

Benjamin C. Taylor

(December 14, 1871 – December 1, 1919)

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Born in Red Wing, raised in Minneapolis, Benjamin Chandler Taylor received his undergraduate and legal education at the University of Minnesota, taking his law degree in 1895. Admitted to the bar on June 7, 1895,¹ he moved to Mankato and formed a partnership with George M. Fletcher. The firm's business card was published in the local newspaper:²



In an arrangement unusual for that period, the firm had two branches, one in Minneapolis that Fletcher occupied, the other in Mankato, where Taylor practiced.³ It was perhaps for this reason that the firm dissolved four years later. From 1899 on, he maintained a sole practice. His business card, in the simple and direct style of the period, appeared for years in the local press:⁴



¹ *1 Roll of Attorneys: Supreme Court, State of Minnesota, 1858-1970 37* (State Law Library, 2011). At this time, graduates of the University Law Department were automatically admitted to the bar.

² *Mankato Daily Free Press*, July 23, 1898, at 4. The business cards of only three other lawyers were published in the newspaper at this time: B. D. Smith, W. L. Comstock and W. A. Funk.

³ The following notice appeared in 1896 in *Ariel*, a publication of the University of Minnesota Alumni Association:

Benjamin C. Taylor is a member of the firm of Fletcher & Taylor, lawyers, of Mankato, Minnesota. The firm has an office in Minneapolis of which Mr. Fletcher has charge, while Mr. Taylor has charge of the business in Mankato. His address is 430 South Front St., Mankato, Minn.

20 *Ariel* 10 (December 4, 1896).

⁴ *Mankato Daily Free Press*, October 19, 1904, at 7.

Seeking referrals from other lawyers, he placed a notice in *The Corporation Bulletin* that listed his areas of interest: "Practice in State and Federal Courts, Commercial, Corporate and Real Estate Law. Efficient Collection Department maintained."⁵ He also placed his card in the Alumni Legal Directory of the *Minnesota Alumni Weekly*.⁶



In 1907, a short entry containing the basic data of his life, appeared in Albert Marquis's *Book of Minnesotans*,⁷ and two years later, a lengthy portrait was published in a history of Blue Earth County written by fellow attorney Thomas Hughes:

TAYLOR, BENJAMIN.— In the ability and character of its native-born sons the state of Minnesota vies with all other commonwealths. As we glance over the names of young men who are coming to the front in the professions, in business enterprises and in agricultural affairs, we find many of them to be the sons of pioneers who made the family name an honored one in years gone by. Growing to manhood amid the scenes of birth and childhood, they have become familiar with the possibilities and opportunities afforded in this region and have been ready to grasp every chance for securing a foot-hold along

⁵ 8 *The Corporation Bulletin* 10 (1911).

⁶ 8 *The Minnesota Alumni Weekly* 104 (November 10, 1913).

⁷ Albert N. Marquis, ed., *The Book of Minnesotans: A Biographical Dictionary of Leading Men of the State of Minnesota* 505 (1907), listed his biographical data:

TAYLOR, Benjamin, lawyer; born at Minneapolis, Minn., Dec. 14, 1871; son of Benjamin and Hannah J. (Monaghan) Taylor: educated in grammar schools of Red Wing and Minneapolis; Minneapolis High School; University of Minnesota, graduating, degree of B.S., 1893; College of Law, same university, degree LL.B., 1895. Married at St. Paul, 1901, to Miss Lucy Pope. Began practice of law in Mankato as member of firm of Fletcher & Taylor, 1895; has been in practice alone since 1899. Trustee and attorney Mankato Savings Bank. Member Psi Upsilon, Phi Delta Phi, Phi Beta Kappa fraternities; B. P. O. E., Royal Arcanum. Club: Social Science (former president). Address: Mankato, Minn.

the line of their varied specialties. Such might be given as an epitome of the life of Benjamin Taylor, one of the rising young lawyers of Mankato and the son of an honored pioneer, now deceased, who formerly held a prominent place in the flouring interests of Minneapolis.

