

## *Last surviving grandson of President John Tyler passes away at age 96*

*On May 25, 2025, the last surviving grandson of President John Tyler, Harrison Ruffin Tyler, passed away at age 96 near Richmond, Virginia. Many members of the Society of the War of 1812 remember fondly Mr. Tyler's appearances at the Tyler family gathering each year at Hollywood Cemetery, Richmond, Virginia, on March 29 to observe the birthday of the 10<sup>th</sup> president, John Tyler. The president served as a captain in the Charles City County militia two different times in the War of 1812. Enclosed is a copy of his obituary from the Virginia Gazette, Saturday, May 31, 2025.*

## Grandson of 10th US president dies at 96

Harrison Tyler  
was a preserver of  
Virginia history

By Wilford Kale  
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In a unique piece of American history trivia, Harrison Ruffin Tyler has died, 184 years after his grandfather, President John Tyler, became the nation's 10th chief executive in 1841. He was the former president's last living grandson.

Harrison Tyler, who lived for many years at the Tyler estate — Sherwood Forest Plantation in Charles City County — died May 25 in Richmond at the age of 96. The cause of death was not immediately released.

Harrison Tyler had an older brother, Lyon Gardiner Tyler Jr., who died five years earlier in 2020 in Franklin, Tennessee, at age 95. Both men were sons of Lyon Gardiner Tyler Sr., the youngest son of the former president, who fathered 15 children. Another grandson, their cousin, David Gardiner Tyler Jr. of Charles City, was the son of the president's eldest son by his second wife, Julia Gardiner. He died in 1993 at age 95 and from 1934-1970 served as assistant attorney general of Virginia.

For many years, Harrison Tyler captured national attention in various forms. In November 1958 he appeared on the CBS television show "I've Got a Secret," in a New Yorker magazine profile in January 2012 and on a CBS Evening News segment in 2018.

In the New Yorker magazine interview, Tyler was asked how someone born in 1790 could still have living grandchildren.

"Both my grandfather — the president — and my father were married twice," he answered. "And they had children by their first wives. When their first wives died,

they married again and had more children. And my father was 75 when I was born; his father, my grandfather, was 63 when he was born."

President John Tyler had been dead 66 years when Harrison was born.

"(Harrison) will be remembered for his considerable charm, generosity and unfailing good humor by all who knew him," said Annique Dunning, the executive director of the Sherwood Forest Foundation. "He was a beloved father and grandfather. He will be missed immeasurably by those who survive him."

Harrison Tyler received a bachelor's degree in chemistry from William & Mary in 1948 and a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering in 1951 from Virginia Tech. As a chemical engineer, he co-founded Chem Treat Inc., an industrial water treatment company, which was sold in 2000.

His work as a preservationist and philanthropist often overrode his business accomplishments. He played a role in preserving historical sites including Sherwood Forest and Fort Pocahontas, a Union fort during the Civil War.

Among his philanthropic endeavors was a \$5 million gift to establish an endowment in the William & Mary history department. It was to honor his father, the school's 17th president, who served from 1888-1919. He also gave the school about 22,000 books and documents and other memorabilia of the former W&M president.

Subsequently, the department was named the Lyon Gardiner Tyler Department of History. However, after 2020 many colleges began to remove names of buildings, schools and programs for people associated with

the Confederacy. William & Mary also made changes, including removing President John Tyler's name from an academic building.

The William & Mary Board of Visitors also voted to rename the history department after Harrison Ruffin Tyler, its benefactor. His father, Lyon Tyler, had espoused feeling for the Confederacy and in 1929 wrote "A Confederate Catechism," defending the South.

The Tyler family is considered among the first families of Virginia. President Tyler's father was John Tyler Sr., often called Judge Tyler. He was a personal and political friend and college roommate of Thomas Jefferson. He was born in James City County in 1747 and served in the House of Delegates from 1778-1786 and was later Virginia's 15th governor.

Before serving as president, John Tyler was governor of Virginia, 1825-1827, and senator, 1827-1836. He ran on the Whig Party ticket in 1840 with William Henry Harrison, another Virginian, and retired Army general, under the campaign slogan, "Tippecanoe and Tyler Too." They defeated incumbent president Martin Van Buren.

President Harrison developed a case of pneumonia after his inaugural address in March 1841 and died a month later. Tyler became the first vice president to succeed to the presidency upon the death of a president and was the first president never elected to office.

The Whig Party did not nominate him for president in 1844 and he returned to his home at Sherwood Forest.

The Associated Press contributed to this story.

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Harrison Tyler