



# The Unknown Clerk of the Senate of Canada

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By Sue Weller

*Consequiter Quodcunque Petit*

*Inscription on the Taylor Coat of Arms.*

John Fennings Taylor the Elder (1801-1876) was my great-great-great grandfather on my maternal side. He was the first clerk of the Senate when Upper and Lower Canada became Canada. He retired in 1871 after almost 50 years of serving the government in his many capacities. He was presented with a silver tray that is inscribed and is now in the hands of my mother. The following is a copy of the inscription:

*Consequiter Quodcunque Petit*

*John Fennings Taylor Esquire*

*Clerk of the Senate*

*of Canada*

*A parting remembrance from the*

*officers, clerks and messengers*

*of the Senate*

*on his retirement from office.*

*After a Public Service of nearly 50 yrs.*

*Ottawa 1 February 1871*

John had a brother George who named his son after his brother and he was known as John Fennings Taylor the Younger (1817-1882). He later became known as Fennings Taylor. The two men's lives were very similar and often people get them confused so I'll just give a brief history of the younger to save confusion. Fennings was born in England 14 March 1817 and died at Old Point Comfort, Virginia, USA, 4 May 1882. He came to Canada in 1836, and was a clerk in the Legislative Council of Upper Canada, a lawyer, a Lieutenant Colonel in the Militia, and used this title where his uncle did not. He was also the author of many books. He first married Mary Elizabeth Denison, daughter of Colonel George Taylor Denison 1 and his first wife Esther Borden Lippincott, 5 Dec 1838. They had four children. He secondly married Georgina Rosalie Nanton, daughter of John George Nanton and Rosalie Labord, on 8 September 1858 at St. Paul's Church of England, Toronto. He almost duplicated the pattern of his uncle's life to the 'T'. He eventually became an assistant clerk in the Senate under his uncle. The major difference were his books of which I'll name only a few: *Are Legislatures Parliaments? The Last Three Bishops Appointed by the Crown for the Anglican Church; and Portraits of British Americans - Biographical Sketches by Fennings Taylor*. Now that the difference has been shown I hope no one will be confused when they are reading articles about the family in the future.

### **The Early History: The Denison's**

Captain John Denison, born 20 November 1755 in Hedon, Yorkshire, England, died at Weston Upper Canada 28 October 1824, son of George and Mary (Parkinson) Denison. John married 16-year-old Sophia Taylor by licence, with her father's consent, 16 December 1782 at St. Nicholas Parish in Harwich England. Sophia, born in Harwich, 13 October 1765, died in Quebec, Lower Canada, 26 November 1852. They had six children, three of which were born in Upper Canada.

After their marriage they resided for a while at Alton Hall Mill before finally leaving from Hull, England, 11 July 1792 to arrive in Kingston, Upper Canada where they stayed until 1796, when they made their final move to York County. They left England on the advice of Elizabeth Russell, a very good friend of Sophia's, whose brother had already left for Canada. When they left England, they never dreamed they would never see it again.

Sophia had a brother George born c1762, in England, died in Upper Canada c1812, buried at St. John's, Weston. George married on 23 Apr 1786 to a Catherine Fennings, c1767, daughter of Captain Fennings of the Royal Navy (privateersman). They were married by licence by John King at St. Nicholas, Harwich, England. They had at least six children from what I can discover, but only three concern me - Maria, George, and John.

Maria, born 9 August 1794, married the eldest son of John and Sophia Denison, Colonel George Taylor Denison. She became his second wife in London on 1 September 1827, and on returning with him to York, bore him a son, Frederick George, 6 September 1828 - 26 September 1828. Maria died at Old Bellevue 2 February 1831. They are all buried at St. John's on the Humber, Weston.

George (Maria's brother) c1792, married Harriet Jarman and it was their son who became known as Fennings Taylor. I don't know anything further on the parents and if someone has more information I'd be interested. John Fennings Taylor the Elder, born 26 January 1801 in Dovercourt England, married the only surviving daughter of John and Sophia Denison, Elizabeth Sophia Denison (Betsy). They were married 25 June 1828 at Brookfield House, York County, Upper Canada. John and Betsy are both buried at St. John's, Weston. The Denison's went on to become prominent landowners and leaders in the political community of York County later to become Toronto.

