

## A TRIBUTE TO THOMAS LANE TAYLOR

Thomas Lane Taylor was a history maker who left a legacy in area communities of a man "who will protect, preserve and promote our heritage." A pioneer and a family man, he summoned bravery and courage to forge a political foundation for African-Americans during Reconstruction, when he was elected and served honorably as the first black, Fort Bend County Commissioner for Precinct 2, from 1878-1882.

A lifelong resident of the region, he established roots as an agriculturist and cattle raiser, prospering and purchasing a homestead in Boone's Bend in Wharton County. In 2015, his grandsons, Chancy and Tom Taylor, still reside on their beloved grandfather's land.

Commissioner Taylor's public service is extraordinary as he became an elected official during a tumultuous time following the Civil War. In Fort Bend County, the period was marked by conflicts such as the Jaybird-Woodpecker War in which two Democratic Party blocs vied for control. A heated debate during the struggle was whether African-Americans, such as Mr. Taylor, ought to have an opportunity to participate in politics. The ensuing divide raged for more than six decades.

Reflecting on the era, one of Mr. Taylor's descendants noted: "In the [Jaybird-Woodpecker War], they at least were honest enough to acknowledge that some black men were run out of town, while others resisted. My fifth great-grandfather on my father's side, Tom Taylor, was one of the local black [landowners] who resisted 'eviction' from Fort Bend County." However, under great duress, Commissioner Taylor eventually moved his family to Wharton County.

In testament to Taylor's triumphs, the Wharton County Historical Commission celebrated him and his family in 1986, Texas's sesquicentennial year. Mr. Taylor and his family "have lived in and around the community of Hungerford for 100 years or more, and have contributed to the development of this said community. It is hoped that this family will continue to reside in this area, as their presence influences and enriches the history of the community."

At an inaugural Black History Month Celebration in February, 2015, the City of Missouri City saluted Taylor's successes by renaming a portion of Lexington Boulevard to "Thomas Taylor Parkway". The four-lane roadway winds in front of City Hall and intersects with Texas Parkway, a major thoroughfare. City officials were joined at the renaming ceremony by more than 40 of Mr. Taylor's relatives who were elated to witness another tribute to their loved one.

"On behalf of the Taylor family, we are honored to have been in, and around, this County for more than 125 years," said Sgt. Eurel Taylor, a great-grandson of Commissioner Taylor, who serves with the Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office. "This means a lot to our family to see our heritage continued within this County, and the contributions that we played a role in, and seeing that everyone received the equal rights that they deserved within Fort Bend County."