



# WALTON

## RELATIONS & HISTORY

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Walton County Heritage Association

October 2016

### Newsletter Changes

By Sam Carnley

I am starting off as editor of the newsletter with a few changes. I have given it a new look by adding a watermark background depicting a historical scene of the depot as it appeared a few generations ago. One possible problem I see with this is that the darker areas of the background may make for more difficult reading of the text. If anyone finds it harder to read please let me know and I will make changes.

I have also expanded the content. Instead of strictly a genealogy newsletter it was suggested to me that we make it the newsletter of the Walton County Heritage Association and include historical articles as well as genealogies. That gives us more flexibility in what we can publish because it expands the universe of materials available to us as resources.

It is also an opportunity for WCHA members who may not be particularly interested in publishing genealogies to try their hand at writing historical articles. With that said this month's article is historical in nature and is in two parts with the second part coming in November.

Please let me know your thoughts on these and any other changes you might like to suggest. After all, this is "our" newsletter, not just mine, and I welcome your input.

### Genealogy Meeting

No genealogy meeting is planned for October unless the members feel the need for one.

### Upcoming Reunions

Reunions traditionally held in October and November are listed below. For a complete listing see the Reunions page at the following link:

<http://www.waltoncountyheritage.org/genealogy.htm>

#### October (Those after the newsletter date)

- Campbell/McLean – 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday in October
- Day – Last Sunday in October
- Kelly – Last held 17 October 2009
- Pitts – Last held 31 October 2009

#### November

- Donaldson/Trotman – Last held 7 Nov. 2009

#### Walton County Heritage Museum

Open Tuesday – Saturday, 1:00 – 4:00 PM  
1140 Circle Drive, De Funiak Springs, FL 32435  
850-951-2127

[www.WaltonCountyHeritage.org](http://www.WaltonCountyHeritage.org)  
[WaltonCountyHeritage@cox.net](mailto:WaltonCountyHeritage@cox.net)

Who Was George Walton Jr,  
The man whose name the Florida County of Walton Shares?  
Or

“Worth makes the man, and want of it, the fellow.”

By Sam Carnley

George and Dorothy Camber Walton of Augusta, Georgia, welcomed the birth of their second son, George Jr. on 19 January 1789. Walton Sr., an attorney and judge, one of Georgia’s three signers of the Declaration of Independence, a Revolutionary War patriot and personal friend of The Marquis de la Fayette, died 2 February 1804 when George Jr. was fifteen years old.

In 1806, about two years after his father’s death, young George enrolled in the College of New Jersey (Princeton University) class of 1809 but was suspended for participating in the “Great Riot of 1807,” and never returned to graduate.

He continued preparing for entry into his chosen profession of law through apprenticeship, but interrupted it briefly to marry 17 year old Sarah (Sally) Ming Walker on 10 January 1809. After the wedding, 19 year old George moved her into his home, “Meadow Garden,” with himself and his mother. The following December, the Acts of the Georgia General Assembly published in the Augusta Chronicle listed George Walton among those admitted to “. . . plead and practice in any court of law or equity in this state.”

He settled into practice as a hometown attorney making a comfortable living for himself and his family which added its first new member on 11 August 1811 with the birth of daughter Octavia Celestia Valentine. A son, Robert Watkins, followed in late 1812.

In 1821 following the acquisition of the Territories of East and West Florida from Spain, U. S. President James Monroe was in the process of staffing an administration under General Andrew Jackson for the new territorial government. Sally’s uncle, Senator Freeman Walker wrote Secretary of State John Quincy Adams that “Col. George Walton” desired a position in the administration and recommended his appointment as “Secretary of West Florida Territory.” Walker further informed Adams of Walton’s estimable ancestry, but added that his suitability for the post was not for that reason alone. He was also a well-educated attorney of high standing in Augusta and more than adequately qualified for the job.

The appointment was secured and Walton received his commission as Secretary of West Florida Territory on 18 May 1821. A few weeks thereafter, he departed for Pensacola, where he arrived on 31 July. He reported to General Jackson on 10 August to assume his duties and immediately found himself in the middle of a standoff between Jackson and the outgoing Spanish Governor, Colonel Jose Callava.

