first section discussed what Downing called “The Approach.”

In the present more advanced state of Landscape Gardening, the formation of the Approach has become equally a matter of artistical skill with other details of the art. The house is generally so approached, that the eye shall first meet it in an angular direction, displaying not only the beauty of the architectural façade but also of the end elevations, thus giving a more complete idea of the size, character, or elegance of the building: instead of leading in a direct line from the gate to the house, it curves in easy lines through certain portions of the park or lawn, until it reaches that object.²¹

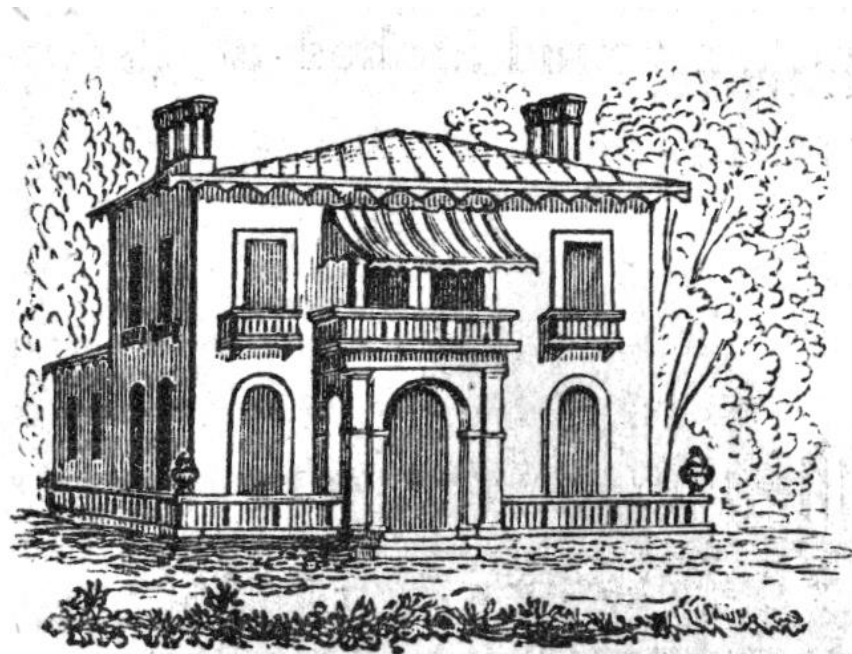
The second bookmark was placed at the start of Downing’s discussion of what he called the “Italian style,” today known as Italianate. Several large residences designed in this style were illustrated, include “Riverside,” the home of the Rt. Rev. George Washington Doane, Bishop of the Episcopal

²¹ Andrew Jackson Downing, *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening adapted to North America; with a view to the Improvement of County Residences . . . with Remarks on Rural Architecture*, Fourth Edition (New York: George P. Putnam, 1852), 336.

Diocese of New Jersey, which was located on the Delaware River in Burlington. Downing advocated picturesque dwellings that featured towers, turrets, arcades, balconies, and various types of projections. But a more simple house with a three bay façade, front portico, prominent chimneys, and a hipped roof was illustrated and described as a “New Haven Suburban Villa.”

Downing commented:

New Haven abounds with tasteful residences. “Hillhouse Avenue,” in particular, is remarkable for a neat display of Tuscan or Italian Suburban Villas. Moderate in dimension and economical in construction, these exceedingly neat edifices may be considered as models for this kind of dwelling. *Fig. 47*, without being a precise copy of any one of these buildings, may be taken as a pretty accurate representation of their general appearance.²²



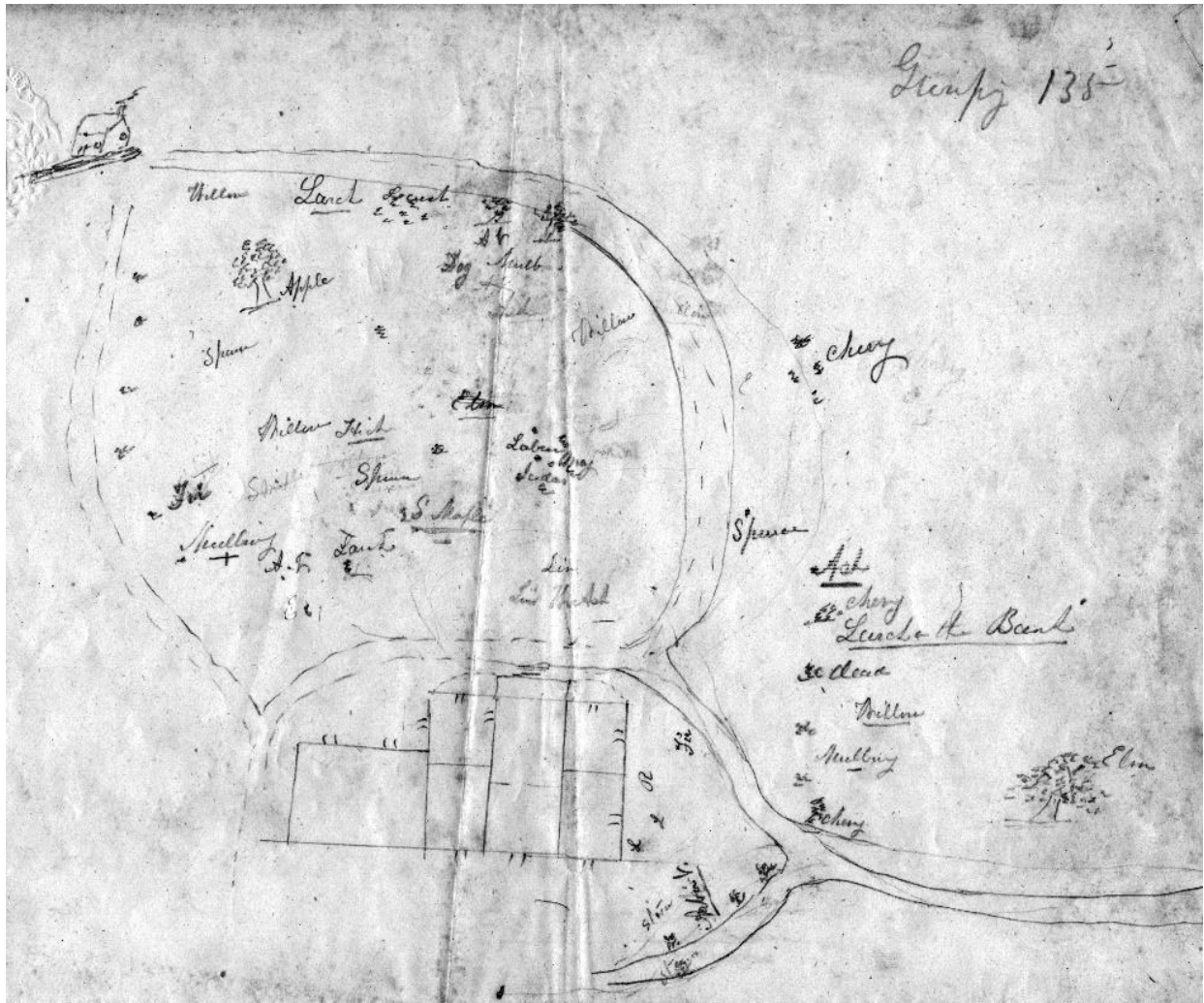
[Fig. 47. The New Haven Suburban Villa.*]

From A. J. Downing, *Landscape Gardening and Rural Architecture*, Fourth Edition (New York: George P. Putnam, 1852), 388. MCHA archives.

²² Ibid, 386 – 389.

The influence of Downing on Joseph D. Taylor can be seen in the overall design of Orchard Home, which does resemble the above Figure 47 although as interpreted by another architect. But perhaps *Landscape Gardening and Rural Architecture* inspired more the layout of driveways and plantings around Orchard Home. Notations on a rear free end paper of the Taylor copy are in the handwriting of his wife, Mary Holmes Taylor II. A listing of deciduous trees of medium size included buckeye, horse chestnut, weeping ash, double Fleming cherry, and ringlet willow. “Forsythia – early yellow blossoms,” and “Wegelia – pink sweet blossoms” appear in a second listing of flowering shrubbery. Two nearly identical drawings of the landscaping around Orchard Home survive, again both in the handwriting of Mary Holmes Taylor II. They show curved driveways arranged according to Downing’s recommendation so that the house would be approached at angles. Trees were then plotted on the grounds. Specimens included willow, larch, mulberry, locust, cherry, elm, fir, spruce, ash, and a large apple tree that may have been a survivor from the orchard. One of the drawings also shows a rose bush and lilac cluster near the house itself. Judging by the arrangement of driveways as well as the alignment of the road from Middletown to Keyport, both drawings date from before construction of the New York & Long Branch Railroad in 1875. Photographs of the Orchard Home grounds taken in the 1880s confirm the parklike setting with specimen trees of many species placed throughout its generous lawns and surroundings, in effect creating a small arboretum.²³

²³ Taylor Family Papers.



Landscaping sketch in the handwriting of Mary Holmes Taylor II showing the early layout of gently curving drives and roadways around Orchard Home that reflected the “approach” principles of Downing. The names of specimen trees planted on the grounds are also noted. Taylor Family Papers.

Life Up and Down the Front Stairs

The family that moved into Orchard Home in 1854 consisted of Joseph D. Taylor (age fifty-one), his wife Mary Holmes Taylor II (age thirty-nine), son Edward (age five), and daughter Mary Holmes III (age three). Virtually all of the farms surrounding their ancestral property were owned by Taylor relatives, making the west end of Middletown village a veritable Taylor family enclave. Life soon settled into a comfortable pattern, with the head of the household leading the

life of a country squire with substantial independent means. The Taylors did not actively farm their acreage. Rather, for the next eighty years they rented it out to tenant farmers, many of whom lived in the “Grandfather Homestead” until it became too dilapidated in the early twentieth century to occupy. Socially, the Taylors fit into the upper levels of Middletown village society, becoming close friends with the likes of the Hendricksons and Hartshornes who lived at nearby Locustwood. They also became members of Christ Episcopal Church rather than affiliating with the Baptist Church which had been supported by the Taylors since Edward the first settled in Middletown by 1684. Even when Mary’s father Edward died in 1845, he, too, was interred among his siblings in the yard of the Baptist Church although he had spent almost all his adulthood in New York. The attraction of Christ Church, where Joseph D. and Mary Holmes Taylor were married, may have been based in part on their friendships with the Hartshornes, who were prominent members and supporters of the congregation.

Photographs of Orchard Home taken by son Edward Taylor in the 1880s and 1890s reveal that every major room of the grand house was filled to capacity with furniture, prints, paintings, bric-a-brac, porcelains, silver, and textiles of every description. Evidence of Joseph Taylor’s career in the China trade abounded. Items of Chinese origin included inlaid and elaborately carved tables of rosewood and teak, porcelain vases and garden seats, lighting fixtures, and small objects that covered every available flat surface. Mixed in with furniture in the Empire and Victorian styles were family heirlooms from the eighteenth century, including a divided scroll pediment high chest and a Queen Anne dressing table, both of Middletown origin. Other inherited items included early Windsor chairs, fiddleback chairs, and slat back chairs, as well as late eighteenth and early nineteenth century English ceramics. One particular family treasure was a silver bowl made in New York City in 1711 by Benjamin Wynkoop (1675 - 1728). It was originally engraved “T / G

H / MDCCXI.” The initials stood for George and Helena Taylor of Middletown who were married in 1708. A later inscription reads “To M. H. T. 1846.” Mary Holmes Taylor II may have received it as a wedding present from an unidentified relative. Another prized item was an oil on canvas portrait of Mary Holmes Taylor’s father Edward that depicted him in the prime of adulthood. It traditionally hung on a wall at the top of the grand front staircase, clearly visible to all who entered the house through the front door.



The formal front parlor at Orchard Home taken in 1886. The room was furnished with many items imported from China. Edward Taylor photograph. Taylor Family Papers.



The informal family parlor at Orchard Home as it appeared on 23 August 1886. Edward Taylor photograph. Taylor Family Papers.



The study at Orchard Home taken about 1890. This print was made from a broken glass plate negative. Edward Taylor photograph. Taylor Family Papers.



The dining room featured two corner closets and a double window. Much of the family silver has been laid out on the table for the photograph, taken about 1890. Edward Taylor photograph. Taylor Family Papers.

Joseph Dorset Taylor died on 26 September 1864 at the age of sixty-two, leaving no New Jersey will. The *New York Evening Post* noted that “he was for many years a merchant of this city (of the firm Olyphant & Son.)”²⁴ Another obituary from an unidentified newspaper offered this verse: “With his loins girded about and his light burning, he waited for his Lord; and though the knocking was sudden and at midnight, the servant was found watching.”²⁵ Taylor's remains were interred in a family plot at Fair View Cemetery in Middletown. His widow, Mary Holmes Taylor II, lived on at Orchard Home for more than thirty years, at times taking an active role in the management of the farm. For example, on 8 April 1881 she entered into a ten year lease with neighbor David G. Patterson (1817 – 1903) for a “certain portion” of the property, said land to be

²⁴ *New York Evening Post*, 26 September 1864.

²⁵ Asher Taylor, op. cit.

planted with asparagus. Mary Holmes Taylor II agreed to provide the fertilizer and plants, and Patterson to provide shipping boxes as well as half the proceeds to Taylor each year, minus shipping expenses and commissions.²⁶ Before he engaged in farming, Patterson practiced the carpentry trade, in which he was especially skilled. Among the buildings he helped construct were the New Monmouth Baptist Church (1855), and apparently Orchard Home itself. He gave up carpentry in 1864, and retired altogether about 1890.²⁷



The Taylor family plot at Fair View Cemetery in Middletown, NJ. From right to left in the foreground are footstones for Joseph Dorset Taylor, his wife Mary Holmes Taylor II, and daughter Mary Holmes Taylor III. Son Edward Taylor and his wife Margaret Dominick Taylor were interred on the other side of the obelisk-shaped monument to the entire family. MCHA image.

²⁶ Monmouth Deeds, book 400, page 3.

²⁷ *Red Bank Register*, 4 March 1903.

From time to time, Mary Holmes Taylor II also sold off portions of the family farm. Among her real estate dispositions were:

1. On 12 February 1868, 42 36/100 acres at the extreme north end of the farm to Elias Morford for \$6,000.²⁸
2. On 3 June 1872, a fifty foot wide right away across the extreme southern portion of the farm to the New York & Long Branch Rail Road Co. for \$350.²⁹
3. On 25 June 1883, a one acre lot on the east side of the Keyport road to James A. Stoothoff for \$800.³⁰
4. On 5 May 1883, the 9 acre salt meadow parcel at Port Monmouth to George Coe for \$200.³¹

The Taylor family opened Orchard Home to groups from the various community organizations that they supported. One example will suffice. On 7 September 1892, the *Red Bank Register* carried the notice that:

A musicale will be given at the residence of Mrs. Joseph D. Taylor, Middletown, N. J., on Thursday evening, September 15th, 1892, at eight o'clock, for the benefit of Christ church. The tickets are fifty cents, and after the music is over ice cream and cake will be served. The programme is a very good one, and it is sincerely hoped that it will be enjoyed by a large audience.³²

No doubt the grand reception hall, with its double door entrances to the formal front parlor and dining room, allowed the music to reverberate throughout the house, to the pleasure of all who attended. No other private residence in Middletown village could accommodate such a large hoped-for gathering.

²⁸ Monmouth Deeds, book 211, page 44.

²⁹ Monmouth Deeds, book 251, page 372.

³⁰ Monmouth Deeds, book 369, page 92.

³¹ Monmouth Deeds, book 374, page 416.

³² *Red Bank Register*, 7 September 1892.

