

Robert B. Tyler 1933 & 1940

From *The History of Jasper County* starting at page 717

Dr. Robert B. Tyler -- In all Joplin, indeed in the whole of Jasper county, there is no man in any walk of life who is more respected and loved by old and young, by rich and poor alike than is Dr. Robert B. Tyler. His whole life has been spent in seeking to benefit others; his one ambition has been to serve his fellowmen. His maxim is to look up, not down, to look out, not in, and lend a hand. His knowledge of human nature has taught him to look upon the errors of others in sorrow, not in anger. From the time when he was a mere lad he had had great determination of purpose, balanced by good common sense. He has made his own way in the world and knows how to appreciate the difficulties of a man struggling to gain a livelihood or of a student striving to acquire an education. Although he is very positive in his opinions, he is most charitable toward the views of others and does not insist that it is necessary to think his thoughts in order to be right. In short, he is a man whom to know is to love and admire.

Robert B. Tyler was born in Westmoreland county, Virginia, March 12, 1854. His father, Walter Hannibal Tyler, grandson of John Tyler, was also a native of Virginia, the family being of English descent. Walther Hannibal's entry into this world was made in 1801. The scene was a large cotton plantation of over two thousand acres, worked by several hundred slaves. Wealth surrounded him and enveloped him. He inherited his father's acres but was also a physician and surgeon. Possibly it was because of this profession and the misery with which he was brought in contact that he was led to believe the slavery system was all wrong. At any rate when the Civil war broke out he sided with the Northerners, lost everything he possessed and moved with his family to Washington, District of Columbia. He had married Julia Grimshaw, a beautiful lady of Virginia birth, whose family had lived in Kentucky for many generations and were related to John C. Breckenridge. She died when Robert was an infant and was thus spared the privations which her family endured. Walter Hannibal died in March, 1863, at the age of sixty-two.

Robert was a proud spirited little lad, very large for his years. During the first year of the war he had heard much about it and he was filled with the boyish longing for adventure; perhaps, too, even at a very early age he was fired with the desire to help the slaves in their fight for freedom. At any rate, when he was but eight years old, April 10, 1862, he ran away from home, after his father had refused his permission to allow one of such a tender age to leave the parental roof. He succeeded in securing a berth as cabin boy in the United States navy; because of his mature appearance and actions the officers thought he was much older than he really was. He was a participant at the battle of Fort Sumter and other fights that took place in the middle and southern Atlantic. Having once started out, his brave spirit was undaunted by the scenes of horror which he witnessed or the hardships he was forced to endure. He continued in the navy for three years and six months, until the close of the war in October, 1865. About a year after he left home his father died, so that the boy, a man in experience but a babe in book knowledge and years found himself at the age of eleven alone and almost destitute. He went to Binghamton, New York, and, realizing that if he was to grow up to be a man of whom his Virginia ancestors might be proud -- if they were living -- the first thing necessary was for him to acquire an education. He entered the public schools in Binghamton and by dint of hard work added to his naturally quick mind, and he got through school when he was no older than the rest of his fellow students. For the next seven years he taught in various parts of New York state; his teaching, however, successful though it was, was not the height of his ambition. He earned a livelihood in the pedagogical field and at the same time read and studied medicine. At the end of seven years he abandoned teaching and entered the office of Dr. H.H. Ney, of Wellsville, New York, and studied under him for two years. He proved a most capable assistant and pupil, but unless he received his diploma he would never be able to be anything more than an assistant, so, with the approval of Dr. Nye, he entered the Buffalo, New York, Medical College and was graduated in 1879. He returned to Wellsville and entered into partnership with his old friend and teacher, Dr. Nye. The arrangement was highly satisfactory to both doctors and their patients and continued until October, 1881, when he decided to strike out for himself. He came west and arrived in Joplin October 8, 1881. At that time Joplin was only a mining camp and there were very few physicians here. He foresaw, however, that in time it would be the prosperous, thriving center it now is and so started his work. He has been here in the practice continuously ever since (1911) excepting some few months spent each year in hospital work in New York, Chicago and St. Louis. He specializes in gynecology and obstetrics and is one of the leading physicians in the southwest. He is progressive in his methods of treatment and there is no new theory or discovery in connection with his profession that does not receive his immediate examination and scrutiny. He is a member of the city, county, state and American

