WALKER SISTERS HOME
Historic Structures Report, Part II
and
FURNISHING STUDY
Great Smoky Mountains National Park
Historical Data Section
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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
National Park Service
HISTORIC STRUCTURES REPORT
PART II
and
FURNISHING STUDY
WALKER SISTERS COMPLEX
Great Smoky Mountains National Park
Tennessee-North Carolina

APPROVAL SHEET

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Regional Director, Southeast Region
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The Historical Data Section of the Historic Structures Report, Part II, and the Furnishing Study, Parts C and D, for the Walker Sisters Home and Complex, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, were prepared to satisfy the requirements of Historical Resource Proposal GRSM-H-6. Normally the Historical Data Section of the Historic Structures Report would have been issued independently of and separate from the Furnishing Study, Parts C and D. But in this case, the Furnishing Study was inadequate in itself to satisfy the requirements of such a study. As it chanced, the Historical Data Section incorporated a great deal of information that is needed in the Furnishing Study. In view of the fact that both studies were completed and submitted by Park Historian Robert R. Madden at nearly the same time it was possible to combine them in one report and thereby avoid the necessity of a revision of the Furnishing Study.

It must be noted, therefore, that the Historical Data Section of the Historic Structures Report, Part II, is to be considered a necessary supplement to the Furnishing Study, Parts C and D.
The Furnishing Study, Parts C and D, does not indicate the period of time to which the Walker Sisters' home should be furnished. We recommend that the period be indicated as 1900-1921. This is the period of the last 21 years in the life of John N. Walker. It was he who gave the house furnishings and the home and its surrounding complex of buildings their form, and which continued on substantially unchanged until the 1960s when the last of his daughters, the Walker Sisters, died.

Roy E. Appleman
INTRODUCTION:

Consider all the people who lived in the Great Smoky Mountains and none will exhibit the character of these mountain people better than the Walker family of Little Greenbrier or Five Sisters' Cove. Isolated by their environment, each generation was raised with the idea that dependence on any strength save God's or their own was less than wholesome. Close family ties and an insuppressible belief in a strong pioneer faith were practically inherent in the Walkers. Resourceful, strong-willed, self-reliant, and an illimitable love of this land and their home were all fitting descriptions. The old ways passed down from father to son or daughter were almost sacrosanct. Advancements were not spurned, neither were they sought. An advanced society would have thought them primitive. Perhaps they were, but here in these mountains they lived the only life they knew—the only life they wanted to know. This kind of life elsewhere had passed into history years before.
GRANDPARENTS AND PARENTS:

John N. Walker, the father of the Walker Sisters, was born March 3, 1841. He was the oldest of fifteen children born to Thomas and Eliza Walker. In later life, due to a full beard, he was locally called "Hairy John" Walker to distinguish him from others of the same name. Nothing is known of John Walker's childhood, but by 1860 he was engaged to marry Margaret Jane King. Margaret Jane, born July 18, 1846, was the daughter of Wylie and Mary Jane (Adair) King. It is not known when the Walkers came to that section of the Smokies, but Wylie King was in Little Greenbrier at least by 1830.

The marriage of John Walker and Margaret Jane King was considerably delayed by the Civil War. John, like most East Tennesseans, was an ardent Unionist. He had no sympathy whatsoever for the Confederate cause. He and other young men of


3. Bible.


the area made elaborate plans to steal away and enlist in the Union Army, thus avoiding Confederate military service. At the proper time a signal bonfire was lit atop Bluff Mountain and the men gathered, marched north, and eventually enlisted in a Union military unit. Family tradition says John Walker was an enlisted man in the First Tennessee Light Artillery. It also alleges that Walker apparently fought in one battle, and was captured. He supposedly spent one hundred days in a Confederate prison and lost one hundred pounds before being exchanged. He told his children of starvation and ill-treatment while a prisoner, but he also told them of a sympathetic southern farmer who eased his hunger pangs when he dumped a wagon load of pumpkins into the prison compound.

After his exchange and a period of convalescence at home, Walker traveled to Cleveland, Ohio, and was officially discharged, thus becoming eligible for a pension which he later received. An examination of the pension index cards for Union veterans at the National Archives failed, however, to disclose any reference to him.

On his return from the war, John resumed his courtship with Margaret Jane King, which culminated in their marriage on March 29, 1866. They initially settled on his father's place in Buckeye at the foot of Cove Mountain in Wear's Valley, but a growing family with commensurate responsibilities forced Walker to begin a search for a place of his own.

Wylie King, Walker's father-in-law, died in 1859, and most of his children had moved away. His widow continued to reside in Little Greenbrier, but was undoubtedly finding life more difficult as her children moved away. It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that she welcomed John Walker's suggestion that he move his family to Little Greenbrier. The move to Little Greenbrier was made in the late 1860s or early 1870s.

Eleven children were born to John and Margaret Jane Walker. Walker was a good provider for his family, and was regarded as a skilled craftsman in a land where every man was his own

8. Bible.
handyman. It is said he could make practically anything from wood, leather, or metal.  

Like most men of the area, Walker was first a farmer, but was equally competent as a blacksmith, carpenter, grist miller, herder, and builder. He made much of the furniture for his own home and his children's homes, including not only beds, tables, and chairs, but also looms and spinning wheels. He constructed many of the outbuildings that stood around the Little Greenbrier home, and made improvements and an addition to the house itself. It is said that he could build an entire wagon, "from the ground up."  

Walker is remembered by his children and grandchildren as a kingly man much devoted to his family. Existing photographs of Walker show him with a full gray beard reaching his chest. He was fond of his children, and each fall took his boys on a two-week fishing and hunting trip high in the Smokies. One

grand-daughter remembers sitting in his lap, playing with his beard while he made a child's wooden whistle for her.  

Politically, Walker was a strong Republican. He often told his children that he cast his first presidential ballot for Abraham Lincoln. He was an equally strong Primitive Baptist, and raised all his children in that faith.  

His wife, Margaret Jane, was no less accomplished. The very fact that she was able to bear eleven children and care for them so that they all reached maturity made her exceptional even for her time and place. Perhaps her skill as a "herb doctor" was a major factor. Margaret Jane, no doubt, learned her "doctoring" from her mother who was a midwife and "herb doctor." John Walker often boasted that in his life he had spent a total of fifty cents for the services of a medical doctor. This was for medicine for two of his sons who contracted measles while away at school.  

with the stoic courage that was so common among her kind. The story is told that one day she heard one of her hens making a great deal of noise, as if something was killing it. She went to the hen, and at first saw nothing wrong, but soon noticed that a weasel had the hen by the neck. The weasel was hidden beneath the hen. She grabbed the weasel, but it was able to bite her thumb and hold so securely that she couldn't get it off. She calmly walked to the wash tub and thrust her hand, weasel and all, under water. It drowned in water stained by Margaret Jane's blood. She commented that she knew "sooner or later it would turn loose."²¹

Margaret Jane, a Methodist before marriage, adopted her husband's Baptist faith.²²

As in most mountain homes, the wife was the first to die, and Margaret Jane died January 15, 1909, age sixty-two.²³ John Walker lived until April 23, 1921.²⁴ In death they left their children a legacy similar to what their parents had left them: a love of God, an intimate knowledge and experience of hard work, and a love of home and family.

₂³ Bible.
₂⁴ Bible.
JOHN N. WALKER'S FAMILY:

The eleven children raised by John and Margaret Jane Walker in the order of their birth were: James Thomas, William Wylie, Margaret Jane, John Henry, Mary Elizabeth (called "Polly"), Martha Ann, Nancy Melinda, Louisa Susan, Sarah Caroline, Hettie Rebecca, and Giles Daniel. James Thomas and William Wylie were born in Buckeye, the others in Little Greenbrier.

The early years of the Walker children were no worse, perhaps better, than what was considered normal in the mountains. They worked a lot, played when they could, and unconsciously acquired the knowledge needed to live in partnership with the mountains. The two older boys went to school in Wear's Valley, while the remainder went through the six grades at Little Greenbrier School. Tragically, some sessions were only a month and a half in duration. They were all remembered as above-average students. Of the eleven, only William Wylie and John Henry were educated above the sixth grade level. They both

25. Bible.
finished high school and attended a college in Sevierville for a short time. Both were later to teach at Little Greenbrier.  

As they grew older, the boys found wives and moved out of the Walker house. James Thomas married a daughter of the Cole family who lived near the Chimney Tops. They had three children before her death. His second wife was "Tip" Stennett's daughter. William Wylie and John Henry also married and moved away, leaving only the girls and the youngest boy, Giles Daniel. Sarah Caroline married Jim Shelton in 1908, the only one of the girls to marry. They were married in the Walker house.  

Although Sarah Caroline was the only daughter to marry, it was thought that others would marry. Martha was engaged to a man named John Daniels, and "Polly" was to have married a logger named Cotter. Both men died accidental deaths. "Polly" apparently grieved so that she was taken ill. The illness affected her brain, and left her mind unsettled for the rest of her life.  