Mary Holmes Taylor II passed away on 31 May 1897 from heart disease after several years of increasing fragility, at the age of eighty-three.³³ She was interred beside her husband in the family plot at Fair View Cemetery. In her will, Mary Holmes Taylor II directed “to my beloved son Edward, I give my watch, my silver pitcher, the antiquated silver mug, the Chinese teak wood table and stools, all my books and book cases, the old family clock, and my father’s portrait.” To her namesake single daughter, “I give all my silver and plated ware except that designated for my son Edward. Also to her my jewelry, my blue plush sewing chair, and rosewood serving table, also the entire set of maple bird’s eye wood furniture, & marble & spar candlesticks with the wardrobe now occupied by her. The old fashioned wash stand is hers by gift from our dear Aunt Huldah.” The will continued, “To my dear daughter Margaret Elizabeth, wife of my son Edward, I give one suit of mahogany bed room furniture, with the wardrobe now standing in the upper hall at Orchard Home, with the privilege of selling should she so wish.” After stating that no part of her daughter’s money at the Seamen’s Bank for Savings should be taken to pay for her funeral and burial, Mary Holmes Taylor II concluded her will with the following instructions, “I desire my beloved children Edward and Mary Holmes, as Executor and Executrix, to take entire charge of my property, and excepting such designations made above, to have the same share and share alike, wishing them to make sale or not, as both may deem expedient, trusting that each, and my daughter Margaret Eliz. as well, will strive to give mutual satisfaction, ever praying that should they need it, friends may in the Providence of God be at hand and with disinterested willingness be able to give them all needed advice.” The will was dated 25 March 1887, some ten years before her passing.³⁴

³³ *Red Bank Register*, 2 June 1897.

³⁴ Monmouth County Surrogate’s Office, wills, book C-2, page 144 [hereafter Monmouth Wills].



From 1864 to her death in 1897, Mary Holmes Taylor II (seated right) lived at Orchard Home with her son Edward Taylor (standing), daughter Mary Holmes Taylor III (seated foreground), and Edward's wife Margaret Dominick Taylor (seated left), along with the family's pet dog Hank. The photograph, entitled "We all," was taken on the front lawn of Orchard Home on 30 August 1889 by Edward Taylor. Taylor Family Papers.

A Tragic Disaster Averted

On 9 December 1891, the west end of Middletown village experienced a major calamity. At noon on that fateful day, the large landmark Taylor / Crawford / Beekman House west of Orchard Home caught fire. Thirteen-year-old Walter Field (1878 – 1951), a Taylor cousin, described the event in a letter to his sister Charlotte Wikoff Field (1875 – 1949) dated 13 December 1891. "There was a great time in Middletown on Wednesday about noon. Eddie Beekman's house got on fire. They tried very hard to put it out, but could not. They saved all the furniture, though.

The whole house was burnt down. During the fire, Aunt Mary's house [Orchard Home] got on fire by burning shingles blowing across. They set the roof on fire and done a good deal of damage. It was put out with a great deal of difficulty."³⁵ Charlotte's mother, Isabella Wikoff Field, also wrote to her daughter on the same day. "The fire excited the whole town. All Aunt Mary's roof and garret burned; they almost gave up trying to save it at one time. Had to carry all the furniture out, except Aunt Mary's room, which they left to last. Even the school children helped, but as you are coming home so soon, will leave the rest to tell you."³⁶ The extent of the damage can be seen in the attic of Orchard Home to this day. The fire was largely confined to the peak of the roof, where the framing had to be completely replaced. Lower down, charred but solid timbers remain in place, surrounded on the plaster walls by smoke stains.



The underside of a purlin plate became charred in the 1891 roof fire at Orchard Home, as did the common rafters which are supported by it. The peak of the roof above this point required complete reframing.

³⁵ Gulick Family Papers, collection 1240, MCHA archives, box 3, folder 6, letter, Walter Field to Charlotte Wikoff Field, 13 December 1891.

³⁶ Gulick Family Papers, op. cit., letter, Isabella Wikoff Field to Charlotte Wikoff Field, 13 December 1891.

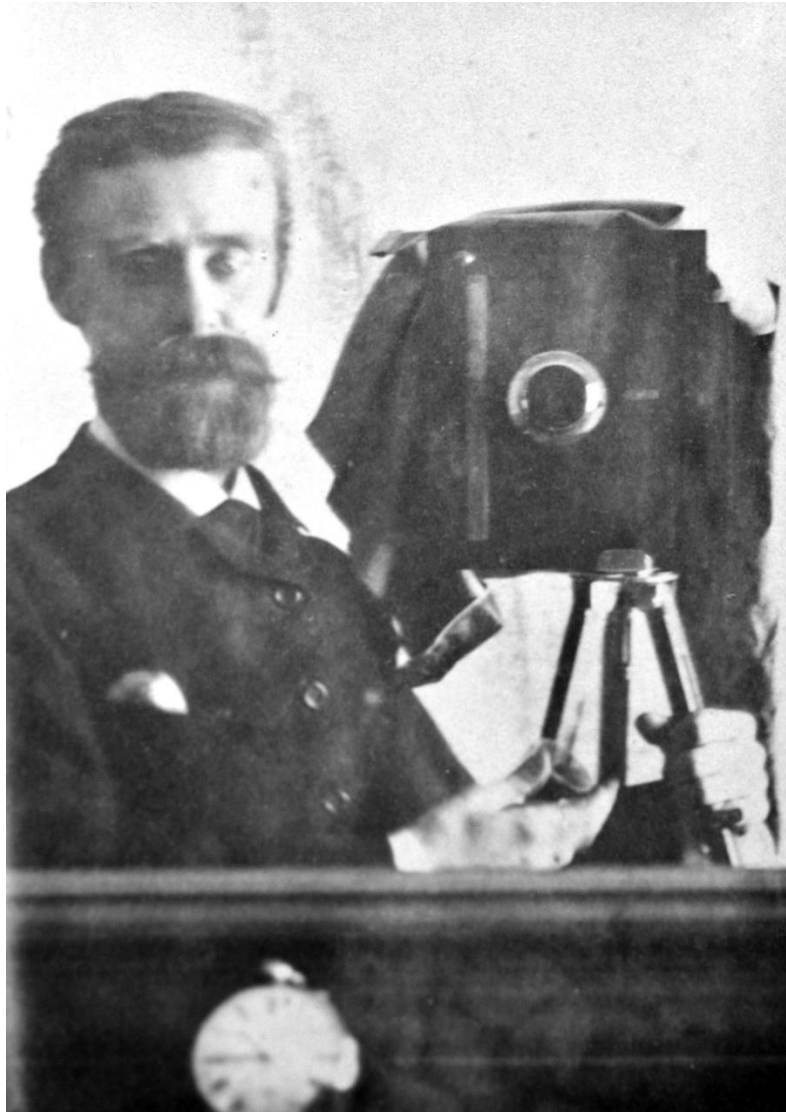
Seventy-seven year old Mary Holmes Taylor II, by that time largely confined to a wheelchair, came dangerously close to losing her stately home. The 17 December 1891 issue of the *Monmouth Democrat* contained the following note: “A Card. Mrs. Jos. D. Taylor, in full acknowledgment of the over-ruling of our Heavenly Father, and being unable to address personally her great thanks to the host of kind friends who so heroically, wisely and successfully battled the flames that threatened to destroy her house, desires in this public way to express her appreciation of their labors, and also of their kindly sympathy, with gratitude more than words can furnish.” She dated the note “‘Orchard Home,’ Middletown, N. J., Dec. 9, 1891,” the same day as the fire.³⁷

The Second Front Stairs Generation

Edward Taylor and his sister Mary Holmes Taylor III continued to reside at Orchard Home for the rest of their lives, although not necessarily year round. The extent to which their parents left them comfortably well off financially is not known. But neither of them ever faced the necessity of employment. Edward, born in New York City on 26 September 1848, had married on 18 January 1881 to Margaret Elizabeth Dominick, a daughter of James and Sarah Patten Dominick of New York. They had no children. For many years, the couple lived at Orchard Home in the summer months, and spent their winters at their second home in Astoria, Long Island. The community social news columns in local newspapers indicate that Edward and his wife typically returned to Middletown in late April or early May, and remained in town until late November.³⁸ Edward became a noted early photographer. Between about 1884 and 1900, he captured many views of his family, Orchard Home, Middletown village and vicinity, as well as photographs of

³⁷ *Monmouth Democrat*, 17 December 1891.

³⁸ *New Jersey Standard*, 23 November 1901, *New Jersey Standard*, 18 April 1903, *Red Bank Register*, 19 April 1905, *Red Bank Register*, 4 April 1906, *Red Bank Register*, 14 April 1909.



A photographic self-portrait of Edward Taylor taken on 22 January 1886, posed with his camera and as reflected in a mirror. The watch allowed him to time the exposure. Taylor Family Papers.

his relatives and friends often posed in theatrical groupings and given humorous captions. Several of his friends joined Taylor in forming a camera club. Its members included Susannah Pelletreau Hartshorne and her sister Louise Hartshorne of Locustwood, and second cousin Katherine Taylor Clark. The group apparently shared the same cameras, and all of their glass plate negatives were kept at Orchard Home in Taylor's numbering sequence, which ran to over 1,000. Approximately 225 of their images survive today. They constitute the best and most

extensive early visual record of the Middletown area and its people.³⁹

In 1903, the Taylors held a Semi-Centennial affair to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of building Orchard Home. An elaborate handwritten program was put together, the covers of which featured images of the house taken by Edward. Party games were based on the body's five senses

³⁹ Joseph W. Hammond, *Hartshorne Family Papers, 1670 - 2014: A Descriptive Guide* (Freehold, NJ: Monmouth County Historical Association, 2015), 226.

– sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. Tasting involved fifteen items like chocolate, cinnamon, salt, and vinegar; seeing - twelve items, feeling - twelve items, hearing - six items, and smelling - twelve items. In the last category, participants were tormented with such opposing samples to sniff as allspice, almond, whiskey and brandy as well as ammonia and paregoric. A prize was awarded to the person who correctly identified the greatest number of items. The program was written in distinctive block lettering from the hand of Edward Taylor.⁴⁰



Cover of the Semi-Centennial celebration program, illustrated with a cyanotype photograph of the house taken by Edward Taylor. String laced through the two holes on the left kept the program together. Taylor-Butler Papers.

⁴⁰ Taylor-Butler Papers, collection 1246, MCHA archives, folder 1, Semi-Centennial / 1853 / 1903 / Orchard Home.

At some point in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, a large coal-burning furnace was installed in the basement of Orchard Home. Located under the reception hall, ductwork radiated out from it to all the major rooms and back hallway of the first floor. Registers cut into the flooring allowed warm air to rise up through the house. Two large coal bins in the southwest corner of the basement were constructed of concrete blocks, a building trades innovation that became commercially available after 1900 when the first practical machine for making them was patented. The furnace may have become a necessity by 1909 when, in failing health, Edward Taylor and his wife made Orchard Home their year-round residence. The brick foundation for the furnace remains in place in the basement of the house. Cuts in the sub-flooring reveal the locations of the floor registers.

During the time that Edward and Margaret Taylor shared ownership of Orchard Home with his sister Mary Holmes Taylor III, they sold off a few pieces of real estate in three transactions:

1. On 2 February 1898, 12 15/100 acres on the east side of the road to Keyport to John W. Morris for \$1,518.75.⁴¹
2. On 10 August 1899, a large lot on the west side of the road to Keyport, plus a small 40/100 acre lot acquired by Mary Holmes Taylor II in 1853, to Grace E. Schroder, wife of Frank P. Schroder of Jersey City. This deed contained the restriction that the property could only be used for a dwelling house not to be valued at less than \$2,000.⁴²
3. On 6 September 1900, a 14 34/100 acre parcel on the west side of the road to Keyport, plus a 41/100 acre lot to provide access to it, to John D. Wallace for \$717.⁴³ This transaction is notable in that Wallace was African-American.

⁴¹ Monmouth Deeds, book 601, page 356.

⁴² Monmouth Deeds, book 633, page 245.

⁴³ Monmouth Deeds, book 656, page 309.

As mentioned above, by 1909 declining health caused Edward Taylor to confine himself full-time to Middletown. He died quite unexpectedly of heart disease at Orchard Home on 23 December 1911 at the age of 63. His lengthy obituary that appeared in the *Monmouth Inquirer* described the circumstances:

Edward Taylor, a resident of Middletown village all his life, died very suddenly about 2 o'clock Saturday morning from valvular heart trouble . . . For many years he conducted the Taylor estate at Middletown, but of late years he had led a retired life . . . Mr. Taylor had been in poor health for several months and under the care of [a] New York specialist, who said he was suffering from indigestion. For some past time, Mr. Taylor has been compelled to sleep in a chair nights. About 2 o'clock Saturday morning Mrs. Taylor was awakened by her husband's heavy breathing. Dr. Daniel D. Hendrickson of Middletown was hurriedly summoned, but Mr. Taylor died before he arrived. Coroner Harry C. Fay of Red Bank was summoned, and after learning the circumstances, issued a death permit ascribing death to valvular heart trouble. Mr. Taylor was well-known throughout Middletown township and his sudden death was a great shock to a host of friends.⁴⁴

After a funeral service held at Christ Church, Middletown, Taylor was interred in the family plot at Fair View Cemetery.⁴⁵ In his will dated 11 February 1909, Edward Taylor provided for his widow and sister. "I give, devise, and bequeath all my estate, real and personal of whatsoever kind and wheresoever situate to my wife, Margaret E. D. Taylor, to have and to hold the same for her use during the term of her natural life and upon her decease I give, devise and bequeath the same to my sister Mary Holmes Taylor absolutely forever in case she shall survive my wife," which she did. After making several other provisions and appointing executors, Edward Taylor then continued:

I except from the foregoing provisions of this my Will a certain silver cup belonging to me and known in my family as "The Pint" and which has been handed down from generation to generation for about one hundred and fifty years or more, and I give and bequeath the same to my first cousin Joseph D. Taylor, for life and then to his son Joseph D. Taylor for life and if the last named shall not survive his father, then to the son of the last named, who

⁴⁴ *Monmouth Inquirer*, 28 December 1911.

⁴⁵ *Red Bank Register*, 27 December 1911.

is also named Joseph D. Taylor, and upon the termination of the last life estate hereby created, then I give and bequeath the same absolutely to the eldest male heir of the last surviving life tenant who shall bear the surname of Taylor."⁴⁶

This last mentioned item was the same "antiquated silver mug" devised to Edward Taylor by his mother's will. It remains today in the hands of Taylor descendants in the male line.

After Edward's passing, his widow, Margaret E. Dominick Taylor, continued to reside at Orchard Home with her sister-in-law, Mary Holmes Taylor III. The latter had been born in New York City on 6 December 1850, so she was three years old when the family moved into Orchard Home. Again, given the financial security provided by Joseph D. Taylor's successful career as a China trade merchant, Mary did not need to seek employment. However, about 1880 she did conduct a private school in the house for a short time.⁴⁷ That may explain why one room off the attic on the third floor was redecorated about that time with an Aesthetic Movement patterned wallpaper, and equipped with two long rows of coat hooks. Like her brother and his wife, Mary Holmes Taylor III spent only her summers at Orchard Home following her mother's death in 1897, while living mostly in New York City during the winter months.⁴⁸ Mary Holmes liked to travel. For example, as early as August of 1886, she and three female friends embarked on a junket to Niagara Falls. On 2 July 1901 she left for an extended trip to Italy and elsewhere in Europe with a party of Brooklyn friends, not returning to the United States until early November.⁴⁹ The community social columns in local newspapers commented frequently on her trips to and from

⁴⁶ Monmouth Wills, book 52, page 107.

⁴⁷ *Keyport Enterprise*, 21 August 1941.

⁴⁸ *Red Bank Register*, 16 May 1900; *New Jersey Standard*, 29 November 1902 and 18 April 1903.

⁴⁹ *Red Bank Register*, 3 July 1901; *New Jersey Standard*, 6 July 1901 and 9 November 1901.

New York, at times accompanied by friends from Middletown.⁵⁰ At the time of her brother's death in December of 1911, Mary Holmes was in Florida, where she spent that winter.⁵¹

The pattern of life began to change at Orchard Home after Edward's untimely death. Mary Holmes and Margaret Taylor spent more time in Middletown, making it their year round home. But the challenge of heating the house with the basement hot air coal furnace and ten coal-burning fireplaces made winter occupancy of their grand residence difficult. The 1920 U. S. census schedules for Middletown indicated that Mary H. Taylor, age seventy, and Margaret D. Taylor, age eighty-two, were boarding that winter in the village with the family of John J. Massey. The census was taken that year between 21 and 23 January. On 13 December 1923, the *Red Bank Register* commented that "Miss Mary Holmes Taylor and Mrs. Edward Taylor have closed their large house on the King's Highway and they have moved into the Christ church rectory for the winter."⁵² The following November, the Middletown Village News column in the same newspaper again noted that "Charles Lippincott has rented his house on Church street for the winter to Miss Mary Holmes Taylor of this place."⁵³

While resident in Middletown, the two ladies of Orchard Home enjoyed active roles in the social life of their community. As early as 1901, Mary Holmes Taylor III took part in various fundraising events for Christ Church. In a fair held that year in July,

A novel feature of the affair, and one which made considerable money, was an express office in charge of Miss Mary Holmes Taylor. Cards were passed around among the people at the fair, telling them that a package awaited them at the express office. When they applied at the office they were charged ten, fifteen, or twenty cents, according to the value of the package.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ *New Jersey Standard*, 22 February 1902, 10 May 1902, and 15 November 1902; *Red Bank Register*, 30 July 1924.