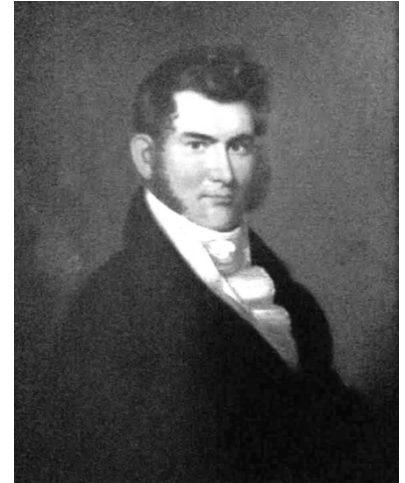
Jackson ended the standoff with the arrest of Callava and seizure of the records in his possession that he had refused to turn over to the Americans. The affair culminated in Jackson issuing a proclamation ordering the deportation of several of Callava’s officers who had criticized his treatment of the former Governor. Walton drafted the document in his name as Secretary and Jackson’s as Governor.

Within a week of throwing the Spaniards out, General Jackson announced his own imminent departure for home in Tennessee and that he would leave the Territorial government in the hands of Secretaries George Walton in West Florida and W. G. D. Worthington in East Florida. Journeying from Pensacola about the middle of October 1821, Jackson arrived home at “The Hermitage,” in early November. On the 13<sup>th</sup>, he notified President Monroe by letter of his resignation as Governor of the Territory of Florida, to which he never returned.

Walton began his tenure as Acting Governor of West Florida on Jackson’s departure and served until the arrival of Kentuckian William P. Duval, Jackson’s successor, in June 1822.

In his early correspondence with Jackson and Secretary of State John Quincy Adams as Acting Governor, Walton mostly assured them that everything remained under control in Pensacola and that he was satisfactorily performing the obligations of his position as charged to him by General Jackson.

Walton’s assessment of the situation though, was not shared by his colleague, Henry M. Brackenridge. Jackson appointed Brackenridge to his administration because he was a multi-lingual attorney who wrote and spoke fluent Spanish, as well as French and other languages. His contribution to Jackson’s success in dealing with the Spanish Government officials had been invaluable, and before leaving, Jackson had asked him to assist Walton. Striking a



George Walton Jr.  
(1789-1863)

(Courtesy Historic Mobile Preservation Society, Mobile, Alabama.)

discordant note to Walton's view of existing conditions in Pensacola, Brackenridge wrote to a friend, "I assure you our situation at this moment is truly deplorable, and if there could be any doubt of the necessity of having a man such as General Jackson, clothed in ample powers, at the head of government, a single glimpse of our present state would remove that doubt." (Satterfield, 4)

He was the first to hint that Walton might not fit the mold of honorable men begetting like progeny. Not only did Brackenridge disagree that Walton was a good administrator, but going even further, he wrote:

*The person who fills the office of Governor is a young Georgian who has run through a handsome fortune, without capacity of habits of business. I have been compelled to do everything for him since General Jackson went away . . . he is a wastrel, a despicable character . . . unfortunately he is totally wanting in that weight of character and dignity of manners which become the station he fills. No one has respect for him or confidence in him. His companions are persons of no character, or the subalterns of the army with whom he passes almost every night over the gaming table . . . He is in truth an object of universal contempt.* (Satterfield, 5)

In due time, Walton's behavior would validate Brackenridge's opinion of him. But his feelings about Walton did not discourage Brackenridge from befriending his family, especially his precocious daughter, Octavia. Recognizing her extraordinary intellect in the ease with which she learned language, he appointed himself her tutor. With his schooling and her eagerness to learn, her fluency in Spanish and French soon equaled his. Her aptitude for language would later be useful to Walton in his dealings with the Indians (Satterfield). Any of Walton's short comings alluded to by Brackenridge seemed not to present any problems before Governor Duval arrived and relieved him.