Medical associations. For a number of years he was president of the Jasper County Medical Society and for thirteen years he was local surgeon for the Kansas City, Fort Scott and Memphis Railroad (now the Frisco System) and also local surgeon for the Missouri Pacific Railroad. It might be thought that a man who has attained such eminence in his profession would not have the leisure to do anything else, but it is not so with Dr. Tyler. He is an active factor in politics; he is an ardent Republican and was mayor of Joplin in 1890 and 1891, the first mayor under the present charter converting the town from a mining camp to a city. He is at present (1911) a candidate for mayor and it is whispered will probably be a candidate for congress. If there were more such men as Dr. Tyler in politics the system would not be so vituperated as it is today. Dr. Tyler, however, is hopeful; in politics as well as in religion, he looks forward and not backward for the millennium. Outside of his practice the Doctor conducts a well-established and fully equipped drug store, situated at 922 Main street. He owns valuable farm lands in the county and has at various times been active in mining. He is recognized as the first man in this section to raise thoroughbred horses. He has raised, trained and raced some of the best thoroughbreds on the turf, both trotters and pacers.

April 18, 1882, soon after his arrival in Joplin, Dr. Tyler married Miss Maggie Heathwood, daughter of Thomas Heathwood of Massachusetts, a woman as beautiful in spirit as she is strong, calm, deliberate, dignified, leisurely. She is gay, graceful, sprightly, sympathetic. She is severe upon occasion and upon occasion playful. She has fancies, dreams, romances, ideas. She organizes neatness, order and comfort, but they are merely the foundation whereon rises the temple of her home, beautiful for situation, the joy of her family. This union has been blessed with four children. Walther H., was born in Joplin, January 19, 1884. He is married to Ora Elizabeth Sowder and is associated with his father in the drug store. Robert M., born Joplin, May 23, 1887, married Miss Pearl King, whose family are residents of Joplin; he is engaged in the oil business. Dorothy F., born in Joplin, September 24, 1893, is now attending high school here (1911). Harry B., born in Joplin, May 30, 1898, is now in the grammar school here.

Dr. Tyler is a member of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, of the Modern Woodmen of America and of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks. In each one of these orders there is no man who is better known and more popular than Dr. Tyler. He is a member of the First Presbyterian church and his membership is not honorary but active. Indeed it would be impossible for Dr. Tyler to be associated with any movement, whether professional, political or religious and not perform the duties pertaining thereto. He is one of the youngest members of the Grand Army of the Republic. Indeed if one did not know his history it would seem

incredible that one of his years could have taken part in the Civil war. Dr. Tyler is a very pleasant, hospitable gentleman. He has always been very charitable and it is said has done more for the poor of Joplin than any other individual in the city. He is known as the Poor Man's Friend. He is a great lover of children and he is known and loved by every child in town. He stands for right, honesty and justice tempered with mercy. In regard to his many other noble characteristics the tenor of his life speaks. It is safe to say that the good that he has done will not be interred with his bones, but will live and thrive and grown even after he has crossed the threshold.

ADDENDUM :

He attended the last Missouri GAR encampment in 1940 representing Post 14. He lists his service as USS Racer, Navy. He lived at 2228 Pearl St, Joplin. It is possible that he remarried later in years as his wife is listed as Rosa Tyler age 63 on his death certificate. On April 2 1941 he died from colon cancer. He is buried at Fairview Cemetery, Joplin, Mo.

MISSOURI STATE BOARD OF HEALTH
STANDARD CERTIFICATE OF DEATH

10997

State File No. _____

Registration District No. 411

Primary Registration District No. 2002

Registrar's No. _____

1. PLACE OF DEATH: **Jasper**

(a) County: **Jasper**

(b) City or town: **Joplin**
(If outside city or town limits, write "RURAL" and name of township)

(c) Name of hospital or institution: **none**
(If not in hospital or institution, write street number or location)

(d) Length of stay: In hospital or institution: _____
(Specify whether in this community years, months or days)

In this community: **Sixty Years**

2. USUAL RESIDENCE OF DECEASED.

(a) State: **Missouri** (b) County: **Jasper** **49**

(c) City or town: **Joplin Missouri**
(If outside city or town limits, write "RURAL") **2**

(d) Street No. **2228 Pearl st.**
(If rural, give location) **5**

(e) If foreign born, how long in U. S. A.? **0** years.