The identification of the family with the history of Minnesota dates from 1868, when Benjamin Taylor, Sr., a descendant of English ancestry and a native of Pennsylvania, sought a home in the midst of the undeveloped opportunities of the northwest. A miller by trade, he soon rose to a position of influence in the milling interests of Minneapolis, where as a member of the firm of Taylor Brothers he founded an industry that at a later date was owned by the Pillsbury interests. At the time of his death in 1887 he was sixty-two years of age. During early manhood he had married Hannah Monaghan, who was born in Pennsylvania and traced her lineage to English and Irish progenitors; her death occurred in 1906 at the age of seventy years.

Among the seven children comprising the family of Benjamin Taylor, Sr. the fifth in order of birth was given the name of the father and was born in the city of Minneapolis December 11, 1871. Primarily educated in the public schools of his native city the education there secured was supplemented by broader studies in large institutions of learning. From an early age it had been his desire to enter upon the practice of law and with that object in view he took a course of study in the law department of the University of Minnesota, from which he was graduated in 1895. During the same year he was admitted to practice in the courts of the state and immediately came to Mankato, where he formed a law partnership with George H. Fletcher, son of one of the most influential men of the city. Since the dissolution of this partnership in 1899 Mr. Taylor has engaged in practice alone, and now has his office in the Odd Fellows block. Both by native gifts and educational advantages he is equipped for the successful practice of his profession and already has won recognition as a skilled counselor and sagacious attorney. While building up a growing practice he has become identified with local politics as a stanch Republican and has served as chairman of the city committee of the party, besides taking a warm interest in the political affairs of the state and the larger

problems affecting the prosperity of the nation. Since coming to Mankato he has established domestic ties, his marriage June 12, 1901, uniting him with one of the popular young ladies of the city, Miss Lucy Pope, daughter of the late General E. M. Pope, who for years wielded a large influence in the Democratic political affairs of Minnesota and held official honors under one of the governors of the state.

To Mr. and Mrs. Taylor has been born one child, Virginia Pope Taylor, born February 17th, 1907.⁸

He was an active in the Republican Party, a member of several fraternal and social organizations in Mankato, the State Fair Association and Board of Governors of the Minnesota State Bar Association.⁹ This was a time when lawyers were expected to play a role in civic affairs by holding office, through election or appointment, and this he did by service as United States Commissioner and on the city library board. Over the years, he acquired a reputation for being an opinion maker and community leader.

His last and most detailed profile appeared in Henry Castle's *Minnesota: Its Story and Biography* in 1915. By this time, he and his wife had two more children (the youngest, a son, would die in 1917).

BENJAMIN TAYLOR. A successful lawyer and a fearless leader of public opinion in the city of Mankato, Benjamin Taylor has practiced his profession for the past twenty years. He is a native Minnesotan, and is an alumnus of the university.

Benjamin Taylor was born in Minneapolis, December 14, 1871, a son of Benjamin and Hannah J. (Monaghan) Taylor. His paternal grandfather was Lowndes Taylor, a native of Pennsylvania, but of English parents, and spent his life in Pennsylvania a farmer. He was in religion a member of that quiet sect of Quakers. The maternal grandfather as John J. Monaghan, who was also born in Pennsylvania, followed the trade of tanner, and his parents came from Ireland. Benjamin Taylor, Sr., was born in Pennsylvania in 1825 and died in 1887, while his wife was born in 1836 and died in 1906. After their marriage in Pennsylvania they moved out to

⁸ Thomas Hughes, *History of Blue Earth County and Biographies of Leading Citizens* 585-86 (1909).