Subsequent events on the other hand, severely tested not only Walton, but everyone else in Pensacola as well. Shortly after Duval arrived and convened the inaugural session of the Legislative Council of the Territory of Florida, the worst yellow fever epidemic in recent memory enveloped the Town bringing widespread death and terror. In the ensuing panic, those who could fled the city in hopes of finding safety and shelter in the surrounding woods. Duval and the Legislative Council hastily adjourned to the farm of Don Manuel Gonzalez about fifteen miles north of Pensacola in an effort to escape with their lives.

But the effort was not entirely successful. Four men associated with the Legislative Council died of yellow fever, including Dr. James Bronaugh, formerly General Jackson's personal physician. Before evacuating Pensacola, Duval and Dr. Bronaugh had stayed in Walton's home. Duval thought himself lucky to have escaped because Bronaugh and everyone in the family except Walton and his mother came down with the fever. Duval wrote Secretary of State John Quincy Adams that the Legislative Council had adjourned in September, and that he was returning home temporarily to Kentucky. He further advised that future communications should be addressed to Walton as Acting Governor in his absence.

Duval returned to Pensacola in the spring of 1823 to collect Walton and continue on to St. Augustine where the second session of the Legislative Council was scheduled to convene on May 1. On arriving in Pensacola however, he found Walton's daughter, Octavia still dangerously ill from the lingering effects of yellow fever. He departed for St. Augustine leaving Walton behind with instructions to join him when and if the child's condition permitted. She subsequently recovered sufficiently for Walton to leave and arrive in St. Augustine in time to attend the meeting.

Walton and two companions negotiated the four hundred mile overland journey between Pensacola and St. Augustine in record time, but it was not an accomplishment that most people could match on a regular basis, or would want to. It in fact was such an obstacle to travel between the two cities to attend the Legislative Council meetings alternating between them that at their St. Augustine meeting in 1823, the Legislative Council resolved to do something about it.

Accordingly, the Council on 24 June passed an act providing for the appointment of Dr. William H. Simmons of St. Augustine and John Lee Williams of Pensacola as commissioners to select a central location for the seat of Territorial government. The two men concluded their work in early 1824 and submitted their report to the Governor. In March he issued a proclamation directing the next session of the Legislative Council to convene at the site selected by the commissioners on the day set by law. The location was in Gadsden County situated "about a mile southwest from the old deserted fields of Tallahassee, about a half mile south of the Oke-lock-o-ny and Tallahassee trail, at a point where the old Spanish road is intersected by a small trail running southwardly." Nearby was the Mikasuki village of Chief Neamathla.

The Territory obtained title to the property on 24 May 1824, in an act of the U. S. Congress conveying to it a quarter section of land for the seat of government. The act further authorized the Governor and Legislative Council to sell part of the land to raise funds to construct public buildings on the site, and reserved for sale three quarter sections of contiguous and adjoining land to be chosen by the Governor. A temporary structure of logs was constructed on the site to

house the December 1824 Legislative Council meeting.

On 11 December the Council approved laying out the Town of Tallahassee. Octavia Walton later wrote that she was present in her father's office in Pensacola during several of Neamathla's visits and she had learned his language. When the name of the Town came up for debate, she suggested they call it Tallahassee, which in Neamathla's tongue meant, "Beautiful Land." (Satterfield, 7-8, 10-11) On 29 December the Legislative Council carved out a portion of Gadsden County which included Tallahassee to establish the new county of Leon, named after Ponce de Leon, discoverer of Florida. Other counties established on that date included Alachua, Nassau, Mosquito, and for the Territorial Secretary, Walton.

Governor Duval again being out of the Territory in early February 1825, Acting Governor Walton wrote on the 16<sup>th</sup> to George Graham, Commissioner of the General Land Office, regarding the terms of the act granting land for the seat of government. He advised that in the Governor's absence, the duty of selecting the three contiguous quarter sections specified in the act appeared to be his to discharge, which he proceeded to do. His identification of those last three parcels finalized the aggregation of all the land granted by the act. With that accomplished, the Town of Tallahassee laid out, and lots put up for sale, the real estate surrounding the future Capital city quickly became highly desirable. In June 1825, the U. S. Congress granted an entire township of thirty six thousand acres adjoining the town to the Marquis De Lafayette as a gift for his invaluable assistance to George Washington and the Continental Army in defeating the British and winning the Revolutionary War. Although the property it encompassed has long since been sold off, historical markers in Tallahassee now delineate the boundaries of the grant.