9
It is said that the oldest sister, Margaret Jane, never courted with any man. She apparently selected spinsterhood early in her life and through reasoning and ridicule attempted to influence her sisters in like manner. Obviously she was successful, but it is not known if there were other factors involved. In this respect, the six spinstered Walker Sisters were not characteristic of mountain women, for most of them married early in life.

The youngest boy, Giles Daniel, left home after 1910, and wandered over the country to Idaho. He was drafted during World War I, and fought in numerous engagements, including the Argonne Forest. After his departure, the only Walker children who remained in the Little Greenbrier home were Margaret Jane, "Polly," Martha Ann, Nancy Melinda, Louisa Susan, and Hettie Rebecca. These were the well-known Walker sisters. They continued to live in the Little Greenbrier house until they died one by one. Nancy died first on July 2, 1931. The last to

40. Bible.
die was Louisa Susan on July 3, 1964. Although Sarah Caroline lived until February 5, 1966, she did not reside in the Little Greenbrier House.

THE LAND AND THE HOUSE:

The land on which the Walker Sisters' house is located is in Little Greenbrier or Five Sisters' Cove in Sevier County, Tennessee.

The first known owner of this land was John Renfro, who acquired 2,000 acres on January 29, 1824. Nothing is known of Renfro, but on December 10, 1838, he conveyed 400 acres of this land to Brice McFalls. At a later date, McFalls conveyed the north 305 acres of this tract to William Richardson, and Richardson's heirs deeded the land to Wiley King on February 2, 1853. After King's death the land eventually went to his

41. Bible.
42. Bible. Also, Shelton, Nov. 26, 1968.
43. East Tennessee Land Office Book, No. 21, p. 737, entry 991. (Taken from Abstract of Title, Walker Sisters Land, prepared by John Morrell for USNPS, copy in GSMNP Library.)
44. Sevier County, Tennessee, Surveyor's Book, No. 1, p. 513. (Taken from Abstract of Title.)
45. Sevier County, Tennessee, Deed Book G, p. 291. (Taken from Abstract of Title.) (Note - this Deed Book was burned in 1856; however, a copy of the deed was found in the possessions of the Walker Sisters.) Also, Sevier County, Tennessee, Deed Book J, p. 150. (Taken from Abstract of Title.)
son-in-law, John N. Walker. Walker was forced into court to acquire complete ownership, but these legal problems will be discussed later. Walker conveyed part of his tract to his unmarried daughters on May 29, 1909, and a portion to his son, Giles Daniel, on the same day. Giles Daniel deeded his portion to the unmarried sisters on September 30, 1921. The land was owned by the Walker sisters until they sold their 122.8 acres to the U.S. Government in 1940.

It is likely that Brice McFalls made the first improvements on the land. Although it cannot be substantiated, McFalls probably built the log house that was later dismantled and added to the Walker Sisters' house as a kitchen. The probable construction date is in the early 1840s. Oddly enough, nothing is

46. Sevier County, Tennessee, Deed Book No. 58, p. 303. (Taken from Abstract of Title.)
47. Sevier County, Tennessee, Deed Book 24, p. 85. (Taken from Abstract of Title.)
48. Sevier County, Tennessee, Deed Book 24, p. 82. (Taken from Abstract of Title.)
49. Sevier County, Tennessee, Deed Book 48, p. 48. (Taken from Abstract of Title.)
known of William Richardson except that he acquired the land at an unspecified date and conveyed it to Wiley King in 1853.

Wiley King moved his family into the existing log cabin, but soon started construction of another cabin about four hundred yards distant. At the time of Wiley's death in 1859, the second cabin was completed except for a portion of the chimney. His sons finished this. The new cabin was a two-room, two-storied log cabin. Wiley was probably living there at the time of his death. Ownership of the land apparently passed to his ten surviving children, each receiving a one-tenth share.

Most of Wiley's children were probably married and had left their parental home at the time of his death, but his widow continued to live in the cabin until her death on June 3, 1886. The last of Wylie's children to marry was Margaret Jane, who married John N. Walker in 1866. Margaret Jane moved away for a period of about four years, but by 1870 had returned with her husband and children. Shortly after his marriage, John Walker

54. Bible.
began buying the heirs' shares of the King land. His wife, of course, held one share, and on October 6, 1868, he purchased shares from five other heirs, thus giving him six-tenths undivided interest in the whole tract. Walker purchased each share for $10.00 which was, no doubt, a token payment.

The other four heirs refused to sell to Walker for some unknown reason, but they apparently made no objection when he moved his family into the King house.

The expanding Walker family soon outgrew the house, and he was forced to dismantle the old "McFalls cabin" and use a portion of it as a kitchen addition to his house. He added the porch at the same time. The exact date of this addition is not known, but was probably in the late 1870s. This was the only major change that was made to the house. In later years the shingle roof was periodically replaced, and on one occasion

56. Sevier County, Tennessee, Deed Book No. 58, p. 308. (Taken from Abstract of Title.)

57. Sevier County, Tennessee, Deed Book No. 58, p. 308. (Taken from Abstract of Title.)


60. Both Shelton and Walker said the addition was not made until the family grew too large for the "big house." This could not have been before the mid-1870s.
a new board floor was installed. This is the existing floor.

Over the years Walker constructed numerous outbuildings around the house. These included a barn, pig pen, corn crib, gear shed, smokehouse, applehouse, springhouse, blacksmith shop, grist mill with a wood-turning lathe, and a poultry yard. One structure not present that one might have expected to be there was an "outhouse." The Walker family used the woods, women the woods below the house, men that above the house. In later years men in the family offered on several occasions to build the Walker sisters a toilet facility, but Margaret Jane refused. She did not want the odor that would result, and said that people would see it and know what it was for and this would cause her embarrassment.

Walker also constructed a tar kiln, ash hopper, charcoal-making pit, drying racks, bee gums, rail and stone fences, and a poultry yard. Walker planted valuable apple, chestnut, peach, plum, and cherry orchards on his land, and cleared many suitable acres for the cultivation of corn and other less important crops. He fenced pastures and laid out a garden directly behind the

house. Some years later the size of the garden was doubled and the entire plot was fenced with hemlock palings. 63

The farm began to take shape, and Walker was, no doubt, justly proud of his labors. Perhaps the future appeared serene to him, but any such feelings were abruptly shattered in the 1890s when his ownership of the farm was contested by a distant relative. Bettie A. King, one of Wylie King's grand-daughters, managed to acquire two of the four one-tenth shares not owned by Walker, and apparently convinced the owners of the other two shares to join her. 64 After the death of Wylie King's widow in 1886, Bettie was convinced that John Walker should pay rent and a share of the profits to the other shareholders. Walker was not overly anxious to do this, so Bettie filed suit. 65 The resulting judgment decreed that the four shares of land not owned by Walker be put up for sale at public auction. 66

64. Sevier County, Tennessee, Deed Book No. 58, p. 306. Also, Sevier County, Tennessee, Deed Book No. 58, p. 308. Taken from Abstract of Title.
65. Bill of Complaint filed in Sevier County, Tennessee, Court, Sept. 9, 1892. (Taken from Abstract of Title.)
66. Interlocutory Decree, Sevier County, Tennessee, Minute Book D, p. 58. (Taken from Abstract of Title.)
Walker's bid of $300 was high, and on April 25, 1893, he finally became the sole owner of the Little Greenbrier property. 67

A mountain farm is, by its very nature, not overly productive, but the Walkers suffered no serious privation. It is doubtful that they ever went hungry. Practically all essential commodities were produced on the farm. Luxuries were scarce, but were usually considered useless or sinful. The house was well built and, though crowded at times, was a fine home for John Walker's family. Perhaps the family's love of the house is best described in the following excerpt from a poem written by Louisa Walker entitled "My Mountain Home":

There is an old weather bettion house
That stands near a wood
With an orchared near by it
For all most one hundred years it has stood

It was my home in infency
It sheltered me in youth
When I tell you I love it
I tell you the truth

For years it has sheltered
By day and night
From the summer sun's heat
And the cold winter blight. 68

67. Sevier County, Tennessee Chancery Court Minute Book D, p. 58, (Taken from Abstract of Title.)

68. Copy of poem in GSMNP files.
The remainder of the poem is quoted to provide a statement of events to come and a testament to their religious favor:

But now the park commesser
Comes all dressed up so gay
Saying this old house of yours
We must now take away

They coax they wheedle
They fret they bark
Saying we have to have this place
For a National park

For us poor mountain people
They dont have a care
But must a home for
The wolf the lion and the bear

But many of us have a title
That is sure and will hold
To the City of peace
Where the streets are pure gold

There no lion in its fury
Those pathes ever trod
It is the home of the soul
In the presence of God

When we reach the portles
Of glory so fair
The Wolf cannot enter
Neither the lion or bear

And no park Commissioner
Will ever dar
To desturbe or molest
Or take our home from us there. 69

The Walker house as it now exists, and as it has existed since the 1870s, is a three-room, two-storied log house, with

69. Copy of poem in GSMNP files.
a front porch running the length of the kitchen. Changes to the exterior appearance of the house were few, and were caused more by time and natural weathering than by man. The appearance of the interior of the house could best be described by the term "organized confusion". The walls were papered with newspapers and magazines, and adorned with anything that might strike the family's fancy. Calendars, especially "Cardui" calendars; letter and note boxes made from cardboard boxes; lanterns; pictures—family, religious, or simply decorative; clocks; dried food; bags of seeds; spice racks; mementos from family or friends; greeting cards; or simply "anything that could be hung on a nail" were usually found on the interior walls. The rafters of all three rooms were studded with nails or wooden pegs which supported items beyond description. Bags of seeds, any kind of dried food, clothing, guns, walking sticks or crutches, kitchen utensils, magazines, and baskets were a few of the staggering number of items that hung from the ceilings of all the rooms. Every available inch of space was used for something.

