

Historic Sites & Markers

Morley's Settlement

Morley's Settlement (or "Yelrome"), a Mormon community of some seventy families, once thrived (1839-1845) twenty-five miles south of Nauvoo, Illinois. It no longer exists and is all but erased from the landscape. Today, tiny Tioga sits on some of the Morley Settlement properties. Anti-Mormon arsonists burned Morley's Settlement to the ground in the fall of 1845, ending its existence. To date, no in-depth history of the settlement, the arson, or the murder of Edmund Durfee that was part of that terribly story, has been written. What follows is a beginning attempt to fill that void.

So wrote William G. Hartley in the Preface to his booklet, *The 1845 Burning of Morley's Settlement and Murder of Edmund Durfee*.¹

Because of the obscurity of Morley's Settlement, the families of Edmund Durfee decided to erect a marker at the town site. After much research, and with the help of several residents of present-day Tioga, which was built on the old Morley's Settlement, a marker was created. Jim Peters at Interpretive Graphics designed the marker and saw it to completion. A work crew from Nauvoo Restoration, Inc. helped install the marker on 28 April 1997. Later that year, on 2 August 1997, the Durfee descendants gathered at Tioga for its dedication.

Location of Morley's Settlement²

The present town of Tioga is located in the thirty-six-square mile township called Walker Township in Hancock County.

Tioga is in Walker Township's section 32, or in the second section from the west on the township's bottom or last row of sections. A major Illinois state highway runs north-south along Walker Township's western side, highway 96, which connects Hamilton (just east of Keokuk and south of Nauvoo) to Quincy. Tioga is reached from State 96 by driving 1.5 miles east on paved County Road 22. Tioga's turnoff is marked on State 96 for drivers coming from the north and from the south.³

Morley's Settlement spreads across three of the square-mile sections in Walker Township's southwestern corner: section 32 (the location of Tioga), section 31 (west of 32), and 29 (north of section 32).

It is clear that Saints moved onto land and farmed it and lived there before any of them formally purchased the land. It is also clear that most did not buy land but lived on lands that their fellow-members bought—the Morleys, Hancocks, and Carters, and others. They leased, rented, or squatted, while they farmed and built their log homes.⁴

Following is the text of the marker, which also includes an illustration based on C. C. A. Christensen's "Attack at the Hancock Home." This was commissioned at the request of Solomon Hancock's son, Charles B. Hancock, a witness to the burnings and the murder.

Morley's Settlement

This was the site of Morley's Settlement, 1839-1846. The log homes and cabins, fenced farms and corrals of 400-500 Mormons (members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) spread out for more than a mile northeast, north, and west of here. The people had come as religious refugees, forced from Missouri.

The settlement was named after founder and president Isaac Morley (and was sometimes called "Yelrome"—Morley spelled backward). LDS prophet Joseph Smith often preached here. LDS poet Eliza R. Snow lived here in 1843-44. Morley's barrel shop sold barrels in Quincy. Frederick Cox operated a chair-making shop. The settlement had four stores. Cordelia Morley taught school here. "Morley Town," the settlement's heart, had north-south and east-west streets running for three blocks east and three blocks north of this marker.

Not quite three miles southwest of here, other Mormons settled in an existing town, Lima (Adams County). Mormons in both settlements together formed the Lima Branch (or Stake) of the LDS Church. Branch records for 1842 list families (living in both settlements) named Morley, Hancock, Durfee, Miner, Curtis, Carter, Cox, Whiting, King, Call, Brown, Winn, Garner, Gardner, Tidwell, Thornton, Casper, Benner, Clawson, Vorheese, Snow, Dudley, Scott, Blair, Wimmer, Critchlow, Hickenlooper, Rose, and many others.⁵

In September 1845, when Mormons and non-Mormons clashed in Hancock County, the latter torched scores (some reports say 125) of Morley's Settlement houses and outbuildings. Suddenly homeless, residents fled to Nauvoo for safety. Morley's Settlement, mostly reduced to ashes, disappeared.

Of the John and Hannah Carter family, son Philip stayed behind on his land southwest of here. Philip's posterity lived there for several generations.

The present town of Tioga was founded here in 1855, and soon afterwards many German immigrant families settled in the area.

Edmund Durfee

Morley's Settlement resident Edmund Durfee (Durphy) was born in Tiverton, Rhode Island, in 1788. A farmer, carpenter, and millwright, he married Magdalena Pickle. They became the parents of thirteen children. The Durfees joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the 1830s in Ohio. They moved to LDS settlements in Missouri and then here to Morley's Settlement, living about

one-half mile northeast of this marker.

In September 1845, anti-Mormon arsonists targeted Morley's Settlement. The Durfee home was the first of dozens burned down. The Durfees, with other homeless residents, fled to Nauvoo for safety.

Edmund and other men returned here to harvest their crops on November 15, 1845. They lodged with Mormon Solomon Hancock in his unburned home about one-half mile northeast of here. Late that evening, nightriders set fire to hay in the Hancock barnyard. Awakened, Mormon men rushed outside to fight the fire. Edmund Durfee, age 57, was shot and killed. Durfee's attackers were identified and arrested, but never brought to trial, even though "their guilt was sufficiently apparent," according to Illinois Governor Thomas Ford.

Edmund was buried near his brother, James Durfee, in Nauvoo's Parley Street Cemetery. Edmund's family participated in the Latter-day Saints' forced exodus from Nauvoo in 1846. During the hard journey across Iowa, widow Magdalena died near present-day Council Bluffs, and daughter Tamma Durfee Miner buried a baby, Melissa, at Montrose and husband Albert Miner in Iowaville.

Eight Durfee children went west with the Latter-day Saints and settled in Utah.

Notes

1. William G. Hartley, *The 1845 Burning of Morley's Settlement and Murder of Edmund Durfee* (Salt Lake City: Primer Publications, 1998 Reprint), iv. This booklet was written for the descendants of Edmund Durfee, but has historical importance for other Latter-day Saints whose ancestors lived in the area of Morley's Settlement.

2. *Ibid.* See Appendix 1, p. 65-69 for maps and locations of Tioga and also of Morley Town's location.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.* See Appendix 2: Partial List of LDS Heads of Household at Morley's Settlement At One Time or Other, p. 70.