



The Half Moon

- The Newsletter of the Newtown Historic Association -

Welcome

The Newtown Historic Association presents this newsletter to the Newtown community with the goal of providing news and information on related historic and preservation events in our area. We welcome any suggestions for future articles.

Officers

Barry Fleck, *President*
William Mahler, *First Vice President*
Brian Rounsavill, *Second Vice Pres.*
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Caroline Bennett, *Corresponding Sec.*
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Parliamentarian – Tim Potero

Newtown Historic Association

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Callahan Research Center

100 Mercer Street
Research Center Hours
Tuesday, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
Thursday, 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
And also, by appointment

Upgraded to Contributing Membership

Renee Noel and Wayne Heacock
Sharon and Joseph Hulihan

Upgraded to Distinguished Donor Membership

Patricia and Glenn Beasely
Gina Tognini and Christopher Brill
Christine Edmonds
Jeanne and Stephen Haeckel
Heinz Heinemann
Cristie and David Leder
Christine and Christopher Lilley
Lucinda Sanders

Upgraded to Innkeeper's Circle Individual Life Member

Linda and William Heinemann

Clean-Up Day

Our annual Clean-Up Day was held on Saturday, May 15th and was a huge success. Special thanks to all the volunteers that helped clean, polish and shine the Half-Moon Inn.

Annual Garden Walk

The Newtown Historic Association hosted our annual Garden Walk on Saturday, June 19th, 2021. The main reason for this fundraising event and idea is to share the beauty of our historic and beautiful Newtown, walk together and enjoy some of the many beautiful gardens, and to raise funds for NHA to support our mission to preserve Newtown's history. There were 34 walkers who started this year's walk at the Half-Moon Inn. With 18 gardens to see, the three-mile route included the Boone Garden, St. Luke's Church, Grapevine Health & Nutrition, Linton Park, and gardens

on North State Street, Liberty Street, Penn Street, Court Street, Lafayette Street, Grant Street, and Caldwell Circle.



Homeowners welcomed walkers and answered questions during the stops. Some offered refreshments and snacks to all. The NHA thanks all who participated and those who shared their beautiful gardens.



Speaking of gardens, the Half-Moon Inn Garden is blooming, and Countryside Gardeners continue to weed, trim, and water flowers and shrubs. In the Boone Garden, volunteers are still needed to weed and do upkeep. Those interested may

Half-Moon Inn Summer 2021 Page 2

contact Mary Jo Garner at (215) 858-0939 or Karen Groff at (267) 566-4400.

Summer Cocktail Party

The Newtown Historic Association hosted our annual Summer Cocktail Party on Saturday, June 26th, at the Half-Moon Inn. Almost 90 guests were present. This was an opportunity for people to mingle and meet up with friends and neighbors for the first time in over a year.

The NHA would like to thank everyone who donated food and helped make this a memorable evening. Food donations were made by Newtown's own Nothing Bundt Cakes and Relic on State Street, and NHA Board members. Music was provided by Jeff Sutton. The Half-Moon Inn was decorated with beautiful summer flowers arranged by Lorraine Pentz and Jeannette Rodgers.



The Craig Hackett one-of-a-kind print painted over by hand of Washington's Headquarters was won by Neale Messina. Along with the painting, the winner also received copies of three letters written by General George Washington while he stayed in Newtown during that time, and a discount from Countryside Gallery & Custom Frame Design on State Street to use toward framing the painting.



Market Day

We are pleased to announce that our popular Market Day event is back this year after being cancelled in 2020. This year's raffle will be a \$400 gift certificate to the Inn at Barley Sheaf. There will be over 40 crafters and demonstrators. The hayride, kettle corn, puppet show, and candle dipping will be back, and several restaurants have committed to participate. A co-chairperson is still needed to assist Mary Callahan as well as a crafter co-coordinator to assist Andrea Bayford. And volunteers are needed to assist with a variety of tasks. If you are interested, please contact Mary Callahan at (215) 968-3914 or dcnhh@comcast.net.



Appreciation for the Aark

We received positive feedback about the article on the Aark, which was published in our Spring 2021 newsletter. Many thanks to the author (and our NHA Parliamentarian), Tim Potero.

History Book Club



We are excited to announce the start of a history book club and are currently gathering names of individuals who may be interested in joining us in this new endeavor!

If you are interested, please email info@newtownhistoric.org or leave a message at (215) 968-4004.