The bottom room of the "big house" contained six beds, one a trundle bed; at least two chests; a sewing machine; and several chairs along with other smaller pieces of furniture. Immediately

70. Shelton, Nov. 26, 1968.
in front of the large fireplace was a potato cellar for sweet potatoes. The kitchen was equally crowded, containing a table with benches and chairs; two stoves; cupboard; meal and flour bin made from a hollow gum log; salt gum; work table; water shelf; jelly box; and other smaller items. Another potato cellar was located in front of the kitchen fireplace and was used for storage of Irish potatoes. The upper floor of the "big house," which was reached by a ladder from the room below, contained three beds, chest, chairs, and other smaller items. There was a storage loft above the kitchen that was "multi-purpose" in the broadest sense of the word. When asked what was stored there, one source said, "Lord, everything." 71

The grounds around the house were literally carpeted with flowers and flowering shrubs. All the sisters were especially fond of flowers, and took great pains with the cultivation of any kind of flower they could find. It is said that they had "an awful lot of flowers, probably over 100 varieties." 72 Roses, lilac, snowball bushes, yucca, rose-of-sharon, and hydrangea were a few of the many. 73 Also located around the house were rock piles, dozens of them, in all the cleared areas.

"Work" was the cornerstone of the Walker family's lives. In all seasons, at all times there were chores to be done. They chose to live as their father and grandfather had lived, and in so doing they made their labors slow and arduous. This is especially true in regard to the sisters, for they lived a life that had passed decades earlier. Money was rarer than leisure, and the Walkers, along with most mountain people, learned to live in a "make do or do without" environment. From early age until death all family members were expected to produce for the common good.

Securing an adequate supply of food was a primary concern of the Walkers. Corn was the main crop and dietary item, but it was supplemented by as wide a variety of foods as could be found on any mountain table. A vegetable garden, located immediately behind the house, contained "everything--all the vegetables usually found in a garden and then some." An herb garden was also located in the garden plot and contained a wide variety of medicinal herbs and teas. Horseradish, boneset, catnip, Indian turnip, and peppermint were a few of many. The

size of the original garden was doubled in the early 1900s, and the hemlock paling fence was installed. Jim Shelton and John N. Walker made the palings and fence. Sweet potatoes and late Irish potatoes were grown behind the apple house. 76

As already mentioned, the Walkers had prized apple, chestnut, peach, plum, pear, and cherry trees. In addition there was a large grape arbor above the house, and a blue Concord grapevine in the garden. The apple orchard contained at least twenty varieties, including Red Milams, Limber Twigs, Ben Davis, Roman Beauties, Red Junes, Abrahams, Buckinghams, Shockleys, Sour Johns, and others. 77 The apples from different trees ripened in different seasons insuring a steady supply of fresh fruit, and preventing a deluge of apples from one harvest to be peeled and dried. During good years the orchard provided surplus fruit, especially chestnuts, that could be marketed for badly needed cash.

Animals provided food, labor, and cash when sold. The Walkers kept a large flock of sheep until later years when dogs, too numerous to control, began to kill them. 78 Mutton was the

Pork was the next most common meat; beef was a rarity. "The truth is that mountain beef, being fed nothing but grass and browse, with barely enough corn and roughage to keep the animals alive through the winter, is blue-fleshed, watery, and tough." Also, beef was the most difficult meat to preserve.

After securing the food, the family still faced an equally demanding task of preserving it. Initially, most of the food was either dried, salted, or pickled. They built drying racks outside, hung poles over the inside fireplaces, and on occasions used the roofs of various buildings for drying racks. Apples, pumpkins, peaches, beans, and some beef were a few of the foods they dried. Beef and pumpkins were usually hung on the drying poles before the fireplaces. Jim Shelton remembers that they built fires out on the fireplace hearths to make sure the beef was thoroughly smoked. Obviously the rest of the room was also thoroughly smoked! After drying, they normally strung the food

and hung it from nails and pegs located throughout the house.
Meat was later cured in a smokehouse that used a stove for quick
drying, but most meat in earlier days was dried inside the
house. 81

Pickled beans and kraut were kept in large crocks in the
springhouse. Also located in the springhouse was the shelf for
salted meat. In the fall, the men of the family butchered
animals, usually hogs. They let the meat cool, then cleaned it
and covered it with a crust of salt. The women arranged the
meat in layers on a shelf in the springhouse and covered each
layer with additional salt. They bought salt in one hundred
pound bags and stored it in a hollow gum in the kitchen. 82 It
also served as table salt. Some fruit and root vegetables were
stored fresh in the apple house.

Preparation of the food was a speciality of the Walker
women. The Walkers served sumptuous meals, generally including
a variety of foods. This was unusual in a land where the diet
was often bland to the extreme. Jim Shelton especially remembers
the pot of green beans that was often emptied and refilled, but

seldom left the fireplace. As in most households, Christmas dinners are remembered with sentimental affection. "They started cooking way before Christmas, and when we came on Christmas you could smell the food from way down the road." 83

"They always had a big Christmas dinner. I haven't tasted a 'stack cake' like theirs in many a year." 84

Originally they did all their cooking in the fireplace, but they eventually acquired two wood-burning cook stoves.

Hard work was a way of life to the Walkers. They were born to it and appeared to thrive on it. Tasks that are taken for granted today involved long hours of labor for the Walkers. They made all their clothing, even weaving the heavy, itchy linsey-woolsey they used in winter clothes. Cloth for summer clothing was "store bought," but the garments were all handmade. 85 Nancy, the fourth sister, had asthma and did most of the housework, away from the pollen and dust of the fields. 86 The other women spent a great deal of time in the fields and

gardens. However, each spring they all pitched in for the spring cleaning. One rather unique chore here was to "scald the walls." All the house furnishings were moved outside, and every inch of the interior was thoroughly scrubbed with boiling water. Newspapers and magazines were used to cover the walls, and of necessity were replaced after each scalding. 87

The family had a flexible work routine, with each member bearing responsibility for specific chores. Margaret Jane assumed the position of "final decision-maker" after the death of her parents. 88 She was also the "boss cook." 89 Nancy was an excellent seamstress and "needlepoint woman," and there "ain't no machine anywhere that could make buttonholes like Martha and Nancy." 90

Local tradition says the Walker sisters plowed the fields and gardens alongside the men. This is not true. 91 They probably could have, but there were enough male relatives nearby to spare the women this difficult task. Jim Shelton clearly remembers the endurance and steadiness of "Buck" and "Dick,"

John Walker's two oxen. He also recalls the cussed stubbornness of "Kit," their old mule. "He didn't know what the middle of the row was, went out of his way to step in the furrow."92 However, the sisters did sow and hoe the fields and protect the plants from weeds, crows, and other "varmints."93

Social activities were few and were normally restricted to corn huskings and bean and pea shellings attended only by the family.94 They were not a socially active family, and outside of "church doings" rarely took part in organized activities. They attended church regularly at Little Greenbrier Primitive Baptist Church and later Headrick's Chapel.95 The entire family joined in church singings, especially Sacred Harp or shaped-note singings.96 Their religion was most fundamental and they were strong Republicans, although the sisters never voted.97 Two of the boys, John and Wiley, served as Superintendents of the Sunday School at Little Greenbrier, as did brother-in-law Jim Shelton.98

Drinking, although not entirely unknown to the Walkers, was not tolerated, especially by the girls. When once asked by a visitor if they minded him smoking, Margaret Jane replied, "it'll only make two people sick, you and me." Jim Shelton was a self-taught banjo and guitar "picker," and passed the ability on to Dan Walker.

Contrary to popular belief, the Walker sisters did see more of the world than Little Greenbrier. Jim Shelton said he "was always taking them somewhere." The "somewhere," however, was always to some point in East Tennessee. They made a trip nearly every year to their church's conference held in various East Tennessee towns, and paid a number of visits to their Uncle Charley Walker in Jefferson City, Tennessee.