## **Descendants of Captain John Denison (1) and his wife Sophia Taylor**

**1.1 Colonel George Taylor** the 1st of Bellevue, born in Dovercourt England, 29 December 1783 died at Old Bellevue York County, Upper Canada, 18 December 1853. He was married four times and had 14 children. His second marriage was to his cousin Marie, listed earlier. He is buried at St. John's, Weston.

**1.2 Captain Thomas John Denison** the 1st of Weston Branch, born at Dovercourt England, 1 Nov 1786, died at York County, Upper Canada, 23 August 1846. He married Maria Pillion Lawrence, 4 March 1817 at St. James Cathedral, Upper Canada. Maria born 26 August 1794 at Saint John New Brunswick, died at Toronto 31 October 1880. They had eight children from this union and they are buried at St. John's.

**1.3 Charles Denison** the 1st, born in Dovercourt England, c1789 died at York County, Upper Canada, 15 August 1828. He had no issue and was buried at St. John's, Weston.

**1.4 John Denison**, the first Denison to be born in Upper Canada c1796, died without issue 5 January 1826. Interred at St. John's.

**1.5 Elizabeth Denison**, born at Weston Upper Canada, 2 November 1800 - 14 October 1801. It was because of her that John started the family cemetery of St. John's on the Humber, Weston.

**1.6 Elizabeth Sophia Denison** (Betsy), born at Weston 24 September 1803 and died at Rolyat House Ottawa, 14 January 1892. Married her first cousin John Fennings Taylor the Elder. They had ten children and started the Denison-Taylor the Elder Branch. Betsy's will is no. 2046 of Carleton County. They are buried at St. John's, Weston.

## **Interesting sidelights on the family**

There are many roadways in the Toronto and Weston areas named after the Denison-Taylor's and their friends. These are a number of those roadways: Augusta Avenue; Bellevue Avenue, Bellvue Street; Borden Street; Brookfield Street; Denison; Denison Ave.; Denison Square; Dewson; Esther Street; Fennings Street; Lawrence Avenue; Lippincott Street; Lippincott; Ossington; Robert Place; Robert Street; St. John's, Rolyat Street and Rusholme Street. Here are some of the names for the branches in the family: Bellevue; Brockton; Deacon-Denison; De La Hooke; Denison-Taylor the Elder; Denison-Taylor the Younger; Dovercourt; Hepburne-Taylor; Mooryart~Denison, Rusholme; and Weston. There have also been a number of well known homes through the years. These are the Denison-Taylor homes: Bellevue; Dovercourt; Brookfield; Rusholme; and Rolyat.

John Fennings Taylor the Elder lived in two of the preceding homes. First he lived in Brookfield House in York County, Upper Canada, and the second was Rolyat House in Ottawa, Ontario. Brookfield House stood on the NE corner of what is now Queen Street and Ossington Avenue. It was the South part of Lot 25, in the Twp. of York County, Upper Canada, with 4A attached. It was owned by Captain John Denison and given to his daughter Elizabeth upon his death. Through an error in his will the house and land went no further than Elizabeth, and after her death reverted back to her brother Colonel George and his family. It was described as having large trees and beautiful gardens. I have yet to see a picture or drawing of this house. If anyone has seen one or has one I'd be very grateful to see it. Rolyat House stands at 158 Stewart Street, Ottawa, Ontario, at the corner of Nelson and Stewart Streets. Rolyat is the family name spelled backwards. The Taylor's lived here most of their years in Ottawa. It was in their possession till 1933 when Maria died, then it was sold and eventually made into two apartments. The house still stands to this day.

## **The Taylor's**

John Fennings Taylor the Elder was born in Dovercourt, England 26 January 1801, son of George and Catherine (Fennings) Taylor. He arrived in Upper Canada on Valentine's Day 1821, and by 1822 he was a clerk in the Legislative Council of Upper Canada. Between 1822-1828, John traveled between Lower and Upper Canada as a clerk and a Commissioner for taking affidavits. He did, however, make at least one trip back to England, that we know of because of his historic love letter to his future bride Betsy. (Text of letter is included, courtesy of R. L. Denison's books). Elizabeth Sophia Denison and John Fennings Taylor became one at Brookfield House, York County, Upper Canada on 25 June 1828, and had ten children who are listed later.

