

## NUGGETS of HISTORY

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PELEG REMINGTON WALKER

By Hazel M. Hyde

(continued from last issue)

A typed resume of Mr. Walker's life stated,

"He was born July 1, 1835, in Brooklyn, Windham Co., Connecticut, his parents, Albert G. and Patience A. E. Remington Walker being descendants of the founders of Rhode Island.

"In early youth he attended a district school and later West Killingly Academy, Connecticut, where he was preparing for college when a severe affliction of the eyes, continuing two years, compelled him to relinquish his plans. At that time the family moved to Illinois. Later he entered the Normal University in Bloomington, Illinois, from which he was graduated July 3, 1861.

"As a teacher he began in district schools in Hampton and South Killingly, Connecticut, later in Lindenwood and Byron, Illinois. He was principal of the Creston School eight years, Rochelle for twelve years, and has been Superintendent of the Rockford Schools for twenty-six years, where he is at present." Actually he was superintendent for twenty-nine years in Rockford.

He was chairman of the Educational Committee on Normal Schools for six years when the last Normal School bills were being urged for legislation.

He was an active member of the National Education Association. He has been President of the State Teachers Association, the Northern Principals' Association, and President of the State Board of Education.

He had served as a director of the National Teachers Association, a member of the state board of education,



P. R. Walker at about the time he was married



Mrs. P. R. Walker at about the time of their marriage

which made him also an ex-officio member of the board of directors of the normal school at Normal, Illinois. He was president of the state board of education at his death.

The date February 16, 1865, was on a certificate from the Department of Public Instruction at Springfield, giving Peleg R. Walker the authority to teach in Illinois and was duly signed by Newton Bateman, Superintendent of Public Instruction. The certificate, yellow with age, has been preserved at Walker School in Rockford.

P. R. Walker was superintendent of the Rockford Schools from 1884 to 1913. The Rockford Morning Star of April 18, 1913, states, "Before Prof. Walker came to Rockford the East and West sides comprised separate school districts, each having its own principal and high school, but this was changed the first year Prof. Walker was here. The ordinance providing for one district and one high school was drawn up by Hon. Alfred Taggart.

"The creation of a central high school was necessary. Temporary quarters were in the second story of a building on West State Street, with Prof. A. W. Mc Pherson as the first principal. He was succeeded by Prof. Charles A. Smith."

"The first of the group of buildings now (i.e. 1913) comprising the high school was erected in 1885. An addition was placed in 1900 and a second addition in 1906. The third addition is now being erected. There were 2,800 pupils in the schools in 1885. There were 174 in the high school and the faculty composed of four teachers. The enrollment of the city schools now (1913) is 1,200. Fifty teachers constitute the faculty at this building."

Previous to the reorganization of the schools, the several buildings were designated by the ward in which they were located. Prof. Walker was much interested in the history of the city of Rockford. He advised naming the schools and up to the time of his death, most of the schools

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P. R. Walker in Denver, standing beside a bus of that period

were named to honor Rockford citizens.

The Rockford Morning Star, April 18, 1913, speaking of his military service stated:

"Superintendent Walker's service in the Civil War was in Company K, Ninety-second Illinois Infantry. He enlisted August 12, 1862, and was made a sergeant. He won advancement, becoming second lieutenant January 23, 1863, and first lieutenant April 21, 1864. The Ninety-second regiment was with the army of Cumberland. The commission of first lieutenant came to him after the battle of Chattanooga. The regiment was later transferred to General Kirkpatrick's cavalry division of General Sherman's army and participated in the march to the sea. Captain Scoville of Superintendent Walker's company was taken prisoner at Ringgold, Georgia, thus placing Lieutenant Walker in command of the company, but he would not accept the captaincy, although retaining command for a year until Captain Scoville was released as a prisoner of war."

Rading Martha Webb's diary for the year 1863, using a magnifying glass for the faded penciled entries, you will find January 1, 1863, Thursday: "Commenced reading the bible. New Year's day spent at home. Something unusual. Lonesome. Rec'd a letter from Rem. Wrote to him. They are moving toward Murfreesboro." Rem is short for Walker's middle name Remington. He calls her Mattie.

