

Blackacre Conservancy

A Place to Discover...

The Tyler Settlement



In 1780 Edward Tyler and his family came from the Virginia frontier to the wilderness that is now Kentucky's Jefferson County. The couple and their children moved first to the settlement of Louisville, where Edward built a tavern and kept warehouses. Then, in 1783, Edward purchased 1,003 acres on Chenoweth Run, east of present Jeffersontown, for his sons and a nephew to farm.

This fertile land was highly suited for farming: springs supplied pure water, and trees and rock outcroppings provided building material. William Tyler, probably the first of the sons to live on this land, established his farm south of present Taylorsville Road. His brother Moses and his cousin Robert came next in about 1785, and before 1790, Edward Sr. and Ann had left Louisville with their youngest son, Edward Jr., to establish the fourth homestead nearby.



(<https://blackacreconservancy.files.wordpress.com/2012/06/visitors-center-copy-stone-cottage-2.jpg>)

Blackacre's original stone cottage, constructed between 1795 and 1800

These farms soon became known as the Tyler Settlement. Three of the four survive today. Each has a stone (or stone and log) house and a springhouse constructed before 1800. Moses' farm—today's Blackacre State Nature Preserve—also has a log barn from the same period. Moses' son, Presley, built Blackacre's brick farm house in 1844. Between their extended family, the Tylers also shared a

cemetery, centrally located on the Settlement, and a system of roads and lanes they established to connect their farms. Some segments of this historic road system—such as our Mann’s Lick Road trail—can still be seen today; others have become public roads.

600 of the Tylers’ original 1,003 acres—located just east of the city of Jeffersontown—have been designated the Tyler Settlement Rural Historic District. The district is loosely bounded by Taylorsville Road on the south, the NorfolkSouthern Railroad on the north, the Gene Snyder Freeway on the east, and the Jeffersontown city limits on the west. In addition to three original Tyler homesteads, the district includes about 17 early 20th-century houses and several recently subdivided developments. Thanks to the efforts of the Blackacre Conservancy and its many advocates, the land in this historic district remains largely preserved in its original, rural state.

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The Tyler Homestead (1785-1881)



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[/2012/06/farmhouse1.jpg](#))

The house wasn't always this bright yellow– it was painted by a previous owner around 1900.

The Moses Tyler Homestead, situated at the center of the Blackacre State Nature Preserve, dates to approximately 1785. As part of the National Register's Tyler Settlement Rural Historic District, the Homestead shelters an 18th-century residence, springhouse, barn, and a pre-Civil War farmhouse, now open to the public as the Blackacre visitors' center.

The Presley Tyler Farmhouse

The Presley Tyler Farmhouse was built in 1844 by a son of Moses Tyler. Constructed in a single-pile, the I-house design of the two-story brick farm house was characteristic of the region. Today, the nine room structure houses the conservancy's office, a caretaker's apartment, and the Presley Tyler Visitor's Center, where patrons can learn about the homestead's history through photo exhibits, maps, and historic relic displays.



(<https://blackacreconservancy.files.wordpress.com>

[/2012/06/stone-cottage.jpg](#))

The c. 1795 Stone Cottage

The Stone Cottage

The Stone Cottage, originally a one story, two-room residence with two stone fireplaces, was constructed between 1795 and 1800. Some believe this to have been the Tyler's original residence; other historians have noticed its similarities to co-existent slave cabins and suspect that it was intended as a slave residence. Regardless, the cottage has served many purposes through its two hundred years, and today it is the private home of the preserve's site biologist. A frame addition was added to the structure in 2000.



(<https://blackacreconservancy.files.wordpress.com>

[/2012/06/barn-2.jpg](#))

The Barn, c. 1900

Double-Crib Appalachian-Style Barn

Based on the style of its construction, the barn would have been built around 1790, the year that Moses Tyler was issued a distillery license. It would have provided storage for corn and other grains fed to livestock. The barn is unique in that it houses two (as opposed to one) large cribs of poplar logs connected, which are connected by a superstructure supporting the roof. The barn was originally covered by shakes, but these were replaced by tin after 1915.