They occasionally took outside jobs. Martha did domestic work for families near home, and agreed to "sleep in" in case of illness. At times she was away from home for two or three weeks. Hettie even went to Knoxville for a "year or two" to work in a hosiery mill. While there, she boarded with her

married sister Caroline, who worked in the same mill. The depression of the Twenties sent them all back to Little Greenbrier.

All the sisters were "herb doctors," as one visitor to their home discovered:

One of the five well-known Walker Sisters of Little Greenbrier had recently recovered from a case of "pneumonic fever," when I visited them briefly at their old-fashioned log house. For a remedy her sisters put "lamp oil" (kerosene) on a woolen cloth and placed the cloth on the chest, rubbing camphorated oil on the chest to keep the lamp oil from burning. They explained, "we put the woolen cloth (on the chest) when the fever got high or when she got to smotherin'. We put it on just as hot as she could stand it." For teas efficacious against pneumonia, they employed boneset and catnip. Despite this expert care, the convalescing sister said, "I like to took a back-set when I got to knockin' about," that is when she got on her feet again.

To cure a rattlesnake bite the Walker Sisters bathed the affected part with lamp oil, turpentine, and Roger's linament. Concerning one occasion when they used this remedy, one sister exclaimed, "you could just see the poison comin' out."

For times when a mild anesthetic was desired, they recommended "strong, hot, creamy coffee for dope."

The Walker sisters were well versed in the time honored medical lore of the Smokies. 104

The mainstay of the Walker sisters' healing potions was "Charley linament." A "soothing balm" of secret ingredients concocted by Uncle Charley Walker. It was an herb mixture that used Indian Turnip and May Apple root along with many others, and is remembered as being "hot as hell's hinges" and "mighty powerful." For headache or fainting it was rubbed on the temples; "Charley linament" on the chest helped coughs, colds, and other lung ailments; and stiffness was eased by rubbing it in the muscle. In fact, it was used practically every way except internally.

Old-fashioned—certainly, they were considered old-fashioned even in the Smokies in their later years. But, there was an air about them. Maybe it was a flashback to the dogged independence of mind and body that in another century was a characteristic of our country. Life with the Walkers was not an easy life, but there was laughter and love, and great pride and honor.

The Coming of the Park:

"These old women are 'rooted to the soil.' We have always understood they were to be permitted to spend the rest of their lives on their property....If they were ejected from the park we should be subject to severe criticism, and in my opinion, justly so." 107

In the 1930s something called a "National Park" entered the Walker Sisters' lives and threatened to force them from their home. This was not to be, for they became the poor people versus government.

"On the afternoon of Saturday, July 8, 1939, I drove Mr. Myers of the Washington office of the N.P.S. to the Walker Sisters land in Little Greenbrier Cove. We spent a little over two hours there, Mr. Myers trying to talk up a trade with them....Mr. Myers advised them not to rely on their own judgement, but to consult their friends, kin-folks, and attorneys; but they replied that they didn't 'aim to talk it over with anyone else as nobody knew as much about what the place was worth as they did." 108

107. Memorandum from Superintendent Ross Eakin, GSMNP to Director, NPS, Nov. 18, 1939. (Copy in GSMNP files.)
108. Memorandum from John Morrell to GSMNP files, August 14, 1939. (Copy in GSMNP files.)
The slow, steady process of land acquisition began, and as other properties came under U.S. title, the Walker Sisters resisted. Their land was appraised in March of 1939 for $5,466, and again in September of that year for $4,423. According to family tradition the sisters agreed to sell for a prohibitive $15,000, but were convinced by their attorney that this was too high. Their first asking price listed in existing correspondence is $7,000. This was more than the government would pay and the sisters made compromise offers of $6,500 and $5,500, neither of which proved acceptable. A lifetime lease was a primary part of each compromise offered by the sisters. Finally in late 1940, faced with condemnation, they accepted $4,750 for their land provided they were "allowed to reserve a life estate and the use of the land for and during the life of the five sisters." On January 22, 1941, ownership of the Walker Sisters' land passed to the United States, but the sisters remained there until death.

109. Appraisals made by John R. Gilbert, March 5, 1939; and W.R. Mize and John R. Gilbert, September 19, 1939. (Appraisal sheets in GSMNP files.)

110. Memorandum from Superintendent Ross Eakin, GSMNP to Director, NPS, March 12, 1940. (Copy in GSMNP files.)

111. Memorandum from Superintendent Ross Eakin, GSMNP to Director, NPS, October 1, 1940. (Copy in GSMNP files.)

112. Memorandum from A.M. Price, Attorney, to J.C. McKenzie, U.S. Attorney, November 11, 1940. (Copy in GSMNP files.)
The park came, and with it came visitors. The Walker Sisters were oddities, to be viewed along with Cades Cove and the Cherokees of the Qualla Boundary. An article in the April 27, 1947, *Saturday Evening Post* brought them national publicity. The sisters and their home became an "island of self-sufficiency ....almost a museum in itself." 113

They tried to make the visitors welcome for they realized that although the visitors were often annoying, they were a source of income. Louisa wrote poems and had her nieces illustrate them. They were displayed for sale. They also made "things," small items associated with mountain life, that were offered for sale. The sisters even had a "visitors welcome" sign installed on the road leading to their house.

**Last Days:**

One by one John and Margaret Walker's children died. The old house and outbuildings and fences were slowly rotting down. The family began to pass from the scene as had their way of life many years before. Perhaps they embraced death yearning for the promised reunion with family and friends. By 1953 there were

only two of the sisters alive. The following poignant letter was written by these two old women to the "Supertendant" of the park, and is quoted in its entirety.

To the Supertendant of the Great Smokie Mountain National Park
Dear Sir
I have a request to you Will you please have the Sign about the Walker Sisters taken down the one on High Way 73 especilay the reason I am asking this there is just 2 of the sisters lives at the old House place one is 70 years of age the other is 82 years of age and we can't receive so many visitors We are not able to do our Work and receive so many visitors, and can't make savioners to sell like we once did and people will be expecting us to have them, last year we had so many people it kept us buisy from Sun up till sun down besides our own work We haven't bin feling very well this winter can't do much at our best. I write poems to sell but cant write very well I use to write of winter but I havent bin able to do much for the ? last ones My Brother is in the Hospital and cant stay with us much We mis his help We have a Grant Nephew and his wife with us now There was 5 of us living here when we began to receive visitors and we enjoyed meeting so many nice people from different places from every state in the union and many out side, some of them came every time they came to the park, there was more of us and we were more able to care for things, they bought things from us and made it easier to have spinding money. they buy things yet if we was abel to fix them but it is to confining on us now with no more help if we get to feeling better or get till we can receive them a gain we may want to receive them a gain but we want to rest a while it is to much work for us now. Come visit us if you have time.

Very Respectively

The Walker Sisters
Margaret and Louisal14

114. Letter from Margaret Jane and Louisa Walker to Superintendant, GSMNP, January 19, 1953. (Copy in GSMNP files.)
The Walker sisters are remembered, not as five eccentric, old-maid mountain women, but as warm, human elements in the story of the Great Smoky Mountains.

Description of Historical Evidence:

The Walker sisters' house was occupied and furnished as late as 1964. Photographs and descriptions are available to document the condition of the structure's interior. Most of the furnishings and personal belongings were purchased by the Great Smoky Mountain Natural History Association at the time of the death of the last sister. This material is in storage. At present, the house itself is empty except for a fairly modern wood stove and assorted trash.
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Newspapers:

## JOHN N. WALKER'S FAMILY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Relation</th>
<th>Date of Birth</th>
<th>Date of Death</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John N. Walker</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>March 3, 1841</td>
<td>April 23, 1921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Jane Walker</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>July 18, 1846</td>
<td>January 15, 1909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Thomas Walker</td>
<td>Son</td>
<td>February 22, 1867</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Wylie Walker</td>
<td>Son</td>
<td>September 2, 1868</td>
<td>February 5, 1929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Jane Walker</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>August 29, 1870</td>
<td>December 20, 1962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Henry Walker</td>
<td>Son</td>
<td>October 20, 1872</td>
<td>December 6, 1942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Elizabeth Walker</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>February 6, 1875</td>
<td>June 14, 1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martha Ann Walker</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>July 8, 1877</td>
<td>July ?, 1952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy Melinda Walker</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>January 31, 1880</td>
<td>July 2, 1931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisa Susan Walker</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>December 23, 1882</td>
<td>July 13, 1964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Caroline Walker</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>February 6, 1886</td>
<td>February 5, 1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hettie Rebecca Walker</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>July 4, 1889</td>
<td>December 24, 1947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giles Daniel Walker</td>
<td>Son</td>
<td>October 10, 1891</td>
<td>Living</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Information taken from Walker family Bible, in possession of Giles Daniel Walker.)
FURNISHING STUDY, PARTS C AND D
WALKER SISTERS' HOME AND COMPLEX

C. ANALYSIS OF HISTORIC OCCUPANCY:

During the period 1890-1920, the following family members were the primary residents of the Walker house: John N. Walker (father), Margaret Jane Walker (mother), Margaret Jane Walker (daughter), Mary Elizabeth "Polly" Walker (daughter), Martha Ann Walker (daughter), and Hettie Rebecca Walker (daughter). Other family members and unrelated individuals lived or boarded in the house for portions of the period, but they are not to be considered primary residents in the story of the Walker house. Birth and death dates for the primary residents are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Born</th>
<th>Died</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All the primary residents were mountain people. They lived a type of life that elsewhere had passed into history decades earlier. Their's was a pioneer's existence; a constant struggle
to cope with a partially self-imposed "make do or do without" environment. Electricity, indoor water, most labor-saving devices, even toilet facilities of any type, were never used at the Walker house. Like the "Old Time Religion" of the gospel hymn their way of life was "good for their father, and was good enough for them."