In Peleg Remington Walker's diary January 1, 1863, he wrote: "Wrote on Master Rolls. Did not drill. Very cold. We were on the march. I froze 2 fingers. Camped at Elkton Springs. A happy new year to Mattie today."

On Friday, September 18, 1863, he wrote: "Got to foot of Look Out Mt. today. Slept on ground. Very cold. Saw misery in truth. Walked on Rd most all day." It was September 13 when he recorded Letter Number 100 to Mattie and started what he called "No 1 of Second Series to Mattie."

November 2, 1863, gives an idea of an army that lives off the land, foraging as they go, "Took all of my men

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P. R. Walker's home at 716 North Church Street as it appeared at the time he resided there

and started up the Sequotchee Valley, found a field of 10 acres of corn and went to work, got 30 bushels of ears picked when I received orders from Capt Woodcock to report to Chattanooga as soon as possible."

November 25, 1863, "Our forces charged on Missionary Ridge and took it. We lost only a few men. Gen Sherman lost the most. Drew horses. I got a very pretty one. I like him. He was stolen tonight." November 29, "My horse very lame and could hardly get back. Troops coming back from the late battle in Missionary Ridge."

February 4, Sunday, 1864, in diary, Mr. Walker wrote "Attend church. Chaplain Courtright preached from Isaiah 53 chap 4th verse. Had good class meeting afterward. Wrote No 39 to Mattie, a whole sheet fools-cap. reasons for not coming home etc. Brig Genl. Elliott Inspector C. Rec'd 3 Chicago Tribunes from a friend."

Primary material and papers concerning his military record and attainments consisted of: Illinois Volunteers: Orderly Sergeant Company K of 92 Regiment of Illinois Volunteers, 4th Sept 1862--Smith D. Atkins, Col., Commanding Officer; Field Order (Re: Quantity of Hard Bread)--Board of Survey included 2nd Lt Peleg R. Walker 92 Ills-- Marietta, Georgia, Nov 9, 1864; An article by a former classmate and friend (not signed) 18 pages typed "Professor P. R. Walker The Student and Soldier" (Tells of wound he sustained); Discharge 1863 (gives place of Birth Brooklyn Homestead) 2nd Lt. Description hair, age, eyes. 21st April 1863 (no reason why may not re-enlist); Commissioned 2nd Lieutenant 23 January 1863 signed by Governor Yates; Correction of Muster May 22, 1895 to read 1st Lt May 12, 1865.

A flicker of the patriotic zeal of a by-gone era stirs as you examine faded ribbons with their words "Fourteenth Triennial Reunion--92 Illinois, September 4-5, 1906 - Byron, Illinois" which is topped with a metal bar of K 92 Ill. Or a wash of political fervor can be briefly savored reading the campaign button "Employment for Labor--A Full Dinner Bucket--Prosperity--Sound Money--Good Markets" and the pictures of the candidates, pictures of McKinley and Roosevelt. Then there is the Mayblower Pin and Ribbon

with "Fourth Annual Celebration of Forefathers Day, Rockford, Illinois, Dec. 20, 1898." One ribbon has "1832-1902 Battle Ground Monument Stillman Valley, Illinois" with a picture of the monument that commemorates the battle known as "Stillman's Run". There is a torn ribbon that has a button with the picture of P. R. Walker but now the occasion has become past history to be revived fleetingly as you handle the artifact and lay it reverently to rest.

All of the ribbons take me back to the days when the so-called "Old Soldiers of the Civil War" were still living. I attended several "Old Soldiers' Reunions" and saw the devoted service given by relatives and auxiliary members to the men who had been "The Boys in Blue". For a moment, tune your ears and memories to those fervent speeches you heard in your youth. You may feel a stirring of your patriotism and a renewed appreciation of what the soliders of this country have contributed to preserving our Union. My grandfather and great-grandfather both fought in the Civil War and were reputed to have been proud of the part they played. Such a man and soldier was P.R. Walker.

The funeral was held in Second Congregational Church, of which he was a member. Rev. John R. Gordon officiated. Addresses were also delivered by Prof. Cook of DeKalb Normal School and Principal C. R. Briggs.



716 No. Church St. in 1966



Front hall and staircase of P. R. Walker's house



Horse and buggy in front of the old Central High School on South Madison Street



P. R. Walker

Burial was at the West Side Cemetery (now Greenwood) with a service by the G.A.R. and the Loyal Legion.