John received many appointments over the next 40 odd years, and this caused the Taylor's to live in both Lower and Upper Canada, although his duties were all in the Districts of Upper Canada. Sir John Colborne appointed John a Public Notary for the Province of Upper Canada, 30 December 1834. During this time John was

still a clerk for Lower Canada and a commissioner for Customs for York County. Sir John Colborne next appoints John as a Clerk for the Several Committees of Assize, Nisi Prius, Oyer and Terminer and General Gaol Delivery for the Districts of Bathurst, Eastern, Johnstown and Midland in Upper Canada. In 1835 he was given admission to the Bar as an Attorney for King's Bench for the first Michaelmas commencing, and received his certificate 7 August 1837. Francis Bondhead reappoints John as a Clerk for the Special Committees, but this time for the Districts of Niagara, Newcastle and Prince Edward, 20 August 1836. On 2 February 1838 John is appointed as a Senior Justice of the Peace for the Home District. Francis Bondhead reappoints John again, this time to the Committees of Oyer and Terminer, and Gaol Delivery for London District, 22 March 1838. Sir Arthur George reappoints him to the Special Committees, of Oyer and Terminer in the Niagara District July 1838. He is fast becoming an important and very busy man.

The next few years got even busier as he was appointed Assistant Clerk for Lower Canada by Governor Sydenham, 14 June 1841 and on 31 October 1843, Metcalfe appoints him Master in Chancery. Lord Elgin reappoints John as Assistant Clerk 30 June 1850 and in 1853 gives him a commendation in the Militia to Lieutenant Colonel, although he never uses the title that I know of. In 1865, John is finally made Clerk of Lower Canada as well as Master in Chancery.

The time is now 1 July 1867 and we have finally become a country. Sir John A. MacDonald commissions John Fennings Taylor as of 2 November 1867 to be Clerk of the Senate for Canada, and on the 5 November 1867 he and two assistants, Robert Lemoine and his nephew John Fennings Taylor the Younger are given the authorization to administer the Oaths of Office to the Senators. During the years 1868-1871 John was Clerk, Cashier, Master in Chancery and Accountant. John retired 1 February 1871 and died at Rolyat House 18 December 1876, buried at St. John's on the Humber, Weston, Ontario.

### **Chronological outline of the life of John Fennings Taylor the Elder**

26 Jan 1801 Born in Dovercourt, England

14 Feb 1821 Arrives in York County, Upper Canada

1822 Becomes a Clerk with the Legislative Council of Upper Canada

17 Nov 1827 Appointed to committee for taking Affidavits

25 June 1828 Marries Betsy at Brookfield House, York County, Upper Canada

1831 Reappointed to committee for taking Affidavits

30 Dec 1834 Appointed Public Notary for the Province of Upper Canada by Sir John Colborne

1834 Still a Clerk with the Legislative Council of Upper Canada plus being in the committee of Customs for York County

15 July 1835 Appointed Clerk of several committees of Assize, Nisi Prius, Oyer and Terminer, and General Gaol Delivery for the Districts of Bathurst, Eastern, Johnstown and Midland in the Province of Upper Canada, appointed by Sir John Colborne

1835 Date of admission to the Bar as an Attorney for King's Bench, Upper Canada

20 Aug 1836 Reappointed Clerk to several committees as in 1835 but for the Districts of Niagara, Newcastle, and Prince Edward of Upper Canada, appointed by Francis Bondhead

7 Aug 1837 Received certificate to practice law on King's Bench, Upper Canada

2 Feb 1838 Appointed Senior Justice of the Peace for the Home District

22 Mar 1838 Appointed Clerk of the committee of Oyer & Terminer and Gaol Delivery for the District of London by Francis Bondhead

