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P Harry Lee Walker 7/4/1875 - 3/4/1941

Page 1

Harry Walker was born on July 4, 1875. As children we never knew who his father was. His mother was Hettie Adams who lived in Augusta County on a farm. In later years Hettie Adams was the proprietor of a livery located on Henry Street, behind the First Baptist Church.

Harry got his name in a most unusual way. It was customary to have a boat race on the Maury River every fourth of July between two boats ^{clubs}. One named the Harry Lee and the other named the Albert Sydney. Which ever boat ^{club} won the race would be the name given to my grand father, hence his name became Harry Lee, named after the winner of the boat ^{club} race on July 4, 1875.

He was a devoted and loving son who spent his early years given to much hard work. This was evidenced by his successful later endeavors. Harry was exceedingly masterful at grading stock, such as weight and breeding.

For many years Harry was the butcher at Alum Springs Hotel, a resort of some sort, situated in the Allegheny Mountains. He walked the distance most of the time, which was about 14 or 15 miles from Lexington.

Harry would walk to the Cedar Baptist Church on many Sundays. As a young man where he courted Eliza Bannister who later became his wife.

In 1901 Harry and his wife Eliza purchased

a 14 Acre Tract of land just east of the town limits in 1901. Here he built a holding pen and a slaughter house where the latest B Band T Building now stands. He purchased all sorts of stock from local farmers and on occasion had to order stock from as far away as Chicago, Illinois. A Swisher Family was a main local supplier of stock that Harry bought from.

A few years after the above purchase, the State of Virginia by rights came through the land, building Route 60 East. Dividing the land that was left to the south, caused him to sell the divided piece. Since that first purchase of above land, there has been four other purchases of said acreage with a fifth purchase pending.

Harry worked for many years as a master butcher for the Mayor of Lexington named Rhoads. He took a great fatherly interest in Harry and after many years of service, encouraged him to strike out on his own, which he did.

In ~~1911~~ Harry opened a successful business in front of the Stonewall Jackson Home on Washington Street. ~~He~~

In 1911 he purchased an old home at 28-30 North Main Street. ~~It~~ ~~was~~ ~~with~~ ~~one~~ ~~man~~. Harry ran a successful business from this address.

He supplied the Virginia Military Institute with meat and poultry provisions.

as Attested To in Several Contracts Signed by The Superintendent. (See prices of 1975, etc)

The specialty of The House was The Old Virginia Hams That he shipped out to all parts of The World. Even in The 1950's People would Write To See if They Could still Purchase The Old Virginia Hams.

Early in The 1920's Harry took into his business his New Son-in-law, Clarence M. Wood and His brother Joseph McMillian Wood as Partners. Harry's Business became Known as The Walker and Wood Brothers Meat Market.

Harry was a deeply religious Man who was deacon for several years in The First Baptist Church and he was a member of several Community groups. He was always interested in young people bettering ~~themselves~~ themselves in education, which he never had much of.

In The Summer he always had a garden and would get up at The Crack of dawn to work in it before he went to his real responsibility on Main Street.

⊗ In 1917 he Purchased The house at 101 Tucker Street Known as Blandome. He expired on 3/4/41 at Blandome.

Eliza Bannister Walker (4-11-1874/12/14/1939)

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Eliza Bannister Walker was born on April 11, 1874. She lived in Murat, Virginia UNTIL she married Harry L. Walker. She was a member in good standing of The Cedar Hill Baptist Church.

Eliza was instrumental in helping her husband build his successful businesses during their early years. Two children were born to this union, a boy, Harry Thomas Walker 4/17/1897 and Wannie Elizabeth Walker on 1/07/1900. Harry Thomas died of Pneumonia on 1/15/1914 when he was almost 17 years old.

During most of her adult life, Eliza was a Civil Rights Activist. She was the organizer of many groups that tended to better the Negro race. She was President of the group that was organized to get a new school in 1923. She was the President of The Rockbridge-Walker Federation of Colored Women's Club. She was the organizer of The Charity Nightingales a singing group and several more groups. She was both organizer and President. She spearheaded the moving of Black Cemetery to its present place.

