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## The Mystery of Missing Marvin: Determining the Alumni Status of a Century-Old Student

Marcus Walker\*\*\*

In my opinion, you would probably never choose to become a librarian or an archivist if it weren't in your nature to enjoy an occasional mystery or puzzle. As such, I invite you to come along on one of mine.

An intermittent long-term project of mine is to compile a complete (well, complete-as-possible) historical list of law school graduates. Fortunately, much of the most difficult part already had been done, as many of the pre-Great Depression law school catalogs included a cumulative roster of alumni.

Something that caught my attention in the last of those rosters was a four-year stretch just after World War I. Here a short contextual history may be helpful, and perhaps interesting.

By the point the United States officially joined the First World War, enrollment at the erstwhile Law Department of the University of Louisville and the then-independent evening Jefferson School of Law shrunk to where both schools attempted to combine their respective programs for the 1918-1919 term. When even the joint session failed to draw enough students, Jefferson closed for the

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<sup>\*\*</sup> For such a simple seeming inquiry, I certainly had to reach out to a lot of people. Those who were particularly helpful in locating information beside the persons cited within include: Tom Owen, University of Louisville Archivist for Regional History; Tyler Lehrer and Gioia Spatafora at University of Wisconsin-Madison Archives and Records Management; Christy Causey, duPont Manual High School Teacher-Librarian; Charles Sayre and Mike McDaniel of the duPont Manual High School Alumni Association; and Lance Hale, Archivist of the State Archives Center, Kentucky Department of Libraries and Archives.

school year while the University Law Department refocused its coursework for the needs of the military.<sup>1</sup>

Following the war, Jefferson picked up from essentially where it had been; its four 1920 graduates almost mirrored the five from 1918.<sup>2</sup> The Louisville Law Department on the other hand sought to raise admission standards with the goal of eventually gaining accreditation with AALS, taking advantage of a unique opportunity – none of the five first-year students enrolled in the 1917-1918 session returned.<sup>3</sup>

An initial measure the Law Department undertook was lengthening the curriculum.<sup>4</sup> The expansion was originally approved in 1919, but the first three-year course began in Fall 1920.<sup>5</sup>

- <sup>1</sup> JEFFERSON SCHOOL OF LAW ANNOUNCEMENT 1919-1920, at 3; *Law Department of the University of Louisville and Jefferson School of Law*, LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL, Sept. 24, 1918, at 5; Letter from Arthur Y. Ford, President of the University of Louisville Board of Trustees, to Col. E.W. Hubbard, Commanding Officer of the University of Louisville Student Army Training Corps, Oct. 11, 1918.
- <sup>2</sup> THE JEFFERSONIAN 1924, at 29-30 (Jefferson Sch. of Law, Louisville, Ky.).
- <sup>3</sup> Compare University of Louisville Bulletin, 1918-1919, at 122-131 (Students are listed alphabetically, not by course; there are fifteen total students five first-years and ten second-years), with University of Louisville Bulletin, 1920-1921, at 185 (Students listed by course; none of the eight are the same as those enrolled in 1917-1918) As a side note, one of those students, M. Joseph Donovan, had already graduated from Jefferson in the spring and would be sworn in to practice the following February: The Jeffersonian 1924, supra note 2, at 29; Court of Appeals, Louisville Courier-Journal, Feb. 2, 1918, at 10.
- <sup>4</sup> Letter from W.L. Lafferty, Dean of the University of Kentucky College of Law, to John L. Patterson, Dean of the University of Louisville College of Arts and Sciences (Nov. 1, 1918) (Lafferty suggested the increase; why the letter was directed to the liberal arts dean or if similar correspondence was sent to the Law Department dean is unknown) (on file with the University of Louisville Archives and Special Collections).
- UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE BULLETIN, SCHOOL OF LAW ANNOUNCEMENTS, 1919-1920, at 9 ("The course of study covers two school years of eight months each . . . ."), UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE BULLETIN, 1920-1921, at 134 ("The course of study covers three school years of eight months each . . . ."); Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the University of Louisville (Apr. 15, 1919)