1 July 1838 Appointed Clerk of Special committee of Oyer & Terminer for Niagara District by Sir George Arthur

1839 Chief Clerk in the office of Legislative Council of Upper Canada

14 June 1841 Assistant Clerk of Legislative Council of Upper Canada, appointed by Governor Sydenham

31 Oct 1843 Master in Chancery, appointed by Metcalfe

30 June 1850 Reappointed Assistant Clerk in Legislative Council of Upper Canada by Lord Elgin

1853 Given the commendation of Lieutenant Colonel of the Militia by Lord Elgin

1865 Clerk of the Legislative Council and Master in Chancery

2 Nov 1867 Appointed Clerk of the Senate by Sir John A MacDonald

5 Nov 1867 Authorized by Sir John A MacDonald to administer the Oaths of Office to the Senators

1 Feb 1871 Retired as Clerk of the Senate

18 Dec 1876 Died at Rolyat House, Ottawa, interred at St. John's on the Humber, Weston

## LETTER TO ELIZABETH SOPHIA DENISON

Quebec, 9th October, 1825

My Dear and ever dearest Betsy,

It gives me much happiness after a very long separation to write you again from the quarter of the Globe in which I hope and trust I shall now end my days. Anxiety, my dear, is the most poignant sensation of any other, and God knows I have felt it to my heart's content ever since I left you, but by the Divine Will I thank the author for my being, that I have been preserved thus far, after a long and tedious voyage, and of sickness, and shall, I hope, meet you ere long in perfect health.

You no doubt have been expecting my arrival for a long time past - as when I parted with you - and also when I last wrote, I had every prospect before me of seeing you in August last, but from the long sickness with which I was visited, prevented me, but I trust nevertheless that my being thus far upon the road to you will sufficiently prove that my sincerity is not to be doubted, and that my attachment for you, is as I have always professed it to be. Oh my *dear, dear Betsy*, I don't know how to repay you for your kind and affectionate letter which came to hand as a healing draft after a sickness of two months. I never read anything in my life with such joy - nor did I ever in my life read anything so often. The more I dwelt upon its contents and the affection that it breathed from the beginning to end, the more happy in mind I became; but there was, notwithstanding, a degree of pain mingled with it. Because of our being at so great a distance from each, I was fearful you would think from my long absence from you, that I was totally undeserving of your esteem, and which I cannot prove to you is the same as when I took the parting kiss - until I again see you

I dread to reveal to you the very heavy disappointment that I have met with since writing you last; but, my *lovely girl*, do not for a moment suppose I knew of it at the time. I allude to my business transactions with my brother's house. I omitted writing to you until I had seen George (who was out of town when I arrived in London) lest I should be too sanguine in what I should write; and as soon as I saw him, I mentioned the subject of my visit, to him and his partners, and reminded them of their letter to me, who seemed much pleased with the idea of doing business, and obtained a list from me of all the articles I wanted to take out, got me samples of different goods to show me, requested me to engage a vessel, which I did, and ever kept me in painful suspense for two months, when, to my great astonishment, and mortification, they told me that they had been weighing matters, and after mature consideration, they would wish for the present to decline doing business with me, as they did not like speculations so far out of their usual course of business, but at a future day they should be very happy in embracing my offer. This, you may be sure, was like a thunder clap upon me, and my letter to you was foremost in my mind. But when I meet you, I will explain their base conduct more fully.

My grandfather is still living, and my brother and brother-in-law have been fleecing him completely. My brother-in-law has all his affairs in his own hands; and in place of there being something like £2000 in one stock when I left, there is now only about £300 or £400 - and still he has been paying up the interest of the first sum regularly, and impoverishing the principle.

God knows what I shall do when I return, or how I shall bear to see you, after deceiving you so grossly in my expectations.

I have brought you a few presents, and have not forgotten the knives forks, and spoons; neither did I forget the ring. I have brought your Mama a pair of spectacles, prayer book, rosemary and lavender, and, not forgetting the locket.

This has been written in great haste to save the post, which please excuse. I take the boat tonight - therefore, my *dear girl*, adieu till I see you in York, when I hope you will grant me an interview at Miss Caldwell's, prior to my going to your Mama's.