⁵¹ *Monmouth Inquirer*, 28 December 1911.

⁵² *Red Bank Register*, 13 December 1922.

⁵³ *Red Bank Register*, 14 November 1923.

⁵⁴ *Red Bank Register*, 3 July 1901.

A very creative gimmick for raising money at a church fair, for sure.



Christ Episcopal Church on Kings Highway in Middletown village, taken about 1890 by Edward Taylor, who initialed the glass plate negative in the lower left corner. Joseph D. Taylor married Mary Holmes Taylor II in this church in 1846. The family remained very involved socially and spiritually with the parish for more than eighty years. Hartshorne Family Papers.

The annual Monmouth County Fair held outside Red Bank in late August 1913 included exhibits in all lines of “Household Industry, Domestic Fanciwork [sic], and Antiques.” Mary Holmes Taylor took home five prizes - second place for a piece of brass, second and third places for a woman’s card case or purse, third place for a piece of early American blown glass, and third place for a bed warmer.⁵⁵ By then the contents of Orchard Home were already beginning to be appreciated for their antique value. During the winter of 1915 / 1916, The Women’s Auxiliary for

⁵⁵ *Red Bank Register*, 3 September 1913.

War Relief met weekly at the Taylor home. By 12 April, this group, renamed The Middletown Women's Surgical Dressings Committee of the National Red Cross, had produced "4,271 dressings, 10 large linen pieces, 1 bath wrapper, 7 towels, 5 vests, 7 pairs of pajamas, and 4 nightshirts, and has also made up two bundles of miscellaneous linen articles."⁵⁶ After the United States finally entered World War I in 1917, the women of Middletown formed a branch of the Girls' Patriotic League in May 1918. The newspaper headline read, "Seventeen Pledge Their Patriotism at a Meeting Held at the Middletown Public Library Building - Mary Holmes Taylor is Chairman." A patriotic address was delivered at the meeting by Miss Elizabeth Green of Long Branch, and a letter written from Paris describing an air raid was read by Mrs. J. J. Dunlop.⁵⁷

Among other civic and social activities, Mary Holmes Taylor III served in the early 1920s as Librarian of the Middletown Public Library, then located in the village.⁵⁸ She was also named chairman of the publicity committee of the Middletown Village Community Club in November of 1923. At that meeting, "it was voted to have pamphlets prepared describing the ancient landmarks of the village. The object will be to advertise the village and Miss Taylor will be in charge of the work . . . It is planned to use many photographs in the pamphlets." No doubt Miss Mary had her brother's photographic archive in mind when helping to plan this publication. Even as late as 1927 and 1928 as she approached eighty years old, Mary Holmes Taylor III continued to help staff rummage sale booths of household articles at the annual Christ Church fairs.⁵⁹

In the years after Edward Taylor's death in 1911, Margaret and Mary Holmes Taylor continued the sale of real estate from their ancestral Taylor family farm. Four transactions were as follows:

⁵⁶ *Red Bank Register*, 4 November 1915, 29 January 1916, and 12 April 1916.

⁵⁷ *Red Bank Register*, 8 May 1918.

⁵⁸ *Red Bank Register*, 5 May 1920, 26 January 1921, and 19 April 1922.

⁵⁹ *Red Bank Register*, 7 September 1927, and 11 July 1928.

1. On 19 October 1914, a narrow lot containing 1 7/100 acres on the east side of the road to Keyport to Henry G. Scudder for \$1.00 and other considerations.⁶⁰
2. On 9 December 1914, 11 81/100 acres on the west side of the road to Keyport to Harry Morris for \$1.00 and other considerations.⁶¹
3. On 17 June 1920, an easement or right to install poles and lines along the highway from Keyport to Middletown to the New York Telephone Company for \$1.00.⁶²
4. On 31 December 1925, part of the homestead farm inherited by Mary Holmes Taylor III and her brother Edward from their mother, to James Butler and his wife Agnes for \$1.00 and other considerations. The deed contained the following restrictions - no dwelling house to be built valued at less than \$4,000, not to be permitted to rent the same for advertising purposes, and not to be sold to persons of African descent.⁶³

But one small transaction dated 8 February 1919 that involved only 1.18 acres of land pitted Mary Holmes Taylor III against the New Jersey State Highway Commission. As early as March 1918 the Highway Commission had announced the construction of a concrete highway from near Keyport to Cooper's Bridge between Middletown and Red Bank. The proposed road, to be known as State Highway 4, was to follow the present road south from Keyport to near Middletown, then over the old King's Highway through the village and beyond to the Navesink River bridge. A newspaper article went further.

The route has been surveyed and some changes in the course of the road have been advised at Middletown, where the road has one or two sharp turns and where it crosses the railroad. It has been proposed to build the road through the properties of Mary Holmes Taylor and Frank Osborn on the east side of the railroad tracks. At this place the present road crosses

⁶⁰ Monmouth Deeds, book 987, page 349.

⁶¹ Monmouth Deeds, book 989, page 126.

⁶² Monmouth Deeds, book 1170, page 400.

⁶³ Monmouth Deeds, book 1333, pages 432 and 434.

the railroad tracks twice within a short distance and the short cut along the east side of the tracks would avoid crossing the railroad and would also eliminate a dangerous turn.

The article concluded by stating that “this road is part of the main thoroughfare between New York and the shore district of the state and the automobile traffic over it is very heavy for four or five months of the year.”⁶⁴ Surveys indicated that this highway realignment in front of Orchard Home would require demolition of the “Grandfather Homestead,” the ancient structure built in part about 1686 that served as home for generations of Taylors. The proposed sixty foot wide right of way would clip off the street end of the house by fifteen feet. Mary Holmes Taylor went into action. Almost a year of negotiations with the Highway Commission resulted in an agreement in which they would move the house back about fifty feet. The deed, date 8 February 1919, included the following requirements.

“ . . . the said party of the second part [State of New Jersey], through its State Highway Commission, its successors or assigns, covenants and agrees to and with the said party of the first part [Mary Holmes Taylor], that the said party of the second part, its successors or assigns, at their own expense, will remove the house on tract #1 heretofore excepted by the party of the first part from its present position to a new location to be designated by the party of the first part fifty (50) feet distant from its present position. The work of moving the said house to be complete with one hundred (100) days from the delivery of this deed. The house shall be put on brick foundations and over a cellar of the same size and character as is now under said house. The work when complete shall leave the house in as good a condition as the same may be at the time the work is begun. This is to include the repairs and restorations that may be necessary as an incident of moving. And the said party of the second part, through its State Highway Commission, its successors or assigns, covenants and agrees to and with the said party of the first part, that the said party of the second part, through its State Highway Commission, its successors or assigns, will pay and satisfy, or cause to be paid and satisfied unto the said party of the first part, the sum of twenty five hundred seventy two dollars (2572) and shall move the said house and trees as above set forth, all of which the party of the first part agrees to accept as and for the purchase money and full satisfaction for this conveyance, the purchase money to be paid within one hundred (100) days from the delivery of this deed . . .”⁶⁵

⁶⁴ *Red Bank Register*, 6 March 1918.

⁶⁵ Monmouth Deeds, book 1082, pages 316 and 327.

Mary Holmes Taylor III succeeded in saving one of Monmouth County's more notable early houses from demolition, an early victory for what has become known as the historic preservation movement. But in point of fact, the building had deteriorated significantly and was no longer habitable. Photographs taken about that time reveal that all traces of paint had weathered off the exterior shingles. Within a few years, a rear section of the structure that reputedly housed chickens and pigs was on the point of collapse. Furthermore, the State Highway Commission took longer than one hundred days to complete the relocation of the "Grandfather Homestead." Reports indicate that the venerable structure sat up on cribbing for perhaps a year or more before it was finally set on stone foundations rather than brick. This situation has contributed to this day to the uneven settlement of the structure with resulting slanted floors and occasional plaster cracks. Also, the street end of the house continues to move toward the roadway due to its inadequate foundations and buttressing provided by the dirt bank between it and the modern sidewalks. Unfortunately,



extensive structural work carried out during the period 1995 to 2001 did not fully resolve this ongoing movement.

Snapshot of Marlpit Hall taken about 1930, after the house had been moved back fifty feet in 1919 by the New Jersey State Highway Commission. The two rows of narrow shingles above the foundation indicate that the sills were replaced as part of the relocation. Otherwise, the old manse was falling into considerable disrepair, even though open windows and window curtains suggest that it was still being occupied. Taylor Family Papers.

The *Red Bank Register* for 10 November 1926 carried the sad news that Margaret Elizabeth Dominick Taylor had passed away on 27 October. “She had been an invalid three years. Mrs. Taylor was a native of New York. Later she lived at Astoria, Long Island. For a number of years Mr. and Mrs. Taylor were summer residents of Middletown village. Mr. Taylor died fifteen years



Margaret E. Dominick Taylor at her writing desk, taken by her husband Edward Taylor on 7 June 1886 at their residence in Astoria, Queens. Taylor Family Papers.

ago and since that time his widow had lived at the Taylor homestead, which is known as Orchard Home.” The funeral was held at the house, with the service conducted by the Rev. Ernest W. Mandeville, rector of Christ Church. Burial took place in the family plot at Fair View Cemetery.⁶⁶

In her will dated 4 June 1920, Margaret Taylor left her real estate in the State of New York to her nephew Maynard Abbott Dominick, or to his widow if he predeceased his aunt. This may have been the house in Astoria, Queens. Then she stated, “I give,

⁶⁶ *Red Bank Register*, 10 November 1926.

devise and bequeath to my sister-in-law, Mary Holmes Taylor, of Middletown, County of Monmouth, State of New Jersey, all the real estate situated anywhere within the State of New Jersey, or any interest therein which I may own or to which I may be entitled at the time of my death, and also all the personal property of every kind and nature which I may own and to which I may be entitled at the time of my death, such personal property to be disposed of in accordance with a letter given by me to the said Mary Holmes Taylor.”⁶⁷ Stated in other words, the share of Orchard Home and its contents devised to Margaret Taylor by her late husband Edward were returned to his sister Mary Holmes Taylor, who then held absolute title to the property and its furnishings.

Miss Mary stayed on at Orchard Home for another four years after the death of her sister-in-law, toward the end in increasingly failing health. The Middletown Village news columns in the *Red Bank Register* tell the story. On 17 April 1929, it was reported that “Miss Mary Holmes Taylor is confined to the house with sickness. A nurse is attending her.”⁶⁸ A week later, “Miss Mary Holmes Taylor continues to improve from her sickness.”⁶⁹ Two weeks after that, “Miss Mary Holmes Taylor has almost fully recovered from her sickness and she is out again.”⁷⁰ But her recovery apparently did not last long. The *Register* informed its readers on 10 December 1930 that “Miss Mary Holmes Taylor is in a serious condition. She has been sick for some time past and of late her condition has taken a change for the worse.” The same issue reported her death that had occurred on 8 December, two days after her eightieth birthday, under the headline “Aged Resident of Middletown Village Passed Away on Monday.”

⁶⁷ Monmouth Wills, book 94, page 337.

⁶⁸ *Red Bank Register*, 17 April 1929.

⁶⁹ *Red Bank Register*, 24 April 1929.

⁷⁰ *Red Bank Register*, 8 May 1929.

Miss Mary Holmes Taylor, an aged resident of Middletown village, died on Monday after a long sickness. Her death occurred at the Taylor residence, Orchard Home. Miss Taylor was the daughter of the late Joseph D. and Mary H. Taylor. She has no brothers or sisters, but she is survived by several cousins who live at Middletown village. The funeral will be held this afternoon at three o'clock at Christ church at Middletown village. Rev. Ernest W. Mandeville will conduct the service. Burial will be at Fair View cemetery.⁷¹

The will of Mary Holmes Taylor III had been dated 31 January 1928. It directed that all her real estate be sold at public or private sale, and that the proceeds be distributed among several legatees. That included \$2,000 to Sybilla H. Parmentier of Red Bank, \$1,000 to Elizabeth Cornwall of Nutley, NJ, \$1,000 to Mary Cornell of Red Bank or Nutley, and \$1,000 to be held in trust and the income used to support Maria Lefferts Taylor (1844- 1932), widow of her first cousin Joseph D. Taylor (1837 - 1915). On her death, the principal of this trust and any accumulated interest were to be paid to Joseph D. Taylor, 3rd., Maria's great-grandson. This is the same line of family descent who received the silver pint mug from Mary's brother Edward Taylor in 1911. Additional bequests were \$1,000 devised to Miss Louise Hartshorne, "in appreciation of such help and comfort as she has given me," and a Wabash Railroad Company bond, par value \$1,000, to Christ Church, "the same or proceeds thereof to be held in trust and the annual income therefrom to be used for the care and upkeep of the cemetery at said church..." And finally, "All the rest, residue and remainder of my estate, real, personal and mixed, wheresoever situate and whatsoever the same may be, I give, devise and bequeath as follows: two-thirds (2/3) thereof to Katherine Louise Clark, wife of William F. Clark of Maplewood, New Jersey, and one-third (1/3) to Lydia Martha Hodges, wife of Wilson Hodges, and to their heirs and assigns forever." Katherine Louise Taylor Clark (1866 - 1942) and Lydia Martha Taylor Hodges (1868 - 1959) were second cousins, daughters of Mary

⁷¹ *Red Bank Register*, 10 December 1930. The same obituary was repeated, word for word, in the *Keyport Enterprise* on 11 December 1930.

Holmes Taylor's first cousin, Joseph D. Taylor. The will also named the Second National Bank & Trust Co. of Red Bank as executor.



A rare photograph of Mary Holmes Taylor III as an older woman, taken about 1910 by Ferdinand Maag, a Keyport photographer. Taylor Family Papers.

A detailed inventory of Mary Holmes Taylor's estate was carried out by John M. West and Edgar I. Vanderveer. They were assisted in the appraisal of the family heirlooms by Louis Richmond, a noted antiques dealer from Freehold. Assets included \$7,963.12 in cash on deposit in six different New York City and Red Bank banks, the \$1,000 Wabash Railroad Co. 5% bond valued at \$1,010.00, jewelry valued at \$49.00 including a diamond and pearl brooch appraised at \$25.00, and a bond and mortgage made by Emanuel and James Milonas for \$10,000.00 and dated 15 March 1928, the

unpaid balance of which was \$9,000.00 at 6% interest. A detailed item by item inventory of the contents of Orchard Home, plus silver in the hands of the executor, came to \$6,199.67. The appraisal totaled \$24,245.09, including the value of her remaining real estate and the house itself.⁷²

The extraordinary inventory of Miss Taylor's household contents at Orchard Home was taken room by room, and by each object listed separately within those rooms down to a value of

⁷² Monmouth County Surrogate's Office, inventories, book 89, page 259 [hereafter Estate Inventory].

50 cents. The descriptions are detailed enough that a large percentage of the items can be identified in interior photographs of Orchard Home taken decades earlier by brother Edward Taylor. Very few things appear to have been moved. The formal front parlor still contained its rosewood, teak, and lacquered furniture made in China. The informal family parlor behind it retained its rosewood square piano and stool, which the appraisers noted was “very dilapidated.” The dining room with its two corner cupboards was furnished with mahogany dining and serving tables, “1 Drop Leaf Chippendale Ball Claw Mahogany Table” appraised at \$100.00, and a set of andirons and fireplace fixtures valued at \$150.00. The reception hall contained a number of items of high value, including



Photograph of the mid-eighteenth century Taylor family high chest, then called a “highboy,” that was valued in the estate appraisal at \$650, taken about 1890. Edward Taylor photograph. Taylor Family Papers.

the family’s tall case clock made by Elias Sayre of Monmouth at \$500.00, an oak paneled chest at \$250.00, and two early Windsor chairs at \$100.00 each. A number of the most precious family heirlooms were located in a second floor bedroom. They included “1 Old Broken arch and claw ball feet highboy” at \$650.00, “1 Queen Anne Lowboy” at \$600.00, and “4 Poster curley [sic] maple bed” at \$50.00. Silver in the hands of the Second National Bank included the famous two-handed bowl by Benjamin Wynkoop that was dated 1711. It was appraised for \$1,200.00, the most valuable single item in the estate of Mary Holmes Taylor.