3. (a) PRINT FULL NAME: **Robert B. Tyler.**

3. (b) If veteran, name war: **Civil War Vet** 3. (c) Social Security No. _____

4. Sex: **M.** 5. Color or race: **W** 6. (a) Single, widowed, married, divorced: **Married.**

6. (b) Name of husband or wife: **Rosa Tyler.** 6. (c) Age of husband or wife if alive: **65** years

7. Birth date of deceased: **March 12th - 1854.**
(Month) (Day) (Year)

8. AGE: Years **87** Months **0** Days **21** If less than one day _____ hr. _____ min.

9. Birthplace: **Virginia.**
(City, town, or county) (State or foreign country)

10. Usual occupation: **Physician.**

11. Industry or business: **same**

MOTHER FATHER

12. Name: **No record**

13. Birthplace: **No record** **9**
(City, town, or county) (State or foreign country)

14. Maiden name: **no record**

15. Birthplace: **no record** **9**
(City, town, or county) (State or foreign country)

16. (a) Informant: **Mr. Rosa Tyler**

(b) Address: **Joplin Mo.**

17. (a) Burial, cremation, or removal: **Burial** (b) Date thereof: **4-4th 1941**
(Month) (Day) (Year)

(c) Place: burial or cremation: **Fairview cemetery**

18. (a) Signature of funeral director: **Funeral Home Co.**

(b) Address: **Joplin Mo.**

19. (a) **4-3-41** (b) **Ed. H. James**
(Date received local registrar) (Registrar's signature)

MEDICAL CERTIFICATION

20. DATE OF DEATH: Month **4** day **2**
year **1941.** hour **3** minute **45** a.m.

21. I hereby certify that I attended the deceased from **Mar. 20**, 19**41**, to **Apr. 2**, 19**41**, that I last saw her alive on **Apr. 1**, 19**41**, and that death occurred on the date and hour stated above.

Immediate cause of death: **Carcinoma of right colon - (bowel obstruction)**

Due to: _____

Due to: **Similarity - Hip**

Other conditions: **Similarity - Hip**
(Include pregnancy within 3 months of death)

Major findings: _____

Of operations: _____

Of autopsy: _____

Duration **5**

PHYSICIAN

Underline the cause to which death should be charged statistically.

22. If death was due to external causes, fill in the following:

(a) Accident, suicide, or homicide (specify) _____

(b) Date of occurrence: _____

(c) Where did injury occur? _____
(City or town) (County) (State)

(d) Did injury occur in or about home, on farm, in industrial place, in public place? **372**

While at work? _____ (Specify type of place)

Means of injury: _____

23. Signature: **Rash. L. Huff** (M.D. certificate) **Q.M.D.**

Address: **Joplin Mo.** Date signed: **4/7/41**

DR. ROBERT BLAKE TYLER

Mar. 12, 1854 - Apr. 2, 1941

"Little Robby" Blake Tyler was "quite probably" the latest born of all naval veterans of the war—certainly no inconsiderable distinction. It is likely that he was both latest born and the youngest on enlistment of all who served in the Union Navy. It is well that a navy man appear among the dozen latest-born youngest, for youthful lads of Tyler's era were proverbial for filling out the ranks in shipboard complements; they were known for cheerfully performing the more humble duties on a man-of-war. Even though holding the less-than-awesome grades of Apprentice Boy, Third Class Boy, Second Class Boy, or First Class Boy, these fellows, too, could accurately call themselves man-of-wars-men. By birth, Tyler does appear to have been among our very youngest bluejackets, being seven months junior to the mythopoeic Albert Tisdale of South Framingham, Massachusetts—Tisdale, who himself was eight months junior to young Nicholson from the District of Columbia area. (See Appendix G that sets forth a sampling of the very youngest.)

Born at Hague, Westmoreland County, Virginia, to Walter Hannibal Tyler—a nephew of another Virginia native, John Tyler (Mar. 29, 1790-Jan. 18, 1862), tenth president of the United States—and Julia Grimshaw, also a Virginia native, Robert was but an infant when she died. Julia's family had lived in Kentucky for many generations and were kinfolk to John C. Breckinridge, James Buchanan's vice president.¹ Robert's father, Walter (1801-1863) grew up on a large cotton plantation worked by several hundred slaves. Though he was wealthy and inherited the 2000 acres, Walter was a physician-surgeon. Because he was not comfortable with some of the miserable misfortunes of slavery and, possibly, wanting improved prospects as a doctor, when the war broke out he sided with the North. Consequently, he lost EVERYTHING when he moved the family to Washington, D.C. However, we can be reasonably sure that the good doctor in his final years and months was a life saver and life extender for scores {perhaps hundreds} of unfortunate wounded. Few citizens led busier lives than surgeons during the War of the Sixties. Such demands may likely have shortened this humanitarian's own years, for he died while his son was afloat with the Union Navy. {Noticeably, orphanhood operated as a qualifier for youthful duty.}

