

DATA SHEET

Form 10-306
(Oct. 1972)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:	Tennessee
COUNTY:	Sevier
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY DATE	MAR 16 1978

1. NAME

COMMON: Walker Sisters' Place

AND/OR HISTORIC: ~~King Walker Place~~
King Place, John H. Walker Place

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: ~~W of Gatlinburg~~ TN 73
Two miles south of Wear's Valley

CITY OR TOWN: Gatlinburg, TN
Great Smoky Mountains National Park

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: 1st District of Tennessee

STATE: Tennessee CODE: 47 COUNTY: Sevier CODE: 155

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) not used at present

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 CODE: 13

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Sevier County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER: N/A

CITY OR TOWN: Sevierville

STATE: Tennessee CODE: 47

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

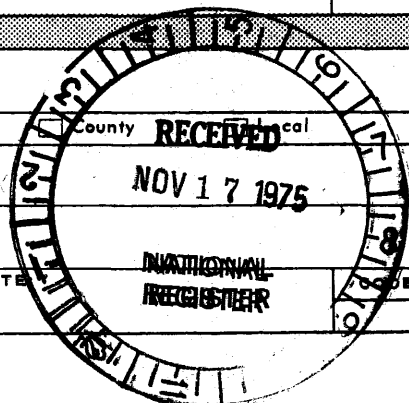
TITLE OF SURVEY: None

DATE OF SURVEY: Federal State

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:



STATE: Tennessee

COUNTY: Sevier

ENTRY NUMBER: MAR 16 1978

DATE:

FOR NPS USE ONLY

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

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, corn-crib, 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.

- 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 22'5 1/2". 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.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

E. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century | |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | _____ |

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.

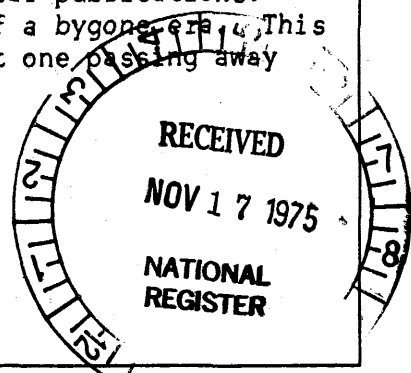
Resourceful, strong-willed, self-reliant, and loving, their land and home were characteristic of the Walkers. In a time when new ideas and ways had begun to invade the mountains, they clung to old ways, and old habits. When Great Smoky Mountains National Park was established in 1935, the Walkers still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

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Madden, Robert L. and T. Russell Jones.

Walker Sisters Home, Historic Structures Report, Part II.
National Park Service. March 1969.

Hall, Joseph H.

Smoky Mountain Folks and Their Lore. Cataloochee Press,
Asheville. 1960.

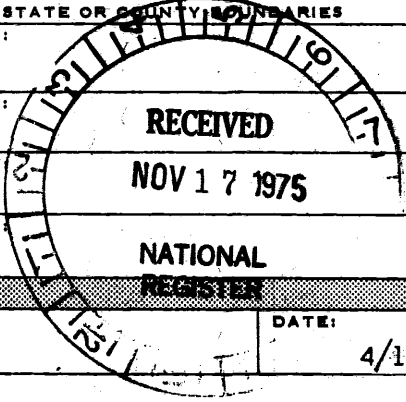
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		35° 41' 39"	83° 37' 45"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: Less than 10

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Paul R. Gordon, Historian DATE: 4/16/74

BUSINESS ADDRESS: Great Smoky Mountains National Park

STREET AND NUMBER: N/A PHONE:

CITY OR TOWN: Gatlinburg STATE: Tennessee CODE: 47

12. CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

State Liaison Officer recommendation:
 Yes
 No
 None

Lawrence
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 Local

[Signature] NOV 11 1975
Federal Representative Signature Date

Deputy Assistant Secretary
Title

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

[Signature]
Acting Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 3/14/76

ATTEST:

Robert B. Ketting
Acting Keeper of The National Register

Date 3-14-76

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	Tennessee
COUNTY	Sevier
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	MAR 10 1976

(Number all entries) Item #7 cont'd (1)

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 Sisters²--Corn Crib
Building #641
Reccommended 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 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x19'8 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". 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.

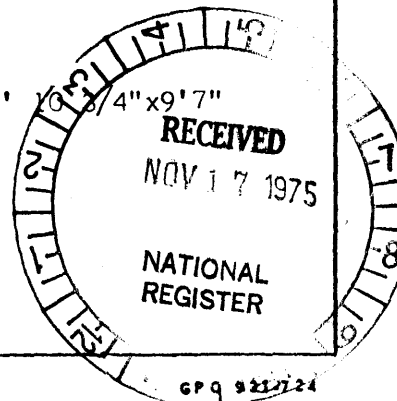
Two harness racks are located at the east end and one at the west end of the north shed.

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 Sisters³ Springhouse
Building #642
Reccommended level of Treatment: Reconstruction
Cost Estimate N/A

This is a rectangular, hewn log structure measuring 7' 10" x 9' 7" on a stone foundation.



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
Tennessee	
COUNTY	
Sevier	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	MAR 16 1976

(Number all entries)

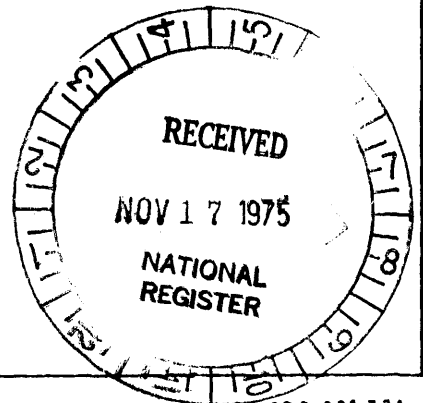
Item #7 cont'd (2)

The roof overhangs the front wall approximately four feet and is framed 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.



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
Tennessee	
COUNTY	
Sevier	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	MAR 16 1976

(Number all entries)

Item #8 cont'd (1)

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 Sister's 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.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Tennessee	
COUNTY Sevier	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	MAR 16 1976

(Number all entries)

Item #8 cont'd (2)

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 neice.

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 Sisters' House: 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.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	Tennessee
COUNTY	Sevier
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	MAR 16 1976

(Number all entries) Item #8 cont'd (3)

Today plans are afoot to repair the structure, refurbish 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.