In spite of living in a virtual museum of inherited family possessions of every imaginable description, a careful reading of the inventory and executor's accounts reveal that Mary Holmes Taylor had indulged in a few modern conveniences toward the end of her life. First and foremost, Orchard Home had been wired for electricity. The contents of the master bedroom included an electric heater, as did the library on the first floor. The upper hallway even contained a Westinghouse electric sweeper, along with a Victrola (presumably the popular wind up variety). Expenses paid by the Second National Bank from January 1931 through August 1938 included monthly payments to Jersey Central Power & Light for electricity, and to New Jersey Bell Telephone Co. for phone service. But the executor's accounts contain a number of payments that indicate running water had also been introduced at Orchard Home, superseding the two story outhouse. On 12 January 1932, Kenneth Jeffrey was paid \$6.85 for plumbing work, followed on 16 May by a payment of \$20.43 to Fred G. Hurst for "Turning on water and connecting up pipes." Presumably the water had been turned off during the winter of 1931 / 32 when Orchard Home was not occupied. The plumbing seems to have been of such age that it had become troublesome. Payments for repairs were made on 1 December 1933, 27 December 1933, 9 March 1934, 7 May 1934, 10 October 1934 (repairs to pump for \$1.50), 10 January 1935 (repairing pump for \$1.50), 1 May 1935, 2 August 1935 (repairing pump for \$1.50), 12 November 1935 (repairing pump for \$1.50), 6 December 1935, 11 February 1936 (repairing pump and cleaning well for \$12.75), 6 April 1936, 5 May 1936, 2 July 1936 (repairing pump for \$1.25), 5 December 1936, 19 March 1937 (repairing pump for \$1.50), and lastly on 14 February 1938. A number of these payments were for seasonally turning off and turning on the water. But it appears from the executor's

accounts that Orchard Home, which remained unsold, was finally shut down in August of 1938 with its utilities services terminated.⁷³

Life Up and Down the Back Stairs

As mentioned at the beginning of this study, Orchard Home was designed from the start to function with servants, whose world focused on spaces around the back stairs from cellar to attic. Support to the Taylors included such tasks as food preparation and cooking in the kitchen, serving the family in their dining room, keeping the house clean, doing laundry, and any other assistance requested via the system of call bells located throughout the house. The servants were also responsible for planting and maintaining the kitchen garden, and perhaps for curing farm-grown meats in the smoke house. A small ice house adjacent to it no doubt provided ice for an ice box in the kitchen. And the servants would have had to keep the two-story outhouse clean. In addition to



Orchard Home as seen from the kitchen garden, taken about 1890. The service courtyard is shown with the single story kitchen wing to its left and a storage shed on its right, with the bridge from the main residence to the two story privy passing overhead. Edward Taylor photograph. Taylor Family Papers.

⁷³ Monmouth County Surrogate's Office, estate docket 29542, Account of the Second National Bank & Trust Co, 15 September 1938 [hereafter Executor Account].

the kitchen and adjacent sitting room, the servants would have been given rooms at the top of the stairs on the third floor for their use. They would have also ruled the service courtyard just outside the back door of Orchard Home, an important work area enclosed on three sides and furnished with a well.

Both branches of the Taylor family were experienced for generations in managing African-American household servants and laborers, first as slaves and later as employees. Grandfather Edward (1712 - 1783), who had purchased the farm in 1771 but who lived in a large gambrel-roofed residence in the center of the village which still stands, wrote in his will, "I hereby give unto my Daughter Ellenor [sic] her Choise of my Negroe Wenches..."⁷⁴ Following her death in 1794, her two sons Fenwick and John Lyell manumitted on 26 March 1796 a mulatto male between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-five named York.⁷⁵ Eleanor's brother John Taylor (1740 - 1818) also owned slaves. In his will, he specified "I give and bequeath unto my son Samuel one Negro Boy, and two horses, he to have his choice out of the whole of the Negroes and horses that I may be the owner of at the time of my decease." Taylor clearly viewed his slaves as property, not being influenced by the rising tide of the abolition movement in the early years of the nineteenth century. As a testament to that position, he directed his executors to pay his son in cash "in case my said son Samuel should prefer the sum of Two Hundred & fifty dollars in money instead of such Negro Boy..." And lastly, Taylor allowed that "if my son Samuel should wish to purchase any other Negro Boy belonging to me at the time of my decease in addition to the one before given to him, that he shall have the privilidge [sic] of taking him at the sum at which he may be appraised."⁷⁶ John Taylor resided early in life in a house adjacent to the Middletown Reformed Church on its east

⁷⁴ Collections Alphabetical 144, MCHA archives, will of Edward Taylor written 20 October 1779.

⁷⁵ *Manumission Book of Monmouth County, New Jersey, 1791 - 1844* (Freehold: Office of the Monmouth County Clerk, 1992), 1.

⁷⁶ Will of John Taylor, dated 24 September 1814, Taylor Family Papers.

side. It burned in 1848 when occupied by Dr. Edward Taylor. After the American Revolution, John removed to the “Grandfather Homestead,” or Marlpit Hall, where he continued to reside until his death in 1818.⁷⁷

An inventory and appraisal of John Taylor’s movable estate, dated 26 February 1818, came to \$4,320.44. The document included reference to four African-Americans: “Ephraim, Colour'd Man” valued at \$250, “Maryann, - do Woman” at \$130., “Will - do Boy” at \$160, and “Betty - do Girl, at \$25.00.” Their full names were Ephraim Leonard (born 1797), Mary Ann Brown (born 1792), William Van Cleaf (born 1804), and Elizabeth Van Cleaf (born 1806).⁷⁸ Will and Betty were apparently brother and sister, and children of Hannah Van Cleaf. The accounts of the estate executors contain a very unusual line item. On 23 October 1818, they paid \$10.00 in cash to “Ephraim our Black Boy for a legacy left him by his father.”⁷⁹

Ephraim, Colour'd man	250	—
Maryann do Woman	130	—
Will do Boy	160	—
Betty do Girl	25	—

Detail from the estate inventory of John Taylor taken on 26 February 1818. Taylor Family Papers.

Abolition was slow to take hold in New Jersey. But finally on 11 February 1804, an *Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery* passed the state legislature. This anemic piece of legislation stipulated that all children born of slaves after 4 July of that year would be declared free. However, they would be required to serve their owner, or any other person assigned by their owner, until

⁷⁷ Stillwell, op. cit., vol. 5, 56 - 57.

⁷⁸ *Manumission Book*, 55.

⁷⁹ Estate of John Taylor, Executor's Accounts, [1819], Taylor Family Papers.

twenty-five years of age for males, and twenty-two years of age for females.⁸⁰ Only one of the Taylor slaves, namely Betty, was accorded her freedom under the provisions of this law as she had been born in 1806. The other three were eventually manumitted. On 22 December 1823, Mary Ann Brown, then age 31 years and 11 months, received her freedom from Edward Taylor of New York, and Huldah, Mary and Samuel Taylor of Middletown, four of the six children of former owner John. Ephraim Leonard, then age 31, followed on 19 May 1828, given his freedom by the same four siblings. The last to be manumitted was William Van Cleaf on 15 August 1832, then age twenty-eight. It was given by Samuel Taylor alone, perhaps indicating that he took up the clause in his father's will that let him purchase another African-American from the estate. It seems that Samuel's slave ownership may have expanded by the birth of a male child named George whose mother was named Mary Ann, undoubtedly Mary Ann Brown. The boy was born on 11 May 1822, and registered accordingly in Monmouth County's Black Birth Book.⁸¹

Other members of the immediate Taylor family also owned slaves. Another son of John named Joseph Taylor (1771 - 1836) manumitted a slave named James Freeman on 12 May 1831. At the time, James was thirty-eight years old, meaning he was born in 1793.⁸² The young boy apparently started as a bonded person to Joseph Dorset (1743 - 1831), and came into this branch of the Taylor family through his daughter Martha Dorset Taylor (1775 - 1850), Joseph's wife. Slave ownership by the Dorsets was nothing new. The estate inventory of Joseph's grandfather, also named Joseph Dorset (1681 - 1741), taken on 14 November in the year that he died, contained the following line items:

⁸⁰ *Black Birth Book of Monmouth County, New Jersey* (Freehold: Office of the Monmouth County Clerk, 1989), iv.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 12.

⁸² *Manumission Book*, 36.

To a Negrow Woman and Child	50	0	0
To a Neg[r]ow Girl	29	0	0
To 2 Negrow Children	44	0	0 ⁸³

Additional registrations of black births and manumissions under the name of Joseph Taylor from Middletown may also refer to this individual, the father of Joseph Dorset Taylor of Orchard Home.

On Thanksgiving Day, 28 November 1861, a grand reunion was held at the house Joseph Taylor had erected in 1814 at the western end of Middletown village, then occupied by his son John J. Taylor (1799 - 1871). Twelve of the thirteen children of Joseph and Martha Dorset Taylor, with most of those who were married accompanied by their spouses, assembled in the house where many of them had grown up. Among the guests were brother Joseph Dorset Taylor and his wife Mary Holmes Taylor II from nearby Orchard Home. The celebration was held to welcome back youngest brother Edward Taylor after an absence of sixteen years. Altogether nineteen people, including a few grandchildren, invited neighbors, and the Rev. Alexander C. Millspaugh, pastor of the Middletown Reformed Church, attended the joyous festivities. Brother Asher Taylor (1800 - 1878), long an avid genealogist interested in family history, prepared an extensive address that told the story of the Taylors of Middletown. At the beginning it was noted that,

There are but two members of the old families remaining, one Miss Betsey Dorset, the mother's sister, aged 85, was present, the other Mrs. Sally Manning, the father's sister, of nearly the same age, removed, following her children, a few years ago to Wisconsin, where she now resides.

There are also remaining, two old Colored Servants, relics of a former age, still lingering around the family, Betty Van Cleaf, of the Taylor, and Jim Freeman, of the Dorset family; they were Slaves 'when such things were' and manumitted under the wise and beneficent laws of New Jersey, passed 'long time ago'; early associations and attachments, however,

⁸³ John E. Stillwell, *Op. Cit.*, vol. III, 215 - 216.

have outlived in them, the desires which they may once have had for independence, and they, in their old age [come home to roost] in the branches of the old tree.⁸⁴

Elizabeth Van Cleaf and James Freeman are but two examples of former slaves who still viewed the families of their past owners with respect if not affection. More will be said about Van Cleaf in a subsequent section of this essay. James Freeman spent some years in Philadelphia, but by 1860 had returned to Middletown where at the age of sixty-seven he was employed by farmer Richard W. Stout near Chapel Hill.⁸⁵

Through 1880, most of the domestic help engaged by the Taylors at Orchard Home had been born in New Jersey, including those who were African-American. But after that, the local labor pool changed dramatically. In 1885, Clinton P. Heath (1856 - 1936), a former slave from North Carolina, migrated north to Middletown, where he found employment on the large farm of Edwin Beekman at the west end of the village. He soon encouraged friends and family who remained behind to follow him to New Jersey, where opportunity for farm laborers was better than in North Carolina. Heath was soon joined by his brothers Douglas and Calvin (1849 - 1933), the latter of whom served as a Methodist minister. In September of 1894, Clinton and Calvin purchased adjoining properties on the east side of Harmony Road north of Route 35, a small piece of which still remains in the hands of Clinton's descendants.⁸⁶ The seller was Willett Tilton and his wife, who received \$215 for each lot. The Middletown Plaza, popularly known as Shop Rite Plaza, was constructed years later on Calvin's parcel. Other black families, including those of brother Douglas Heath, the Boyds and Wallaces, became neighbors of Clinton and Calvin, to form a community called Briartown. Calvin's ministry work involved the organization in 1890 of the

⁸⁴ *Reunion of the Family of Joseph Taylor, at Middletown, New Jersey, in 1861* (New York: William Everdell's Sons, 1861), 1-2.

⁸⁵ 1860 U. S. Census of Population, Middletown, Monmouth County, NJ, 739. Retrieved on 24 July 2018 from Ancestry.com.

⁸⁶ *Monmouth Press*, 22 September 1894.

Clinton Chapel A. M. E. Zion Church on Red Hill Road in Middletown, to which many of the local black families who migrated from the South attended. Calvin also established a mission at Winslow Junction, and served as pastor for churches at Keyport, Long Branch and Matawan. Living within easy walking distance of Orchard Home, members of the Heath, Boyd and Wallace families worked at various times for the Taylors.

With the death of Mary Holmes Taylor II in 1897, Orchard Home became primarily a summer residence for her son Edward, daughter Mary Holmes, and daughter-in-law Margaret Dominick Taylor. So, long relationships to individual servants gave way to a higher rate of staff turnover due to the seasonal only nature of the positions. The household staff of the Taylor family at Orchard Home usually consisted of two females. Federal and New Jersey State census schedules, combined with a few other documents, have provided the names of twenty-one individuals who worked for the Taylors between 1850, when they still lived in New York City, and the death of Mary Holmes Taylor III in 1930. Five of them were Caucasian, but the remaining sixteen were African-American. Biographical information on these servants has been compiled largely from newspapers available in digitized, searchable format at GenealogyBank.com and Newspapers.com. The *Red Bank Register* was also searched on the web site of the Middletown Township Public Library.

Biographies of the known household servants are arranged in chronological order.

1850 Federal Census, living at 56 Lispenard Street, New York City:

Anna Smith, white, age 25, born in New York. Although her occupation is not listed, her age is appropriate for a servant girl in the household, which at the time included Joseph D. Taylor and his two year old son Edward. Mary Holmes Taylor II was not present at the

time the census was taken, perhaps elsewhere preparing for the birth of her daughter later that year.

Harriet Quinn, black, age 36, born in Maryland. Probably a New York City Free Black employed in the household, not a slave.

1855 New Jersey State Census, by then living at Orchard Home:

The first New Jersey state census of 1855 did not list all individuals in a given household by name. Rather, it was a statistical accounting under the name of the household head only. Residents at Orchard Home under Joseph D. Taylor included 1 white male, 4 white females, 1 colored female, 1 white male and 1 white female who were foreign born, and 1 white male between the ages of 5 and 16. The 1 white male was Taylor himself. Two of the females were his wife, Mary Holmes Taylor II, and his daughter Mary Holmes Taylor III, who was not yet five years old. The young white male was son Edward, then age seven. So the four residents of Orchard Home apparently enjoyed a support staff of presumably five - two of the females, the colored female, and both of the foreign born members of the household would have been servants or laborers.

1860 Federal Census:

Elizabeth Van Cleaf, black, age 54, born in New Jersey, occupation servant. Van Cleaf [also spelled Van Clief] worked for the Taylors at Orchard Home for more than twenty years as she appears again in the household in State and Federal census schedules taken between 1865 and 1880. Elizabeth was born on 14 June 1806 in Middletown to a mother whose name was Hannah, a slave of John Taylor. He was the grandfather of Mary Holmes Taylor II.⁸⁷ Taylor died in 1818. A detailed second inventory of his estate taken on 8 March

⁸⁷ *Black Birth Book of Monmouth County*, 37.

1821 included reference to “Black Girl Betty” valued at \$40.00.⁸⁸ Elizabeth would not have attained her freedom until 1828, according to the 1804 *Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery* in New Jersey. It was not unusual for black servants to remain with the families who had owned them as slaves long after the point where they became free.⁸⁹ Elizabeth Van Cleaf stayed with the Taylors far longer than any other servant. She died at Matawan on 20 March 1883 at the age of seventy-seven, and was listed in the New Jersey Death and Burials index as a widowed black female. An obituary that appeared in the *Matawan Journal* newspaper read as follows:

Elizabeth Van Cleaf (colored), who died near Matawan in the “Africa” neighborhood, on Tuesday, was once a slave in one of the Taylor families, near Middletown, and the expenses of burial were borne by that family.⁹⁰

Africa was the name given to a Free Black community that grew up in the nineteenth century along Atlantic Avenue near the Matawan train station. The Taylors of Orchard Home, headed at the time by Mary Holmes Taylor II, must have held their longtime servant in high regard for them to pick up the cost of her funeral. So why did Betty Van Cleaf remain with the Taylors for virtually her entire life? There may have been a bond between her and Mary. Betty would have been eight years old when Mary was brought to Middletown as an infant to be raised by her aunts. She would then have been nineteen when Mary at age eleven went to New York City for her schooling. Betty apparently remained with the Taylor household even as Mary and her family moved back to the farm in 1851,

⁸⁸ “A True and Perfect Inventory of all and singular the Goods and Chattles of John Taylor late of the Township of Middletown, Monmouth County, Deceas’d made . . . the 26 day of February in the Year of our Lord Eighteen Hundred and Eighteen,” Taylor Family Papers.