⁹ Proceedings, Minnesota State Bar Association 4, (1916) (listing members of the Board of Governors). He represented the Sixth District.

the Northwest in 1867, locating in Minneapolis. Benjamin Taylor, Sr., was one of the pioneer millers of the great flour metropolis, and that was the business which occupied him all his active career. In the early days of the development of Minneapolis as a flour center he was associated in the industry with Charles A. Pillsbury. The senior Taylor and wife were the parents of seven children, all of them living, as follows: Frederick J., who is division engineer on the Northern Pacific Railway with headquarters at Livingston, Montana; George H., a resident of Hastings, Minnesota; Mary H., who is a Christian Science practitioner at Minneapolis; William J., a pastor of the Universalist Church at Oak Park, Chicago, Illinois; Benjamin, Jr.; Anna R., of Minneapolis; and Joseph E., who is with the United States Fidelity and Guaranty Company of Chicago. Mr. Taylor's father was a Universalist in religion and in politics a republican.

Benjamin Taylor attended public schools in his youth, was graduated Bachelor of Science from the University of Minnesota in 1893, and then continued in the law department until taking the degree LL. B. in 1895. His professional career has been passed in Mankato, where he began practice in 1895 associated with Mr. Fletcher of Minneapolis under the firm name of Fletcher & Taylor. Since this partnership was dissolved Mr. Taylor has practiced as an individual, and enjoys a large general clientage

In 1901 he married Lucy Pope of Mankato, daughter of Edmund M. Pope, who attained the rank of brigadier general in the Civil war, having entered the service as major of the Eighth New York Cavalry and remaining until the close of hostilities. Mr. and Mrs. Taylor are the parents of three children: Virginia Pope, Harlan Pope and Benjamin, Jr. The two older are now students in the Mankato Normal School. The family all attend the Presbyterian Church.

Mr. Taylor has been quite prominent in the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, having served as exalted ruler of Mankato Lodge No. 225 in 1910, as district deputy in 1911, and has attended grand lodges both at Portland, Oregon, and Atlantic City. He is also affiliated with the Royal Arcanum, with the Psi Upsilon and the Delta Tau Delta college fraternities.

A republican in politics, Mr. Taylor has been frequently heard in state and local campaigns, and is an effective worker for the party and for the general cause of good government. At the present time he is serving as United States commissioner at Mankato through appointment by the United States district judge. Every year he makes a few campaign speeches, and in 1914 was unsuccessful candidate for election as district judge. Mr. Taylor is one of the trustees of the Mankato Savings Bank.¹⁰

He died on December 1, 1919, two weeks shy of his forty-eighth year. The *Mankato Daily Free Press and Daily Review* carried the story on its front page:

**DEATH OF BENJAMIN
TAYLOR LAST NIGHT**

**Well-Known Attorney Is
Summoned**

PROMINENT IN AFFAIRS

**Splendid Citizen, Who Had Con-
tributed His Aid Toward
Upbuilding City**

After a lingering illness of over six years, during the latter two years of which he was confined to his bed, Benjamin Taylor, prominent and well known Mankato attorney died at his home, 808 South Second street, at nine o'clock last evening. Death came as a result of a general breakdown which during the past two years has steadily grown worse.

¹⁰ Henry A. Castle, 3 *Minnesota: Its Story and Biography* 1605-6 (1915). The next to last sentence is puzzling. There is no record that Taylor stood for election for judge of the Sixth Judicial District, which encompassed Blue Earth and Watonwan Counties, in November 1914. That year there were two candidates on the ballot: incumbent Albert R. Pfau and challenger Willard L. Comstock. The results were:

Willard L. Comstock.....4,401
Albert R. Pfau.....3,272

Mr. Taylor had been a resident of Mankato for the past twenty-four years and during that time had been one of the leading and influential citizens of the community. When he first came to Mankato in 1895 Mr. Taylor was associated in a law practice with George H. Fletcher. Later in 1899, he engaged in practice alone and had been actively engaged in his profession until obliged to give it up because of failing health.

Active in Community Affairs.

During his long practice of law Mr. Taylor was actively engaged in community affairs and used his influence always for the future and the upbuilding of Mankato. He was also interested in politics and took an active part in campaigns, acting for sometime as chairman of the republican city committeeman.



BENJAMIN TAYLOR.

