



For Labor, Race, and Liberty: George Edwin Taylor, His Historic Run for the White House, and the Making of Independent Black Politics

Bruce L. Mouser

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More than one hundred years before Barack Obama, George Edwin Taylor made presidential history. Born in the antebellum South to a slave and a freed woman, Taylor became the first African American ticketed as a political party's nominee for president of the United States, running against Theodore Roosevelt in 1904.

Orphaned as a child at the peak of the Civil War, Taylor spent several years homeless before boarding a Mississippi riverboat that dropped him in La Crosse, Wisconsin. Taken in by an African American farm family, Taylor attended a private school and eventually rose to prominence as the owner/editor of a labor newspaper and as a vocal leader in Wisconsin's People's Party. At a time when many African Americans felt allegiance to the Republican Party for its support of abolition, Taylor's sympathy with the labor cause drew him first to the national Democratic Party and then to an African American party, the newly formed National Liberty Party, which in 1904 named him its presidential candidate. Bruce L. Mouser follows Taylor's life and career in Arkansas, Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Florida, giving life to a figure representing a generation of African American idealists whose initial post-slavery belief in political and social equality in America gave way to the despair of the Jim Crow decades that followed.

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