Given the above, the curiosity was the alumni roster listed a graduating student in 1922, but none for 1920 – the opposite of what otherwise might be expected.<sup>6</sup> However, the Board of Trustees Minutes supported the roster: no 1920 law graduates and a single graduate for 1922.<sup>7</sup>

The Class of 1921 needed no explanation, as any student matriculating the 1919-1920 school year would only be subject to the shorter course, it made sense there was a full graduating class that year.<sup>8</sup>

The sole 1922 law graduate was due to a delayed graduation. The student, Evert B. Baker, began his coursework in Fall 1919, but "had several conditions to make up at the close of the term" in 1921. Upon completing them, he was awarded his degree the following year.<sup>9</sup>

The Class of 1920 was more complicated, as although neither the Board of Trustees Minutes nor alumni rolls referred to above

("On motion of Mr. Jefferson, seconded by Mr. Keisker, the plan of re-organization of the Law School and by the Executive Committee of the Board, was approved, . . . the course to cover a period of three years . . ."); Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the University of Louisville (May 21, 1920) ("On motion the Board expressed its approval of the plan to establish a three year [sic] course in the Law School. . . ."). It is unclear the reason an ostensibly identical plan needed reapproval (there was no mention of a particular year in either, for example); however, at the 1919 meeting, the then-current Dean resigned and a new candidate – Shackelford Miller Sr. – was approved, but never took the position.

- $^6$  E.g., University of Louisville Bulletin, School of Law Announcements, 1927-1928, at 54.
- <sup>7</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the University of Louisville (May 21, 1920); Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the University of Louisville (June 7, 1922).
- <sup>8</sup> University of Louisville Bulletin, School of Law Announcements, 1927-1928, at 54-55. Full being relative; there were six graduates in 1921. While smaller than most other classes, it compares with the Classes of 1918 (also six), 1924 (seven), and 1927 (four).
- <sup>9</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the University of Louisville (June 7, 1922).

named any law graduates that year, the 1920-1921 catalog did list one – Marvin H. Taylor. <sup>10</sup>

A name or a lack of one in the catalog, while not unofficial, is also not absolute: Taylor being listed in 1920 could have been in anticipation of a graduation that never happened, or his name failing to be included in successive alumni rosters might instead have been an error perpetuated by sourcing faulty preceding lists.<sup>11</sup>

Taylor did not have an entry in any School of Law alumni directory, although early in research the reason was ambiguous at best – unlike the catalog rosters which aimed to include the names of the full class, the directories only include graduates living at the time they were published. 12

Taylor's official academic record would be the most apparent source for a definitive answer; unfortunately, neither the Registrar's Office nor University Records had it extant.<sup>13</sup> (Given the number of floods in Louisville during the intervening century, this honestly was not much of a surprise.<sup>14</sup>) The Kentucky Department

- <sup>10</sup> University of Louisville Bulletin, 1920-1921, at 181 (Taylor was listed as a 'Doctor of Laws' recipient; not an inconsiderable distinction since the LL.D. is an honorary degree); University of Louisville Bulletin, School of Law Announcements, 1927-1928, at 54; University of Louisville Bulletin, School of Law Announcements, 1928-1929, at 58; University of Louisville Bulletin, School of Law Announcements, 1929-1930, at 59. (Lists of alumni were discontinued after 1929.) Further, no successive Board of Trustees meeting appended the roll of 1920 graduates, in comparison to the explanation given for Evert's 1922 graduation.
- <sup>11</sup> There is precedent for the latter: The first female graduate, N.A. Courtright, does not appear even in the rosters immediately following her graduation in 1911.
- <sup>12</sup> Or, more accurately, living *and* in contact with the law school; *see*, *e.g.*, University of Louisville Law Alumni Directory, 1846-1960, at 1; University of Louisville School of Law Sesquicentennial History & Law Alumni/Ae Directory 1996, at 1.
- <sup>13</sup> E-mail from Kassie Marie Flanery, University of Louisville Registrar's Office, to author (Aug. 9, 2019) (on file with author); E-mail from Kyna R. Herzinger, University of Louisville Archivist for Records Management, to author (Aug. 7, 2019) (on file with author).
- <sup>14</sup> If you are interested in the history of flooding in the Louisville area, see Louisville Metropolitan Sewer District's list of top ten crests at <a href="https://louisvillemsd.org/programs/programs-and-projects/floodplain-management/flooding-history-louisville">https://louisvillemsd.org/programs/programs-and-projects/floodplain-management/flooding-history-louisville</a> and an