Mr. Taylor was past exalted (sic) ruler of the Elks lodge in this city and also served as state district deputy for the order for a number of years. For many years he held the position as a member of the library board, he was an active member of the Social Science club and was a member of the Minnesota State Fair association. Mr. Taylor was an upright and honorable gentleman and had many friends who will regret his death.

Until his illness became so severe he was unable to attend the duties of the office. Mr. Taylor was United States federal court commissioner in this district. He also held the office of vice president of the Mankato Savings bank for a long period.

Native of Minneapolis.

Benjamin Taylor was born in Minneapolis on December 14, 1871, being forty-seven years of age at the time of his death. He was the son of Benjamin and Hannah M. Taylor. From 1874 until 1881 the family lived at Redwing (sic) and from 1881 until 1895, when he came to Mankato, Mr. Taylor resided at Minneapolis.

He received his early education from the grammar schools at Redwing (sic) and Minneapolis and later entered the law course of the Minnesota state university. He received his Bachelor of Sciences degree from this institution in 1893 and began the active practice of law shortly thereafter.

On June 12, 1902, Mr. Taylor was united in marriage with Miss Lucy Pope of this city, daughter of the late General E. M. Pope, former state public examiner. Two children, Virginia, aged twelve, and Harlan, aged eleven, are living. The youngest child, born in October, 1913, died in April, 1917.

Besides the widow and two children, three brothers and two sisters survive Mr. Taylor. The brothers are Joseph Taylor of Chicago, William J. Taylor of Wausau, Wis., and Fred J. Taylor of Livingston, Mont., and the sisters are Misses Anna and Mary Taylor, both of Minneapolis.¹¹

At the funeral services three days later, Taylor was eulogized for his commitment to doing "what was fair and just and right."

TRIBUTE TO THE DEAD

**REV. T. R. PADEN SPOKE
OF MR. TAYLOR**

**Eulogistic Words Delivered At
The Bier of the Departed
Attorney**

¹¹ *Mankato Daily Free Press and Daily Review*, December 2, 1919, at page 1 (funeral arrangements omitted).

At the bier of the late Benjamin Taylor, yesterday afternoon, Rev. T. R. Paden of the Presbyterian church eulogized the dead lawyer, paying a high tribute to his worth as a man and a citizen. Rev. Paden said:

"The outstanding thought in our minds today as we think of our departed brother is the thought of his integrity and kindly disposition. You were always sure of his being honest and true in every relationship of life. Whether in his law practice or his public service, in private business or in politics we were confident of what was fair and just and right.

"His firm unswerving loyalty to principle might have been mistaken for moral severity had it not been tempered by his rare gift of kindly humor. In conversation while deeply serious and grave his face would suddenly light up and the merriment in his eye would reveal his keen sense of the real humor in life. He was cheerful without levity. The merry twinkle of the eye was all the more memorable for breaking out of the deep gravity of his nature. Back of the smile was the deep seriousness that gave it a rich and tender significance.

"Mr. Taylor was a member of the church of the Redeemer in Minneapolis and supported while in health the Presbyterian church in this city. Since his illness he has been greatly blessed from our brotherhood as from other fraternal organizations where his presence always added greatly to good fellowship and kindly feeling.

"In every movement of civic betterment he represented and was a leader of the forces that make for righteousness. Fearlessly he took the side of the right regardless of whether for the time it was the winning side.

"Many a time the friends of good government have searched for such a leader, and have not been able to find one. Had life and health been spared he would have come to high honor in the state for long with integrity of character, and high ideals of duty and a trained intellect he had qualities of mind and heart and

disposition that were sure to win in the end. How greatly we need such men. " ¹²

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"Ira P. Shissler (1844-1903)" (MLHP, 2013).

¹² *Mankato Daily Free Press and Daily Review*, December 5, 1919, at 14 (paragraph of condolences to family omitted). A memorial by the Blue Earth County Bar Association has not been located.

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Posted MLHP: April 1, 2014.