In the ~~late~~ 30's she built 2 bungalow houses facing Route 60 on "The Farm". In the late 30's and early 40's she built a larger building which she called the Garden Grill known for recreational dancing. For the young children, she built swings, see saws and Merry-go-Rounds. She expired on 12/14/1939.

Nannie Elizabeth Walker Wood 11/7/1900 - 6/18/1993

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Nannie Elizabeth Walker-Wood was born on 11/7/00 to Harry Lee Walker and Eliza Bannister-Walker.

She attended the old elementary school for Negro children located on Randolph Street, next to the Randolph Street Methodist Church. She was born in a home situated about where the parking lot is for the Wandl Fraternity that faces the First Baptist church on Main Street.

Nannie attended Hartshorn Memorial School located on the campus of Virginia Union University in Richmond, Virginia. It was here that she met Clarence M. Wood whom she later married.

Nannie was what one would call back in the day "A Home Maker" she was never employed outside of the home all of her life.

She was the mother of six children, two girls and four boys. All born in the same room at Blandome because there were no provisions made for Negro women for delivery at the Stonewall Jackson Hospital.

With the demise of her father, Harry Lee, everything was left to her, which she invested in certain enterprises, such as Auto Dealerships, Esso Filling Stations, Davi- Delights, Pizza Huts, Kentucky Fried Chicken.

With the demise of her husband she travelled all over the world until her demise on 6/18/93.

Clarence M. Wood, SR (6/27/1889 - 11/9/57)

Page 4 Clarence Mosby Wood, Sr. was born on June 27, 1889 in Urbanna, Virginia. He attended grade school in Saluda, Va and finished The Virginia Union University in Richmond, Va. with a Bachelors in Education Degree.

Women's He met and courted Nannie Elizabeth Walker while she was attending Hartshorn Memorial College on Virginia Union's campus.

They were married on June 18, 1919 in The First Baptist Church, Lexington, VA.

Clarence was associated as one third partner in his father-in-law's business that became known as The Walker and Wood Brothers Meat Market. Clarence's brother Joseph McMillan Wood became the other one third partner in the business. The brothers together went into the real estate business also and for the most part always had 3 to 5 houses for sale.

Clarence later became a most successful insurance agent for the North Carolina Mutual Insurance Company located in Durham, North Carolina. Clarence's debit was so perfect that he never once carried an arrear on his debit book. As an agent of the above company he was able to send all six children to college. All 6 graduated from college, and some went to grad. school.

Clarence, by the intervention of the Governor of Virginia, Governor Price became the first administrator of the Green Pastures National Recreational Park. It was the only federal park set aside for Negroes in the United States. He held this position for more than 12 years (1940-1952).

(OVER)

In the early 1920's Clarence was editor of the Black Newspaper called The . His hand writing was ~~immaculate~~ exemplary, and his advice was much sought after.

For many years he taught Night School to adults in Natural Bridge and Glasgow Virginia. Funds for the teaching of adults came from a grant given either by the state or the Federal Government.

Clarence was the Church Clerk in the First Baptist Church for more than 20 years. He had a tenor voice that was comparable to any of his day.

Clarence expired on November 9, 1957 and is buried in the Evergreen Cemetery in Lexington, Virginia.

Good Citizens of Black Community 1920's - 1930's - 1940's

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Harry Lee Walker - Master Butcher, Grocer
Clarence M. Wood - Realtor, Insurance Agent, Grocer
Eliza B. Walker - Civil Rights Activist, Poet, Lecturer
Organizer, Choral Director

Joseph McMillian Wood - Barber old Ruff Building Main St.

Charlie Franklin - Barber Unit Block of North Main St

Tom Jackson - Barber In front of State Theatre

Dixie Scott - Barber

Will Carter - Grocer

(Ulysses?) U. Johnson - Grocer

Rose Inn Tourist Home -

Franklin Tourist Home (Zack Franklin)

Walter Clark - Pool Parlor

Judge Fisher - Pool Parlor

Willie and Julia Pock - Pocks Tea Room

Washington's Cafe (William, Edna,

Bob "Honeybunch" Poindexter

Jessie Hubbard - Artist, builder of Model Planes and Ships

John Tucker - Blind Man who sold Papers for a living.

