

Taylor, Marble Nash ^[1]

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by Thomas C. Parramore, 1996

183?–1894

Marble Nash Taylor, preacher and Civil War ^[2] figure, is believed to have been born in Bedford County, Va. Said to have been orphaned as a child and reared by the Reverend Morgan Closs of Hillsborough ^[3], N.C., Taylor applied and was rejected for both Baptist and Methodist ministries in the late 1840s. Accepted by the North Carolina Methodist Conference in 1850, he received annual assignments in various eastern North Carolina localities prior to his appointment in late 1860 to the small church on Hatteras Island ^[4]. He married Catherine Munroe of Cumberland County ^[5] in 1857, and they had a daughter.

Taylor was the only clergyman on Hatteras at the time of the Union assault there in August 1861 and was reported in the state press to have given aid to the Federal landing parties that seized the island. He was the first islander to take the pledge of allegiance to the Union and was instrumental in fostering a cooperative attitude among fellow Hatteras residents towards the Federal forces.

In the early fall of 1861 Taylor entered into an alliance with Charles Henry Foster ^[6], a Maine native but lately of Murfreesboro ^[7], N.C., for the purpose of forming a Unionist government for that portion of North Carolina under Federal occupation. It was arranged that Taylor should exercise the powers of governor and that Foster would seek election as Second District congressman. The scheme was launched with a "convention" at Hatteras church on 12 October and the creation of a "provisional state government," which was evidently neither endorsed nor discouraged by Federal military officials. Following a brief "relief mission" to New York in November seeking aid for distressed islanders, Foster and Taylor returned to Hatteras and held a "constitutional convention" at which Taylor was formally named governor. As his first official act, Taylor drafted ordinances calling for a late November congressional election for Hatteras and adjacent Union-occupied portions of the Outer Banks. In the balloting on 28 November, candidate Foster, running unopposed, garnered a few score votes and hurried away to Washington to claim his seat in the Thirty-seventh Congress.

Despite a sympathetic Northern press, the Hatteras scheme made no headway in Washington. Foster's credentials were hooted off the floor of the Elections Committee. Further elections on the Outer Banks in January and February 1862 failed to add credence to the enterprise, and Taylor seems to have taken no further part in Foster's political machinations. In March a Boston journalist found Taylor living unpretentiously on Hatteras Island, "a well-meaning" man who would be "one of the last to lay claim to that which he did not believe himself entitled to." A few weeks later the Lincoln administration named Edward Stanly ^[8] military governor of North Carolina. Taylor appears to have remained at Hatteras in the role of minister until the war's end.

The Reconstruction regime appointed Taylor "keeper of the poor house" at Fayetteville ^[9]. Evidently he stayed in that town for about fifteen years, "respected as a man of earnest and strong convictions, honest and well-meaning, though misguided as to politics in the opinion of most." Around 1880 he is said to have turned up in western Moore County ^[10] peddling fruit trees and living in a shack made of scraps from a sawmill. Long after his death there he was remembered locally as "a dour, taciturn" man who read much, talked little, and was addressed as "governor" to the end.

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Additional Resources:

Methodist Episcopal Church. North Carolina Conference, and Pell, William E.. "Minutes of the December 1861 Methodist Conference expelling Reverend Marble Nash Taylor." North Carolina Digital Collections.

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Subjects:

Civil War (1861-1865) ^[15]

Biographies ^[16]

Religious Leaders and Clergy ^[17]

Authors:

Parramore, Thomas C. ^[18]

Origin - location:

Cumberland County ^[19]

Fayetteville ^[20]

Murfreesboro ^[21]

Moore County ^[22]

Hillsborough ^[23]

From:

Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press. ^[24]

1 January 1996 | Parramore, Thomas C.

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