The Spring House



[_https://blackacreconservancy.files.wordpress.com](https://blackacreconservancy.files.wordpress.com)

[/2012/06/barn.jpg](#))

The barn today



[_https://blackacreconservancy.files.wordpress.com](https://blackacreconservancy.files.wordpress.com)

[/2012/06/spring-house.jpg](#))

The Spring House in winter

The Spring House, built of stone probably quarried at the site, is associated with the pre-1800 Stone Cottage. The structure covers a spring emerging from the surrounding limestone and provides a cool lower level for the storage of perishable foods, along with an attic space for additional storage. The pond below the house was created in the 1940's, but it will be allowed to revert to a natural spring over time.

The Smokehouse

The brick Smokehouse was built originally of logs several feet from its current location and was used for smoking meat. Fires were maintained in the building and the smoke preserved the meat hanging from the rafters. The current structure, which covers a dirt floor and contains a wooden trough, is a replica built in the 1940's.

The Carriage House Complex

The Carriage House complex, built in the early-19th century, is constructed of clapboards. It has served many purposes, including possibly a residence. Today it is home to the Jefferson County Public Schools' Blackacre Environmental Education field office. The Road that passes in front of the

farmhouse was once a main road for the district. Some of the original quarried stones are still visible behind the Stone Cottage.

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Before Blackacre: Edward Tyler's Story

The first owner of the Tyler Settlement was Edward Tyler, born in 1719 in Prince Georges County, Maryland. Edward was the grandson of Robert Tyler, a wealthy planter and member of the legislature. In his youth, he lost the inheritance bequeathed to him by Robert and, in about 1740, moved to the Appalachian region of the Virginia frontier. There, he worked as a trader and, in about 1750, married Ann Langley. Their ten children were born in this region.

In 1780, Edward, his wife, and seven of their children came down river to the Falls of Ohio where they settled at Linn's Station on Beargrass Creek. In 1782, Edward purchased a treasury warrant that entitled him to claim over 1,000 acres of land. He located his claim on Chenoweth Run east of present Jeffersontown—today's Tyler Settlement Historic District—where three of his sons and one nephew established farms.

Edward, apparently not a farmer himself, moved into Louisville with Ann and in 1784 began operating a tavern on Main Street near Fort Nelson. He owned additional lots and at least one warehouse in Louisville from which he wholesaled merchandise and in several instances helped supply the army of George Rogers Clark. Edward remained in Louisville until about 1788/89 when a fire destroyed his warehouse. After that he and Ann moved to the Tyler Settlement farm established by their youngest son, who was also named Edward.

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The Families at Blackacre

The Tyler Family: Blackacre's first permanent settlers



(<https://blackacreconservancy.files.wordpress.com/2012/06/mosp5-2.jpg>)

Moses Tyler, the first owner of Blackacre, received the land as a gift from his father Edward Tyler in the late 18th century

Moses Tyler was nearly 82 years old when he deeded his stone house, property, farm, animals, and equipment to his son, Presley, in return for food, lodging, care, and "a suitable horse and decent saddle and bridle." Ten years later, in 1844, Presley built the two-story brick house, painted yellow since the turn of the 20th century, now known as the Presley Tyler Visitors' Center. The houses were situated on a road that connected Middletown to Jeffersontown, although a new road, later called Tucker Station in reference to a railroad stop, replaced the farm road as a public right-of-way by 1879.

Moses Tyler's farm was one portion of an original 1785 treasury grant purchase of 1000 acres made by his father, Edward Tyler. The elder Tyler lived in Louisville with his family for the period of time necessary to construct a farmstead (consisting of a stone, pen-over-pen residence, a spring house, a timber barn, and outbuildings) located about three miles east of Brunerstown (later Jeffersontown). Moses' farm, located roughly within the boundaries of the Blackacre State Nature Preserve, would consist of a stone residence and springhouse, a nearby timber cabin, double-crib poplar barn, and undoubtedly numerous cribs and outbuildings required to maintain the hog, cattle, and corn



(<https://blackacreconservancy.files.wordpress.com/2012/06/presley-2.jpg>)

Presley Tyler, Moses' son and successor, constructed the yellow farmhouse (now the Presley Tyler Visitors' Center) in 1844

productions we know to have been in place. Moses Tyler received a distillery license in 1798, the year the federal government succeeded in establishing tax revenue procedures in Kentucky.

