

Colonel Taylor's Avenue--Entrance to an Iowa "Pleasure Park"

Colonel John W. Taylor built a one-mile "avenue" approach from the south road (now called Col. Taylor Road) to his rustic log summer retreat within the white pine forest north of here. Col. Taylor may have been creating his own "pleasure park" or "paradise" popular among European royalty and other ancient civilizations. He lined his "avenue" with both native and imported trees, ferns, fruits, and flowers. Col. Taylor also kept a small elk herd enclosed within a high rail fence. To learn more about Taylor's orchard and home, visit other exhibit panels along the Col. Taylor Trail.

View from South Field Northeast Toward Present Orchard



Sumner W. Matteson captured these threshing scenes in the field south of here about 1904. Formerly owned by Colonel J. W. Taylor, it was owned by Philip and Clara Halse at the time the photos were taken. The field is bordered along the top of this photo by remnants of Colonel Taylor's famous avenue. Taylor's orchard is visible in the upper left corner.

Historic Descriptions of the Avenue and Pleasure Park

"The cozy cabin ... was surrounded with abundant natural beauties. A large orchard was maintained on the farm, and the beautiful avenue drive, a mile in length to the road south of the cabin, was famous for years. The road was graded smooth and hard, with rows of evergreens and trees of almost every kind on either side, interspersed with the most beautiful flowers and plants the entire length of the road. *Decorah Republican*, April 17, 1907

"... [I]t will amply repay any one to visit the large and beautiful grounds of Col. J. W. Taylor, about six miles west of the city; where art has combined with nature to make nature look still more varied and beautiful, and where frequent surprises greet the eye as one drives through avenues lined with evergreens, succeeded by flowers, solitary woods, bright and velvety openings in the forest, and finally reaches the cozy, unique log cabin of the proprietor, beyond which a bridle path leads down past a precipitous bluff to the bed of a beautiful stream, where are abundant springs, grassy slopes and green fields beyond." *History of Winneshiek County*, 1888

"... [H]e sought to make a country seat where a gentleman fond of rural life could reside amid country privileges. There he rejoiced to receive and entertain friends; and the summer time was to him a continuous delight as long as strength and health permitted him the privilege of labor among his fruits, flowers, shrubs, ferns and grasses. One large area that a pure money-lover would have turned into wheat raising he kept in native grass for the sake of perpetuating wild flowers and natural grasses. Visitors were given bountifully of his cultivated products, but to these other, humbler members of the floral kingdom, he seemed to bear a tender, jealous regard that forbade other touch than his own." *Decorah Republican*, August 14, 1902

View from South Field Northwest Toward Present Orchard



Colonel Taylor's five-acre apple orchard ascends the hill here. Taylor's orchard covered part of Seed Savers Exchange's Historic Orchard's current location. The ruins of the house in the background are just west of where you are standing. It is not clear who owned the house or when it was built.

A romantic "avenue," shady woods, sunny openings, gurgling streams and a rustic swing along Taylor's horse bridle path enchanted the Taylors, their friends and later visitors.



Women picking daisies in a field that probably bordered Taylor's Avenue.

The R. J. McElroy Trust's American Garden Discovery Trail