

Doc M. B Taylor: ‘The Red Fox of the Mountains’

BY JADON GIBSON
Contributing Writer

As the pioneers moved westward and settled an expanding America there were mountaineers residing in the most remote locations of our mountain area. They were a hardy lot by necessity, having won their living space against beast and savage.

The mountaineers resided in the Appalachians for a hundred years before they were ‘discovered’ by the national press at the outbreak of the War Between the States. These mountain men and women were introduced to America as bumpkins replete with pipe, hunting shirt, coonskin cap and moccasins – residing in log cabins with humble furnishings. The men usually carried a rifle and axe, both necessary in helping to maintain their humble existence. Many maintained moonshine stills they claimed made their lives more bearable, or pleasurable at least. The age-old system of barter was often used since they had little money.

They were shut off by mountains with few navigable rivers. There were no man-made lakes and few wagon roads. Actually, in many cases there were no roads at all except for the beds of streams.

There were few schools and churches during this early period. The mountaineers never saw a newspaper but it was just as well because very few could read. A large number signed their names with an x if they ever had cause to affix their signature. They knew or cared nothing of the outside world excepting events that shook the nation.

Yet the sons and daughters of the mountains were social creatures. Logrollings, house raisings, housewarmings, quiltings, cornshuckings, shivareeing,



The mountains of Southwest Virginia are much tamer today than they were in Doc Taylor’s times. (Wikimedia Commons photo)

fiddling and square dancing became a few of the customs of the mountains.

The mountain people were a generous lot. Although they did not have much – whatever they had was often offered to guests, even strangers. Isolation brings out the best and worst qualities of humanity. The mountaineer was a loyal friend but he could also become a fierce enemy. There was violence.

Dr. M. B. Taylor was such a man. He became legendary in the mountains of southwest Virginia and eastern Kentucky as ‘The Red Fox of the Mountains’. The red-headed, red-bearded Taylor was a complex man. He was a preacher, mystic, herb doctor, revenue officer

and murderer.

He claimed to be a mystic with the ability to communicate with spirits, in fact he was a student of Swedenborg, Sweden’s eighteenth century seer, philosopher, theologian, scientist, mystic and revelator of God’s word. Swedenborg claimed he received a revelation Easter weekend of 1744 that he was appointed by the Lord Jesus Christ to freely visit Heaven or Hell and talk with angels, demons and other spirits.

Doc Taylor felt he possessed unique insight as well regarding life and individuals he encountered. He rode with a Bible in his saddlebags and preached most Sundays in Wise or adjoining counties in Virginia. He also

preached in churches across the mountains in Kentucky. The mountain folk enjoyed his hypnotic sermons. He was a relative of Dr. Moran L. Stallard, a noted Lee County, Va., physician who taught him how to treat various illnesses. Taylor gained the reputation of being a good medical doctor.

When he was called to a home to treat someone seriously ailing he would arrive with his herbs and he would sometimes stay until the patient was either well, or at least on the mend. He treated many women patients much like a psychiatrist of today. After consulting with the patient he would offer: “I’m stepping outside now, dear sister, and will lift mine eyes to the heavens and

pray. Concentrate. You need to concentrate here on your bed. Don’t let your mind stray and soon you’ll feel an inner glow. That will mean you’re healing. When that happens call out to me.”

There were some reports of patients rising and rejoicing. Old Doc was also reputed to be good in assisting the delivery of babies.

His preaching and doctoring found him continuously traveling about the mountains and mingling with the people near the Kentucky and Virginia border. He was well acquainted with moonshiners and bootleggers and knew when and where they operated. He saw their activity as a social and spiritual ill. He decided to ask federal officials to make him a revenue officer because he felt well suited to stop their illegal activities. He was hired and trained immediately as a United States Deputy Marshal.

He took pride in displaying his authority, riding a star-faced black fox-trotter all over the mountain area. In addition to his Bible and herbs he carried an arsenal of weapons. He wore twin Colt 45’s on a gun belt that gleamed with cartridges and he had a 50 x 75 Winchester tied to his saddle.

Doc Taylor also carried a brass-embellished telescope that he strapped over his shoulder. The telescope, which could be extended to five feet, was used to spot horseback riders carrying moonshine and jolt wagons laden with illegal liquor.