During 1861, Robert, large for all his extreme youth, was brimming with excitement over every little piece of war news. He longed for adventure. He wanted to help free the slaves—to do something heroic. Time and again his father refused him the needed permission to join up. After two years of longing, Robert, now 4' 7½" and one month beyond his ninth birthday, ran away from home and, giving his age as fourteen, enlisted on Apr. 10, 1863, at Piney Point, Maryland. He signed aboard USS RACER for one year as Second Class Boy. But his duty aboard the 252-ton, 105 foot long, 18' 10" beam, 9' 6" draft, mortar schooner lasted until Oct. 30, 1864. Purchased by the U. S. Government in August 1861 and sold in 1865, RACER carried two 32-pound guns and a 13" mortar. One action little tar Tyler witnessed occurred July 18, 1863, when USS JACOB BELL (Acting Master, Schulze) with USS RESOLUTE and USS RACER in company drove off Confederate troops firing on the GEORGE PEABODY, aground at Mathias Point, Virginia.² Because of Robert's mature appearance and conduct, his officers believed him older.

¹ The brilliant orator-statesman James Cabell Breckinridge (1821-1875), a native of Lexington, Kentucky, and a major (3rd Kentucky Vols.) in the Mexican War, was nominated in June 1860 at Baltimore for President by the Seceding Delegates (one of two Southern Splits) of the Democratic party. Ironically, the Breckinridge platform avowed to carry slavery into the Territories at any cost. He helped organize the provisional government of Confederate Kentucky. In November 1861 he was made a brigadier general under Albert S. Johnston and served well at Shiloh. Defending Vicksburg, he was promoted to major general. Breckinridge was a division commander at Murfreesboro and Cold Harbor. He was the most popular man in Kentucky during 1868-1875.

² *Civil War Naval Chronology 1861-1865*, 111-118.

From Oct. 30, 1864, to Jan. 31, 1865, Robert, now a First Class Boy, served aboard USS LODONA, an iron ship and screw steamer whose maximum speed was seven knots. LODONA, carrying one 100-pound Parrott rifle, one 30-pound Parrott rifle, one 9-pounder Dahlgren gun, and four 24-pound howitzers, drew duty with the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron, its area being Sapelo Sound, Georgia.³ Sold by the U. S. Government in 1865, LODONA was 750 tons, 210 feet long, 27' 6" in her beam, and required 16' 5.5" of water.

Robert, still only ten years old, was now assigned to his third ship, USS JOHN ADAMS, on which he continued duties as powder boy Feb. 1 - June 30, 1865, and finally as Cabin Steward July 1 - Sept. 22, 1865. One of the oldest craft in the Union Navy, the 700-ton, 127' ADAMS was launched at Charleston, South Carolina, on June 5, 1799, and finally decommissioned and sold Oct. 5, 1867, at Boston, Massachusetts.⁴ During Robert's tour aboard ADAMS she was stationed at Morris Island inside Charleston Bar, near Fort Sumter, having for her armament one 30-pound Dahlgren, one 30-pound Parrott, two 8" 55 CWT's, four 32-pounders, and two 20-pound Dahlgrens. During his thirty months in the Union Navy Robert saw his full share of adventure. At age eleven years and six months, he was paid off in full on Sept. 22, 1865, and discharged at Boston. A Civil War veteran destitute of family, lacking book knowledge, the lad was very much alone. He knew he must acquire an education, must grow up to be a man worthy of his Virginia/Kentucky ancestry. His folks might have already been proud of him had they lived.

Robert went to Binghamton, New York, where he studied in the public schools. With a quick mind he got through the curriculum when no older than his classmates. For seven years young Tyler performed effectively as a schoolmaster at various points across New York State. While teaching, he read medical books, wishing to follow in his father's profession. One day he entered the employ of Dr. H. H. Nye in Wellsville, New York, and studied for two years under him. Because he realized he could never be more than an assistant unless he earned a medical degree, he entered the Medical College at Buffalo, entered with Dr. Nye's hearty approval, and graduated in 1879. Dr. Tyler immediately became a partner with Dr. Nye, and their joint practice flourished until the young doctor chose to go west. He went directly to Joplin, Missouri, a mining camp without qualified physicians, arriving Oct. 8, 1881. In time, Dr. Tyler, by spending a few months each year in New York, Chicago, or St. Louis hospitals, specialized in gynecology and obstetrics.