Subsequent Families

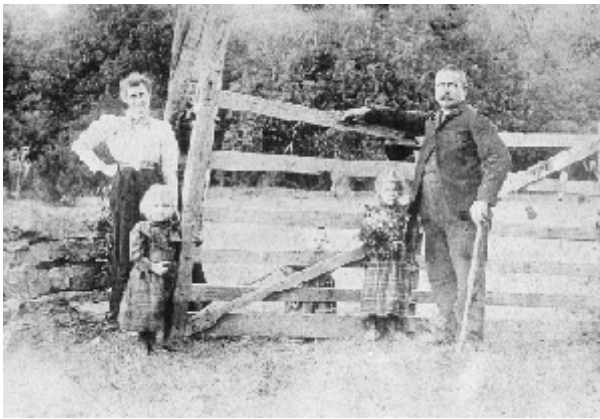


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A young woman rides her buggy through blackacre, c. roughly 1900

Presley Tyler's farm was purchased by a neighbor, Joseph Sweeney, in 1881. The Sweeney family had purchased the Edward Tyler home on the Taylorsville Turnpike and constructed a handsome three-bay brick residence adjacent to the south wall of the original stone residence. Sweeney sold 240 acres of "the old Presley Tyler Place" to John C. Kroeger in 1885. Kroeger's son established a dairy operation at the farm, and nurtured fruit orchards near the house. After Kroeger's death in 1902, local confectionery owner, T.L. Solger, bought the property for use as a summer home. Joseph T. Wheeler acquired the land in 1910 and re-established a farming operation that lasted until 1939, when William Woodward bought the property and installed electricity and modern plumbing in the house. The Woodwards called their new residence Land O' Skye, but when friends Macauley and Emilie Smith purchased it in 1950, Judge Smith renamed the place Blackacre.



(<https://blackacreconservancy.files.wordpress.com>

[/2012/06/fence.gif](#))

A farm family on Blackacre, identity unknown, circa 1900

The Smiths: Visionaries for Blackacre's future

The Smiths lived on the property they called Blackacre starting in 1950. Judge Smith, who delighted in words, named the farm Blackacre, a legal term distinguishing one piece of property from another (called a Whiteacre). In 1975, after Judge Smith left his third term on the Jefferson Circuit Court bench, he and his wife turned their attention to their homestead's preservation. In the face of increasing, encroaching suburban development, they wished to preserve their land in its idyllic state so that future generations might see and learn about farm life.

After nearly thirty years of devoted stewardship, the Smiths donated their 170- acre parcel to the commonwealth on 19 March 1979, dedicating it to the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission for the express purpose of preserving the land for passive recreation and interpretive nature education. Their gift created Kentucky's first state nature preserve.

The Articles of Dedication contained within the deed of conveyance recognized and met the needs of an urban population (such as Louisville) for a convenient, natural place for education and recreation. The principal visitor activities permitted by the Articles of Dedication are observation, walking and study. As a State Nature Preserve (SNP), Blackacre is a legally dedicated area that has been recognized for its natural significance and protected by law for scientific and educational purposes.

After it became clear that the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission would not be able to accept responsibility for the ongoing maintenance of the grounds and structures, the Smiths created the Blackacre Conservancy and established an endowment for the organization. The formation of the Blackacre Conservancy in 1983 was designed to provide an on-going source of financial means to maintain the preserve and the historic homestead.

The Smith family's relationship to Blackacre continues to this day. In the last ten years, the Smiths have helped protect additional property surrounding Blackacre's original 170 acres. Emilie Strong Smith, with support from her son and grandson, purchased 101 additional acres immediately south of the preserve in 1997 to provide a buffer against planned development. This acreage remains in the custody of the Blackacre Conservancy. In addition, the Smiths enabled the Conservancy to purchase a 17-acre easement to the north of the preserve in 2000 to secure the northern boundary from railroad and industrial park incursion.

After over 100 years of life and over sixty on Blackacre's land, Emilie Strong Smith passed away in

April of 2011. Although her presence can still be felt by all who visit her beloved Blackacre, she is and always will be sorely missed by her friends.

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