I remain Your affectionate, lover, and I hope, husband,

J F Taylor

## **Descendants of John Fennings Taylor the Elder and his wife Elizabeth Sophia Denison (1.6)**

**1.6.1 Arthur John Taylor** (my great~great grandfather) 19 March 1829 - 1892, went to law school in Quebec, Lower Canada. He was married to Helen Maria Macklem, 1834. Helen was the daughter of Susan Maria - 9 July 1902, by license, at St. James Cathedral, York County, 14 November 1855, by Henry J Grasset. Hepburne and John Smith Mackle. Helen's father died when she was quite young. Her mother married Colonel R. L. Denison and they had 13 children. Arthur's grandmother, Sophia, remembered him with £50 and a silver pepper castor. Helen and Arthur are interred at St. John's on the Humber, in Weston.

**1.6.2 Alexander George Denison-Taylor**, ISO, 10 November 1830 - 27 March 1913. HM King Edward VII awarded Alexander with the Imperial Service Order in 1908. He married Mary Elizabeth Boswell, 13 December 1842 - 2 February 1909. Mary was the daughter of Judge George Morse Jukes Boswell, of the Queen's Council, and Susannah Radcliffe. Alexander was left, by his grandmother, a silver wine strainer. They are both interred at St. John's, Weston.

**1.6.3 Walter Charles Taylor**, died c1833.

**1.6.4 Charles Walter Taylor**, 4 May 1834 - 29 June 1873. Charles received., from his grandmother's Will, Silver salt cellars and two silver tablespoons. His own will is indexed in Ottawa, no 1204, 1873, leaving everything to his parents. Interred at St. John's, Weston.

**1.6.5 Maria Taylor**, 4 December 1863 - 16 May 1933, buried at St. John's, Weston. Maria had a tin box, which R. L. Denison refers to in his notes, and in the box was found family Papers and the love letter to Betsy. She lived at Rolyat House all her life where she took care of her brother Gunthorpe, before his death. She received £50, one Silver sugar-basket and tongs, one large silver cream jug and one silver tea strainer with an odd spoon, left to her by her grandmother.

**1.6.6 Fred Selletto Taylor**, 19 March 1839, served in the American Civil War and was left half a dozen teaspoons in his grandmother's will.

**1.6.7 Albert Gunthorpe Taylor**, 5 February 1842 - 7 February 1908, interred at St. John's, Weston. He was unmarried, and lived and worked in Ottawa. He was left one pair of silver sugar tongs by his grandmother.

**1.6.8 Sophia Elizabeth Taylor**, 23 March 1844 - 24 March 1844

**1.6.9 Clarence Robert. Jamieson Taylor**, 6 April 1845 - 10 August 1848.

**1.6.10 Sophia Charlotte Taylor**, 22 April 1850 - 28 November 1857. Baptized at Christ Church Cathedral, Montreal, Quebec. Although she was only two at the time of her grandmother's death, she was left £50, one silver papbote with a spoon, one small silver cream jug, and a half dozen teaspoons and coral.

**Elizabeth Sophia (Denison) Taylor** was left one silver porringer, and one silver marrow spoon by her mother, Sophia (Taylor) Denison.

## **Descendants of Arthur John Taylor(1.6.1) and his wife Helen Maria Macklem**

**1.6.1.1 Arthur Wesley Taylor**, 15 June 1861-8 March 1937, married Charlotte M. McLeod, who died 4 March 1934. Arthur's will was probated in York County no. 82237. Both are interred at St. John's, Weston.

**1.6.1.2 John Fennings Taylor**, (my great grandfather) 2 July 1864. Married Emily (Shair) Wellman c1871-1907, from Orillia, daughter of Thomas and Harriet (Dady) Wellman. There is a story told that Emily is buried at St. John's but of this, I can find no record. When Emily died, their only child, a son, was left in the care of Emily's sister Harriet and her husband Charles Mick. John, it seems, went to Nova Scotia and this is where we believe he died. This is not known for certain.

**1.6.1.3 Hettie Elizabeth Maria Taylor**, c1865--26 February 1953, married George Nelthorpe Morrison, 20 January 1860 6 May 1920. They had six children. Both are interred at St. John's, Weston.

**1.6.1.4 Sophia Charlotte Taylor(2)**, 27 September 1867 - 8 August 1943, married Charles Dangerfield King, who died 3 May 1936. They had one child. They are both interred at St. John's, Weston.