⁸⁹ Graham Russell Hodges, *Slavery and Freedom in the Rural North: African Americans in Monmouth County, New Jersey, 1665 - 1865* (Madison, WI: Madison House Publishers, Inc. 1997), 204 - 205.

⁹⁰ *Matawan Journal*, 24 March 1883.



Carte-de-visite photograph of Elizabeth Van Cleaf, ca. 1870, from a family photograph album compiled by Mary Holmes Taylor II. Taylor Family Papers.

and into Orchard Home in 1854. A further testament to the closeness of these two women was found in a cartes-des-visites photograph album embossed on the cover “M. H. Taylor” in gilt Old English lettering. Compiled about 1870 or 1875, it contains forty-eight images of the Taylor family and their close relatives. Remarkably, it also contains a posed studio photograph of a portly Elizabeth Van Cleaf, shown attired neatly in a long dark dress and with white hair as she was then approaching seventy years of age. It is highly unusual for a family

photograph album of this era to include formal images of servants, black or white. But Elizabeth would have been part of Mary Holmes Taylor's life since infancy, and the presence of this image in the album demonstrates that a bond of respect existed between the two women.⁹¹

Hannah Narr, black, age 26, born in New Jersey, occupation servant. In 1870, Hannah was living in Matawan with her presumed husband Sewell Narr, age 38, who was born in Jamaica and who was employed as a waterman. A 14 year old female named Francitia,

⁹¹ One might note that no records expressly outlining Elizabeth Van Cleaf's feelings on the Taylor family, in her own words, have emerged. Historians seeking to represent individuals usually left out of the historical record must develop interpretations using the resources available. An in-depth analysis of slavery and freedom in New Jersey, and the relationships of blacks and whites in the decades prior to and following the American Civil War, is beyond the scope of this piece. The work of James J. Gigantino II represents the latest in that historiography.

quite probably a daughter, was also living in their household at the time. She was born in Chile.

Isaiah W. Smith, white, age 21, born in New Jersey, occupation laborer. Smith may have been employed to tend the kitchen garden, operate the smoke house, and maintain the grounds around Orchard Home. He was born on 1 June 1841, a son of John C. and Mary Smith. On 24 June 1873, he married Henrietta Townley (1826 – 1887). They lived in Howell Township, where he was employed as a carpenter and farmer. Smith died at Farmingdale in 1908.

Jane Thompson, white, age 18, born in Ireland, occupation servant.

1865 New Jersey State Census:

Isaiah W. Smith, white male.

Betsey Van Cleaf, black female

Jane Thompson, foreign born white female.

1870 Federal Census:

Joshua Holmes, black, age 50, born in New Jersey, occupation servant. Like Smith in 1860, perhaps employed outside the house. Actually born about 1817, Holmes appears in the 1860 census for Middletown, age 39, a farm laborer. Holmes married Elizabeth Hewlitt at Orchard Home on 31 March 1859, the Baptist minister Rev. David B. Stout officiating.⁹² They became the parents of at least two daughters. Holmes died at Headden's Corner in Middletown on 28 April 1892 at age seventy-five.⁹³

Elizabeth Van Cleaf, age 64, born in New Jersey. The census takers made a mistake and listed her as white, but her occupation was still servant.

⁹² *New Jersey Standard*, 25 December 1931, quoting an earlier issue.

⁹³ *Red Bank Register*, 4 May 1892.

Katherine Roe, white, age 20, born in New Jersey, no occupation listed but given her age in all likelihood a servant girl as she appears in the hierarchical household order below Holmes and Van Cleaf.

1875 New Jersey State Census:

Elizabeth Van Cleaf, age 67, black female, born in Middletown of native born parents, occupation servant.

Catherine [sic] Roe, age 25, white female, born in New York City of foreign born parents, occupation not listed.

1880 Federal Census:

Elizabeth Van Cleaf, black, age 74, occupation domestic servant.

Sarah M. Rainer, black, age 22, occupation domestic servant. Sarah Rainer was from New Hanover, Burlington County, the oldest child of Charles and Sarah Rainer.

1885 New Jersey State Census:

A diligent search of all residents of Middletown Township with the last name of Taylor failed to turn up those individuals who occupied Orchard Home. The census may have been taken at a time of the year when they were living at their winter home in Astoria, Long Island.

1887 – 1892:

Isabella Wallace, black. Dated photographs taken by Edward Taylor between 13 October 1887 and 17 September 1892 depict Isabella, her two children John and Etta, and her husband John at Orchard Home, at times posed with the Taylors. Isabella was born in North Carolina in September 1866, a daughter of Daphny Bones. She married John D. Wallace, who was also a native of North Carolina born in June 1861. They had four children. The

Wallaces lived on a small farm at what is now the intersection of Highway 35, Kings Highway, and Harmony Road, within easy walking distance of Orchard Home. They had purchased over fourteen acres in 1900 from the Taylors. John died first. His widow Isabella passed on 3 April 1933 of heart trouble, survived by only one son named Edward. An obituary in the *Red Bank Register* stated that “She was one of the best-known colored residents of that section. Although she had been in poor health for the past two years she was apparently well up to the time she was stricken.”⁹⁴ Wallace’s funeral was held at the Red Hill A. M. E. Church, with interment in an unmarked grave in its yard. Mary Etta, her daughter, was three years old when her pictures were taken by Edward Taylor in 1887. She



Isabella Wallace with her son John and daughter Mary Etta posed on 12 August 1889 in the service courtyard at Orchard Home. One of ten images of Wallace family members taken. Edward Taylor photograph. Taylor Family Papers.

was born on 23 May 1884 and died on 6 May 1922, just short of her thirty-eighth birthday. Mary had married John Brokenbaugh on 16 January 1918, and the couple lived with her mother for some years. She was also interred at the Red Hill A. M. E. Church in a grave marked by a headstone.

⁹⁴ *Red Bank Register*, 5 April 1933.



Mary Holmes Taylor II in her wheelchair, accompanied by daughter Mary Holmes Taylor III on the left. The chair is being pushed by John Wallace, with his wife Isabella standing behind. At the right is an unidentified servant. Photograph taken on 17 September 1892 by Edward Taylor. Taylor Family Papers.

1890 Federal Census:

The Federal census schedules for 1890 do not survive.

1895 State Census:

Cassie Simpson, white female.

Martha Boyd, black female. Martha was born 14 March 1854 in North Carolina. Her maiden name was Have. She was the wife of Wiley Boyd, Jr., who was also born in North Carolina in June 1867. They were married in Middletown on 10 August 1893. Martha died on 26 February 1909. Although at times an active member of the Red Hill A. M. E. Church,



Headstone for Martha Boyd in the yard of the Union Missionary Baptist Church on Church Lane in Middletown, NJ.

MCHA image.

she was interred in the yard of the nearby Union Missionary Baptist Church. Her grave is marked by a modest headstone.

John N. Heath, black male. John was born on 20 May 1880 at Fort Boundville, North Carolina, a son of Rev. Calvin Heath and his wife Margaret (1850 - 1925). In 1900 John was employed by James C. Hendrickson at Cherry Tree Farm with his brother Moses. By 1910, he had returned home to live with his parents, where he was working at farm labor. In 1920 and 1930, Heath was living in Brooklyn and serving as a driver, He died in 1948 at the age of sixty-seven and as an employee of the Jersey

Central Railroad at Elizabethport. He was interred in an unmarked grave in the yard of the Red Hill A. M. E. Church.

1900 Federal Census:

Henrietta Heath, black, age 25, born in North Carolina in May 1875, occupation servant, and married. Heath was the wife of Calvin Heath Jr. (1874 - 1948). The couple in 1905 was living in Long Branch. By 1910, Henrietta, still living with Calvin, was listed as a Methodist Evangelist by the name of Hattie C. Heath. She is known to have served at times at the Red Hill A. M. E. Zion Church, and at the Belford Salvation Army.

Sylvia Heath, black, age 18, born in North Carolina in 1882, occupation servant, single. She was the daughter of Rev. Calvin Heath and his wife Margaret. She was living with them in 1905, and working as a laundress. Sylvia died of consumption on 24 November 1908 at the age of twenty-six. Her funeral took place at the Red Hill A. M. E. Church, with interment in an unmarked grave in the church yard.⁹⁵

1905 New Jersey State Census:

Judith Bayne, black, age 27, born April 1878 in Virginia, listed as a waitress, but another entry on the same page describes a similar person as “family waitress.”

Mary Green, black, age 54, born in June 1850 in Maryland, occupation family cook.

1910 Federal Census:

No servants listed. It is possible that the Taylors were using day laborers who were not living at the time in the household.

1915 New Jersey State Census:

Annie Smith, colored, age 23, born October 1892 in North Carolina, occupation waitress. She may or may not be the same 12 year old Annie Smith that appears in the 1905 New Jersey State Census, a black female who was born in March 1893 in New Jersey of parents born in Virginia and New Jersey. The second Annie was the daughter of Frank and Ella Smith, who were then residents of Red Bank. He worked as a laborer, while she was employed in a laundry. The 1920 Federal census indicates that Annie, then with the last name of Coy, was living in Shrewsbury with her mother and employed at home as a laundress. She passed away on 12 November 1920 at the State Hospital in Trenton.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ *Red Bank Register*, 25 November 1908.

⁹⁶ *Red Bank Register*, 17 November 1920.

1920 Federal Census:

No servants listed as Mary Holmes Taylor and her sister-in-law Margaret Dominick Taylor were boarding for the winter with the family of John J. Massey in Middletown village. The census that year was taken between 21 and 23 January.

1930 Federal Census:

Joshua Green, Negro, age 55, born in North Carolina, employed as a steam railroad laborer. He had lived in Middletown since at least 1900. Green and his second wife Rowena (see below) remained at Orchard Home through September 1931 following the death of Mary Holmes Taylor in December 1930. He was occasionally employed by the Second National Bank after that date to cut grass and perform other maintenance chores.

Rowena Green, Negro, age 50, born in Maryland, employed by a private family [i.e. Mary H. Taylor]. Rowena, second wife of Joshua Green, continued to be paid by the month after the death of Mary Holmes Taylor in December of 1930. She remained at the house until the end of September 1931.

Working the Farm

It is unlikely that the Taylors worked the 185 acre farm directly following the death of Samuel Taylor at Marlpit Hall in 1843. Rather, the family no doubt engaged tenant farmers. But far less information is available on who these individuals were than that compiled on the servants and household help.

The earliest known farmer to enter into an agreement with the Taylors was David G. Patterson, who in 1881 took part of the farm for ten years to grow asparagus in partnership with Mary Holmes Taylor II. This arrangement has already been discussed. Middletown columns in local newspapers provided names for some of the later farm tenants.

Red Bank Register, 7 November 1894. “Last week thieves stole about eight bushels of corn from Gottlieb Dietz, who farms the Joseph D. Taylor place at Middletown. The thieves went into the field and husked the corn from the shocks.”

Gottlieb Dietz (1851 – 1929) was born in Germany. He married Fredericka Schweitzer (1852 – 1919), and they became the parents of five children. In 1883, the family emigrated to the United States, settling in Monmouth County. At first they resided at the North American Phalanx, where Dietz was employed in the Bucklin family canning factory. Afterward he moved to a farm at Centerville in Holmdel Township, and then to the Taylor farm in Middletown village. The 1895 New Jersey state census indicates that the Dietzes were then living on the Orchard Home tract. According to the 1900 Federal census schedules, the elder Dietzes and four of their children (but not Frederick) were living next door to the Taylors in a house and farm that they were renting. They were still engaged as tenant farmers on the Taylor property and apparently occupied Marlpit Hall. By 1908, the Dietzes had moved to Red Bank, where Gottlieb had purchased a meat business on West Front Street. He died at the hospital in Long Branch in 1929 at the age of seventy-seven. Interment took place at Fair View Cemetery, where the Eintrach singing society conducted a service. “Mr. Dietz possessed a sterling character, a good natured disposition and a reputation for honesty and fairness in his business dealings.”⁹⁷

⁹⁷ *Red Bank Register*, 20 March 1929.



The Red Bank meat market operated by Gottlieb Dietz and his son Frederick, even while they rented the Taylor farm in Middletown. From “Red Bank and Vicinity,” a souvenir edition of the *New Jersey Standard*, July 1909. MCHA archives.

New Jersey Standard, 21 February 1903. “John W. Boyd of Marlboro has leased the Mary H. Taylor farm for one year. Mr. Boyd will take possession at once.”

Nothing is presently known about Boyd. However, this John W. Boyd is not to be confused with a second person of the same name who was of African-American descent. That John Boyd (1882 – 1949) was born in North Carolina. He and his family migrated north to New Jersey in 1911. They lived in Fair Haven, and he served as a gardener on various local estates.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ *Asbury Park Press*, 28 September 1949.

Asbury Park Press, 16 March 1915. "John Jones has moved from Plainfield to the Mary Holmes Taylor farm at this place, which he will manage this season."

Red Bank Register, 7 October 1925. "Mr. Frederick Dietz of Middletown village has bought the Edmund Wilson farm of 98 acres on the Nutswamp road from Louis Kaschuba, who now lives on the place. The sale was made last Thursday and the price was \$11,000. Mr. Dietz will take possession in January. For the past ten years he has been farming Miss Mary Holmes Taylor's place at Middletown village."

Frederick J. Dietz Sr. (1882 – 1948) was born in Germany, a son of Gottlieb Dietz (1851 – 1929) and Fredericka Schweitzer (1852 – 1919) who had rented the Taylor farm earlier. Fred Dietz married Caroline I. Walling (1885 – 1941). The couple had four children. By 1910, he had become proprietor of a butcher shop on West Front Street in Red Bank in company with his father, later expanded to include groceries. Dietz apparently succeeded John Jones as the Taylor's tenant farmer in 1916.

Red Bank Register, 13 January 1926. "Fred Dietz moved last week from Miss Mary Holmes Taylor's farm to one which he recently bought on the east side of the Nutswamp road. A number of his neighbors helped to drive his cattle to his place and assisted him in other ways to get 'set to rights.'"

The image of a cattle drive along the roadways of Middletown seems very foreign in today's context. But it confirms that Dietz was raising at least some of the animals himself for slaughtering to supply the Red Bank butcher shop.

Asbury Park Press, 14 October 1926. "Edward Kincaid, formerly of Belford, has taken a lease on the Taylor homestead farm, which is now owned by Miss Mary Holmes Taylor."

A Landmark Auction Held

Following the death of Mary Holmes Taylor III on 8 December 1930, the estate was taken over and managed by Ralph S. Pearce, a trust officer at the Second National Bank & Trust Co. of Red Bank. The law firm of Applegate, Stevens, Foster & Reussille provided much legal advice during the protracted period of eleven years before the estate was finally settled. The first order of business was to determine the extent of the estate's assets. The inventory and appraisal process took from January through April 1931. As mentioned above, the household effects and antiques were appraised at \$6,199.67. Of that amount, Katherine Taylor Clark and Lydia Taylor Hodges, the two principal beneficiaries of the estate, took items valued at \$1,050.92. The estate attorney noted on 25 June, "Two hours conference in morning with Mr. and Mrs. Clarke [sic], Mrs. Hodges and Mr. Pearce, re-apportionment of specific articles desired by the beneficiaries; general conferences re estate affairs; preparation of receipt for Mrs. Hodges to sign for advancement of her legacy."⁹⁹

By early July, planning was in full swing for a major auction to be held on site at Orchard Home. Word of the treasures the house contained had spread quickly among antiques dealers and museum professionals. Even as early as 4 April, the estate attorney held a "Lengthy conference with Mr. Pearce re valuations and offers fixed and made by Metropolitan Museum of Art and Rockefeller Foundation," the latter no doubt representing Colonial Williamsburg.¹⁰⁰ George H. Roberts of New Monmouth was engaged as auctioneer, and advertisements appeared in several Monmouth County newspapers publicizing the event scheduled for 20 August 1931. After listing many of the items to be sold, the ad continued, "If you are interested in real antique furniture this

⁹⁹ Monmouth County Surrogate's Office, estate docket 29542, Statement of Services, Applegate, Stevens, Foster & Reussille, 3 October 1938 [hereafter Legal Statement of Services].