Jadon Gibson is a widely read Appalachian writer from Harrogate, TN. His stories are both historic and nostalgic in nature. Thanks to Lincoln Memorial University, Alice Lloyd College and the Museum of Appalachia for their assistance.

What’s happening at the Library

BY JAMES GARDNER
Clark County Public Library

Break. Weirdo. Oddball. Perhaps you have referred to people by these names during your lifetime. You may also have been on the receiving end of them. It may surprise some (even though there are some I suspect wouldn’t be surprised) that I’ve been called names like these. And on the receiving end of these names, it hurt. Sure, folks say that “sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never harm me.” However, these words do hurt when you’re young and forming a sense of self.

Many of us have had an awkward phase with that phase lasting longer for some than for others. Even when you’ve made it out of that awkward phase (or still trying to find your way out of it), the ridicule and loneliness can leave a long-lasting impression because humans, including and especially me, are social creatures. We all crave companionship and belonging. When we are pushed out of a group or simply ostracized by a group’s members, it could leave us with a pervasive feeling of dread, perhaps even compelling us to conform to the group, by

whatever means necessary.

Luckily for those who have felt forced to conform, there are many examples of weirdos like writer Aldous Huxley, who celebrates a birthday this week, to follow.

According to his Wikipedia page, Aldous Huxley has had quite the interesting life. As a child, he was called “ogie” (short for “Ogre”). His brother once commented that Ogie often contemplated “the strangeness of things.” Aldous (because he probably didn’t keep the name Ogie as an adult) was planning on becoming a doctor but an eye disease curtailed that dream, and he instead majored in English literature at Oxford. Perhaps the most well-known example of his strangeness is his book “Brave New World,” a novel about a dystopian society where pleasure and sensation subsumes an individual’s ability to resist (if you’re reading this thinking you need to check your phone, you may be evidence that “Brave New World” still has relevance today). Throughout his life, Aldous dabbled in several different religious studies, including meditation and Hinduism, while also earning money in Hollywood as a screenwriter.

Not bad for a kid named Ogre.

And Ogie’s—I mean Al-

dous’s—example is one I try to live by as an adult, meaning I have not only accepted my weirdness; I have embraced it. I read weird books, I write weird stories (none as famous as Huxley’s yet), and I even eat weird sandwiches (not as famous as Shaggy’s sandwiches, and if you watched “Scooby-Doo,” you know what I mean). Aldous also managed to find people who admired his eccentricities, which is what everyone deserves. I hope that you all find your people, no matter how weird you are!

Those people might even be in these programs:

■ On Tuesday, July 22nd, at 5 and 6:30 pm, the library presents an Exotic Fruit Tasting! Taste some of nature’s most delicious candy! Learn some fun facts about each fruit, sample a variety and vote on your favorite! This is the same program, just with two time slots to choose from; only register for one time. Space is limited; please register.

■ On Wednesday, July 23rd, at 2 pm, the Kentucky Picture Show presents a classic comedy/drama starring James Stewart. A naive youth leader (Stewart) is appointed to fill a vacancy in the U.S. Senate. His idealistic plans promptly collide with corruption at home and subterfuge from his hero in

Washington, but he tries to forge ahead despite attacks on his character. Popcorn and snacks provided!

■ On Thursday, July 24th, beginning at 6 pm, Learning @ the Library presents Japan’s Most Bizarre and Deadly Cults. Join librarian Brad Allard for a night of international true crime, looking at the dark underworld of Japanese cults. Learn about incidents from the most bizarre and deadliest cults in Japan, including the largest terrorist attack in Japanese history and more. This event will be of great interest to those who

love true crime. Potluck is at 6 p.m.; presentation begins at 6:30. Space is limited; please register to attend.

■ On Sunday, July 27th, at 2 pm, the library gives patrons an opportunity to Paint a Butterfly! Jennifer Wilson from Eve’s Uniques will be here to teach how to paint a butterfly. Participants will use chalk paint, stamps and transfers to make a unique butterfly which will be sealed with wax. Space is limited; please register.

