**DATA SHEET**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**
**INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**
**FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES**

(Type all entries • complete applicable sections)

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### 1. NAME

**COMMON:** Walker Sisters' Place

**AND/OR HISTORIC:** King Place, John Hr Walker Place

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### 2. LOCATION

**STREET AND NUMBER:** Two miles south of Wear's Valley

**CITY OR TOWN:** Gatlinburg

**STATE:** Tennessee

---

### 3. CLASSIFICATION

<table>
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<tr>
<th>CATEGORY (Check One)</th>
<th>OWNER (Check One)</th>
<th>STATUS (Check One)</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Unoccupied</td>
<td>Unrestricted</td>
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**PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate):**

- Agricultural
- Commercial
- Educational
- Industrial
- Military
- Religious
- Scientific
- Transportation
- Government
- Private Residence
- Military
- Religious

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### 4. AGENCY

**National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior**

*REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS (If applicable):*

Southeast Regional Office

**STREET AND NUMBER:** 3401 Whipple

**CITY OR TOWN:** Atlanta

**STATE:** Georgia

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### 5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

**Sevier County Courthouse**

**COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:**

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### 6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

**TITLE OF SURVEY:** None

**DATE OF SURVEY:**

- **Federal**
- **State**

**DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:**

**STREET AND NUMBER:**

**CITY OR TOWN:** Sevierville

**STATE:** Tennessee

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Walker Sisters' Place

This was originally a 122 acre farm, with corn patches and other fields. There were a number of buildings, including a house, springhouse, corncrib, mill, and blacksmith shop. There were also a number of smaller structures about the place.

Today all that remains of the farmstead are the house, springhouse, and corncrib.

1. Walker Sisters' House
   Building #640
   Recommended level of treatment: Restoration
   Cost Estimate: $125,000

This is a three room, one and a half story L-shaped log structure on a stone foundation. The one and a half story portion measures 20'6" x 22'5½". The one story kitchen ell, including the porch, measures 18'4-3/4" x 27'3".

The walls are constructed of hewn logs and are joined at the corners 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.

The floor in some cases is in a deteriorated condition, and some boards are missing. A number of blacksnakes have taken up residence under the porch.

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 garrett is by ladder and crawl hole from the living-bedroom.

There are six windows—five on the first floor and one in the garrett. Four of the first floor windows have a single six light sash. The two remaining windows are closed by shutters. To protect the building, several windows and one door have temporarily been boarded up.

The kitchen and the living-bedroom are both heated by a fireplace and massive outside chimney constructed of fieldstone laid in mud mortar. The fireplaces in both rooms have rubble masonry hearths, fireboxes, chimney pieces, and mantles.
8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- [ ] Pre-Columbian
- [ ] 15th Century
- [ ] 16th Century
- [X] 17th Century
- [ ] 18th Century
- [ ] 20th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- [ ] Aboriginal
- [X] Prehistoric
- [ ] Historic
- [ ] Agriculture
- [ ] Architecture
- [ ] Art
- [ ] Commerce
- [ ] Communications
- [ ] Conservation
- [ ] Education
- [ ] Engineering
- [ ] Industry
- [ ] Invention
- [ ] Landscape
- [ ] Literature
- [ ] Art
- [ ] Architecture
- [ ] Government
- [ ] Military
- [ ] Music
- [ ] Political
- [ ] Religion/Philosophy
- [ ] Science
- [ ] Sculpture
- [ ] Social/Humanitarian
- [ ] Theater
- [ ] Transportation
- [ ] Urban Planning
- [ ] Other (Specify)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Walker Sisters’ Place: Order of Significance: 3rd

Of all the people who once lived in what is now Great Smoky Mountains National Park, none exhibited better the character of the mountain people 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 a strong religious faith were inherent in the Walkers.

Resourceful, strong-willed, self-reliant, and loving, their land and home were characteristic of the Walkers. In a time when new ideas and ways had begun to invade the mountains, they clung to old ways, and old habits. When Great Smoky Mountains National Park was established in 1935, the Walkers still lived in a manner that had disappeared before World War I.

Of all the inhabitants of the National Park area, none became better known than did the five spinster Walkers, children of John and Margaret Jane Walker. The sisters, in order of their birth, were: Margaret Jane, Mary Elizabeth (called Polly), Martha Ann, Nancy Melinda, Louisa Susan, and Hettie Rebecca.

Another sister, Caroline, married, and they also had four brothers. As time went by, the brothers and Caroline left home; the parents died; and the five sisters lived alone on the farm they inherited from their father.

With the establishment of the National Park, visitors became aware of the existence of the sisters and their way of life. There were numerous articles that appeared about them in national and local publications. They became an institution, almost a living museum of a bygone era. This continued until one by one the sisters died, the last one passing away in 1964.
Madden, Robert L. and T. Russell Jones. 

Hall, Joseph H. 

10. GEOPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES
DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY

<table>
<thead>
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<th>CORNER</th>
<th>LATITUDE</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Degrees Minutes Seconds</td>
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LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES
DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY
OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES

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APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: Less than 10

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>CODE</th>
<th>COUNTY</th>
<th>CODE</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Paul R. Gordon, Historian

BUSINESS ADDRESS: Great Smoky Mountains National Park

STREET AND NUMBER: N/A

CITY OR TOWN: Gatlinburg

STATE: Tennessee

STATE CODE: 47

12. CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

State Liaison Officer recommendation:

X Yes

☐ No

☐ None

State Liaison Officer Signature:

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Liaison Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The recommended level of significance is:

☐ National
☐ State

Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Date 3/14/76

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date 3/14/76

SPO 938-449
The roof of the building is gabled, and was originally shingled. Both the roof of the building itself and the porch roof have been covered with roll roofing to prevent leaking. Both roofs are framed with pole rafters, shingle lath, and then the shingles and temporary roll roofing.

Floors throughout the house are sawn boards. The garrett floor is supported on hewn joist forming the ceiling of the living-bedroom. The kitchen is ceiled in the same manner.

The interior walls of the kitchen are smoked from years of fires in the fireplace. The walls of the living-bedroom are covered with newspapers and magazine pages. Many of the latter have been removed by vandals.

2. Walker Sisters' Corn Crib
   Building #641
   Recommended level of Treatment: Reconstruction
   Cost Estimate N/A

This is a rectangular, one story building. It has a gabled roof covered with shingles, and the north half has been covered with tin. There is a single center crib with two side sheds. The crib is set on fieldstone piers, laid dry. Overall measurements are 24'7"x19'8½". The walls are hewn log, with half-dovetail.

Access to the crib is by means of a small door in the west end wall hung on wrought iron strap hinges. The door is constructed of split board, and secured with a wooden latch.

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

The crib has a puncheon floor, 3 to 4 inches thick laid transversely on the log sills. The shed floors are earth.

General Location: The corn crib is southeast of the main house about 100 feet.

3. Walker Sisters' Springhouse
   Building #642
   Recommended level of Treatment: Reconstruction
   Cost Estimate N/A

This is a rectangular, hewn log structure measuring 7' x 12' on a stone foundation.
The roof overhangs the front wall approximately four feet and is
dramed with rib poles. Originally covered with wooden shingles, the
present roof is plywood with roll roofing for protection of the building.

The spring house is entered through a rectangular doorway on the north
side. The door is board and batten, and is hung on a wood gudgeon
and pintel hinge.

There is a stone trough in the floor through which water still flows.
This pit was at one time lined with stone, and the floor was apparently
paved with rock, but this is now missing. There are two shelves
across the interior rear wall, and a small box is in the left front
corner.

General Location: The springhouse is located about 200 feet southeast
of the main house, and is on the road leading to the place from the
Greenbrier road.
The Walker Sisters' father and mother were married in 1866 upon John Walker's return from the Civil War. Although Tennessee was a member of the Southern Confederacy, John Walker, like most East Tennesseans, was an ardent unionist, and was one of the over 100,000 mountain area men who enlisted when Abraham Lincoln sent the call for troops for the union army.

The Walker Land: The land on which the Walker family lived is located in Little Greenbrier, or Five Sisters' Cove, Sevier County, Tennessee. The first known owner of the property 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 the land to Brice McFalls. Later McFalls sold the north 205 acres to William Richardson, and Richardson's heirs deeded the land to Wiley King in 1853.

After the death of King, the land eventually went to his son-in-law, John N. Walker, the father of the Walker Sisters. Walker conveyed part of his land to his unmarried daughters in 1909, and the remainder to his youngest son, Giles. Giles in turn turned his share over to the sisters in 1921. The land was owned by the sisters until sold to the United States Government in 1940.

Life of the Sisters: Work was the greatest feature in the life of the Walkers. At all times, and in all seasons there were chores to be done. The sisters chose to live as their father and grandfather had done, and this made their work slow and tedious. They did many things in the old way, ways that had disappeared at other places. Herb and vegetable gardens, sweet and Irish potato and corn patches were tended by the sisters. They did all the work in these fields but the plowing, and if the occasion arose where no one else was available to do it for them, they could plow also.

The Walkers kept sheep, and mutton was common fare, along with pork on the family table. The sheep were sheared, and on a loom made by their father, the Walker Sisters wove linsey-woolsey for their winter clothes. They also grew or traded for cotton which they ginned on a small, hand-powered gin. They then spun, wove, dyed, and sewed cotton clothing for summer wear. Also the sisters made coverlets, and other bedding for their use.

Food was preserved by drying, pickling, smoking, or salting. The Walker women prided themselves on serving good meals. Originally the cooking was done in the fireplace, but eventually two wood burning cookstoves were obtained.
Nancy, the fourth sister had asthma and did most of the housework, away from the pollen and dust of the fields. The other women did the farming and chores, but all would pitch in help at certain jobs requiring all hands.

When the National Park was established, arrangements started to purchase the Walker land. The sisters resisted several offers, but a sale was finally agreed upon. One stipulation was that the sisters could live and use the property until their deaths.