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

sale will be worth your attention. The house will be open for inspection Tuesday and Wednesday, August 18th and 19th, from 2:30 until 6:00 o'clock P. M.”¹⁰¹ A detailed account of the sale appeared in the *Red Bank Register* on 26 August, followed by a somewhat edited version of the same text in the *Keyport Enterprise* the next day. The article appeared under the headline “Valuable Antiques Sold at Middletown / Sale of Effects of Late Miss Mary Holmes Taylor Largest in County in Recent Years.”

About 500 persons attended the sale of the furniture and other personal effects of the estate of Miss Mary Holmes Taylor of Middletown village last Thursday. The vendue took place at the late home of Miss Taylor on the King’s Highway and it was under the direction of the Second National Bank and Trust company of Red Bank, acting as executor of the estate. The sales aggregated \$6,500.

The sale was one of the largest of its kind held in Monmouth County in recent years and it was notable for the great quantity of antique furniture disposed of. The most valuable of these articles was a hammered silver bowl made by Benjamin Wynkoop in 1711. The bowl is said to be the only one of its kind in the world. It was struck off to Miss E. M. Netter of Freehold for \$1,735. The buyer is a dealer in antiques. A number of other persons engaged in the same line of business, including some New York dealers, were at the sale, and the bidding was spirited.

Dr. Daniel D. Hendrickson of Middletown village was the buyer of a grandfather’s clock. The price was \$375. There were many bidders for the antique timepiece. It is in perfect running order and it was keeping time when it was sold.

A highboy sold for \$950 and a lowboy for \$392. Mrs. Thomas N. McCarter was the buyer of several articles. A rat tail spoon was struck off for \$71. A set of chinaware was sold for \$260.

Some things at the sale were struck off at bargain prices, but it was the general opinion of the expert valutors [sic] of antiques that the conclusive bids corresponded to true values. Old-fashioned straight-back chairs sold for as much as \$90 each. An ancient mat sold for \$90. China dolls which Mary Holmes Taylor played with when she was a girl were struck off at \$24 each.

The auction was very ably conducted and there were many compliments for those who directed it. George H. Roberts of New Monmouth was the auctioneer ... Nothing but the furniture and other personal possessions of the late Miss Taylor were sold.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ MCHA Research File, Marlpit Hall, undated newspaper clipping.

¹⁰² *Red Bank Register*, 26 August 1931. The Wynkoop bowl was sold again at Sotheby’s in New York, *The Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Walter M. Jeffords*, 28 – 29 October 2004, lot 738. It realized \$36,000.



Snapshot taken on 20 August 1931 at the estate auction of Mary Holmes Taylor III. Taylor Family Papers.

The actual amount of cash taken in at the auction came to \$4,860.15. The appraised value of the items delivered to Katherine Clark and Lydia Hodges amounted to \$1,050.92. Goods remaining that were not sold tallied \$650.00 at inventory prices. Those items that did sell exceeded the appraised values by \$361.40. So the residual value of unsold household effects was carried on the estate books at \$288.60.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ Executor's Account.

Mrs. J. Amory Haskell (1864 – 1942), a pre-eminent collector of American furniture, decorative art, and fine art, acquired many of the leading items sold at the Taylor auction. A resident of Middletown, at the time she was also developing a strong interest in the new museum of the Monmouth County Historical Association then being completed in Freehold. Until her death in 1942, Mrs. Haskell served as a key patron of and contributor to the organization. Among the Taylor items she obtained were: the highboy (i.e. high chest) and lowboy (i.e. dressing table) mentioned in the newspaper article, a green painted low back Windsor armchair, a brace-back Windsor armchair also painted green, and a pair of brass andirons accompanied by a steel and brass fireplace fender. Mrs. Haskell donated the andirons and fender to the Association on 18 September 1931, only a few weeks after the auction. They were assigned accession number 2, and placed as accessories in the fireplace of the Washington Room at the museum. That donation was followed on 12 October 1931 by the gift of the highly important dressing table, made in Middletown ca. 1730 – 1760 and identified in collection records as accession number 20. It was placed on display in the upper hallway by the time the museum opened to the public eight days later.

Real Estate Challenges

Disposition of the real estate owned by Miss Taylor at the time of her death proved to be more troublesome, no doubt due to financial conditions encountered during the Great Depression that started in 1929. The exact acreage was determined by a new survey made by Herbert O. Todd of Atlantic Highlands. The property, lying on both sides of Kings Highway, amounted to 71.505 acres. Considerable interest focused immediately on the “Grandfather Homestead,” or Marlpit Hall. The newspaper account of the auction contained the following commentary:

At the auction last Thursday rumors were rife that the house built 228 years ago had recently been sold. According to this report it had been bought by a historical society and was soon to be moved to the property of the society to be used as part of a historical museum. When questioned by a Register reporter about this, Mr. Pearce said the report was untrue. He stated that the ancient house, as well as the house where Miss Mary Holmes Taylor had made her home, were on the market but that no sale had yet been made. He said the ancient house would be sold before the rest of the estate was disposed of and that there was a possibility of its being bought by a historical society, although this was not a certainty. One report which was widely prevalent at the auction was that the old house had been bought by the Monmouth County historical society and that it would be moved in sections to the grounds of the society's new museum in Freehold. Mr. Pearce said that this report was entirely untrue, as no such sale had been made.¹⁰⁴

In point of fact, there was some truth to the rumor as the estate attorney noted in his diary for 22 July that he held a "Lengthy conference with Mr. Pearce and Miss Edna M. Netter re terms to be granted in event of successful bid upon old farmhouse to be removed from premises."¹⁰⁵ Netter was not successful in persuading the Monmouth County Historical Association to acquire Marlpit Hall for relocation to Freehold. The heavy expense of finishing and furnishing their new museum no doubt served to discourage the Association. The museum opened to the public on 20 October 1931.

But Miss Netter did not let the matter of Marlpit Hall drop. By the spring of 1935, she had convinced Mrs. J. Amory Haskell to step in, buy the house and an acre of land on which it sat, restore it, and present the finished project to the Monmouth County Historical Association. Writing on 13 April, Mrs. Haskell gave Netter some instructions on how to handle the transaction.

I will see my brother [Samuel Riker] tomorrow night & ask him about having a "search" made in regard to the title of the Mary Holmes Taylor House. The survey I wish made any way & I would like the roof patched so it will be water tight. I am enclosing cheque for 2000/00/100 as I think that was the price we agreed upon. Of course the survey I understand will be extra . . . I understand the enclosed cheque for \$2000.00/100 is for the house & one acre of land and your commission . . . I thought perhaps you would call me up in regard to the cheque, but decided you had better make some sort of payment to hold the deal. I told Mr. [William S.] Holmes I was buying it, but told him not to say any thing [sic] until it was

¹⁰⁴ *Red Bank Register*, 26 August 1931.

¹⁰⁵ Legal Statement of Services.

settled. He seemed to think it was pretty safe as it always belonged in the same family. Of course, he is delighted to think it will belong later to the M. C. Hist. Assn, but is to remain in Middletown. Of course put it in my name until I can turn it over to the society.¹⁰⁶

Netter lost no time in wrapping up the purchase of Marlpit Hall. On 16 April, she made a \$100 payment to the Second National Bank & Trust on account toward “purchase price of old farm house and 1 acre of ground.”¹⁰⁷ On 6 May, the Taylor estate attorney made note of “Preparation of executor’s deed to Miss Netter, and deed from Miss Netter to Margaret Riker Haskell.”¹⁰⁸ The transaction closed on 8 May when Netter paid \$1,400 to the executor, the balance of the agreed purchase price of \$1,500.00.¹⁰⁹ The deeds were duly recorded with the County Clerk.¹¹⁰ Restoration work on the venerable structure began immediately under the supervision of Edna Netter. Finally, Mrs. Haskell presented the completed project to the Association at a simple ceremony held on Saturday, 6 June 1936, for members and invited guests. Marlpit Hall, furnished largely with items from the renowned Haskell collection of Americana, opened to the public on the following Tuesday, 9 June.¹¹¹

Disposition of another tract of 9.1 acres did not go so smoothly. An article that appeared in the *Red Bank Register* for 18 April 1928 begins the story.

Manuel and James Milonas have bought the Lone Pine property near Middletown, where there [sic] roadside booth and restaurant business is located. The land is on the state highway, near the Harmony country clubhouse, between Middletown village and James C. Hendrickson’s Cherry Tree farm. The property is on both sides of the road, with a frontage of 1,200 feet on each side. Business buildings are on both sides.

The land comprises nine acres, of which 3 ½ acres are on the west side of the highway and 5 ½ [sic] acres are on the east side. The eastern part of the property also has a frontage on

¹⁰⁶ Edna M. Netter Papers, letter from Mrs. J. Amory Haskell to Edna M. Netter, 13 April 1935. Owned Privately. William S. Holmes (1876 – 1948) was at the time President of the Monmouth County Historical Association. Later he became the organization’s first Director.

¹⁰⁷ Executor’s Account.

¹⁰⁸ Legal Statement of Services.

¹⁰⁹ Executor’s Account.

¹¹⁰ Monmouth Deeds, book 1679, page 32; and book 1679, page 34. For some reason, the Second National Bank issued a second separate deed on 9 August 1935 directly to Margaret Riker Haskell.

¹¹¹ *Red Bank Register*, 4 June 1936.

a side road. The land was owned by Miss Mary Holmes Taylor of Middletown village and the two Milonas brothers had been renting it from her the past three years for their business. The new owners paid \$15,000 for the property. They intend to put up new and larger buildings and to have larger parking space for automobiles.

In addition to their Lone Pine business the Milonas brothers conduct a restaurant business at the Sheridan hotel at Red Bank. James Milonas is in charge of the Middletown business and Manuel Milonas directs the Red Bank business. The land at Middletown, aside from that occupied by the roadside booth and restaurant, will be held by the two brothers as an investment. They may develop this part of the property later and put it on the market for home sites, but nothing will be done with the land at present.¹¹²

The property in question was situated on both sides of Route 35 west of the line of Kings Highway and Harmony Road, a prime location for business. Today it serves as the site for a Sears store as well as Staples on the opposite side of the highway. The initial sale of the Lone Pine tract was subject to a \$10,000.00 mortgage dated 15 March 1928. As of the death of Mary Holmes Taylor III in December 1930, an unpaid balance of \$9,000.00 remained at 6% interest.¹¹³ James Milonas continued to meet the interest payments until 11 September 1933.¹¹⁴ As for payments on the principal, as early as 16 January 1932 the estate attorney prepared a "Letter to Milonas notifying him that payment of \$2,000. must be made on account of principal of mortgage held by estate."¹¹⁵ That payment was never received. After several years of court proceedings, the Lone Pine was finally foreclosed and the property offered at a Sheriff's sale in Freehold on 6 January 1936. The principal and accrued interest then totaled \$11,275.00.¹¹⁶ There were apparently no takers, as the *Asbury Park Press* reported in its real estate transfer column on 29 January of the filing of a deed at the County Clerk's office from "James Milonas, et. al, by sheriff to Mary H. Taylor, by exr, Middletown, 9 acres."¹¹⁷ The business relationship between the Milonas brothers

¹¹² *Red Bank Register*, 18 April 1928.

¹¹³ Estate Inventory.

¹¹⁴ Executor's Accounts.

¹¹⁵ Legal Statement of Services.

¹¹⁶ *Freehold Transcript*, 13 December 1935.

¹¹⁷ *Asbury Park Press*, 29 January 1936.

and Mary Holmes Taylor proved to be expensive to her estate. A total of \$133.92 was paid to the Middletown Township sheriff for advertising the foreclosure, among other things. And the law firm of Applegate, Stevens, Foster & Reussille billed the estate \$200.00 for legal fees. But the Milonas brothers had not paid Township taxes on their property since 1929. So the estate was required to pay the arrears through 1935, which amounted to \$2,056.99 including interest.¹¹⁸



A drawn postcard view of the Lone Pine complex on both sides of Route 35 in Middletown, ca. 1930. From Randall Gabrielan, *Middletown Township* (Augusta, ME: Alan Sutton, 1994), 41.

Once title had been secured, the executor quickly engaged John N. Hillyer, a Middletown realtor, to rent the Lone Pine property, which he did for \$47.50 per month through August of 1938 to one B. Anthopoulos. In the meantime, efforts to sell the premises continued. It was first sold on 25 August 1937 by the executor “to Eraklis P. Constantinides for the sum of \$6,000 of which \$600

¹¹⁸ Executor’s Accounts.

was paid on account. Said purchaser defaulted in performing this contract and the said down payment was retained by the accountant [meaning executor] as liquidated damages.”¹¹⁹ The Lone Pine tract was finally sold on 22 August 1938 to James Poletis and his wife Julia of Newark for \$5,000.00.¹²⁰ Poletis paid \$2,500 in cash on delivery of the deed, and took a mortgage for the balance at 6 percent interest.¹²¹ The long saga of the Lone Pine property had finally come to an end.

One can assume that deteriorating financial conditions following the stock market crash of 1929 contributed in a major way to the collapse of the Milonas business venture at the Lone Pine. After it opened in 1919, concrete paved Route 35 initially generated much shore traffic, so much so that in the summer of 1928 the Middletown village bypass from the junction of Kings Highway and Harmony Road to the south end of Kings Highway was constructed to relieve vehicular congestion through the village. An aerial drawing of the Milonas enterprises issued as a post card reveals that restaurants had been opened on both sides of Route 35. Abundant signage boasted "Quick Lunch" and listed some of the menu items available, such as hamburgers, frankfurters, coffee, all kinds of sandwiches, and ice cream. The two eateries, situated in a heavily wooded grove, were supplemented by a farm stand offering fresh fruits and vegetables, a "comfort station" for travelers, and several other small shacks catering to the traveling public.¹²² The Lone Pine complex helped to begin the intense commercialization of Route 35 that continues to characterize that corridor through Middletown today.

¹¹⁹ Executor's Accounts.

¹²⁰ Monmouth Deeds, book 1775, page 24.

¹²¹ Executor's Accounts.

¹²² Randall Gabrielan, *Images of America: Middletown Township* (Dover, NH: Arcadia Publishing, 1994), 41.

The remaining seventy acres of property belonging to the estate of Mary Holmes Taylor III did not find buyers for several more years, until a point when the nation was finally recovering from the lingering economic effects of the depression. Meanwhile the area around Middletown village was beginning to be built up into a suburban community which put a demand for expanded facilities on the township, such as a new school. The *Red Bank Register* carried the story on 21 March 1940 under the headline “Middletown Board Has Special Meeting.”

At a special meeting of the board of education of Middletown township Tuesday night an enabling resolution was passed for the purchase of five acres of ground at Middletown village from the Mary Holmes Taylor estate. The property will be used as a site for the new Middletown village school.¹²³

Aylin Pearson, an architect from Perth Amboy, had designed two new schools for the township - that proposed for the village and another at Navesink. His contract was discussed at the meeting, as were plans and specifications for the two buildings. The deed transferring the five acres to the Board of Education for \$1,750.00 was dated 18 April 1940.¹²⁴

The next piece of real estate to find a buyer was Orchard Home itself along with the five acres it sat on. The new owners were Henry Ludwig Kramer and his wife Harriet, who purchased the grand but by then neglected house for \$3,500.00. The deed was dated 15 July 1941. An article in the *Keyport Enterprise* described the sale:

The Ray Van Horn agency of Fair Haven reports the sale of the Mary Holmes Taylor residence, one of Middletown village’s old houses to Henry Ludwig Kramer, a leading Monmouth County architect. Mr. Kramer for many years has had his office located in Asbury Park. For some time he has been in quest of an old Monmouth County house to be used by him as an office and residence. At the present time the necessary alterations are being planned to make this possible.

The grounds comprise some five acres well planted with century-old elms, walnut trees and evergreens located on King’s highway at the northeast end of Middletown village. The house is situated on a knoll with a magnificent view of the rolling ground of the old Conover farm opposite...

¹²³ *Red Bank Register*, 21 March 1940.

¹²⁴ Monmouth Deeds, book 1825, page 463.

The house purchased by Mr. Kramer is one of the most extensively built old residences in the county. There are 12 large rooms in the house, six marble trimmed open fireplaces, a handsome open staircase and lower and upper hall of generous proportions. Construction details are exquisite. Even the rail of the back stairs to the servants' quarters is done in mahogany all the way to the third floor. An annunciator [sic] system with levers in all rooms runs through the walls of the house with wires and pulleys and bells so that servants may be called from the kitchen or third floor. Some of this old system is still in working order.¹²⁵

Even with that major transaction accomplished, there were still some sixty acres on both sides of Kings Highway left in the hands of the Second National Bank & Trust. This large parcel finally changed hands on 30 December 1941. The buyers were James J. Butler and Mary A. Butler, who acquired that desirable tract for \$3,000.00.¹²⁶ So as the United States entry into World War II unfolded after the 7 December Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the estate of Mary Holmes Taylor III was finally closed after eleven years of effort.