Active pallbearers were: Mayor W.W. Bennett, Charles T. Marsh, President John Cook of Northern Illinois Normal School at DeKalb, President Felmley of the normal school at Normal, Principal C. R. Briggs of Rockford high school, and George C. Purdy.

Honorary pallbearers were: Dr. D. Lichty, Dr. Clinton Helm, Dr. W. H. Fitch, Dr. F. H. Kimball, Supt. W. H. Hatch of Oak Park, Supt. W. L. Steele of Galesburg, Prof. O. F. Barbour of Rockford, State Superintendent Francis G. Blair, Andrew Sherratt, P. R. Wood, Chandler Starr, N.F. Thompson, George D. Roper, J. H. Burnham of Bloomington, Liberty Walk-up, W. T. Robertson, Charles Andrews, Sr., and Frank Waterman.

Considering cascading funeral costs as 1979 beings, the funeral expenses listed at Burpee's Funeral Home were a comment on the change of times: Casket \$80.00, Chairs .75, hearse 8.00, concrete vault 45.00, 16 carriages at 5.00 each were 80.00, 2 coaches 10.00, cab 1.00, cemetery work 9.00 for a total of 233.75. Three doctors' services had cost \$33.50, Nursing and medication at Porters Drug Company had cost \$80.32. The total for all was \$347.57.

The 1978-79 principal at P.R. Walker school is Mr. Don Swanson. He will escort the interested visitor around the P. R. Walker School, pointing out furniture formerly belonging to Mr. Walker and many artifacts from the family. One interesting item was Mr. Walker's sword.

The P.R. Walker School Building was dedicated April 4th, 1913, in Rockford, and P. R. Walker was present at the dedication. He died April 17, 1913.

A clipping dated April 21, 1913, entitled "Supt. Walker's Monument" stated "The school named in his honor and which has now become his monument commemorates both the teacher and the volunteer soldier." When a young man of 27 P. R. Walker was in camp as a soldier on the very ground

where now stands the "P.R. Walker School". It is in the middle of the old camp ground where in 1862 four Illinois regiments were encamped, the 74th, 92nd, 95th, and 96th. He was a lieutenant in the 92nd regiment under the late Colonel Smith D. Atkins. Among his fellow officers in Company K were Captain Albert Woodcock of Oregon, and Lieut. Horace C. Scovill, then of Mt. Morris, but later and for many years a prominent citizen of Rockford. Young Lieut. Walker in Camp Fuller in 1862 would hardly have believed it if told that fifty years later a great school building bearing his name on it in stone letters would stand in the very midst of the old camp ground, honoring his memory and testifying to the fact that he had attained recognition as one of the distinguished educations of his time."

"The North Star", a publication of Walker School, began in December 1919. A letter from Mrs. A. Revellof Monroe Center, Aug. 22, 1967, enclosed Vol I No 1. She wrote, "Our brother-in-law, Mr. Miles Stone gave me these "North Star" this summer. He told us that Vol No 1 was the first one printed on the press for his personal collection.

"I thought they should be sent on to the school to be put on display if you cared for them. Mr. Stone taught there for a few years and went to the Joliet school system.

"Miss Catherine Needham was our daughter's counselor at East High, not knowing that her Uncle Miles was Miss Needham's teacher.

In that first issue is an article entitled "North Star" which stated, "With the aid of Miss Dentler, our drawing teacher, we have succeeded in securing a fitting name for our school paper. Because the P.R. Walker is the farthest school north (sic), and because it shines like a star to all boys and girls who are thirsty for knowledge, the name "The North Star" was thought to be appropriate for this



P. R. Walker  
at his desk

institution."