The Lafayette land grant document mentioned Mr. Walton as arranging to purchase adjacent lands. But instead of George Walton, it was his mother Dorothy who would make the purchase. In December 1825, Walton received from President John Quincy Adams a commission appointing him Secretary of the Territory for a second term of four years commencing 26 April, 1826. In January, Duval dispatched Walton to Key West to collect salvage revenue due the Territory. Completing his business in Key West and preparing to sail on to Washington to "settle accounts," Walton wrote Duval on 22 February 1826 advising that he had collected for the Territory the sum of \$9,879.10. He arrived in Washington in early April as evidenced by his letter from there on the 8<sup>th</sup> to Georgia U. S. Senator John M. Berrien regarding the settlement of land claims in Florida.

During her son's absence from Tallahassee, Dorothy Walton purchased the previously mentioned land, which totaled eight hundred acres. In two separate purchases in March and April, it consisted of the whole of section 4, and a quarter section each from sections 3 and 5, in township 001 south and range 001 east. The bulk of the property lay along today's U. S. Highway 27 (Apalachee Parkway) between the Capital and U. S. Highway 319 (Capital Circle). Mrs. Walton likely paid less than two dollars an acre for it, but as some of the choicest residential and commercial real estate in present day Tallahassee, it is now valued in the millions of dollars.

Secretary Walton's letter of 8 April to Senator Berriens was his last correspondence of record until the following December. His silence in the interim began raising suspicions that something was amiss. W. Hassel Hunt, editor and publisher of the Pensacola Gazette printed an article on 8 September 1826 questioning Walton's unexplained absence and why he had not submitted to the Territorial treasury the nearly ten thousand dollars he had collected in Key West. The article's suggestion that the circumstances might lead to the public perception that Walton was a thief came as a major source of embarrassment to his wife and family.

Walton finally revealed his whereabouts when he wrote to Henry Brackenridge, then a Superior Court Judge in Tallahassee on 11 December. Addressed from Washington, it was a rambling narrative of woe and self-pity bemoaning that people viewed him as a villain and how his family had been made to suffer. He never explained his year-long absence or admitted to any wrong doing but only that he had used poor judgement. Failing to mention the money collected in Key West, he complained of the numerous places he had gone trying to raise the money he needed to take to Tallahassee but as rumors of suspicion had preceded him, he was turned down at all of them. He indicated he would return to Florida even if it meant going to jail and that he would resign as Territorial Secretary.

In view of the opinion he had already formed of Walton, the letter likely came as no great surprise to Brackenridge. It no doubt saddened him that Walton in his poor judgement had failed to consider how his behavior might impact his family, and it is certain that he commiserated with them in the embarrassment and humiliation they felt in face of the rumors and accusations circulating in Pensacola about Walton.

As he stated he would do in the letter, Walton submitted his resignation to Secretary of State Henry Clay by letter from Baltimore on 14 December 1826 and soon after returned to Florida. He met in Tallahassee with Davis Floyd, the new Territorial Treasurer on 1 January 1827 and promised to remit to the Territory the money he had collected in Key West. He subsequently reneged however, on his promise to pay, leading Floyd to file a complaint against him on an action of "Trespass on the case," for damages of ten thousand dollars. On 2 April, a warrant was issued ordering the Marshall of the middle district of Florida to take Walton into custody if found in his district and hold him to be brought

before the Superior Court Judge on the first day of the term beginning in October. The case filed against him was titled "Territory of Florida vs. George Walton." The warrant was not immediately served because Walton had returned to Pensacola by that time and was no longer in the district of the Marshall ordered to arrest him.