The Kramer Years

Henry Ludwig Kramer (1903 - 1965) and his wife Harriet Wardell (1911 - 1984) were in many ways ideal owners for Orchard Home, by 1941 recognized as one of Middletown village's important historic and architectural landmarks. They introduced modern infrastructure into the stately residence without altering its architectural details. In fact, the Kramers enhanced them wherever possible. Henry Kramer was a practicing architect who maintained an office in Asbury Park for many years. He had been born in New York, a son of John H. Kramer (1880 - 1966) and Marie Anna R. Kramer (1884 - 1975). But the family eventually settled in Deal, Monmouth County. Among his known commercial works are: the Asbury Auto Supply Co. facility (1933), renovation of the Tusting Piano Co. of Asbury Park (1946), and a new maintenance garage for Holmdel Township (1957). Kramer also served as the municipal architect for Deal, carrying out

¹²⁵ *Keyport Enterprise*, 21 August 1941.

¹²⁶ Monmouth Deeds, book 1881, page 193.



Architect Henry Kramer on the front porch at Orchard Home, ca. 1942. Taylor-Butler Papers.

various renovation and construction projects at the Deal Casino and elsewhere between 1937 and 1949. Kramer was elected President of the Monmouth Chapter of the New Jersey Society of Architects between 1948 and 1951. He also maintained a membership in the Washington Lodge of Free & Accepted Masons at Eatontown.¹²⁷

On 27 October 1929, Henry Kramer married Alice E. McLain at Long Branch. Harriet Wardell became his second wife. A registered nurse, she was a daughter of Albert Wardell (1881 - 1965) and Cora Fields (1887 - 1978) of Neptune. Harriet Kramer graduated in 1935 from the Ann May School of Nursing, and retired years later from Riverview Hospital in Red Bank.¹²⁸ The

Kramers had one son named William L. who died in 1949. The family was interred at Glenwood Cemetery in West Long Branch.

After buying Orchard Home in 1941, the Kramers began immediately to adapt the house to modern living standards of the day. They dismantled the coal furnace and its ductwork, installing in its place a forced hot water heating system that featured large cast iron radiators in every window recess on the first and second floors. In conjunction with that work, they skillfully patched many

¹²⁷ *Red Bank Register*, 2 August 1965.

¹²⁸ *Asbury Park Press*, 14 May 1984.

of the old floor register openings, to the point that their locations are difficult to determine today without careful inspection of the sub-flooring from the basement. Electrical wiring was expanded and upgraded throughout the house, with chandeliers placed in the center of the ceilings in most major rooms as well as in the reception hall. Modern plumbing and bathroom renovations included the use of antique brass fixtures and porcelain sinks in the main second floor bathroom, and in a half bath off the former study on the first floor. The Kramers were careful to leave intact such features as all of the folding window shutters on every window in the main house, the marble mantelpieces (although several were opened up and converted from burning cannel coal to wood), and all the elaborate woodwork throughout the house. Redecorating included hanging a boldly patterned wallpaper in the reception hall and in the second floor hall above it. An existing built-in bookcase was relocated to the former dining room.

As gently as their work in the main residence went, the Kramers did make a number of major changes to Orchard Home. The most dramatic took place almost immediately in 1941 - the removal of the bridge over the courtyard to the two-story outhouse, and lowering that structure to a single story. They did, however, save the two-seat "throne," which was placed in an alcove in the courtyard, where it remains on view. The Kramers also converted the storage building adjacent to the outhouse into a two car garage by removing its rear wall and installing hinged doors. The color of the house exterior, which had been painted a uniform dark brown since the late nineteenth century, was changed to white with dark green shutters and doors for accent. And finally, the large barn was taken down carefully in the spring of 1949, its parts being salvaged by a contractor named Jones for use elsewhere. The Kramers erected two new structures on the property. The first was a dog kennel built of concrete block, with a fenced run in front of it. The second structure was a long low building behind the kennel identified on a 1952 survey of the property as a coop, also

constructed of block. The grounds, which had become very overgrown during the ten years the house stood vacant, were also cleared, regraded with a bulldozer, and replanted in the spring of 1945.



This photograph dated May 1942 indicates that the Kramers had by then removed the second floor of the two-story privy, as well as the bridge to it from the main residence. Also, Orchard Home had already been painted white. Taylor-Butler Papers.

The Kramers remained at Orchard Home for thirteen years, transforming it back into a gracious residence with modern conveniences. They sold the property on 4 August 1954, and moved to Holmdel.¹²⁹

The Butler Years

¹²⁹ Monmouth Deeds, book 2513, page 575.

The new owners were George W. Butler Jr. (1908 - 1998) and his wife Helen Dietrich Butler (1909 - 1994) of Lincroft. At the time of their purchase, George Butler was a rising executive at Standard Oil of New Jersey (later Esso and finally Exxon). A native of Baltimore, he was a son of George W. Butler Sr. and Anna Breitenbach. Butler married his wife in 1929. In the same year he began a forty-two year career with Exxon and its predecessor companies. In January 1954, Butler was named manager of the New Jersey sales division of Esso Standard Oil Co. in Elizabeth, having served previously as assistant manager. Two years later he moved up to become manager of marketing development for Standard Oil Company of New Jersey with an office at Rockefeller Plaza in New York. His last position was as coordinator of World Wide Marketing, which he held until his retirement in 1971. The Butlers were very socially active people while living at Orchard Home. They maintained memberships at the Rumson Country Club and the Seabright Beach Club. They also became members of Christ Episcopal Church in Middletown village. Many area people still remember parties and other social events hosted by the Butlers at Orchard Home, often involving the Christ Church community. George and Helen Butler were interred at Fair View Cemetery in Middletown. They were survived by two sons.¹³⁰

Like any new owners of a gracious home, the Butlers redecorated Orchard Home to suit their own tastes. The bold wallpaper in the reception hall and second floor hall favored by the Kramers was replaced by one in a Colonial Revival pattern inspired by Williamsburg. Other striped wallpaper patterns were used in the downstairs half-bath and in the guest bedroom on the second floor. Upgrades were also made in the kitchen over the years, including new appliances, a washer and dryer, and a blue and white decorating scheme also inspired by the Colonial Revival. One of George Butler's principal hobbies was growing orchids. The concrete block dog run was converted

¹³⁰ *Asbury Park Press*, 4 April 1994 and 8 July 1998.

to a potting shed, while a greenhouse was added to it. The facility, which Butler jokingly referred to as his “Hoe House,” was equipped with electricity and running water. The original heating system consisted of an oil-fired furnace that circulated hot water through the greenhouse. The Butlers also altered the garage by removing the two sets of hinged doors and replacing them with one large lift door complete with an electric opening and closing mechanism. Additional wiring in the main house accommodated large air conditioners in some rooms, and extensive electronics of several kinds in the former dining room now used as a library. George Butler passed away on 5 July 1998, having outlived his wife Helen by four years. A month later Orchard Home was listed for sale through the Rumson office of Weichert Realtors.



Snapshot of a room turned into the main dining room by the Kramers, as redecorated and furnished by the Butlers. Asian inspired wallpaper adorned the walls. MCHA image.

Landmarks Reunited

The Weichert listing, dated 10 August 1998, described Orchard Home as follows:

“Orchard Home” Elegant estate on almost 5 acres. Corinthian columned, Italianate style mansion set on a hill overlooking historic village. Known as the “largest and grandest” home of its day built by the Taylor family. Elaborate moldings enrich every window & doorway. A 3 story stairway reaches through a 2 story center hall. 10 marble fireplaces grace spacious rooms. Outbuildings include 2 car garage/workshops – greenhouse/office, brick smoke house, covered well house and woodsheds. Specimen trees line a sweeping drive while restored antique Baltimore street lamps lend a glow of yesterday.¹³¹

Marti Huber, a Weichert sales representative and historic homes specialist, handled the listing. The asking price was set at \$875,000.



A detail from the front page of the Weichert listing for Orchard Home, showing mature foundation plantings, 1999. MCHA property file.

¹³¹ Listing, Monmouth County Association of Realtors, 10 August 1998.

It was only natural that the Monmouth County Historical Association would take an interest in Orchard Home, given its sixty-year ownership of adjacent Marlpit Hall. An update memorandum from Rick Kniesler, then Co-President, to the Board of Trustees dated 3 September 1998 contained the following announcement:

We had an opportunity to preview “Orchard House” in Middletown, recently the Butler home. The Taylor Family from Marlpit Hall built the house during the height of their success. Lee Ellen, Bernadette and I found the structure to be VERY well maintained, in an impeccable state of preservation, and worthy of adding to our collection. The professionals consider it to be one of the finest examples of the Italianate Style in the State. Being able to present the transition of one family over 150 years is an exciting interpretation challenge. We just need \$850,000 to buy it. We are pursuing some funding options, and are willing to entertain any suggestions.¹³²

At the next Board meeting held on 15 September, the trustees discussed the pros and cons of purchasing Orchard Home for the Association, and how the building might be used. A motion was made and passed that more information on the property be obtained through an attorney.¹³³ An undated Executive Summary of the situation was prepared soon after the meeting.

Although the MCHA is not currently in a position to take on additional expenses that purchase and maintenance of the property would entail, this particular situation does merit some discussion. Unlike our other properties, this one would be suitable as a revenue producing site through rentals. I have done some preliminary research on these issues for our discussion, so that we can decide if or how we should proceed.

Marti Huber is the listing agent, and she has been helpful in providing information about the property. The listing price is \$875,000. At our request, Mr. Richard McOmer has contacted the attorney for the estate’s heirs and determined that they would be willing to entertain some donation to off-set the cost of the property to a non-profit organization.

The remainder of the memorandum presented some discussion points, such as partnering with another organization, funding sources, broad based programming opportunities, and seeking a tenant to serve as site manager as well as a security presence. After months of further discussion,

¹³² Memorandum, Rick Kniesler to the MCHA Board of Trustees, 3 September 1998. MCHA Archives.

¹³³ Monmouth County Historical Association, Board of Trustees, meeting minutes, 15 September 1998 [hereafter Board Minutes].

the Board finally passed a resolution on 18 February 1999 “to authorize the officers to pursue negotiation with the owners of Orchard Home with a price not to exceed \$675,000.” Co-President Judith Stanley offered to pursue possible funding sources to help with the purchase of the property.¹³⁴ By April 22, it was reported to the Board that “The Taylor-Butler House in Middletown is being purchased by MCHA for \$630,000. The owners are taking part of the mortgage and we will have a bank loan for the balance of the mortgage. The Association hopes to receive some money from the County and State for the house.”¹³⁵

The final pieces for the acquisition of Orchard Home were put in place quickly as the closing took place on 16 June 1999.¹³⁶ In her quarterly report to the Board, Director Lee Ellen Griffith stated that:

On June 16, the MCHA made history when we closed on our fifth historic property, the Taylor-Butler House, our first acquisition by purchase and our first nineteenth century building. Our purchase price was \$630,000. Of that, \$565,000 is financed with short term interest-only loans from the seller and from Commerce Bank. A grant application for \$320,000 from Green Acres funding is already in process. In addition, the MCHA will receive a \$100,000 grant from the state budget through the efforts of Sen. [Joseph] Kyrillos.¹³⁷

The Association came up with \$75,000 for the deposit and down payment. Other closing costs and related start-up expenses totaled \$20,127.59, including some necessary repairs, professional fees, utilities, back taxes, and the first interest payments. The \$100,000 state grant was received by the Association in December 1999, and applied immediately to the Commerce Bank loan in order to reduce monthly interest payments. A second state grant for the same amount awarded to the Association in the fall of 2000 was also applied to the Commerce Bank loan. With receipt of the Garden State Green Acres Trust funding in September 2001, the Butler family

¹³⁴ Board Minutes, 18 February 1999.

¹³⁵ Board Minutes, 22 April 1999.

¹³⁶ Monmouth Deeds, book DB-5842, page 569.

¹³⁷ Board Minutes, Director’s Quarterly Report to the Board of Trustees, April through June 1999.

mortgage of \$315,000 was paid off, while a \$50,000 contribution from the Scire Family Foundation received at the same time paid off the last of the Commerce Bank loan of \$250,000. As the secretary reported in the minutes, “The Taylor-Butler House is now debt-free.”¹³⁸ So after separate ownership for sixty-four years, Orchard Home and Marlpit Hall were once again reunited for a linked future, this time under the auspices of the Monmouth County Historical Association.

By the fall of 1999, the Association began to make improvements to Orchard Home, then renamed the Taylor-Butler House. A painting crew went to work on the main rooms of the first floor, changing the color scheme to one recommended by trustee Nelson A. Kuperberg, a professional decorator. He and Director Lee Ellen Griffith agreed on bold dark red colors for the former formal parlor and study, while the family parlor, dining room, and private dining room received lighter treatments in blue, green and tan. All trim was painted an off white, while the wainscoting in the reception hall became a dark charcoal green sympathetic to the wallpaper that remained in place from the Butler era. The Association lost no time in holding events at Orchard Home. A party held there on 30 October, attended by 250 people, raised \$18,000 for the organization.¹³⁹ And the following 27 January 2000, the 101st annual meeting of the Association took place at the newly acquired property. With optimism about the use of the house for event rentals, the year 2000 budget included a revenue line item of \$18,000 in anticipation of a significant number of bookings for weddings, etc., at a site use fee of \$1,500. Unfortunately, Taylor-Butler did not immediately realize its full potential as a rental venue. But private events, holiday parties, and Association activities have continued to be held there. The house has also evolved into a very suitable display space for much of the organization’s extensive portrait collection. That includes

¹³⁸ Board Minutes, 26 September 2001.

¹³⁹ Board Minutes, 5 December 1999.

twelve works by local artist Harvey Jenkins (1822 – 1908), Middletown’s resident portrait painter from 1849 to his death.



The front parlor of the Taylor-Butler House as set up for a wedding on 14 April 2018. MCHA image.

Looking to integrate Marlpit Hall and Taylor-Butler into a unified landscape, in the fall of 2001 the Association engaged Webster Associates of Highland Park, NJ, to prepare a report and master plan on how to unify the two adjacent properties. Their final report, entitled *Orchard Home and Marlpit Hall: Historic Landscape Report and Master Plan*, was submitted on 15 March 2002. It contained a discussion on the landscape history of the site as it was then known, a condition assessment, and recommendations for improvements. Illustrations included historic images of the two houses and their surroundings, existing conditions images, and three drawings prepared by the

landscape consultants for a potential ADA compliant access ramp at Taylor-Butler as well as other walkways. Some parts of this master plan have been implemented over the years, but it needs substantial revision in light of developments in historic landscape architecture over the last two decades. The preparation of the Webster report was funded in part by a \$5,250 Historic Site Management grant from the New Jersey Historic Trust.

For the next few years, no major changes or improvements took place at the Taylor-Butler House. Regular maintenance continued, a new security and fire detection system was installed, and the boiler for the heating system required replacement in 2008. All that changed on 1 August 2010 with the death of Judith Stanley Coleman, a trustee of the Association since 1967, President since 1996, and a major supporter of the Taylor-Butler House acquisition. Coleman had created a trust on 28 July 2006. Article 6(c) of the trust directed its trustees to distributed \$350,000 to the Monmouth County Historical Association after her death, provided that the Association agreed to comply with the following terms:

As a condition of the gift given to the Monmouth County Historical Association, the Association shall agree to hold the amount of that gift as a segregated fund, and use the income and principal of that fund to pay for the restoration, maintenance and preservation in their historical form of any building that the Association uses as a museum and the buildings owned by the Association known as the Allen House, Marlpit Hall, the Taylor Butler House, the Holmes-Hendrickson House, and the Covenhoven House. Both the income and the principal of the fund may be used for that purpose. If the Association does not agree to hold and use the gift for that purpose, then the gift shall lapse.¹⁴⁰

Those generous funds were received in the summer of 2011, and placed in the Judy Stanley Coleman Fund for Historic Preservation.