A P.R. Walker Parent-Teacher Association Program for the school year 1934-35 lists persons who were officers or gave programs or provided entertainment and refreshment, as follows: Mr. J. E. Borner, Mr. and Mrs. James Welsh, Mrs. Claire Barber, Miss Lydia Adolph, Mrs. Eloise Morgan, Mrs. Clyde Weingartner, Mr. Forrest Lyddon, Miss Ethel Wetterstrom, Mrs. Glen Ralston, Mr. Frank Colehour, Mr. and Mrs. T. J. Floden, Mrs. Robert Wiley, Miss Beatrice Carmichael, Mr. C. A. Carter, Mrs. Arthur Logan, Mrs. A James Breckenridge, Mr. Leroy Foss, Mrs. H.W. Lindsey, Mrs. Maurice Rogers, Mrs. Ralph Picken, Mrs. Roscoe Brightup, Mrs. B. J. Knight, Mrs. A. H. Bates, Mrs. George Bradley, Mrs. Howard Ball, Mrs. Raymond Harding, Mrs. Harold Shugart. James Welsh was principal and Mrs. Lulu Davis, assistant principal. Many of the people were associated with Walker school and other community service over a period of years. J.E. (June) Borner, who led the community singing, was a loved teacher. Roy Foss taught for an extended period in various schools.

Martha Webb Walker died three years before her husband. She was born in LeRoy, New York. Her farther was Martin Webb and her mother was Fanny Deming Webb. She was educated in Casnovia seminary in LeRoy. In 1857, she accompanied her family to the west. They settled in Creston, Ogle county, where they lived for seven years. After that they returned to the homestead in LeRoy.

Martha was married to Peleg Remington Walker, August 16, 1865, immediately after his retirement from three year's service in the Civil War. The couple returnedat once to Creston, where they made their home until 1872. They moved to Rochelle and lived there for twelve years. She moved to Rockford with her husband where she spent the remaining years of her life.

Through her great grandfather Benjamin Webb, who was a soldier in the Revolution, she was a member of the Rockford Chapter of DAR. She was a member of the Second Congrega-



P. R. Walker School

tional Church for over twenty years and a worker in the Aid Society.

She had three sisters, Ellen, Harriett, and Julia, and one brother, Hawley. The Walkers had only one child, the daughter, Frances E. Walker. Both Mrs. Walker and her daughter were much interested in genealogy. Many letters have been preserved concerning the family.

Mrs. Julia D. Frost, of Huntsville, Alabama, survived her sister, Martha Webb Walker. Mrs. Frost and her sons William, Herbert, and J. Henry made their home with Mrs. Walker at times and the boys graduated from Rochelle High School.

In a letter, September 25, 1956, to Barney Thompson of Column Left, Mrs. Penton Hazen (Martha), wrote that among the 3,000 people attending Greenwich Village Fair, she was very pleased to see Miss Frances Walker. She stated that Miss Walker was a charter member of the group that became the nucleus for the first organization of the Rockford Art Association. That group met in the studio of Mrs. Belle Keith many years ago.

Frances E. Walker was married to Azro Chase Tallmadge, June 10, 1896, at Second Congregational Church, with Walter Manning Barrows, Pastor. Her marriage certificate was signed with Mabel Sturtevant and Lee Stewart as witnesses. The beautiful little engraved invitation was carefully preserved. The marriage lasted just two years and among the papers Frances Walker gave to Walker School is the uncontested divorce paper dated April Term 1898, with John C. Carver, Judge. She resumed her maiden name and continued her active life in the community.

Miss Walker apparently felt that all the belongings and papers of her family should be open to inspection and kept in a central place. A copy of her will, and revisions in pencil which she had implemented in a second will, is among her papers. She gave certain artifacts to Rockford Chapter of Daughters of the American Revolution, which are arranged in cases and catalogued in their museum in the Rockford Woman's Club Building. (See: NUGGETS OF HISTORY, Vol IX No 1, January-February, 1972, pp 4-7, especially pp 6-7, "Rockford's DAR Museum") Other items were left to the then Winnebago County Museum. She listed on 3 x 5 cards some twenty items for that organization and interesting among the items were: valentines, a child's bank, chair,



Buggy in front of P. R. Walker's house. Note also the back part of the home next door at 710 North Church Street

and table, puzzle of Exposition 1876, big doll, doll clothes, a music box. There were also P. R. Walker's officers sash, shoulder strap and buckle, Grandmother Webb's camphor bottle and Martha Webb Walker's wedding dress.

A letter of thanks signed by Gladys R. Haskin, librarian, Cleveland Institute of Art, dated October 10, 1952, tells of a complete file of pictures, perfectly organized and some books, given by Miss Walker.

