

## Vacy Hall Guest House Toowoomba

### The Wedding Gift from Hon James Taylor – “The King of Toowoomba”



James Taylor was born in Clifford, Yorkshire, England in 1820 (exact date unknown). He migrated to Australia in 1840, probably on the “James Pattison”.

Taylor worked in pastoral industries before arriving on the Darling Downs in 1848, he became involved as a partner with Henry Stuart Russell in a substantial property known as Cecil Plains Station which spread 30 miles either side of the Condamine River and became the sole owner of the property in 1859. (Taylor Street in Toowoomba today is the route he took to visit Cecil Plains Station). He married Sarah Boulton in 1850 in the first marriage ceremony performed on the Darling Downs (the wedding was held at Drayton).

They had five sons and four daughters. In 1860, Taylor became the member for the Western Downs in the first Queensland Legislative Assembly.

He set up office in Toowoomba and held the seat until 1870 when he resigned after a dubious land deal in which large areas of the Cecil Plains district were withheld from selection, only to be sold to James Taylor in 1870 (he was Minister for Land at the time). Taylor lost the subsequent election against W.H Groom in the seat of Toowoomba. In 1871, he was offered a seat on the Queensland Legislative Council which he held until 1893, resigning due to ill health. Taylor was the first president of the Toowoomba School of Arts and the Royal Agricultural Society.

He was also involved in the Queensland Turf Club, Queensland Club and the Toowoomba Grammar School. Taylor was a generous donor to the local Anglican parishes. He is also remembered for importing the first steam-driven sawmills to Toowoomba and was a significant land holder (reportedly over 10,000 acres) in the town, including the Royal Hotel in Toowoomba and the iconic early Brisbane home at the mouth of Breakfast Creek, Newstead House (which is now the headquarters of the National Trust in Queensland).

He was a member of the Union Club which commissioned the building of Clifford House (named after Taylor’s birthplace) in Russell Street in 1860. Taylor and his family took up residence in the magnificent sandstone building in 1870 after the club failed financially. In 1873, when his daughter Ann Sophy married Gilbert Gostwyck Cory who was working for Taylor at Cecil Plains, James Taylor had the first Vacy Hall built as a wedding present. Ann and Gilbert Cory moved into Toowoomba and lived at Vacy Hall for the rest of their lives.

In 1890, Taylor was elected mayor of Toowoomba. Taylor died on October 19th 1895 at Clifford House and title of Vacy Hall passed to his daughter Ann in 1897 (and he had maintained control over the property till his death).

#### Sources:

Fletcher, Enid – “Three pioneers of the black soil plains of the Darling Downs”

Anderson, Faye – “Hon. James Taylor” 1974

National Trust of Queensland

LH files – LH/Taylor, James & Sarah