The first major project undertaken with the Coleman fund was extensive work on the roof of Taylor-Butler in 2011. Four bids were received for stripping the present roof, installing plywood sheathing and new asphalt shingles, rebuilding the four tall brick chimneys above the roof line,

¹⁴⁰ Letter, Stephen J. Oppenheim to Lee Ellen Griffith, 22 September 2010. MCHA Coleman Bequest File.

reinforcing the roof and box gutter framing where necessary, and providing new lead coated copper flashings, gutter linings, and downspouts. Precision Building & Construction of Bridgewater, NJ, won with their bid of \$137,948. Work went forward quickly, and was finished by the end of the year. Extensive deterioration encountered in some areas of the box gutters, caused by extensive water penetration over a long period of time, required almost complete reconstruction.



A detail showing the base of a rebuilt chimney, new flashings and gutters, and new asphalt roof shingles, 2011. MCHA image.

Additional major work carried out on the Taylor-Butler house since 2011 includes:

- Restoration of the front porch portico in 2012. Bob Frizell Builders of Bamber Lake, NJ, removed all paint from the columns and Corinthian capitals, installed a new roof, repaired the porch deck, fabricated two cornice brackets that were missing, replaced existing lattices, and applied two coats of paint. This project cost \$31,817.



Restoration of the front porch involved removal of the thick paint accumulation from the columns and Corinthian order capitals, 2012. MCHA image.

- Repairs to the window hoods or pediments, as well as preparation and painting of the entire house. Again, Bob Frizell Builders undertook the work in 2013 at a cost of \$35,000.
- Near the end of the heating season in the spring of 2016, the boiler installed in 2008 failed and could not be repaired. Replacement costs ranged from \$16,000 to \$20,000. At the same time, leaks were beginning to occur in the radiator system and related plumbing, a danger as the house sits unattended for long periods of time. After extensive discussion, the trustees

approved the installation of a state of the art HVAC system that would provide heating and humidification in the winter, cooling and dehumidification in the summer, and dehumidification whenever needed. Aggressive Mechanical Contractors, Inc., of Neptune, NJ, won the contract. They designed a four zone system for the house with simple controls. Their crew managed to carefully install ductwork in the basement and attic that did not disturb the historic fabric of the building more than absolutely necessary. The project also involved asbestos remediation, removal of the old boiler along with the cast iron radiators and associated plumbing, and restoration of the beautiful paneled window recesses throughout the house that formerly held the radiators. Total cost of the entire project came to \$95,822.

- During the spring of 2017, Boy Scout Owen Doherty of Rumson selected restoration of the greenhouse for an Eagle Scout Project. He cleaned out the overgrown facility, replaced broken or missing glass panes, repaired the plant benches, patched broken masonry, and put down stone in its walkways. Doherty raised all the necessary funds for his project. To that end, he organized a Holiday-themed open house at Taylor-Butler that was held on 3 December 2016.
- During the winter and spring of 2018, the three large bedrooms on the second floor of Taylor-Butler were redecorated in preparation for use as exhibit spaces. In one instance, black striped wallpaper from the Butler era had to be removed and major plaster cracks underneath repaired. The wainscoting and trim in the upper reception hall also received new paint. Now all trim in the public spaces of the building appears in a uniform off white color. Exceptional Painting of Red Bank carried out the work for \$6,851.90.



Orchard Home, known since 1999 as the Taylor-Butler House, as it appears today. MCHA image.

Even with so much attention over the past two decades, the Taylor-Butler House will continue to require significant resources for the foreseeable future. Issues yet to be addressed include:

- Repair and refinishing of the original softwood flooring of the first and second floors, which was originally covered with carpeting and/or woven matting.
- Renovation of the kitchen and first floor half-bath.
- Adaptation of at least parts of the house for compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act to provide access for individuals with physical handicaps.
- Improved lighting in all public areas of the house.
- Equipping the windows with UV light filtration in order to use the house more extensively for exhibit purposes.

- Replacement of the roof and cleanup of the potting shed attached to the greenhouse for potential use as a visitors center for Marlpit Hall, Taylor-Butler, and Middletown village tours.
- Stabilization and restoration of the historic smoke house before it collapses entirely.
- Development of improved signage around the entire property.
- Development of a nature trail on the hill and elsewhere around the property in compliance with the Association's Garden State Green Acres Trust agreement.

Return of Taylor Family Treasures

Since literally days after the landmark auction held at Orchard Home on 20 August 1931, Taylor family possessions have steadily returned to the Monmouth County Historical Association. They came in as donations from individuals who attended the sale, patrons such as Mrs. J. Amory Haskell who acquired Taylor items immediately after the sale, Taylor descendants, and more recent donors who have found books and other artifacts with their Taylor histories of ownership intact. The opening of Marlpit Hall to the public in 1936 resulted in many items being returned for display there. Among these Taylor possessions, both great and small, are:

- A pair of brass andirons and fireplace fender mentioned above, accession number 2, gift of Mrs. J. Amory Haskell on 18 September 1931.
- A highly important dressing table made in Middletown, ca. 1730 to 1760, accession number 20, gift of Mrs. J. Amory Haskell on 12 October 1931. This item can be viewed on the Association's eMuseum site by clicking [here](#).
- A pair of ice skates dated 1858, accession number 697, gift of W. C. White of Loch Arbor, NJ, on 10 November 1934.

- A low back Windsor arm chair made in Philadelphia, ca. 1750 – 1780, accession number 2001.507, gift of Mrs. J. Amory Haskell on 6 June 1936. This item can be viewed on eMuseum [here](#).
- A continuous bow Windsor arm chair made in New York, ca. 1780 – 1800, accession number 1992.511, gift of Mrs. J. Amory Haskell on 6 June 1936. It can be viewed on eMuseum [here](#).
- A group of eleven items of historic clothing, including three men’s white shirts, an old fashioned pique vest, a white slip, a white embroidered dress, two pairs of long tan trousers, a blue and white striped coat, a black lace cape, and a man’s Persian design wrapper, gift of Miss Louise Hartshorne, Middletown, NJ, on 17 November 1936. Accompanied by the following note: “These articles belonged to Miss Mary Holmes Taylor, who frequently loaned them for Fancy dress parties. Given to Miss Hartshorne by Mrs. [Katherine Taylor] Clark when she cleared out the house.”
- Oil on canvas portrait of Edward Taylor (1770 – 1845), a New York merchant who inherited a one-third interest in Marlpit Hall and the Taylor farm, accession number 2001.512, gift of Mrs. Katherine Taylor Clark, Maplewood, NJ, 1936. On display at Marlpit Hall.
- A New York City Alderman’s staff that belonged to Edward Taylor above, who was elected to that office from 1834 to 1839, accession number 2001.514, gift of Mrs. Katherine Taylor Clark, Maplewood, NJ, 1936. On display at Marlpit Hall.
- A New York City Alderman’s mace that belonged to Edward Taylor above, accession number 2001.515, gift of Mrs. Katherine Taylor Clark, Maplewood, NJ, 1936. On display at Marlpit Hall.
- A small oil on canvas portrait of an elderly female wearing a black dress, white cap tied under her chin, and wire rim glasses, a probable gift of James H. Peters, Elberon, NJ, in 1937-1938.

Marlpit Hall accession records note the gift of “4 Portraits of Taylors” from Peters. A photograph taken on 14 April 1894 of Mary Holmes Taylor II in a second floor bedroom at Orchard Home shows the portrait hanging over the fireplace. Probably sold at the 1931 auction at Orchard Home. Peters was a Taylor descendant, and donor of other family related items.

- A highly important high chest made in Middletown, ca. 1750 – 1770, accession number 1995.528, gift of Mrs. J. Amory Haskell in 1938. This item can be viewed on eMuseum [here](#).
- A collection of seven nineteenth century social invitations addressed to Edward Taylor and Mary Holmes Taylor III, library accession numbers 5612 through 5618, archives collection number SA283, gift of Miss Louise Hartshorne, Middletown, NJ, on 8 July 1939. The events were held at the Globe Hotel in Red Bank, the Pleasant View House in Middletown, as well as at several private residences. Miss Louise Hartshorne was a close friend to Mary Holmes Taylor III and a beneficiary in her will. She may have acquired the invitations at the 1931 auction at Orchard Home.
- A forty piece child’s tea set of Chinese export porcelain made ca. 1825 for Mary Holmes Taylor II, decorated with delicate borders of grape clusters and grape leaves, monogrammed “MHT” in gold, accession number 3181, gift of Mrs. H. R. Riker in 1947.
- At the real estate closing on 16 June 1999, the executor of George W. Butler turned over to the Association a small but very important collection of papers and images pertaining to Orchard Home. The items included a photograph scrapbook created by the Kramers that contained images dating between 1941 and 1951, an Orchard Home Semi-Centennial booklet from 1903, a posed 1890 photograph taken in the Orchard Home dining room of Mary Holmes Taylor II, Mary Holmes Taylor III, and the Rev. Joseph F. Jowett from Christ Church sitting at a table with much of the family silver on display, twenty black and white snapshots and negatives of

the house from the 1950s and 1960s, clippings and miscellaneous papers about the house and Middletown in general dating from the 1960s to the 1990s, and title abstracts and searches on the property prepared in 1912 and 1940. The collection is identified as the Taylor-Butler Papers, library accession 1999.17, archives collection number 1246, gift of the Estate of George W. Butler, 16 June 1999.

- A child's puzzle of metamorphic caricatures made in Germany, ca. 1840 to 1860, contained in a wooden box inscribed "Edward Taylor / Orchard Home / Middletown / New Jersey," accession number 2001.16.3, a gift of J. T. Bruning, 1 December 2001. The donor was a Taylor family descendant.
- A manuscript recipe book of Mary Holmes Taylor II containing old style recipes mostly for baked goods and desserts, library accession account 2002.11, archives collection number SA270, gift of J. Robert Johnson, Navesink, NJ, 20 May 2002. Johnson's late wife Mary was a grand-daughter of Katherine Taylor Clark.
- A group of twenty-six books ranging in date from 1819 to 1903 that are variously inscribed to or by Joseph D. Taylor, his wife Mary Holmes Taylor II, and their children Edward Taylor and Mary Holmes Taylor III. Topics covered include fine literature, popular fiction, poetry, history, travel, and educational texts. Twenty-three of the books were donated by William C. Iler, Atlantic Highlands, NJ, on 10 January 2005, library accession record 2004.37. The collection is identified as the Taylor Family Collection, archives collection number 693.
- An embossed leather-bound cartes-de-visites photograph album containing twenty-nine identified images of the extended Taylor family, and nine unidentified images, ca. 1860 – 1870, gift of William C. Iler, Atlantic Highlands, NJ, on 10 January 2005, library accession record 2004.37. It is part of the Taylor Family Collection, archives collection number 693.

- A collection of historic Taylor family clothing consisting of fourteen nineteenth century items such as a Civil War era National Guard uniform complete with epaulets and a havelock, men's trousers and shirts, and a women's dress with other accessories, gift of J. Robert Johnson, Navesink, NJ, on 15 October 2008, and identified as museum accession number 2008.5.
- A collection of sixty original glass plate negatives taken by Edward Taylor and other members of the Middletown village camera club, library accession number 2012.02, gift of Ann Adams Royal and Mary Minturn Adams, 23 February 2012, and incorporated into the Hartshorne Family Papers, archives collection number 900. The images depict scenes around Middletown village, local landmarks, and Orchard Home, as well as individuals. These plates, acquired by Miss Louise Hartshorne, were accompanied by research files started by her and continued after her death in 1956 by her cousin Mary "Polly" Hartshorne Noonan. This work may have been started in 1923 by a committee chaired by Mary Holmes Taylor III that intended to publish a booklet on Middletown historical landmarks. Following the death of Polly Noonan in 1978, the plates and the files were retained by her daughter Ellen Noonan Adams. Ann Royal and Mary Adams were her daughters and executors. Additional cyanotype prints from Taylor negatives can be found in the Hartshorne Family Papers, and in the Gulick Family Papers, archives collection number 1240.
- An ornate four piece coin silver tea service consisting of a tea pot, coffee pot, sugar bowl, and cream pitcher, made by Gale & Hayden of New York, accompanied by the original purchase receipt from Gale & Hayden dated 2 May 1846, and also an English silver plated tray by James Dixon & Son of Sheffield. All five pieces are monogrammed "MHT" for Mary Holmes Taylor II, accession number 2013.14.1 - .5, gift of J. Robert Johnson, Navesink, NJ, 13 December 2013. The tea set appears in a photograph taken in the dining room of Orchard Home on 22

March 1888. Mary Holmes Taylor II and Mary Holmes Taylor III were entertaining the Rev. Joseph F. Jowett from Christ Church in a posed image taken by Edward Taylor. An array of family heirloom silver had been laid out on the dining table.

- A copy of Alexander Jackson Downing, *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening adapted to North America; with a view to the Improvement of County Residences . . . with Remarks on Rural Architecture*, Fourth Edition, (New York: George P. Putnam, 1852), inscribed on a front free end paper “Joseph D. Taylor / 1852” with pencil annotations on rear free end papers probably in the handwriting of his wife, Mary Holmes Taylor II, library accession number 13608, gift of Randall Gabrielan, Middletown, NJ, 17 September 2015.
- A curly maple high post bed, ca. 1800 – 1820, probably made in Middletown and purchased at the 1931 auction at Orchard Home by H. Gregory Gulick, a Taylor cousin, accession number 2017.2.17, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Henry G. Gulick, Little Silver, NJ, 13 January 2017. The bed appears in a photograph dated 28 July 1894 of a second floor bedroom at Orchard Home. This item can be viewed on eMuseum [here](#).
- As this manuscript was being finalized in September of 2018, a major collection of Taylor family papers and objects was donated to the Association by J. Robert Johnson of Navesink, NJ, in memory of his late wife Mary Clark Johnson. The majority of the materials was taken from Orchard Home in 1931 by Katherine Taylor Clark, his wife’s grandmother and principal beneficiary of the will of Mary Holmes Taylor III. Among the items included in this most generous gift were manuscripts of every type dating back to the mid-eighteenth century that pertain to Marlpit Hall, the Taylor farm and family, and Orchard Home; hundreds of photographs taken by Edward Taylor; additional photographs of the family dating from the mid-1850s on; a large silver pitcher given to Joseph Dorset Taylor in 1856 by his aunt Huldah

Taylor; and an extensive early genealogy of the Taylors compiled in 1861 by Asher Taylor. The papers have been assigned archives collection number 1277. They are presently being organized and should be ready for public access early in 2019. Numerous museum objects await cataloging.

The Meaning of It All

Orchard Home was intended from the start to be the showplace residence of Middletown village, a position it still occupies one hundred and sixty-five years later. With Marlpit Hall next door, the two historic landmarks tell the story of one important Monmouth County family over five generations. Intertwined with that narrative are the lives of those servants, the majority of whom were African-Americans, and tenant farmers who helped the Taylors maintain their lifestyle through the years. Since the 1930s, Orchard Home and Marlpit Hall have come to symbolize the historic preservation movement – one as an early restored house museum that had been moved in 1919 to preserve it, and the other as a sensitively maintained private residence of exceptional architectural integrity. Now reunited under the ownership of the Monmouth County Historical Association, the two structures continue to serve different purposes, and will for the foreseeable future. Agreements with the Garden State Green Acres Trust assure that the landscape and natural setting of Orchard Home will remain unchanged.

Taylor family possessions that were dispersed in 1931 have entered the museum, research library, and archives collections of the Association since its Freehold museum first opened to the public in the same year. That ingathering accelerated especially after Marlpit Hall started welcoming visitors in 1936, and again in the last twenty years since the acquisition of Orchard Home. Additional important materials remain today in the hands of Taylor descendants. The large number of surviving photographs taken in the late nineteenth century by Edward Taylor afford a

unique visual record of what life was like at Orchard Home in its heyday. And because of the family's social status, local newspapers covered their comings and goings and activities in considerable detail. That intersection of two landmarks, objects that they once contained, the papers of those who lived there, a plethora of historic images, and regular news coverage, all combine to tell a story highly unusual in its completeness. However, this essay represents just a check point in a narrative that will continue to evolve and expand over time and as yet more resources become available.

Joseph W. Hammond has engaged in the study of New Jersey history, material culture, and architecture for more than forty years. He served as Director of the Monmouth County Historical Association from 1978 to 1981. After an unrelated business career, Hammond returned to the Association in 2011 as a consulting archivist for the Hartshorne Family Papers project. In 2015, he rejoined the staff as Curator of Museum Collections, a position that was expanded to Director of Collections in 2016. Hammond holds a B. A. degree from Boston University, and an M. A. degree in History Museum Studies from the Cooperstown Graduate Program of the State University of New York, College at Oneonta.