John N. Walker, the father of the Walker sisters, was a multi-talented man. He was an average farmer, an excellent woodworker, a miller, mason, herder, blacksmith, in short, a jack of all trades. He had to be, for professional craftsmen were rarities in these mountains. His son, Dan, said he could make anything from wood, leather, or metal. He constructed many of the buildings on his land; made most of the furniture for his house; built and used a blacksmith shop, grist mill with a water-powered turning lathe, tar kiln, and charcoal-making pit. His talents ranged from making a spinning wheel and loom to devising a suitcase carrier from supple hickory for his son-in-law. Even in old age when he could no longer do heavy work he whittled intricate walking sticks for sale to visitors.

John N. Walker was a strong-willed man. He had little formal education, but knew the land and used it to his advantage. He instilled a strong fear of God in his children, and regularly
attended the Little Greenbrier Primitive Baptist Church. Family tradition says he had no time for strong drink, and once drove one of his sons from home upon discovering him drunk.

John N. Walker was a Unionist and a Lincoln Republican. Above all else, though, he was a mountain man. His character, desires, likes, dislikes, in fact, his entire life was shaped and affected by the mountains and the hardships they placed on those who chose to live there. By mountain standards Walker was neither poor nor wealthy. It is doubtful that his family ever went hungry, but his only reliable income apparently was a small pension he received for his Civil War service. Money was a luxury. His farm products met most of the family needs, either directly or as barter goods.

Based on what little we know of John Walker, it must be assumed that he was not an unusual man for his time and place. He does not fit the popular and often erroneous mold of the mountain man who stalked the woods with a jug over his shoulder, feuding and shooting revenue agents. Existing photographs of John Walker show him in the company of the persons and worldly things he probably loved best--his children and grandchildren, and the fruits of his labors on the land.
John N. Walker's wife, Margaret Jane King, was apparently well suited for the life of a mountain wife. She came from a mountain wife. She came from a mountain home, and probably characterized the mountain woman as much as her husband mirrored the men. She bore John Walker eleven children in a twenty-four year period. Surprisingly, all of them reached maturity.

The center of her domain was the house, garden, and children. The labors of a normal day in her life could involve anything from weaving linsey-woolsey to protecting her chickens from predators or "doctoring" her family's hurts or illnesses. Like her husband, she was trained to "make do or do without," and she made sure this knowledge was passed on to her children. Her garden was both supermarket and pharmacy, for vegetables and herbs were equally important. She was apparently very fond of flowers, and spent long hours planting and caring for extensive flower beds around the house area. One wonders if perhaps she realized how stark her environment was and used the flowers to soften and color this starkness.

Her way of life changed little from birth to death. She always used a battling board and scrub board to wash clothes. Any kind of soap except homemade lye soap was a luxury. Cooking was done over an open fireplace except, perhaps, for the last few years.
of her life when a wood stove was acquired. Clothing was all handmade, although the cloth for summer garments was normally factory made. Winter clothing was produced entirely by hand, beginning with the wool on the sheep and the cotton and flax from the field and ending with the finished garment. Her primary tools for housecleaning were homemade brooms, shuck mops, scalding water, lye, and lye soap. Also, the essential feather duster was always present.

Church and church-related activities provided the only major escape for Margaret Jane. She embraced her religion with a fervor that matched her husband's, and emplanted strong religious beliefs in her children. She was a Methodist before marriage, but accepted her husband's Primitive Baptist faith.

The six daughters of John and Margaret Jane Walker became celebrities for refusing to adopt the ways of the modern world. They learned their childhood lessons well, and saw no reason later for abandoning the tried and true life. Their cherished mountain home was a "living museum," and they themselves were "oddties in their homespun dresses and large sun bonnets." Equally odd is the fact that none of these daughters married. This is not a common occurrence among mountain women.
To the casual observer, these women must have appeared as alike "as peas in a pod." On closer inspection some individual characteristics appear. Margaret Jane was the leader, the head of the family after the parents' death. Her influence was greater than any of the other sisters. She was, in part, responsible for the spinsterhood of the sisters. Nancy was the physical weakling. She suffered from asthma and was the first of the six to die. Louisa wrote poetry in a primitive and often plaintive fashion. Nancy was a "needlepoint woman" and an excellent seamstress, while Margaret Jane and Martha were supposedly the best cooks. Polly, due to illness, was mentally disturbed, but was a productive worker. Hettie was the only one of the six who spent any great time away from home. She worked in a Knoxville hosiery mill for a "year or two."

It is difficult, however, to accept the Walker sisters on an individual basis, for their image as a family group is dominant. They worked in the fields together, planted and cultivated their vegetable and flower gardens together, ate together in the same room, slept in the same room, tended one another during illnesses and hurts—in fact, all things were done for the common good. They devoutly supported the same church, where they all sang soprano at the Sacred Harp Singings.
Apparently there was little difference in their habits, tastes, interests, and activities, other than those mentioned. Going one step further, there was little difference between the sisters and their parents. The old ways were carried forward. The sisters lived in basically the same fashion as had their parents.

D. EVIDENCE OF ORIGINAL FURNISHINGS:

After the death of the last Walker sister, the Great Smoky Mountain Natural History Association acquired one hundred and fifty-one objects and groups of objects from the Walker estate. All these objects are intimately associated with the Walkers, and are in storage awaiting display. An object inventory is attached as Appendix A.

Although most, if not all, of these objects were in use as late as the 1950s, there should be no conflict in displaying them during the period of interpretive interest. Practically all of them were made or acquired by the Walkers before this period of interpretive interest. Most of the home manufactured items were made by John N. Walker, while the origins of the "store bought" objects are not presently known. It must be assumed, however, that they were acquired locally.

The items included in the inventory are by no means all of the
Walker's possessions, but they do constitute an excellent cross-section. Fortunately, most of the major furnishings are included in the park collection, and the minor items needed to complete the furnishing scheme can be easily purchased or made. This can be done without great loss to the historical integrity of the site.
APPENDIX A

List of Pioneer Culture Items
acquired from heirs of the Walker Sisters
October 13, 1964

Purchased by
Great Smoky Mountains Natural History Association

2. 2 kraut cutters. 1 molasses paddle.