Do you have historic items to donate? (pictures, letters, research on a property or family, furniture, etc.) If so, please contact us.

The History of Tyler State Park (Book Available Now; Tour in October)

by Brian Rounsavill

We are extremely fortunate to have Tyler State Park available to us as a free natural resource, playground, and day-to-day escape here in Newtown. There are not many parks around that have either the expansive acreage or deep history of Tyler State Park.

My grandparents (Walter and Bette Gore Benedict) and great grandparents (George and Jane Daisley Gore) owned Ledge Spring Farm, which was on Swamp Road, opposite the park, backing up to the Deubler Farm. Over the years, I heard many stories about the Tylers.

When Covid hit last year, the park served as a sanctuary for many people, but very few are aware of the park's deep and rich history.



Tyler State Park Entrance Sign, 2021.

The park has changed dramatically over the past fifty years. Sadly, it is evident that the number of farmhouses, barns and buildings that have disappeared greatly outnumber the ones that remain standing in the park today. The following is an abbreviated account of the story of Tyler State Park.

Brief History

Presently, Tyler State Park encompasses over 1,700 acres and features a network of over 23.5 miles of interconnected trails, including

more than 10.5 miles of paved trails, 4 miles of hiking trails, and over 9 miles of bridle paths in Newtown and Northampton Townships, Bucks County, Pennsylvania.

The property that is now Tyler State Park was originally inhabited by the Leni Lenape Indians. Colonists purchased some of the land from William Penn in 1682. Through a series of land grants and purchases, many families lived on and farmed the area over the past 300 years.

As the 18th century progressed, landowning families, such as the Coopers, Blakers, and Twinings built mills, houses, and barns on this property. The Neshaminy Creek, which flows north to south centrally through the area, supplied power for several mills, including the Cooper Mill and the Spring Garden Mill. Mills powered by the Neshaminy are said to have ground and furnished flour for our soldiers during the Revolutionary War.

The Tylers

The last private owners of the land, which is now Tyler State Park, were George and Stella Elkins Tyler who purchased the land between 1919 and 1929. Mr. Tyler, a wealthy Philadelphia banker, and his wife, an artist, moved to the area upon his return from a tour of duty during World War I, where he served on the staff of General Pershing.



George and Stella Tyler, circa 1940.

The Tyler's purchased their first farm in 1919, which served as their

weekend country get-a-way until their mansion was constructed in 1930. Neighboring farms soon became available because farmers in the area found it difficult to make a living during the Great Depression, which enabled Tyler to purchase the farms outright from the farmers.

Tyler eventually acquired 11 more farms in Northampton Township to the west of the Neshaminy, owning from Newtown-Richboro Road to Swamp Road, which he called "Neshaminy Farms." Around 1928, Mr. Tyler heard that the Newtown Township side of the creek was going to be developed so, to protect his property, he bought 6 farms on the east side of the Neshaminy, from Spring Garden Mill Bridge up to the Worthington Mill Bridge, which he called "Indian Rock Farms." By 1929, the Tylers had acquired roughly 2,000 acres of the land, which now comprises both Tyler State Park and Bucks County Community College.

The Tylers upgraded the farms by adding plumbing and electricity, and farmers were able to live in some of the farmhouses rent-free, while receiving a nominal wage. They raised crops that were sold at the Spring Garden Mill or used by the Neshaminy Farms Dairy and the Tyler horse farm. The remaining houses were rented out to individuals who did not work on the farms. In all, a total of 23 families lived in 21 farmhouses scattered across the Tyler property.

Indian Council Rock

Upon completion of their land purchases, the Tylers commissioned the design and construction of Tyler Hall. The Tylers chose the location of their Bucks County home in 1928, and its construction began in 1930, which took about a year and one half.

The History of Tyler State Park (cont'd)

The brownstone was quarried from the property and cut by hand. Mrs. Tyler named the estate after the Indian Council Rock that is located behind the mansion over-looking the Neshaminy, as it is said that the rocky cliff was used as a meeting place for local tribal councils.



The Tyler Mansion, circa 1934.

The Tyler mansion was designed in the French Norman style and consisted of 45 main rooms, two dozen fireplaces, a Dutch Room, an English pub (note that there have been unsubstantiated claims that the pub was shipped from Great Britain and reassembled on site), exotic gardens, a greenhouse, clay tennis courts, and a swimming pool. The 300-foot-long mansion had 60 total rooms, several towers, and a castellated balcony.