News of the warrant did not become public knowledge in Pensacola. If it had, W. Hassel Hunt would almost certainly have made it the lead story in his paper for months on end. As it was, the only thing he had on Walton was that he had absconded with the nearly ten thousand dollars he collected in Key West. After learning that Walton was back in Pensacola, Hunt renewed his attack articles against him in the paper. The first appeared on 8 June in which the paper printed a portion of the article of the previous September disclosing Walton's letter to Governor Duval regarding the nine thousand eight hundred and seventy-nine dollars and ten cents he secured in Key West. The article cited several instances in which men guilty of crimes were released from prison because there is "no money in the Treasury to support offenders in jail." Indian John was on the verge of "perishing from Hunger" while in jail and was discharged to work for a local attorney who paid the fines the Indian was imprisoned for being unable to pay. William Frye, who stabbed his wife intending to kill her had to be let "loose upon the community" because the Territory could not afford to keep him locked up. "How is this" the article read, "NINE THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-NINE DOLLARS AND TEN CENTS secured for the Territory in Feb. 1826 and no money now in the Treasury to support offenders in jail! What has become of it!!!"

As turned out, Walton had his supporters, or at least, one. A letter to the editor on 22 June defended him from the angle that he was of honorable descent and was making arrangements to satisfy his debt to the Territory. It concluded with the writer saying he was not disposed to censure Walton before giving him a chance to correct his errors. The letter was signed only as "Justica."

Hunt fired back in the same day's edition of the paper. He accused Justica of doing injustice to the paper by claiming it made insinuations against Walton that it had not. He insisted that he had printed only the facts in the matter, and protested the idea that a person's "station of ancestry" alone was reason enough to consider him "high standing." "Worth makes the Man; and want of it the fellow," he wrote, and continued to lay out the facts as he saw them. Walton had gone to Key West from where after collecting funds for the Territory he wrote the Governor in February 1826 saying he had collected \$9,879.10 in such funds. He left the Territory with the money, did not return for more than a year, and had not yet remitted the money to the Territory. In consequence of that, the Territory was still without a treasury and prisoners guilty of great crimes were "turned loose upon the community," for the want of funds on which to support them in prison.

He stated that those were the facts and the paper had done no more than publish them, with the enquiry "What has become of the money collected?" Maintaining that the paper was not disposed to censure Walton for anything more than the errors which he appeared to have committed, he stated that as editor it would please him to see those explained away. He again protested the idea that a person should be viewed as "high standing" while remaining unaccountable for withholding funds due the Territory and that anyone should defend him in such questionable circumstances.

Taking offense to Hunt's attacking him, Justica defended himself in a second letter to the editor on 6 July, saying he rarely wrote for the newspaper, and would do so even less in the future as his article was preceded by Hunts criticism of it. He denied saying that "worth did not make the man," or that ancestry constituted claims to respectability. He only intended, he insisted, to suggest that a person clothed in the respectability of an honorable ancestor should not be "suspected or charged with the infamous offence of speculation – but time should be given to correct occasional errors, before that tremendous sentence of public opinion is pronounced through public newspapers."

But Hunt was determined not to yield the last word on the matter. He responded in the column immediately beneath Justica's letter that he was amazed at how Justica had distorted his words by alleging the paper had accused Walton of "speculation." Again disagreeing that the paper had done anything other than use Walton's February 1826 letter as evidence he had collected a certain sum of money for the Territory, he contended that the paper had simply asked "What became of it?" In concluding, he stated that in the absence of money to fund it, the Territory was limited in its ability to administer justice and if the Territory did not demand the money, he saw no reason why Walton should voluntarily return it. But if the demand was made and refused, at what point did Justica think it would become the "infamous offence of speculation?"