of Libraries and Archives had the official order from June 1920 admitting Taylor to the bar, <sup>15</sup> but since there was no mention of education, his graduation could not be implied as at that time it was not yet necessary to complete law school to sit for the exam. <sup>16</sup>

No fewer than three different local newspaper articles – the University of Louisville graduate feature in 1920, a birthday bio from April 1927, and his November 1941 obituary – credit Taylor with a law degree. <sup>17</sup> (His early death explained why he did not appear in the alumni directories.) Moreover, Taylor referred to and considered himself a graduate – he joined the University's Alumni Association in 1935, his 1937 du Pont Manual alumni roster listing mentions a 1920 LL.B. from Louisville, and he attended the law school alumni dinner held at the 1939 Kentucky Bar Association convention. <sup>18</sup>

extensive collection of photographs (particularly of the 1937 and 2009 floods) in the University of Louisville Digital Collections: <a href="https://digital.library.louisville.edu/cdm/search/field/sub-jec/searchterm/Floods--Kentucky--Louisville/mode/exact">https://digital.library.louisville.edu/cdm/search/field/sub-jec/searchterm/Floods--Kentucky--Louisville/mode/exact</a>.

- <sup>15</sup> In Re: Licenses to Attorneys, Ky. Ct. App. Order Book 101, at 213 (1920-1921) (on file with the Kentucky Department of Libraries and Archives); *Appeals Court Spring Term On*, LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL, Apr. 13, 1920, at 9 (The Court of Appeals was the highest court in Kentucky at the time).
- <sup>16</sup> CARROLL'S KY. STAT. §98a (1922) (effective Mar. 29, 1918). Persons needed to be twenty-one years of age or older, score seventy-five percent or better on the bar exam as graded by a board of examiners, and pay a prescribed fee in order to be licensed, but any formal education was yet to be required.
- <sup>17</sup> *U. of Louisville To Graduate 90*, LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL, May 30, 1920, §4, at 7; *The Courier-Journal Wishes You a Happy Birth-day*, LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL, Apr. 15, 1927, at 13; *Taylor, Committeeman For Republicans, Dies At 45*, LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL, Nov. 7, 1941, §4, at 1.
- <sup>18</sup> ROSTER OF ALUMNI 1892-1937, at 89 (Du Pont Manual Training High Sch., Louisville, Ky.); *U. of L. Alumni Meeting to Be Held Tuesday on Belknap Campus*, LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL, June 9, 1935, §2, at 6; *Bar Head to Address Meeting*, LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL, Mar. 29, 1939, §2, at 1 (Noteworthy is that all the other persons listed beside Taylor other than Dean Lott and University President Kent were graduates David Castleman, 1902; Emmet Field, 1917; Raymond Bossmeyer, 1936; William W. Crawford, 1901; and Alec L. Ratliff, 1910).

So while there was significant evidence Marvin Taylor graduated from the law school, there was also a notable counterpoint: The Manual alumni bio also listed a Bachelor of Arts from University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1918, but the Office of the Registrar at Wisconsin only credits Taylor with having completed three semesters between 1914 and 1916. A lesser note of concern was a small conflict in another attribution: Despite the claim in Taylor's obituary he was never a candidate for public office, Taylor *did* run for city council in 1935. Despite the claim in 1935.

While previous search engine queries for departed graduates and personnel have had mixed results, I was fairly optimistic given Taylor was a veteran of World War I.

