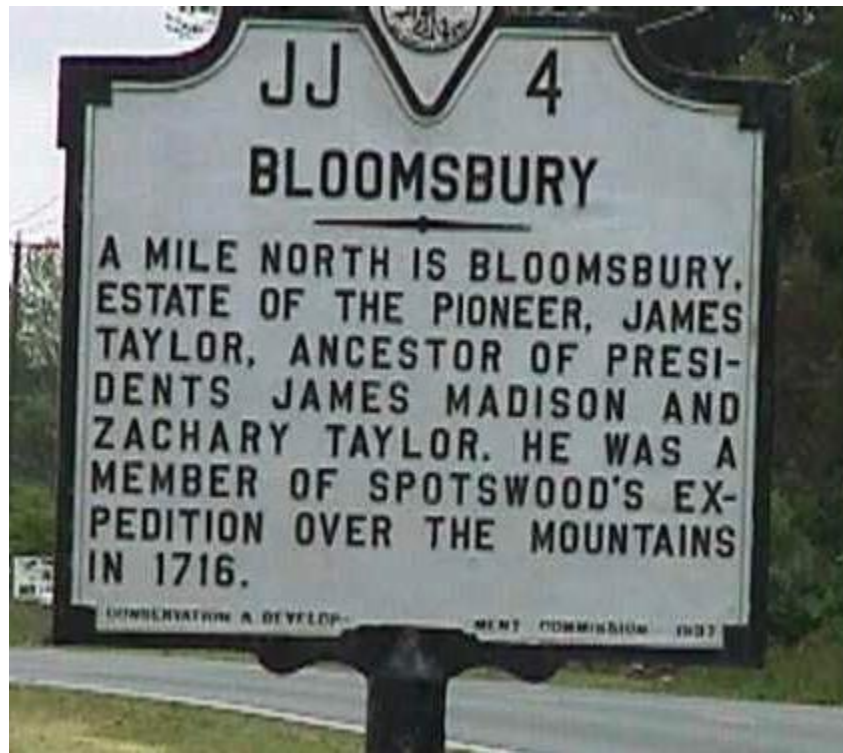


Bloomsbury--The Oldest Home in Orange County



A Pioneer's Place¹

“Bloomsbury, a privately owned farm, and the oldest extant home in Orange County, lies about two miles east of the Town of Orange.² The focal point of the 377 acre tract is the colonial frame farmhouse, built in 1722 by Col. James Taylor II and his wife Martha.

Taylor was one of 63 men chosen to accompany Lieutenant Governor Alexander Spotswood in 1716 for the Tramontane Expedition, to explore the headwaters of Virginia's rivers, claim land for the Crown, name and chart geographical sites and observe Indian tribes.

Spotswood dubbed his men ‘Knights of the Golden Horseshoe,’ and at the end of their travels, presented them with certificates and horseshoe-shaped watch chain emblems of gold and diamonds.

Trained at William and Mary, James was one of two surveyors for Spotsylvania County. In locating the county lines for Spotsylvania, Caroline and Orange counties, Taylor was able to

¹ James, Sandy. “A pioneer's place: Marker JJ-4, Bloomsbury.” *Orange County Review*, July 23, 2015, A3.

² Bloomsbury lies north of the soccer fields on private land and is inaccessible to the public.

acquire a baronial estate of approximately one-third of Orange County, called the 'Taylor District.'

The patent Taylor obtained from King George I contained 8,500 acres (including most of what is now the Town of Orange.)

Taylor and his wife built the 1722 house on the western frontier of Virginia slightly east of Orange.

The Taylors raised their children at Bloomsbury, and were great-grandparents of two U.S. Presidents: James Madison, 'Father of the Constitution,' and Zachary Taylor, hero of Palo Alto, Monterey and Buena Vista in the Mexican War.

James and Martha were also great-great grandparents of Sarah Knox Taylor, first wife of the President of the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis.

Ann L. Millier, author of *Antebellum Orange*, wrote that Bloomsbury remained in the Taylor family until 1791 when it was sold to Elias Langham of Fluvanna County.

As of 2015, the Bloomsbury house still exists in prime restored order, furnished with period antiques, and privately owned by Helen Marie Taylor, a descendant of Col. Taylor.

Meadowfarm, located on that land at the southeastern edge of the town, also continues in the ownership of direct descendants of Taylor.

Bloomsbury was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1992.

Marker JJ-4 is located in front of the Orange County Airport, 2.5 miles east of Orange, on the left when traveling east. The farm is private and there is no pull-off near the sign.

Marker JJ-4 reads, 'A mile north is Bloomsbury, estate of the pioneer, James Taylor, ancestor of Presidents James Madison and Zachary Taylor. He was a member of Spotswood's expedition over the mountains in 1716.'

The bottom of the marker reads, 'Conservation and Development Commission 1937.' For more information on Bloomsbury see Miller's book *Antebellum Orange*, available at the Orange County Library."³

³ *Antebellum Orange* by Ann L. Miller is also available at the Orange County Historical Society.