4. Winding blade.

5. Winding stand.

6. Loom (by John M. W.-1861) 11 pieces

7. Broom (broom cane)


15. Chair, split bottom.

16. Chair, split bottom.

17. Chair, rope bottom.

18. Chair, split bottom, high back.


20. Rifle.

21. Walking stick, grandmother King (150 years old).

22. Loom harnesses.

23. Trunk. Father's when he came in.


27. Basket, split, 2 pocket.

28. Basket, reet (reed?).

29. Basket, split.

30. Basket, split.

31. Chest, grandmother King's. 150 years old.

32. Clock, 70 years old.

33. Basket, willow, round. Dan's at 6 years, by grandmother Parry.

34. Sewing machine.

35. Box, Misc. long box.
36. Box, Misc. short box.
37. Flax wheel.
38. Side saddle & blanket.
39. Reel.
40. Cotton gin.
41. Cotton gin.
42. Quilting frame.
43. Basket.
44. Basket w/spools.
45. Basket w/parts of loom.
46. Scotching paddles.
47. Chair, split bottom.
48. Box, Misc. tools.
49. Dutch oven.
50. Storage bin. Bee gum and then dried fruit storage.
51. Fox and dinner horn. John Walker's.
52. Bed.
53. Bed.
54. Bed.
55. Bed, cord.
56. Treadles for loom.
57. Tension bar for loom and mise.
58. Winding blades.
59. Winding blades stand.
60. Loom sleys.
61. Spool rack.
62. Warping frame.
63. Work bench.
64. Tobacco barrel, log.
65. Bed.
66. Axe handles, etc.
67. Box, Misc.
68. Basket of gourds.
69. Basket and misc.
70. Table, kitchen.
71. Box.
72. Box.
73. Bag of wool.
74. Box. Shoe lasts.
75. Keg with churn.
76. Box with baskets.
77. Box of coverlids.
78. Box of comb boxes, etc.
79. Suit of Dan Walker's clothes.
80. 8 bu. basket.
81. Bag of wool.
82. Box.
83. Baskets.
84. Baskets.
85. Banjo box.
86. Guitar box.
87. Crutches, pr.
88. Gun stocks & blanks.
89. Wood box of misc.
90. Corner cupboard.
91. Meal chest, 2 rolling pins, and bread pan.
92. Small cupboard.
93. Cooking paddles.
94. Iron kettle & lid.
95. Dutch oven.
96. Butter churn.
97. Dehydrating tray (inside).
98. Table.
99. Umbrellas (4)
100. Drill press.
102. Spinning wheel.
103. Chair, split.
104. Chair, split.
105. Chair, rope.
106. Chair, split.
107. Chair, split.
108. Part of flax wheel.
109. Box of herbs & seeds.
110. Unknown object.
111. Mirror.
112. Box of boxes.
113. Box of boxes.
114. Farrier box.
115. Box, misc., corn crib.
116. Horse collars.
117. Plow.
118. Ladder.
119. Tanbark wagon frame.
120. Small table of rived lumber.
121. Yoke for roguish cow.
122. Pot hooks for dutch oven.
123. Stretcher.
124. 5 saws (crosscut saws).
125. Box. Misc. iron.
126. Box. Scythe blades and misc.
127. Peltboard.
128. Bundle with peavy.
129. Basket.
130. Box, clothes,
131. Drying poles (above fireplace).
132. Buggy.
133. Wood barrel, wheels, harness parts.
134. Hamper of bottles.
135. Crock, 5 gal. (?).
136. Bundle weaving bars.
137. Box, bottles.
138. Box, bottles.
139. Box, 2 gladirons & misc.
140. Box, crock, shoes, & misc.
141. Bundle fire pokers.
142. House ladder.
143. Plow (3 parts) & misc.
144. Scythe.
145. Scythe.
146. Box misc. iron.
147. Box misc. iron.
148. 2 coverlets.
149. Kerosene lamp and shade.
150. Shoe repair "chisel."
151. Box, bottles.
The location of the various pieces of furniture shown on the floor plan was supplied by Mr. Jim Sheldon, brother-in-law to the Walker Sisters.

1. Potato Cellar
2. Potato Cellar
3. Bed (Nancy & Louisa)
4. Bed (John N. & Margaret Jane Walker)
5. Bed (Margaret Jane & Hettie)
6. Bed (Martha & Polly)
6a. Trundle Bed
7. Bed
8. Chest
9. Chest
10. Sewing Machine
11. Kitchen Table with two benches
12. Salt Gum
13. Jelly Box
14. Meal and Flour Gum
15. Shelf for Water Pan
16. Shelf for Water Pan
17. Cupboard
18. Wood Stove
19. Wood Stove
20. Table
21. Spinning Wheels
22. Loom
23. Bed
24. Bed
25. Bed

FIRST FLOOR

FRONT PORCH

LIVING AND/OR BEDROOM (BIG HOUSE)

KITCHEN

SECOND FLOOR

BEDROOM
ILLUSTRATIONS
1. John N. Walker, at his home in the Great Smoky Mountains. This picture was taken by Jim Shelton, about 1918. Note the basket of fine cherries grown on his mountain farm.
2. Another photograph of John N. Walker, taken by Jim Shelton, about 1918. This view shows Walker with a large, fine specimen of apple grown on his mountain farm. Note the uneven board floor and the hand woven coverlet. This view shows Walker without his eye glasses.
3. The seven Walker Sisters, daughters of John N. Walker. This photograph was taken by Jim Shelton, about 1909, from a photograph made earlier.
5. One of the Walker Sisters, but unidentified otherwise. Photograph taken by Jim Shelton in 1924.
6. A view of the Walker Sisters' home and garden in the Great Smoky Mountains. A grape arbor shows in the lower right of the picture, and another one seems to be present in the lower left beyond the fence and at the back of the shed annex. Photograph taken by E. E. Exline in 1936.
7. Another view of the Walker Sisters' home and garden but picture extended to left to show more of the garden and fence. Photograph taken by E. E. Exline in 1936.
8. A view of the Walker Sisters' home showing the front door and looking to the back of the house. Different construction details are revealed. This view also gives another view of the garden. Photograph taken by E. B. Exline in 1936.
9. An enlargement of the house and garden from a section of photograph No. 6.
Still another view of the Walker Sisters' home and garden. This picture gives a better understanding of the location relationship of the grape arbor beyond the garden to the house and adjacent sheds. Photograph taken by B. E. Exline in 1936.
12. Spring House at Walker Sisters' home. From other pictures it is apparent that this is a reverse print. The door is hinged on the left. Photograph taken by E. E. Exline, August 10, 1936.
13. Pig Pen at Walker Sisters' home. This photograph was taken by B. B. Exline, May 21, 1936.
15. Walker Sisters' Bedroom. Three beds can be seen in this picture. The room presents a wealth of furnishings in detail in a way that could never be described in words. The walls are virtually covered by newspapers. Photograph taken by E. B. Exline in 1936.
16. Another view of the Walker Sisters' Bedroom. This time the camera has swung to the corner at the left and shows details not seen in the previous view. The relationship of the beds to each other, and of one pushed under another, is apparent. Note large number of coats and hats in corner. Photograph by B. E. Exline in 1936.
17. Front porch of the Walker Sisters' home. Many items of mountain life in a self-sufficient household can be seen here, including a spinning wheel and loom. Photograph by E. E. Exline, May 21, 1936.
18. Another view of the front porch of the Walker Sisters' home. The woods and the out-of-doors was close at hand. Photograph by E. E. Exline, May 21, 1936.
19. The Springhouse at the Walker Sisters' home. The several large crocks certainly held milk, cream, butter, and perhaps other food items that were kept as cool as possible in the summer time. Photograph by B. E. Exline, August 10, 1936.
20. Three of the Walker Sisters ginning cotton. They are from left to right: Hettie, Martha, and Louisa. Note the heavy men's type of shoes they wear. Photograph by E. E. Exline, March 2, 1936.
HISTORIC STRUCTURES REPORT
PART II
ARCHITECTURAL DATA SECTION

WALKER SISTERS COMPLEX
(House Corn Crib Springhouse)
Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Prepared by
Russell Jones, Architect
May 1969

U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
Washington, D. C.
V. ARCHITECTURAL DATA SECTION

A. Record Drawings of Existing Condition:

The Walker Sisters Complex consisting of three structures was measured in November 1968 and record drawings prepared. Reduced copies are included as part of this report.

B. Photographs of Existing Conditions:

Photographs showing existing conditions as of November 1968 will be found following this section.

C. Detailed Description of Structures:

1. House: Three-room, one and a half story L-shaped log structure on stone foundation. The one and a half story portion measures 20 feet 6 inches by 22 feet 5-1/2 inches. The one story kitchen ell including the porch measures 18 feet 4-3/4 inches by 27 feet 3 inches.

The walls are constructed of hewn logs and are joined at the corner for half-dovetail notching. The joints between logs are chinked with mud and small stones.

The porch is constructed of sawn board on hewn log framing and is enclosed by one rail set between four posts supporting the roof. A rock step appearing in historic photographs has been removed.

Access to the building is by three doors, from the porch to the kitchen, from the porch to the living-bedroom and the third from the living-bedroom in the west wall. The step for this door has also been removed. Access to the garret is by ladder and crawl hole from the living-bedroom.
The windows are six in number, five on the first floor and one in the garret. Four of the first floor windows have single six light sash. The two remaining windows are closed by wood shutters.

The kitchen and the living-bedroom are both heated by a fireplace and massive outside chimney constructed of field stones laid in mud mortar.

A small stone chimney, supported by the kitchen ceiling has been added to receive a wood stove smoke pipe.

The kitchen and proch roof is framed with pole rafters and covered with wood shingles on shingle laths. The story and a half portion is framed with rib poles and pole rafters covered with wood shingles. Both roofs have been covered with roll roofing for protection and to prevent leaking.

Floors throughout the house are sawn boards. The garret floor is supported on hewn joist. The first floor joist were not inspected.

The interior walls of the living-bedroom have been partially covered with newspapers and magazine pages.

2. **Corn Crib**: Gabled roof, with single center crib and two side sheds. The crib is set on a field stone piers laid dry. Overall measurements are 24 feet 7-1/2 inches by 19 feet 8-1/2 inches.

The walls of the crib are constructed of hewn logs. The corner notching is half-dovetail.

The roof is framed with pole rafters supported at midspan by a purlin bearing on hewn log lookouts. The eaves are supported by post and beam. The roof is covered with wood shingles on a shingle
boards. The north half of the original roof has been covered with tin. The roof extends approximately 7 feet at the west end.

Access to the crib is by means of a small door in the west end wall and hung on wrought iron strap hinges.

Two harness racks are located at the east end and one at the west end of the north shed.

The puncheon floor measures 3 to 4 inches thick and is laid transversely on the log sills.