The Park and College

Upon George Tyler's death in 1947, the Bucks County estate was bequeathed to his wife, who lived there until 1962, when she moved back to Chestnut Hill until her death one year later. Stella Tyler left her entire Newtown property, including the buildings, to Temple University, but the University could not utilize the large property. In 1964, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania purchased the property, which consisted of approximately 2,000

acres at that time, through Project 70 funding. It was developed into a park with Project 500 funds under the Pennsylvania Land and Water Conservation and Reclamation Act.

The park was officially opened on May 25, 1974. In 1965, roughly 200 acres of property was sold to Bucks County for the construction of a community college, and in September of 1965, Bucks County Community College opened. The many buildings of the Tyler Estate have been incorporated into the open and scenic campus of Bucks County Community College.

Decisions, Decisions

When the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania took over the Tyler property in 1964, decisions had to be made regarding which farms and houses could be maintained and which ones should be demolished. Between 1964 and the opening of the park in 1974, many structures were leveled. In an effort to protect and preserve the remaining properties, the Friends of Tyler Park worked with the State to establish priorities for utilizing the properties within the park for: restoration for public use, restoration for private use, and rehabilitation for private use.

Over the years, many properties have vanished due to a combination of vandalism and abandonment, and for the safety of park visitors. The 14 original barns/dwellings that remain today stand as fine examples of early rural Pennsylvania architecture. Today, these historic homes are maintained by the individuals who lease and reside in the Commonwealth-owned structures.

Self-Guided Walking Tour

In October, the Newtown Historic Association will be hosting a new annual event that is designed as a self-guided walking tour of the historic properties and farmhouses scattered throughout the Tyler State Park grounds. The self-guided tour

will begin at 10:00 a.m. at the Boathouse Pavilion on Saturday, October 9th, 2021, and again on Sunday, October 10th, 2021.

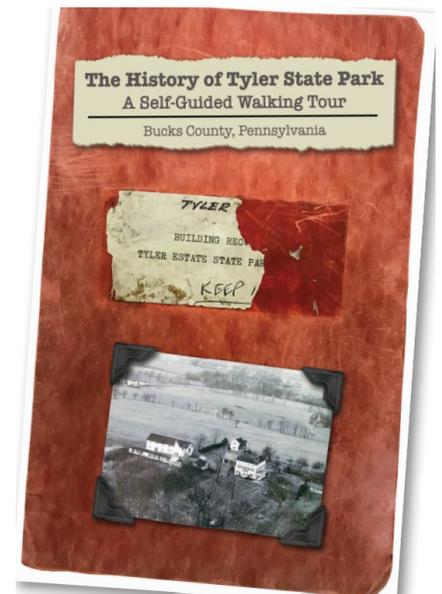
1 Tyler Mansion (BCCC)	13 Blaker Duplex (Blaker #4)
2 John Cooper Farm (Neshaminy Dairy)	14 Tyler Stables (Blaker #5)
3 The Cooper Mill	15 Paul Blaker, Jr. House (Blaker #3)
4 John Twining Farm (Solly Farm)	16 Uriah Delany Farm (Leedom Farm)
5 Schofield Ford Covered Bridge	17 John Cooper Farm (Cooper Farm)
6 Pine Grove Farm (Tomlinson Farm)	18 John Blaker Farm (Dickey Farm)
7 John Tomlinson Farm (Houpt Farm)	19 Spring Garden Mill
8 Amost Twining Farm (Jones Farm)	20 Park Office (Comly Farm)
9 Horace Tomlinson Farm (Glenn Farm)	21 Thomas Buckman (Buckman Farm)
10 Benjamin Cooper Farm (Betz Farm)	22 Newtown Brownstone Quarry
11 Paul Blaker, Sr. Farm (Blaker #2)	23 Dripping Springs
12 Joshua Blaker Farm (Blaker #1)	

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Tyler Park Tour sites.

As part of this ticketed event, representatives from both the Newtown Historic Association and the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources will be on hand to provide a general overview and answer questions at the beginning of each day.

All registrants will receive an informative Tyler Park historical book. This limited-edition, 100-page book contains rare photographs and detailed descriptions of the many historic properties and farmhouses, including the construction of the Tyler mansion, and how they were acquired by the Tyler family in the early 1900s.



Tyler Park History Book cover.

