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The Plaque is Back, Monument at Comfort Tyler Park is updated

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By **The Post-Standard**



Stephen D. Cannerelli / The Post-Standard

The new Comfort Tyler Park monument is at the corner of Comstock Ave and East Colvin Street in Syracuse.

Members of the Outer Comstock Neighborhood Association are hoping the third time is a charm for the monument that stands at attention in Comfort Tyler Park.

Twice a plaque has gone missing over the years from the monument in the park located across from Manley Field House.

A new plaque graces the recently completed and updated monument — finished after several years of dedication and collaboration between the neighborhood association and the City of Syracuse Department of Parks, Recreation and Youth Programs.

The park is named after one of the first settlers of Onondaga County and includes a granite monument surrounded by decorative fencing along with pavers in a circular pattern, a bench and restored flagpole.

“We all worked together to honor Comfort Tyler,” said John Walsh, deputy parks commissioner. “It really looks good and makes the monument stand out. We are really happy with it.”

Gloria Sage, president of the neighborhood association, seconds that notion.

“This was done right. It is beautiful and will last,” Sage said. “It is nice for people to see who the park is named after.”

Over the years there were some challenges to get to this point.

The Daughters of the American Revolution dedicated the original plaque, honoring Tyler and detailing his life, in 1941. As time passed, the park fell into disuse and neglect. By the early 1990s, the plaque had disappeared from the concrete base and there was only a small piece of monument left where the flagpole had been.

What had once been there to honor the park’s namesake was a distant memory until a member of the Outer Comstock Neighborhood Association began asking questions about the former monument.

A fellow member and editor of the association's newsletter, Kathleen Scutt, agreed to do some research to find out.

Scutt, who has a degree in history, took an interest in investigating further at the Onondaga Historical Association where the story of Comfort Tyler and the original plaque was eventually found.

Scutt learned about the bronze plaque established in 1941 and the life of Tyler.

He was born on Feb. 22, 1764 in Ashford, Conn. and came to Onondaga County in May 1788.

Tyler served in the American Revolutionary War at the age of 14 and was one of the first permanent settlers of Onondaga County.

He became a very prominent and well-respected man wearing a multitude of hats. Among his many careers, he was a school teacher, surveyor, postmaster, coroner, county clerk, salt manufacturer, member of the state legislature and sheriff. He was responsible for the creation of roads and schools along with the improvement of the environment around him.

Tyler died in Montezuma in August 1827 and is buried in Oakwood Cemetery.

Local Native Americans were fond of Tyler and named him "To-whau-ta-qua" — one can do two things at once, capable of work and, at the same time, being a gentleman.

Under Sage's leadership, the neighborhood association adopted Comfort Tyler Park and secured funding to replace the plaque once affixed to the monument. When the new plaque was rededicated at the park in 2006, Jacqueline Kelley, who was the Regent of the Comfort Tyler Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, gave the same speech that was given the same exact day 65 years earlier, at the original dedication.

Within a year, though, the plaque was stolen from the park. Authorities theorize the bronze was sold for scrap.

Sage and Scutt spent much time searching for the plaque. Calls were made to every junkyard in the county and surrounding areas. They also contacted news outlets in an effort to find it — to no avail.

But volunteers were determined to replace it and found grant money through the city of Syracuse Tomorrow's Neighborhoods Today and the city parks department.

In 2009, a new granite stone monument was unveiled. But the work did not stop there.

The group felt the stone seemed bare. The area surrounding the granite stone was transformed to complement the monument, with the final piece completed just last month.

Plaque No. 3 is in place.

"I feel wonderful that the parks department has taken an interest in it," said Kelley, a 30-year member and now

Past-Regent of the Comfort Tyler Chapter of the DAR.

Park visitors can reflect on the new monument while taking a rest on the nearby bench, as well as stroll along the tree-lined paths. There is also a playground, built in 2007, tennis courts, a baseball diamond and two half-basketball courts.

The neighborhood association was incorporated as a non-profit organization in 1979 and represents the area bordered between East Colvin Street, Skytop, Ainsley Drive and Brighton Avenue.

Among other things, its bylaws say the group strives to promote and preserve a neighborhood environment that is pleasant, attractive, safe, healthy and otherwise conducive to the well being of the residents.

Completing the monument takes a big step in that direction, association members say.

"We take a lot of pride in our park and, in addition to the monument, we have annual clean-ups and plantings," Scutt said. "It has taken a lot of work to get this far and we feel a sense of accomplishment now that is restored. Not only has this project brought us all together but we learned history at the same time."

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