Indeed, one of the top hits for "Marvin Hunter Taylor" was a page about a journal Taylor kept during his service written by his grandson, Dr. Nathaniel Lane Taylor, who is fortunately (and almost unbelievably so) a professional genealogist. <sup>21</sup> After contacting him, he sent a link to an image of a very interesting document:

- <sup>19</sup> ROSTER OF ALUMNI, *supra* note 18; E-mail from Katie Paar, University of Wisconsin-Madison Office of the Registrar, to author (Aug. 29, 2019). Taylor considered himself a "Wisconsin man," at least as he served: Marvin H. Taylor, Extracts from the Letters of a Junior Officer of Infantry, 1917-1918, at 4 (Nathaniel Taylor ed., 2009) (unpublished manuscript) (on file with Dr. Nathaniel Lane Taylor). Interestingly, he *was* listed as a member of a class at Wisconsin, albeit for 1919; *see* THE BADGER 1920, at 374 (Lincoln A. Quarberg, ed., U. of Wis.-Madison, 1919). Also notable is that while the 1927 and 1941 articles, *supra* note 17, mentioned Taylor attending Wisconsin, neither stated he earned a degree from there.
- There may be a good reason the newspaper might not have wanted to bring that to attention. According to the tally given in the paper, Horace Taylor defeated Marvin Taylor in the race for Second Ward alderman, yet both the preliminary and final tabulations for every city council race, including the Socialist Party candidate whenever there was one, were, \*ahem\*, remarkably similar. See Allan M. Trout, Chandler Goes Ahead By 77, LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL, Nov. 8, 1935, §1, at 1+; State Gives 94,659 Lead To Chandler, LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL, Nov. 10, 1935, §1, at 1+.
- <sup>21</sup> Nathaniel Lane Taylor, *Marvin Hunter Taylor journal of a WWI infantry officer*, A Genealogist's Sketchbook (Mar. 2, 2008, 3:08 PM), <a href="https://nltaylor.net/sketchbook/archives/123">https://nltaylor.net/sketchbook/archives/123</a>. Dr. Taylor's bio as a fellow of the American Society of Genealogists can be found at <a href="http://fasg.org/fellows/current-fellows/nathaniel-lane-taylor/">http://fasg.org/fellows/current-fellows/nathaniel-lane-taylor/</a>.



Marvin Taylor's LL.B. Degree

Any reason he received a degree despite not being included in the Trustees minutes would clearly be speculative, though it is not difficult to imagine that Taylor made special arrangements to complete his coursework, particularly as the bar exam was held within the law school final exam period.<sup>22</sup>

Despite Taylor being the only graduate from the University of Louisville law program in 1920, he would not be the only name under the Class of 1920 in a modern list of alumni, as the aforementioned Jefferson School of Law merged with University of Louisville Law School in 1950, granting Jefferson graduates alumni status at UofL.<sup>23</sup>

 $<sup>^{22}</sup>$  The bar exam was held May 25-26, 1920; the law school examination period was May 17-29. *See, e.g.*, In Re: Licenses to Attorneys, *supra* note 15; UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE BULLETIN, SCHOOL OF LAW ANNOUNCEMENTS, 1919-1920, at 6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Despite Taylor being the lone graduate from the University of Louisville law program in 1920, he would not be the only name under the Class of 1920 in a modern list of alumni, as the afore-

So, who was Marvin Taylor? I invite you to visit his grandson's site for a more in-depth answer, but I do believe I can provide a good short biography:

Marvin Hunter Taylor was born on April 15, 1896 in Louisville and graduated from hometown duPont Manual High School in 1914. Perhaps foretelling his career and certainly heralding one of his talents, Taylor won two awards in declamatory contests at Manual – a silver medal as a sophomore followed by a gold his senior year.<sup>24</sup>

Taylor spent time both at the University of Wisconsin in Madison as well as the University of Louisville the following three years before serving in World War I.<sup>25</sup> After returning to the States, Taylor

mentioned Jefferson School of Law merged with University of Louisville Law School in 1950, granting Jefferson graduates alumni status at UofL.