At first suspicious and shy around park visitors, they gradually thawed and became friends with many people, made and sold souvenirs, and became famous characters. Louisa composed poems which were written and illustrated by her niece.

In the April 27, 1947 issue of Saturday Evening Post there appeared an article about the sisters which brought them national publicity. Some attempts were made to picture the sisters as typical mountain people. In actuality the sisters were as much of a relic in the mountains as if they had clung to ways outdated by 50 years in any other section of the country.

In a land where girls married early, the sisters were old maids. Few people in the mountains had had great reverence for the past, but the Walker sisters lived in the past, and in this way became legends to the mountain people as well as to the outsider.

1. Walker SistersHouse: Level of Significance: 1st

Although it cannot be substantiated, it is likely that Brice McFalls made the first improvements on the Walker land. He probably built the log house that was later dismantled and added to the Walker Sisters cabin. The probably construction date was the 1840's.

When Wiley King, grandfather of the Walker Sisters, moved his family onto the property, he lived in the existing cabin. He began work on a second house, and had completed all but the chimney at his death in 1859. His sons completed this. The new house was a two room story and a half structure.

In 1870 John Walker brought his family to live in the house, along with Grandmother King. Mrs. King continued to live with the Walkers until her death in 1886.

The growth of the family forced the enlargement of the house. The McFalls cabin was dismantled and used as a kitchen addition. This was probably done in the late 1870's. At the same time the porch was added. This was the only major alteration made to the place, although the shingle roof was changed periodically.
Today plans are afoot to repair the structure, refurnish it, and use it as a cultural exhibit by the National Park Service.

2. Walker Sisters’ Corncrib: Order of Significance: 1st

Besides the house, John Walker built numerous other buildings on the farm. The only two that remain are the corn crib and the springhouse.

Corn was the staple crop on the farm. From it were ground meal for human consumption, and whole grain for animal feed. To store and protect this vital crop from year to year it was necessary to have a stout corn crib.

The Walker crib was built by John Walker. He was a carpenter, blacksmith, and skillful at the dozens of other crafts needed to survive on an early day farm. The crib served long after his death while his daughters still lived on and operated the farm.

The crib is still in reasonably good shape, and reflects the skill of the builder. It will be included in any reconstruction of the farm.

3. Walker Sisters’ Springhouse: Order of Significance: 1st

The Walker Sisters had a reputation as excellent cooks. Since there was no such thing as refrigeration in the mountains, the springhouse served as one of the major resources for food preservation. Here the butter, eggs, and milk were kept that appeared on the table in vast quantities.

The Walkers were big, strong people, and put in long hours at back-breaking work. They consumed three huge meals a day, and the quality and quantity of food was renowned in their neighborhood.

Traditionally, many mountain people lived on a scanty diet of poorly cooked food of inferior quality. Many mountain folks scorned dairy foods and lived chiefly on cornbread, pork, and wild game.

The Walkers had orchards to produce a variety of fruits, gardens, poultry, and milk cows. They took pride in their table, and Christmas feasts at their farm were legendary.

The springhouse with its icy stream of water and its stout construction was a source of pride to the Walkers. The building still retains its original appearance, and will be included in any possible rehabilitation of the farm.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. NAME</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COMMON</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>AND/OR HISTORIC</td>
<td>King Place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUMERIC CODE</td>
<td>John H. Walker Place</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Assigned by NPS)</td>
<td>MAR 16 1976</td>
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<table>
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STREET AND NUMBER

Two miles south of Wear's Valley

<table>
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<td>DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.</td>
<td>Front of building from northeast</td>
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[Stamp: RECEIVED NOV 17 1975]
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<th>HISTORIC NAME: King Place</th>
<th>NUMERIC CODE: Wv^6</th>
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### 2. LOCATION

- **STATE**: Tennessee
- **COUNTY**: Sevier
- **TOWN**: Great Smoky Mts. N. P.

2 miles south of Wear's Valley

### 3. PHOTO REFERENCE

- **PHOTO CREDIT**: National Park Service
- **DATE**: July, 1973
- **NEGATIVE FILED AT**: Great Smoky Mts. N. P.

### 4. IDENTIFICATION

Describe view, direction, etc.

Front of building from southeast
## Property Photograph Form

1. **NAME**
   - COMMON AND/OR HISTORIC: Walker Sisters Corn Crib
     - King Place
     - John H. Walker Place

2. **LOCATION**
   - STATE: Tennessee
   - COUNTY: Sevier
   - TOWN: Great Smoky Mts. N. P.
   - STREET AND NUMBER: Two miles south of Wear's Valley

3. **PHOTO REFERENCE**
   - PHOTO CREDIT DATE: National Park Service, July, 1973

4. **IDENTIFICATION**
   - DATE: July, 1973
   - LOCATION: Great Smoky Mts. N. P.
   - NUMERIC CODE (Assigned by NPS): MAR 16 1976

**End of building from southeast**