

# Wilbur Nelson Taylor

## **Born**

December 2, 1846, Hampden, Maine

## **Entered Service**

Boston, Massachusetts

## **Branch**

Army

## **Conflict**

**Indian campaigns**

## **Died**

November 20, 1903, Minneapolis, Minnesota



## **Early Years**

Wilbur Nelson Taylor, son of Thomas and Lydia (Knowles) Taylor, was born near Hampden, Maine, on December 2, 1846. He was the youngest son in a family of four boys and four girls.<sup>1</sup> His life in Maine centered around Neally's Corner, now a small crossroads but in the mid-1800s, the center of an agricultural community in the western part of Hampden.<sup>2</sup>

Much of this biography was drawn from a 1966 family history written by Wilbur Nelson Taylor's son, Harold. Consistent with Harold's statement that everyone called his father Nelson, that is how this biography will refer to him.<sup>3</sup>

During Nelson's teen years (ages 14-18), several of his relatives served in the Civil War: 1) On June 6, 1864 Rodney J. Taylor died of wounds received in the Battle of the Wilderness; 2) John W. Knowles died in Franklin, Louisiana, on April 28, 1863; and 3) Nelson's brother Albert served in the 17th Regiment of the U.S. Infantry and later in the 7th.<sup>4</sup>

Nelson worked on the family farm until after his father's death in 1865.<sup>5</sup> Likely seeking adventure, he left Maine in 1866 and moved to Boston.<sup>6</sup>

## **Indian Campaigns**

Soon after arriving in Boston, Nelson enlisted in the Army and was assigned to the 8th U.S. Cavalry. "He was sent to Arizona via ship to the Isthmus of Panama crossing this by land, then by ship to California, and by horseback to Arizona."<sup>7</sup>

Nelson was likely among the first soldiers assigned to the 8<sup>th</sup> U.S. Cavalry. According to its history, the 8<sup>th</sup> Cavalry was organized on 21 September 1866 at Angel Island, California, following Congressional action to restore and maintain peace on the western frontier. The "Indian Wars" resulted from the clash between the hordes of settlers moving west and the Indians trying to preserve their ancestral lands and way of life.

Only military means - specifically the cavalry - was perceived as an effective force against the Plains Indians and recalcitrant outlaws.<sup>8</sup>

“By December 1866, the Regiment Headquarters was moved from Angel Island to Camp Whipple, Arizona. It remained there for one year until moving to temporary locations at Churchill Barracks, Nevada, during December 1867 and January 1868. It left (for) temporary quarters at Camp Halleck, Nevada, in May 1868 and stayed there until 5 May 1870.

...This (Arizona) service was especially difficult for it involved covering vast distances with little support. It was also dangerous. The Indians were fierce fighters and were experts in conducting ambushes. The Troopers of the Eighth met every challenge.”<sup>9</sup>

Corporal Wilbur Nelson Taylor was one of eight members of the 8<sup>th</sup> U.S. Cavalry (five from Company K and three from Company E) to be cited for “Bravery in scouts and actions against Indians” during the Arizona Indian Campaigns in 1868 and 1869. The Medals of Honor (MOH) were presented to the men on September 6, 1869. The seven other members of his regiment receiving Medals of Honor included Francis C. Green, Jacob Gunther, David A. Matthews, James McNally, James Moriarity, Samuel Richman and Otto Smith.<sup>10</sup>

Although we have been unable to find an official record describing Nelson’s actions, his son Harold G. Taylor provided the following account in his family history:

“...As a boy I remember my father telling about being in charge of a detachment of soldiers who were escorting a high Washington, D.C. official between two Arizona Army Posts during a tour of inspection. While the group was passing through a canyon, Indians hidden behind rocks high on the side of the canyon began firing on the soldiers and the man they were escorting. Father spurred his horse up the side of the canyon, in the face of the fire, and killed the Indians. Whether it was this exploit which earned the Medal, I do not know.”<sup>11</sup>

Nelson served with Company K, 8<sup>th</sup> U.S. Cavalry, for his entire five-year enlistment and achieved the rank of First Sergeant. Despite the encouragement of his captain to stay with the Army, Nelson opted not to re-enlist and completed his Army service in 1871.<sup>12</sup>

### **Post-Military Life**

Nelson returned to Boston where he met a man named Monroe, whom he much admired and through whose influence he learned the paper-hanger trade.<sup>13</sup>

During this period Nelson met his future wife, Araminta H. Seavey, while taking meals at the Boston boarding house where both resided. Araminta had grown up in York Harbor, Maine.<sup>14</sup> She, too, had deep roots in Maine, including a Revolutionary Patriot in her ancestry. (In 1938 their son Harold submitted an application for membership in the Sons of the American Revolution based on his mother’s Seavey line to Patriot Palatiah Perkins.)<sup>15</sup>

Araminta was employed as a typesetter on *The Boston Transcript* newspaper. The job required significant skills, and the pay was relatively high for a woman’s job during that period.<sup>16</sup>