A detailed account of Dr. Tyler's achievements may be found in Joel T. Livingston's 1911 *History of Jasper County, Missouri*, pp. 717-719:

He is progressive in his methods of treatment. . . no new theory or discovery. . . that does not receive his immediate scrutiny. He is a member of the city, state and American Medical Associations. For several years he was president of the Jasper County Medical Society and for thirteen he was local surgeon for the Kansas City, Fort Scott and Memphis Railroad (now the Frisco System) and also for the Missouri Pacific Railroad. . . He is an ardent Republican and was mayor of Joplin in 1890-91, the first mayor under the present charter, converting the town from a mining camp to a city. . . He owns valuable farmlands and has been active in mining. He is recognized as the first man in this section to raise thoroughbred horses. He has raised, trained and raced some of the best thoroughbreds on the turf, both trotters and pacers.

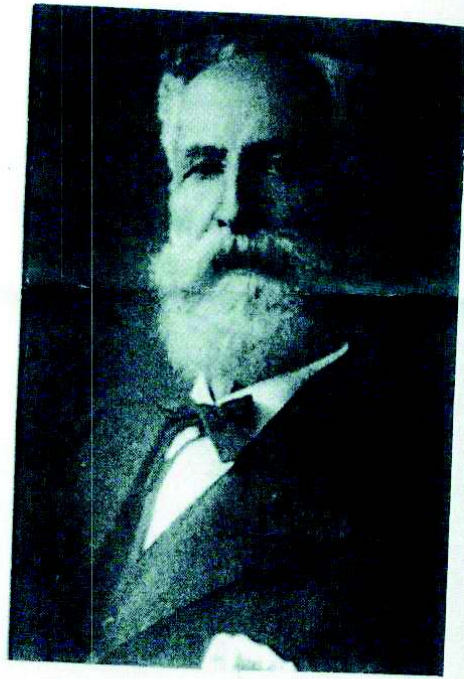
On April 18, 1882, Dr. Tyler married Miss Sarah Maggie Heathwood, daughter of Thomas Heathwood, of Massachusetts. Their four children were Walter H., 1884; Robert M., 1887; Dorothy F., 1893; Harry B., 1898. Sometime prior to 1915 this marriage was ended by divorce. On Mar. 31,

3 *American Naval Fighting Ships*, Vol. IV, p. 132.

4 *American Naval Fighting Ships*, Vol. III, p. 521.

**Dr. Robert B. Tyler
at 82**

Courtesy, Joplin Historical Museum



1917, he married Rosa Olson of Joplin, who would survive him. At the time of his initial application for a Civil War pension, Mar. 24, 1904, he was 5' 8", weighed 137, and had brown eyes and gray hair.

In his Mar. 10, 1976 letter from Joplin, Winfield L. Post, M.D., F.A.C.S. (Fellow of the American College of Surgeons), explains—

Your recent letter to our city clerk was referred to the Joplin Historical Society's Dorothea B. Hoover Museum. It happens that Dr. Tyler attended my wife's birth and that of the late Dorothea Hoover. Dr. Tyler was a prominent physician and civic leader--dapper, small, energetic, a man with a flair. He was a member of the Odd Fellows, The Modern Woodmen of America, the Elks, the First Presbyterian Church, and, incredibly, the G.A.R.--O. P. Morton Post 14.

In his March 13, 1976 letter from Joplin, Victor J. Hinton shares further details—

Dr. Post is a near neighbor and, like myself, a member of the Joplin Historical Society. Dr. Tyler presided at my birth in 1894, and at the birth of Dr. Post's wife, Elizabeth, as well as at hundreds of other new Joplin citizens shortly after Joplin became a new lead and zinc mining town in 1873. He practiced medicine here until his death. We have no detailed record of him from 1911 on, but he was a busy doctor. At one time he was a partner with my Uncle Robert Lisch in the Tyler & Lisch Drug Store, where he had his office in the back. This store later became Miners' Drug. Dr. Tyler was mayor of Joplin four different terms, two before 1911 and two after. He was buried in Joplin's Fairview Cemetery, laid out and surveyed in 1873.

Dr. Robert Tyler was apparently *the* youngest comrade of the G.A.R. from the time of Mancil V. Root's accidental death on July 6, 1929, until his own passing on Apr. 2, 1941, a period of nearly twelve years. Dr. Tyler did finally meet *the* two other veterans who were runners-up to him in youth, met them at the 1938 Gettysburg Blue-Gray Reunion—Benjamin Franklin Williams (3/7/1854-8/26/1943) of Louvale, Georgia; Charles E. Merrick (3/4/1854 - 10/11/1943) of Los Angeles, California. He also made friends there with the youthful Lewis H. Easterly.