The roof overhangs the front wall approximately 4 feet and is framed with rib poles. The present roof is plywood sheathed and covered with roof roofing for protection of the building.

The spring house is entered through a board and batten door hung on a wood gudgeon and pintel hinge.

Originally the pit was stone lined and the floor may have been stone paved although there is no remaining evidence. Two shelves extend across the interior rear wall. A partially destroyed hen nest is located in left front corner.
D. Description of Proposed Restoration:

Introduction

The work will include rehabilitation and restoration of all features of the three structures comprising Walker Sisters Complex. Any discrepancies or unforeseen conditions discovered during the course of the work shall be brought to the attention of the Park Superintendent and the Branch of Restorations for resolution before proceeding. All work necessary to accomplish the rehabilitation and restoration shall be performed in an expert workmanlike manner.

Care shall be taken that the general character of the primitive structures and the appearance of age shall not be destroyed by the stabilization or restorations.

Complete dismanteling of the structures in accomplishing the restoration shall be at the discretion of the foreman in charge of the restoration.

If the structures are to be dismantled, number each existing part, recording each number on the measured drawing so that its location can be determined for reassembly or replacement.

1. House:

   Foundation - remove existing mud mortar to a reasonable depth and tuck point using lime-cement mortar composed of 1 part hydrated lime, 1 part white cement and 6 parts sand, colored to match the original mud mortar. Rebuild missing portions of the foundation using stones from the site.
Log Walls - Inspect all wall logs and sills replacing those found to be unsound. Repair and replace as necessary the sawn boards on the kitchen gable. Where replacement of any log or board is made, the original member shall be used as model.

Chimneys - Provide shoring for the two outside chimneys to prevent collapse during the stabilization. Install a reinforced concrete core to support the chimneys and bond the stones. Remove existing mud mortar of all three chimneys to a reasonable depth and tuckpoint with lime-cement mortar of the same proportions as used for the foundations. Color shall match the existing mortar.

Porch - Inspect sills, flooring, post, rails, lintels ceiling joist and ceiling boards replacing those found to be unsound. Provide stone step matching that shown in the historical photograph included in this report.

Roof - Inspect all roof framing and shingle laths and replace unsound members. Reroof using locally made hand split wood shingles matching the original in size and thickness and which shall be laid with the same exposier as the original shingles.

Doors and Doorways - Repair or replace as necessary the three board and batten doors, doorframes, and trim. Replace any missing portions. Provide wood steps at the outside door from the living-bedroom.

Windows - Repair or replace sash, frames, trim and shutters. Replace all broken window glass and reglaze.

Hardware - Repair existing hardware where possible, any additional hardware required shall be fabricated to match similar existing items.
Ladder - Repair ladder to second floor. If the public is to be allowed access to the garret, replace with a stronger reproduction of the existing ladder.

Kitchen Interior - Inspect floor joist and flooring for decay, replace as necessary. Repair and tuckpoint fireplace and hearth. Repair fireplace shelf. Repair or rebuild miscellaneous shelves and cupboards. Replace missing pegs as may be indicated by holes the ceiling joist and walls. Repair "Shoo-fly" replacing missing parts to make operable.

Living-Bedroom - Inspect floor joist and flooring, replace as necessary. Repair and tuckpoint fireplace and hearth. Repair fireplace shelf. Repair or rebuild miscellaneous shelving and cupboards. Before any work is done to the room, photograph all wall surfaces now covered with newspapers and magazine illustrations. Salvage as much of the existing covering as possible for reuse and reference. Secure newspapers and magazines of the historic period for repapering. All new newspapers and magazine illustrations shall be tinted to match existing material in coloration.

Garret - Inspect floor joist and flooring, replace as necessary. Inspect eave closure board and replace any decayed or missing sections. Repair crawl hole and rework as required for safety of visitors.

Site - After all work on the foundations and building has been completed, regrade to direct surface water away from the building.
2. **Corn Crib:**

- **Foundation** - Rebuild stone piers as may be required.
- **Log Walls** - Inspect all wall and sill logs, replace those found to be unsound. Original item shall be used as model for replacement.
- **Roof** - Remove shoring now supporting roof, replace rafters and other roof framing found to be unsound or of insufficient strength to safely support the roof and any superimposed load. Replace unsound and missing shingle laths. Remove tin roofing on north slope and reroof entire roof with locally made hand split shingles. Replace where necessary the posts and lintels supporting the two shed roofs. Refasten fence rails east shed post.
- **Door** - Repair or rebuild door and wood latch as needed to be operative. Reset existing wrought iron hinges.
- **Crib Floor** - Inspect floor for rot, replacing puncheons as necessary. Replacement puncheons shall show adze marks.
- **Harness Racks, Pegs, Etc.** - Repair harness rack and replace missing pegs as indicated by peg holes in the crib walls.
- **Site** - After all work on the foundation and building has been completed, regrade to direct surface water away from the building.
3. **Spring House:**

**Foundation** - Repair and tuckpoint stone foundation. Rebuild where necessary.

**Log Walls** - Inspect wall logs for rot, replace logs found to be unsound.

**Roof** - Remove modern sheathing and roll roofing. Inspect rib poles for rot and replace as necessary. Install board roof in accordance with historic photograph.

**Door** - Repair and renail the board and batten door, wood gudgeon and pintel hinge and jamb boards.

**Interior** - Repair two wood shelves and hen nest. Rebuild stone cooling pit in accordance with historic photographs. Replace missing pegs as may be indicated by existing holes.

**Site** - Regrade site to direct surface water away from the building.

**General Notes:**

Preservative and Waterproofing treatment shall be applied to all existing and new wood.

Termite Treatment shall be applied to the ground under and for two feet outside of all structures.

All New Wood shall be weathered or colored to match existing wood.

Cut Nails shall be used throughout all structures where nailing is required.
PLATE I

Walker Sisters House, One of the Finest Examples of Great Smoky Mountain Log Construction.
PLATE II

East Elevation of Kitchen, Showing General Condition of the Wall and Stone Chimney.
PLATE III

Partial View of North (Rear) Elevation Showing Kitchen Projection. Note Condition of Stone Foundation.
PLATE IV

Partial View, North (Rear) Elevation
Showing Two-Story Portion of the House.
Not Condition of Chinking.
PLATE V

West Elevation of Two-Story Portion Shows Deterioration of Logs and Chinking.
PLATE VI

South End of Two-Story Portion. Variation in the Stone Would Indicate That the Chimney May Have Been Rebuilt Twice.
PLATE VII

The General Deteriorated Condition of the Porch and the Kitchen Gable is Very Evident.
PLATE VIII

View Showing Condition of Porch Flooring, Sills and Post.
PLATE X

Porch Rail and Post Detail.
PLATE XI

Detail of Kitchen Projection at Rear of House Showing the Condition of the Wall Logs and a Kitchen Window.
PLATE XII

Door in West Elevation From Living-Bedroom Has Been Covered With Roll Roofing for Protection. Note Rot in Lower Logs.
PLATE XIII

Tin Sheets Have Been Attached to the Lower Logs in An Effort to Prevent Rot.
PLATE XIV

Detail of Second Story Gable and Roof.
PLATE XV

Upper Portion of Chimney Indicating the General Character of the Masonry.
PLATE XVI

Detail of the Chimney Sponework.
PLATE XVII

The Walker Sisters Corn Crib is a Typical Smoky Mountain Farm Structure. In Addition to it's Prime Function, the Storage of the Corn Crop the Side Sheds Provide Protection for Wagons and Other Implements.
PLATE XVIII

Internal Shoring Keeps the Roof from Collapsing.
PLATE XIX

View Showing Remains of Orchard Fence.
PLATE XX

View Showing North Crib Wall and Ends of Puncheon Floor.
PLATE XXI

The Corn Crib Was Filled Through Those High Doors
In the Side Walls.
PLATE XXII

The Small Door, In the End Wall Of the Crib Through Which the Corn Was Removed, Needs Considerable Repair.
PLATE XXIII

Side Sheds Protected the Miscellaneous Farm Equipment.
PLATE XXIV

Harness and Other Small Items Were Probably Hung on Those Crude Racks.
PLATE XXV

Coats, Water Buckets, and the Like May Have Hung From the Pegs Set Into the Wall Logs and the Hooks Fashioned From Branches.
The Walker Sisters Spring House, Or Can House As It Is Sometimes Called, Was the Storage Place For Perishable Items As Milk, Butter, Etc.
PLATE XXVII

Rear (South) Elevation Of the Spring House.
PLATE XXVIII

The Original Roof Has Been Replaced With Modern Wood Sheathing Covered With Composition Roll Roofing.
PLATE XXIX

The Ingenious Way The Smoky Mountain Pioneers Used Wood To Replace Metal Hardware is Well Illustrated By The Gudgeon and Pingle Hinge Used On The Spring House Door.
PLATE XXX

Note Rot in the Rib Poles Supporting the Roof Overhang.
PLATE XXXI

This Rear View Of The Spring House Shows The Condition Of The Rib Poles And The Wall Logs.
PLATE XXXII

Storage Shelves At Rear of Spring House.
PLATE XXXIII

Remains of Hen Nest to Left of the Door.
1. **GENERAL NOTES AND SPECIFICATIONS**

   1. **WORKMANSHIP** - All work shall be performed by artisans skilled in log construction, employing original methods and techniques. In the replacement of portions of the structure, the original items shall be used as a model. The restored structure shall retain the distinctive character of the original building.