Hunt's last response seemed to silence Justica as later editions of the paper contained no further communications from him. Those of other writers though were published from time to time and agreed with Hunt's view of Walton. In some of them, the term "defalcation" began to appear. Hunt printed what may have been one of his final articles on Walton and the Territorial Treasury on 24 August before taking an extended hiatus on the subject:

Colonel George Walton, late Secretary and Treasurer of this Territory, has lately paid a visit to the City of Tallahassee, from whence he arrived in Pensacola on Monday of last Week. During his absence, so confidently

was it expected that he had gone for the purpose of depositing in the Treasury, the money secured for the Territory in February 1826, that we were several times on the point of announcing to our readers, the probability of so agreeable an event; we thought best, however, to wait until the money was paid before we entered it to his credit. Since his return we have enquired diligently, and have omitted to say anything on the subject in our last, in order to gain information, but cannot ascertain that the coffers of the Territorial Treasury have benefited by his trip; it is, however, intimated that some arrangements have been made preparatory to this desirable object; we hope that it is although we confess that we cannot yet induce our faith to accompany or hope in this instance. While on this subject, it may not be improper for us to notice an erroneous idea, which we have understood has been entertained respecting us – it is, that in the remarks we have made with regard to the defalcation, by the Ex-Treasurer, of the Territorial Funds, we have unnecessarily harmed and wounded the feelings of his family. This we have certainly had no intention of doing, and we think that every candid person, who reviews our course in this business will acknowledge that we have said no more than our duty to the Public *absolutely required*. We have not now, nor have we ever had, any feelings of personal hostility to Col. Walton; it would be the height of folly in us unnecessarily to create for ourself personal enemies, and it is certainly far from our wish so to do – but where we conscientiously believe our duty leads, there we fear not to follow. Our Territory is young and poor and a handsome sum is due to her; her Secretary and Treasurer is commissioned to collect it; he does so and acknowledges that he has secured the amount; leaves the Territory – stays away a year, and after his return is six months in the Territory without paying a cent. In the meantime every individual in Florida feels the want of a Treasury, and the vilest criminals are turned loose for want of funds whereon to support them in jail! We ask any candid individual should we do our duty if we were silent under such circumstances! Are not these the facts, and have we overstepped the bounds of moderation in exposing them to the public, and endeavoring to induce repayment of the money?

What Hunt didn't realize was that while in Tallahassee, the Marshall caught up with Walton and served him with the warrant on 8 August, but the authorities released him on his own recognizance which enabled his return to Pensacola that became the subject of the above article. Neither that outcome nor the time of his court appearance occurred as spelled out in his warrant. Instead of the October term, his trial was carried over to the one of April 1828. He entered a plea of not guilty to a charge of "Trespass on the Case" on the 18<sup>th</sup>. His trial followed and the jury found in favor of the Territory for damages of \$10,372.45 with interest on \$10,245.38 from the trial date until paid and costs.

The only asset of that value available to him was the land his mother purchased in Tallahassee. Rather than let her son go to jail, she offered it to the Territory in lieu of the money he owed. It was accepted and the Legislative Council adopted a resolution assigning to Mrs. Walton the judgement against her son for the land and granting full discharge of all claims of the Territory against him. Following acquisition of the land, the Legislative Council passed an act laying it out in forty acre lots and putting them up for sale at public auction.

Her son's financial irresponsibility had long been a disappointing concern to Dorothy Walton. She had lived through a similar experience with his father, whose equally poor business acumen was among those few unvarying traits passed down to his son. Once the owner of large tracts of land, he had lost it all and run up massive debts which remained unpaid at the time of his death. Through the stress of those times, Dorothy had learned how to avoid exposing her property to the risk of loss (Satterfield). She had seen that risk looming with regard to the Tallahassee property well in advance of its occurrence but recognized she was powerless to stop it.

Fearing that the same fate awaited her grandchildren's inheritance if it fell into George's hands, she resolved to will it directly to them, which she did in January 1828 in advance of his trial. Her most valuable possessions were her nineteen slaves, four of which went to Octavia, six to Robert, and the remaining nine shared between the two grandchildren. All the remainder of her property was to be divided between them, "share and share alike." She appointed her son George and her friend John H. Walker of Alabama as executors. She committed a potentially egregious error in entrusting the will to George, because he failed to record it in the Escambia County official records until her death.

**(To be cont'd in the November Newsletter)**

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