In about 1876 Nelson moved from Boston to Minneapolis. Nelson and Araminta were engaged to be married, but agreed he would go west and get established first. Nelson worked busily through spring, summer and fall as a paper-hanger. In the winter, he worked in Minnesota’s woods as a “lumber jack.” By keeping busy year-round and carefully saving his money, he was able in a few years to acquire enough to go into business for himself. He opened a store with a stock of wallpaper and employed several men to work for him. He purchased a home on 19<sup>th</sup> Street and Clinton Ave in Minneapolis.<sup>17</sup>

Nelson and Araminta (“Minta” in the Cook County, Illinois, marriage index) were married in Chicago on April 28, 1883.<sup>18</sup> Nelson brought his bride back to Minneapolis, to the home he’d bought and furnished before her arrival. There two sons were born to them, Harold on November 1, 1884, and in 1887, Monroe,

named after Nelson's friend in Boston. After the Taylor family moved to larger quarters at 2628 5<sup>th</sup> Ave, a third son, Paul, was born in 1889.<sup>19</sup>

Nelson operated his business under the name W. N. Taylor & Company. Despite the ups and downs of the economy, Nelson's business thrived. According to Harold's family history, his father

“built up a high-grade clientele who respected him for the good advice he gave in the selections of wallpaper and paint, and the high standard of his workmanship. Although originally a paper hanger, after he opened his own business he did no actual paperhanging himself. He employed paper hangers who could do the kind of high grade work he insisted on.”<sup>20</sup>

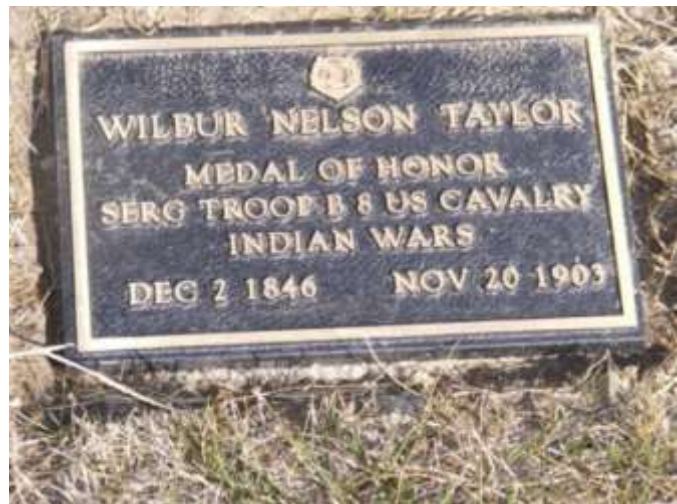
Harold remembered his father as a cheerful, happy man who loved to fish. Nelson had a reputation as an excellent poker player, having learned the game during his five years in the Army.<sup>21</sup>

At age 56 Nelson was diagnosed with an aneurysm in an artery near the heart, a condition that was inoperable in those days. He was confined to his bed for nine months before his death on November 20, 1903. Harold's family history indicates his father's investments enabled his mother “to live comfortably in the old home until her death in 1930 at the age of eighty.”<sup>22</sup>

### Gravestone

Nelson and Ariminta Taylor are buried at Lakewood Cemetery in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

**Submitted by Georgetta “Gigi” Hickey  
Lake Minnetonka Chapter DAR**



**Find-a-Grave photographs by Don Morfe**

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> 1850 and 1860 U.S. Federal Census, Family of Thomas Taylor, Hampden, Penobscot, Maine. Ancestry.com (database online).

<sup>2</sup> Information provided by Dave Flewelling of the Penobscot County Genealogical Society (PCGS) in an email message dated 5Jun2016.

<sup>3</sup> Harold G. Taylor, "The Taylor Family," memoirs and family history written by Wilbur Nelson Taylor's son in 1966 and provided to this DAR member by his descendants.

<sup>4</sup> Flewelling, PCGS, 5Jun2016.

<sup>5</sup> Maine Wills and Probate Records, Thomas Taylor, 1584-1999. Ancestry.com (database online).

<sup>6</sup> Taylor, "The Taylor Family."

<sup>7</sup> Taylor, "The Taylor Family."

<sup>8</sup> "Honor and Courage: Organizational History 3<sup>rd</sup> Squadron 8<sup>th</sup> U.S. Cavalry," accessed online at <http://www.3ad.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/3-8-Cav-History.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> "Honor and Courage," page 14.

<sup>10</sup> Senate Documents, 66<sup>th</sup> Congress, May 19-November 19, 1919, 1st Session, page 443, e-book accessed online at books.google.com.

<sup>11</sup> Taylor, "The Taylor Family."

<sup>12</sup> Taylor, "The Taylor Family."

<sup>13</sup> Taylor, "The Taylor Family."

<sup>14</sup> Taylor, "The Taylor Family."

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Sons of the American Revolution Membership Application, 1889-1970, #56588. Ancestry.com (database online).

<sup>16</sup> Taylor, "The Taylor Family."

<sup>17</sup> Taylor, "The Taylor Family."

<sup>18</sup> Cook County, Illinois, Marriages Index, 1871-1920. Ancestry.com (database online).

<sup>19</sup> Taylor, "The Taylor Family."

<sup>20</sup> Taylor, "The Taylor Family."

<sup>21</sup> Taylor, "The Taylor Family."

<sup>22</sup> Taylor, "The Taylor Family."