   2. **STONE FOUNDATION AND CHIMNEYS** - Repair, repoint and rebuild where necessary the stone foundation. During the repair and repointing of the chimneys, shoring shall be provided to prevent their collapse. Install a reinforced concrete core to support the chimneys and bond the stones. Repointing mortar shall be colored to match the existing mortar.

   3. **WALLS** - Replace all unsound wall logs and gable boards. Repair loose boards. Logs shall not be spliced. Reclinch all logs.

   4. **DOORS** - Repair or replace all doors, frames and trim. Repair or replace existing hardware. Missing hardware shall be replaced with items of the proper type and period. Provide wood steps at west doorway.

   5. **WINDOWS** - Repair or replace sash, frames, shutters and trim. Where practical repair existing hardware. Replace missing hardware with items of the proper type and period. Reglaze all sash and replace broken glass.

   6. **PORCH** - Replace all unsound porch sills, joist, flooring, newel posts and rails. Inspect porch ceiling and joist and repair or replace. Reposition ceiling boards. Provide stone porch step as indicated by historic photographs.

   7. **ROOF** - Remove protective roll roofing. Inspect rafters, ceiling joist, ridge poles and shingle laths. Repair or replace as required. Reroof using locally made hand split shingles of the same size and thickness as the original shingles. Lay with same exposure. Refasten all existing framing members.

   8. **KITCHEN** - Inspect floor joist and flooring and repair or replace as necessary. Repair and replaster fireplace and hearth. Repair fireplace shelf. Repair miscellaneous cupboards and shelving. Repair "Shoo-fly", replacing missing parts to make operational. Replace missing pegs as indicated by historic photographs.

   9. **LIVING - BED ROOM** - Inspect floor joist and flooring and repair or replace as necessary. Repair and replaster fireplace and hearth, repair fireplace shelf. Repair miscellaneous cupboards and shelving. Repair "Shoo-fly", replacing missing parts to make operational. Replace missing pegs as indicated by historic photographs. Before any work is done to this room, photograph all wall surfaces now covered by magazine illustrations and newspapers. Salvage as much of the original covering material as possible for reuse and reference. Recover the walls in accordance with the photographs with similar material of the same historic period. All new covering shall be stained to match in color the reused existing material.

10. **GARRET** - Inspect joist and flooring, repair or replace as necessary. Repair crawl hole and ladder. If the public is to be allowed access to the garret, replace the existing ladder with a stronger and safer reproduction. Repair or replace worn ceiling boards.

11. **COLOR TREATMENT** - All new wood members, after being cut, sanded, matched, etc., but before installation shall be allowed to weather in an open location. When installed, the original coloring shall be maintained.

12. **PRESERVATIVE AND WATERPROOFING TREATMENT** - All timbers after cutting, notching, etc., but before installation shall be given a preservative and waterproofing treatment according to the manufacturer's directions for the chemical used. The bottom surface of all sill logs in contact with the stone foundation and all window, screen, door, etc., shall be painted with paint recommended to such a manner as not to be visible when assembled.

13. **TERMITE TREATMENT** - Ground under the entire building, and for not less than two feet inside of the building perimeter shall be sprayed with a commercial termite treatment in accordance with the manufacturers directions for the chemical used.

14. **GRADING** - After all foundation backfill has settled, fill and compact all low areas to bring the grade. Fine grade to a uniform slope of 2 inches in 5 feet to direct surface water away from the building.

15. **CLEAN-UP** - After all work is completed all trash, debris, construction materials and equipment shall be removed and the site left "Broom Clean."
DRAWING NO. 133
94000

SHEET 4 OF 4 House - Elevations - Restoration
WEST (FRONT) ELEVATION

SOUTH ELEVATION

EAST ELEVATION

NORTH ELEVATION

FLOOR PLAN

SCALE: 3/4" = 1'-0"

FIELD MEASUREMENTS BY R. STINE 8-63
GENERAL NOTES AND SPECIFICATIONS

1. WORKMANSHIP - All work shall be performed by artisans skilled in log construction, employing original methods and techniques. Where it is necessary to replace portions and components of the building, the existing item shall be used as a model. The restored structure shall retain the primitive character of the original building.

2. STONE FOUNDATION - Repair, repoint, and rebuild where necessary using existing stones gathered at the building site.

3. LOG WALLS - Replace all unsound wall logs and boards. Renail all loose boards. Logs shall not be spliced.

4. SHEDS - Replace unsound posts supporting two lintel. Install new post as indicated at north shed. Buried ends of new post shall be painted with asphalt or similar protective coating. Inspect shed lintels and replace as necessary. Replace unsound fence rails and posts at south shed. Refasten rails. Buried portions of fence post to be given protective coating.

5. ROOF - Remove all modern internal roof bracing. Replace ridge and rib poles. Install new rafters (double rafters on south shed to be removed). Replace shingle laths as required. Replace missing nailing head with nails. Apply new nailing with new ridge and valleys and fasten and nailing to the same exposure as the original shingles.

6. DOOR - Repair door and wood bar and replace missing parts to make operative. Refasten hinges.

7. PUNCHEON FLOOR - Inspect puncheon floor and replace any unsound puncheons. Paint underside with asphalt before installation.

8. MISC. ITEMS - Replace missing pegs as indicated by holes in the wall logs.

9. COLOR TREATMENT - All replacement wood members, after being cut, sized, notched, etc., but before installation shall be colored to match adjacent wood. The technique and method of coloring shall be at the discretion of the project supervisor.

10. PRESERVATIVE AND WATERPROOFING TREATMENT - All new timbers after cutting, notching, etc., but before installation shall be given a preservative and waterproofing treatment according to the manufacturer's instructions for the chemical used. The bottom surface of all sill logs in contact with the stone foundation shall be painted with coal-tar creosote in such a manner as not to be visible when assembled. Existing timbers shall be treated in a like manner.

11. TERMITE TREATMENT - All ground under the building, and for not less than two feet outside of the building perimeter shall be injected with a commercial termite treatment in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions for the chemical used.

12. GRADING - After all foundation backfill has settled, fill and compact all low areas to bring to grade. Fine grade to a uniform slope of 2 inches in 5 feet to direct surface water away from the building.

13. CLEAN-UP - After all work is completed all trash, debris, construction materials and equipment shall be removed and the site left "Broan Clean."
SHEET 1 OF 2  Spring House - Existing Conditions
DRAWING NO. 133

94002

SHEET 2 OF 2 Springhouse - Restoration
GENERAL NOTES AND SPECIFICATIONS

1. WORKMANSHIP - All work shall be performed by artisans skilled in the construction, restoring original methods and techniques. When it is necessary to replace portions and components of the building, the existing item shall be used as a model. The restored structure shall retain the primitive character of the original building.

2. STONE FOUNDATION - Repair, repoint, and rebuild where necessary using existing stones gathered at the building site.

3. LOG WALLS - Replace all unsound wall logs and boards. Renail all loose boards. Logs shall not be spliced.

4. ROOF - Remove modern sheathing and roll roofing. Inspect rib poles and replace those found to be unsound. Reroof with locally made hand split boards and finish with a comb ridge.

5. DOOR - Repair and refasten door and gudgeon and pintle hinges replacing worn, broken or unsound items.

6. INTERIOR - Investigate floor and reset stone floor and storage pit lining in accordance with historic photographs on file at the park. Repair existing hen rest and shelving.

7. MISC. ITEMS - Replace missing pegs as indicated by holes in the wall logs.

8. COLOR TREATMENT - All wood replacement members, after being cut, sized, notched, etc., but before installation shall be colored to match adjacent wood. The technique and method of coloring shall be at the discretion of the project supervisor.

9. PRESERVATIVE AND WATERPROOFING TREATMENT - All new timbers after cutting, notching, etc., but before installation shall be given a preservative and waterproofing treatment according to the manufacturers instructions for the chemical used. The bottom surface of all sill logs and all notches, scores, cuts, etc., shall be painted with coal-tar creosote in such a manner as to be invisible when assembled.

10. TERMITE TREATMENT - All ground under the building, and for a distance of two feet outside the building perimeter shall be injected with a commercial termite treatment in accordance with the manufacturers directions for the chemical used.

11. GRADING - After all foundation backfill has settled, fill and compact all the area to bring to grade. Fine grade to a uniform slope of 2 inches in 5 feet to direct surface water away from the building.

12. CLEAN-UP - After all work is completed all tools, debris, construction materials and equipment shall be removed and the site left "Broom Clean."