<sup>24</sup> The Courier-Journal Wishes You a Happy Birthday, supra note 17; Jacob Miles Wins Mitre Club Medal, LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL, Apr. 21, 1912, at 10 ("The second honor, a silver medal, was given to Marvin Taylor, a sophomore, who selected for his address "Robert Emmet's Speech."); Declamatory Gold Medal Won By Marvin H. Taylor, LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL, Apr. 25, 1914, at 4. For instances where Taylor gave speeches later in his life, see, e.g., Defense Dinner Set For Tonight, LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL, Apr. 18, 1928, at 26 (Taylor mentioned as one of the "other" speakers); Republicans Plan 4 Rallies In City Monday, LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL, Oct. 20, 1935, §1, at 2 (see note 20 regarding the timing); Alvin Davis, Davis Named Captain of Red Gridmen, LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL, Dec. 17, 1935, §2, at 1 ("Presiding as toastmaster at the dinner was Marvin H. Taylor, president of the Crimson Alumni Association, who introduced members of the faculty and coaching staff."); Services for War Victims Planned Today, LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL, May 31, 1937, §2, at 4 (Taylor delivered the principal address).

<sup>25</sup> E-mail from Katie Paar, *supra* note 19; Leon Lewis, Roll Book, 1911-1932 (Taylor attended Lewis's Torts and Damages course during the second term of the 1915-1916 year) (on file with the University of Louisville Archives and Special Collections); *Tells of Yanks Crossing Marne*, LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL, Aug. 24, 1918, at 1+ (The article consists of Taylor's recollections of serving in France); *Mlle. On Dit to her Brother "Over There"*, LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL, Sept. 22, 1918, §2, at 4 ("You'd be amazed. . . how many of the multi-starred service flags we can claim. Why, laddie, on the square, on which the family of young Lieut. Marvin

spent a semester at the University of Chicago before completing his legal education at Louisville in 1920.26

Beside his involvement with the law school and UofL, Taylor remained connected to Manual, sitting on the high school's athletic board and holding office in the alumni association.<sup>27</sup> In addition, Taylor sat on the board for the Louisville and Jefferson County Children's Home (also referred to as Ormsby Village).<sup>28</sup>

Taylor also continued his connection with the military as a part of the Kentucky Reserve Officers Association and the American Legion.<sup>29</sup> Interestingly, Taylor was part of an investigation into 'un-

- H. Taylor lives, I counted eleven blue stars gleaming in the windows of the houses on a single square.").
- <sup>26</sup> UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE BULLETIN, 1920-1921, *supra* note 10; Email from Andrew Thompson, University of Chicago Special Collections Research Center Accessions Supervisor, to author (Sept. 3, 2019).
- <sup>27</sup> Davis, *supra* note 24; *Manual Boosters*, The Crimson (du Pont Manual High School, Louisville, Ky.) April 1930, at 233 (Vice-President of Alumni in 1928 and member of the Athletic Board of Control in 1929); Earl Ruby, *Bourbons Gag Flyers 44-0 and Offer to Light Red Field*, Louisville Courier-Journal, Sept. 10, 1934, at 9-10 (Taylor part of Manual athletic board meeting regarding a stadium lighting deal); *T.W. Beard, Sr., Heads Alumni Of Manual*, Louisville Courier-Journal, June 18, 1938, §1, at 8 (Taylor elected as vice-president); *Caldwell Settle Heads Du Pont Alumni*, Louisville Courier-Journal, June 17, 1939, §2, at 1 (Taylor named as trustee).
- <sup>28</sup> Downing Reappointed To Civil Service Board, LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL, Jan. 22, 1941, §2, at 8 (Taylor reappointed to Children's Home board); Ormsby Village Officials Predict Cut In Program, LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL, June 20, 1941, §3, at 1 (Taylor noted that there might be an increase in load on the home during World War II); Eugene D. Hill Named On Orphan Home Board, LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL, §2, at 1 (Hill replaced Taylor on board). A report of the home and a source where it is referred to by both names can be found at, Ormsby Village Called Oustanding [sic] In Report of National Organization, Louisville Courier-Journal, Mar. 24, 1940, §1, at 4.
- <sup>29</sup> E.g., M.L. Sosnin, *National Defense and War Veterans*, LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL, Mar. 21, 1926, §5, at 7 (Encourages pride in the 400<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, of which Taylor was mentioned as the being the secretary); *Officers Honor Lexington Man*, LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL, May 24, 1928, at 3 (Capt. Taylor named as third