Snapshots and post cards of Gloucester, survive from the days when Frances Walker studied jewelry making there and painted in the area. The year must have been 1950 for elsewhere she mentioned: smaller box with water color paints, oil paints, etc. I sent from Gloucester 1950. It is heavy.

Miss Walker attended Elmira College.

She made trips to Europe nine times: 1903, 1924, 1925, 1926, 1927, 1928, 1930, 1931 and she made a listing of the ships in which she traveled and the places she visited. Her travel diary makes good reading for persons who have visited those places.

From the papers, we can reconstruct some small embodiment of this lively, active woman, with a wide range of interests and a concern for friends whose addresses and photographs were saved.

R. G. Jones, Acting Superintendent of Schools, Board of Education, Cleveland, Ohio, wrote of her August 31, 1918, "To the Department of War concerned:

"I am writing this note to express my confidence in the ability and service of Miss Frances E. Walker of Rockford, Illinois. Miss Walker, through her own initiative transformed a school system's "police department" into an attendance department with such signal success that I have great respect for her ability to organize and execute in other fields of service. Miss Walker, by birth, opportunity, training, experience, and personality would be rated a superior woman and will give as good account of herself in war service as she has in civil life. I commend her unreservedly."

Frances Walker had considerable correspondence with

Frances Walker in costume for a German play



Donald Blanding, poet and columnist. One amusing bit was on the back of a snapshot of Don with a flock of ducks, typed, "The extinguished (sic) poet, Donald Duck Blanding, threw a luncheon party for the Quackenwaddle Culture Club of Bend, Oregon. The members were crazy about him until he started reading verses, then they quacked, "More cracked corn and less corny cracks, please." Earthy creatures. Aloha. Don B. "This is the former Rockford artist about whom we read in an updated clipping she had saved, "Members of the Women's Board of Rockford Art Association are busy with the final arrangements of their upcoming memorial showing by former Rockford artists which honors the 50th Rockford Art Association...Another artist whose work they would like to include if possible is Don Blanding, who served with Leslie Young Correthers as director of the Association in its early years. Blanding, also a lecturer and author, illustrated many of his books, which were inspired by his experiences in Florida, California, and the Hawaiian Islands, and service in two world wars."

In the final analysis, it is to Frances E. Walker that we must give our thanks for preserving artifacts, pictures, newspaper clippings, and materials, from which to round out a picture of the family and the character of Rockford's first Superintendent of Schools, Peleg Remington Walker.



Donald Blanding, poet and columnist, with his flock of ducks (the Quackenwaddle Culture Club)

## COOKIE RECIPES

### Lemon Bars

2 cups flour                      Mix flour and sugar. Cut in but-  
1 cup butter                      ter like pie crust. Spread in  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup powdered sugar              9 x 13 pan.  
Bake at 350 degrees for 20 minutes.

#### Topping:

4 eggs (slightly beaten)              Mix together (I use my  
2 cups sugar                      blender). Pour on baked  
4 tablespoons flour                  crust. Bake 25 minutes  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon baking powder              at 350 degrees. Cool  
6 tablespoons FRESH Lemon juice      10-15 minutes and sift  
powdered sugar over top.

Cool and cut into bars.

Harriet Treadwell

### Peanut Butter Bars

5 cups powdered sugar  
2 sticks oleo melted                  Mix all together.  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  box graham crackers rolled out fine  
1 cup peanut butter, crunchy or creamy

Spread contents on cookie sheet and press down solid (I use my hands).

Baker's semi-sweet chocolate squares for topping, melted and spread over entire mixture -- (I use 4-1 oz. squares but more may be used if desired) -- chopped nuts on top, optional. Cut in squares or bars.

Pearl E. Goeller

### Layer Bar

I.  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup melted butter                  Mix well and spread in  
1 cup graham crackers crushed              9 x 13 pan.

II. 1 cup flaked coconut (1 cup +)  
1 6-ounce pkg. choc. chips  
1 6-ounce pkg. butterscotch bits  
1 cup chopped pecans

Sprinkle II in layers over I. Pour 1 cup Eagle Brand milk over all. Bake 30 min. at 350 degrees. Cut while warm. (easy and very good!)

Harriet Treadwell

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