■ This week’s Database Showcase features Kanopy. Want to learn more

about Aldous Huxley and dystopian fiction? Episode 10 of Great Courses’ “Utopian and Dystopian Literature” series features “Aldous Huxley and Dystopian Pleasure.” Kanopy has many offerings in the Great Courses series plus movies like “Airplane” and “The Naked Gun,” which require significantly less thinking to enjoy. To see what Kanopy has to offer, just go to clarkbooks.org, click on “Digital Library,” click on “Movies & TV,” and have your library card and PIN number ready to create your Kanopy account.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE Farm Service Agency NOTICE OF SALE

To beginning farmers and Socially Disadvantaged applicants

The United States Department of Agriculture acting through Farm Service Agency is selling the following described property “as is”: 68.09 acres located at 1259 Pickshin Road in Bath County. The legal description is available for inspection at Farm Service Agency, 502 Wilmont Drive, Mt. Sterling, KY 40353.

The Government reserves the right to cancel the sale at any time during the sale process and reserves the right to reject any or all applications or bids.

The minimum acceptable price is \$250,000.00.

Financing may be available through Farm Service Agency to eligible applicants. Applications may be obtained from Farm Service Agency.

The deadline for submitting applications will be, August 18, 2025.

The property is being offered for sale to those individuals whom the Farm Service Agency (FSA) considers qualified beginning and/or socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers, and prevailing claimants in the civil action Pigford vs. Vilsack. Prevailing claimants who have not already used their right to their one-time priority consideration and who are qualified beginning and/or socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers, will be given first priority consideration in the purchase of this property. If more than one beginning and / or socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher or more than one of a combination of both who are prevailing Pigford I claimants exercising their one-time right to priority consideration, submit an application, priority within this group will be determined by lottery. Qualified beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers must be in need of FSA credit assistance either in the form of direct FSA financing or an FSA guaranteed loan. For other requirements and information on how to qualify as a beginning and / or socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher, you may contact your local FSA office at 502 Wilmont Drive, Mt. Sterling, KY 40353; or by phone 859-498-5487.

A XYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L’s, X for the two O’s, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

7-21 CRYPTOQUOTE

K N E J F E L K N W C N Q D B D Q D A Q , W A D D I U K I K X A E T W N Q Z I C L W Y C L Z R I O S M T L W I

N L N F E , N C I B D C H O O D Q H X A F W U W A U ? X A E G Q A E V K L A F N I D L W S L Q M D X K L Z Z W I

D R D E F E L C L Q P Z . — Y D K Q I C L N Q I A U I G W P I I F N A J M G X W I V S I R I O M D L .

V D X X D Y F E

Saturday’s Cryptoquote: ALL WATER HAS A PERFECT MEMORY AND IS FOREVER TRYING TO GET BACK TO WHERE IT WAS. — TONI MORRISON

A XYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L’s, X for the two O’s, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

7-22 CRYPTOQUOTE

K N E J F E L K N W C N Q D B D Q D A Q , W A D D I U K I K X A E T W N Q Z I C L W Y C L Z R I O S M T L W I

N L N F E , N C I B D C H O O D Q H X A F W U W A U ? X A E G Q A E V K L A F N I D L W S L Q M D X K L Z Z W I

D R D E F E L C L Q P Z . — Y D K Q I C L N Q I A U I G W P I I F N A J M G X W I V S I R I O M D L .

H X G I V D . — F C N G X O V W U I

Yesterday’s Cryptoquote: DANCING DAYS ARE HERE AGAIN, AS THE SUMMER EVENINGS GROW. — LED ZEPPELIN

A XYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L’s, X for the two O’s, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

7-23 CRYPTOQUOTE

K N E J F E L K N W C N Q D B D Q D A Q , W A D D I U K I K X A E T W N Q Z I C L W Y C L Z R I O S M T L W I

N L N F E , N C I B D C H O O D Q H X A F W U W A U ? X A E G Q A E V K L A F N I D L W S L Q M D X K L Z Z W I

D R D E F E L C L Q P Z . — Y D K Q I C L N Q I A U I G W P I I F N A J M G X W I V S I R I O M D L .

— H L K K Y U L D N I F L P

Yesterday’s Cryptoquote: OH, I OFFENDED YOU WITH MY OPINION? YOU SHOULD HEAR THE ONES I KEEP TO MYSELF. — PATSY CLINE