American' activities at the University of Louisville conducted by the latter organization in 1935.<sup>30</sup>

A staunch Republican, Taylor served as the party's county election commissioner in addition to his aforementioned candidacy for city council.<sup>31</sup>

Marvin Hunter Taylor died on November 6, 1941 after complications with pneumonia following a surgical procedure. He was survived by his wife, the former Emma Katherine Schmitt, and his son, Marvin Jr. 32

It is difficult to describe Marvin Taylor as ever truly 'missing' with a descendant who has traced their family's history back before the Mayflower, and he certainly would have never seen his own alumni status as any mystery at all. However, his untimely passing during

vice-president of the Reserve Officers' Association); *Louisville Day at Camp Knox to Attract Hundreds Today*, Louisville Courier-Journal, July 25, 1931, at 1+ (Maj. Taylor, president of the Kentucky Reserve Officers' Association, was invited and named in the article).

- $^{30}$  Legion Is to Probe U. of L. 'Red' Activity, LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL, Apr. 21, 1935, §1, at 1+.
- 31 E.g., Ex-Service Men O.K. Ernst and Thatcher, LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL, Oct. 28, 1926, at 2 (Taylor's support given in a political ad in favor of U.S. Senator Richard P. Ernst and Congressman Maurice H. Thatcher); Young Republicans Will Meet Tonight, LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL, Oct. 2, 1935, at 4 (Taylor listed as one of the principal speakers); 12-Man Council Plans to Liberalize G.O.P., LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL, Dec. 20, 1938, §2, at 1 (Taylor listed as member under legal); G.O.P. Here Enlarges Policy Body, LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL, Jan. 11, 1939, §2, at 1 (Taylor again listed as council member; this is a reconfiguration of the previous council, suggesting if nothing else Taylor's status with the local party); Election Body Delays Todd Certification, LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL, Aug. 29, 1939, §2, at 1 (Taylor appointed as the Republican member on the Jefferson County Election Commission); Ten Out of 12 Louisvillians Hail Willkie, LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL, July 27, 1941, §3, at 1 (Taylor not only still supported Wendell Willkie, his opinion of Willkie had improved following the 1940 elec-
- <sup>32</sup> Taylor, supra note 17; Necrology, The Alumni Magazine (U. of Louisville Alumni Ass'n), Dec. 1941, at 12; Schmitt-Taylor, LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL, Oct. 21, 1923, §3, at 6 (The announcement of the wedding).

a period where retention of many records was more haphazard or happenstance than deliberate or scheduled placed him within a particularly broad gap of information, and to navigate that gap to definitively return a century-old alum to the list of law school graduates is quite satisfying.<sup>33</sup>

Thank you for allowing me to share this mystery with you and I wish you the best of luck in your own future sleuthing.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Part of the information gap may have been overcome sooner had I considered searching University Archives for Alumni Association records prior to finalizing this article. Taylor is referred to as 1920 Law graduate in at least three locations within that iteration of the University's alumni periodical, e.g., The Alumni Association of the University of Louisville Officers and Board of Directors, The Alumni Magazine (U. of Louisville Alumni Ass'n), inside front cover (Summer 1935); Alumni Personals, The Alumni Magazine (U. of Louisville Alumni Ass'n), at 7 (Summer 1935); Necrology, supra note 32. Then again, I may not have otherwise had the opportunity to meet Dr. Taylor, read his grandfather's World War I journal, or see that diploma, and that would have been a loss.