**1.6.1.5 Helen Maud Flancillian Taylor**, 13 December 1869 - 29 September 1887.

**1.6.1.6 Julia Macklem Taylor**, 19 March 1873 ~ 1 December 1943, married first, Arthur Drover on 20 September 1907 and had three children; married second, William Hepburne Rooth, 14 November 1 March 1943, and had one child.

**1.6.1.7 Richard Lippincott Denison-Taylor(I)**, 26 June 1874 - 5 April 1929, married Christine Elizabeth Young, on 11 April 1899, at St. Anne's in the Province of Quebec. They had one son named after the father but commonly called "Dick Taylor" an artist. R.L.D. Taylor (1) is interred at St. John's, Weston, and his will was probated in York County no. 62196.

**Descendants of John Fennings Taylor (1.6.1.2) and his wife Emily (Shair) Wellman**

**1.6.1.2.1 Milton Fennings Taylor** (my grandfather), 3 July 1898 - 7 September 1967, married Ellen Irene Arnold, 20 November 1898 - 9 September 1997, daughter of Henry Charles Arnold and Laura Maud Alexandria Dunning. Married at St. Anne's Church, Gladstone Ave., Toronto, on 16 June 1920. Milton was raised by his Aunt and Uncle Mick, and so decided to be buried beside them at Park Lawn Cemetery. There are three children from this union - Marjorie, John and my mother, Shirley. From this there are ten children and five grandchildren for my grandmother. Irene has one brother, one sister and one nephew.

**Descendants of Milton Fennings Taylor (1.6.1.2.1) and his wife Ellen Irene Arnold**

**1.6.1.2.1.1 Marjorie Irene Taylor**, married Allan Joseph Feheley.

**1.6.1.2.1.1.1 Nancy Irene Feheley**

**1.6.1.2.1.1.2 Janice Louise Feheley**, married William Dunlop. They have one daughter Maggie.

**1.6.1.2.1.1.3 Paul Joseph Feheley**, married Judy Linn. Paul is an Anglican minister and they have two sons.

**1.6.1.2.1.1.4 - Pamela Laura Feheley**, married Lorne Bossin. They have one daughter and one son.

**1.6.1.2.1.2 John (Jack) Warren Taylor**, married Dorothy May (Pyle) Starling

**1.6.1.2.1.2.1 Robert Christopher Starling**, married Karen Gerow. Bob is from Dorothy's first marriage. They have three girls.

**1.6.1.2.1.2.2 Jack Steven Taylor.**

**1.6.1.2.1.3 Shirley Harriet Taylor**, married Alfred Charles Weller.

**1.6.1.2.1.3.1 Linda Diane Mary Josephine Weller** married Jerry Gagnon and has one daughter.

**1.6.1.2.1.3.2 Susan Lorraine Catherine Weller** married/divorced. Two children, a son, a daughter and three grandchildren.

**1.6.1.2.1.3.3 - Deborah Joan Patricia Weller**, married Gary Roy Stanley Pryke, has since divorced. Married second time Thomas Banting and has three children, two girls and a boy

**1.6.1.2.1.3.4 Brenda Catherine Ann-Marie Weller**, married Norman Robert Price and have two sons.

**Descendants of Alexander George Denison-Taylor(1.6.2) and his wife Mary Elizabeth Boswell**

**1.6.2.1 Charlotte Madeline Radcliff Taylor**, 2 June 1863 - 18 October 1864. Interred at St. John's, Weston.

**1.6.2.2 Florence Mary Emily Taylor**, 8 December 1864 -21 April 1952. Interred at St. John's, Weston.

**1.6.2.3 Frank Denison-Taylor**, 17 August 1865 - 25 March 1947, married

Florence Margaret Moffat, 5 October 1874 - 26 December 1954. They had five children and are interred at St. John's, Weston.

**1.6.2.4 Mervyn Ross Fennings Taylor (Doctor)**, 17 July 1877, married Jeanetta Reilly and had two children. Their last known whereabouts was Wynnewood, Pennsylvania, USA.

**SOURCES**

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**Website for Family Tree:** <http://www.denisonfamily.on.ca/>