Rolands Restaurant - Main and Nelson Streets

Sam Jackson - Carpenter

Johnny Scott - Master Mechanic

Zack Franklin - Taxi

Harry Kenney - Taxi - Cementer

William Washington - Taxi

Elliot's Funeral Home

Drs Alfred Pleasants and John Gilmore.

Nolan Brooks

George Morgan - Taxi

Sam Huffman - Shoe Shine Stand

Custis Jones - Plumber

Felt Adamson - Plasterer

Irk Poindexter - Stone Master

Education in The Black Community

Teens, 20's, 30's, 40's

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Probably the Most Controversial, yet least Solved Problem For Persons Freed after The Civil War was the Matter of education. Several laws handed down thru The years by the Supreme Court have not had the hoped for effect.

The age old debatable Question of why The laws do NOT work Can be Summed UP in This Manner, People of Color, Negroes, African Americans are be-deviled by our high visibility Appearance. If you are light - you're all right, If you are Brown, Hang around, If you are Black - Stand Back.

Lexington had its Trying Moments in The Teens, 20's, 30's, 40's.

The most hideous and dastardly lie ever espoused by Mankind was The Phrase "Seperate But Equal." Hundreds of Thousands of Persons have gone to Their graves believing This old Bug-a-Boo!! Do You want to Know More?

Lexington Needed a building That was Conducive to Higher Learning, Well heated, Well lighted, Comfortable chairs and desks, and a Curriculum Geared Towards Finishing High School and on to College.

The School for Black Children on Randolph Street Next to The Randolph Street Methodist Church was used from 1865 to 1927. This was a building of More than 60 years and My Mother, Nannie Wood reported That during her stay, she spoke of it being "Worn Out"

The New School erected in 1927 Still did not have enough grades to qualify Receiving a diploma to Move Those who choose to do

So to attend college.

It is difficult to understand why tax paying citizens had to pay a fee to attend a public school. County students had to pay considerably more

Included in the Walker/Wood Collections and several other thoughts in regard to education. See the write-up of James Lewis Howe on 2/7/1923.

Note how the fee or tuition is escalated after only a few years after 1927. On 7/26/1934 mention is made that this is 5 years after, the beginning of The Great Depression.

* See: Petition to the Lexington School Board to permit the hiring of a teacher at Halboun Downing to teach the 3rd year High School

* See: Parents of Pupils

* See: Another two years 5/31/1934

* See: Communication from School Board 7/26/1934

* See: Lexington School Board Meeting 6/19/1936.

Social Life In The Black Community

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It is very difficult to separate the social life from the religious life as both were so closely entwined. Both are indeed different, so much of what happened, happened either at the First Baptist Church or the Randolph Street Methodist Church. All such activity regardless of its content had a prayer before and a prayer in the conclusion.

Men and women of color thought highly of the sense of belonging. Hence joining the Masons, Elks, K of P, Odd Fellows, Eastern Star, the Rockbridge Walker Federation of Colored Women's Club, the P.P.P.'s were instances that gave them a feeling of personal worth and dignity.

Belonging to one or several of the forementioned groups greatly solidified the colored community into a homogeneous one.

Music played a great part in the community. The Wright Orchestra from Ohio played in our home at Blandome and at a dance at the Washington and Lee University in 1917.

* See: Photo of Wright's Orchestra on steps of Blandome, 1917.

Musical and vocal **contests** were held. They were held at First Baptist Church on 12/9/1915, with special accommodations for **white friends**, admission 10 cents, reserved seats 15 cents.

* See Photo A dramatic cantata was presented at First Baptist Church, Jephthah and His Daughter, on May 25, 1923 or 1928.

The Charity Nightingales sang at the Lexington High School before a white audience in the 1930's.

* See Photo: The Same Charity Nightingales Sang and Performed a Skit at The Great McCormick Celebration on September 25, 1931 in Episode III, a Plantation in 1800.

* See photo: The Honorable Oscar De Priest, Congressman from Chicago, Illinois addressed the Negro Citizenry at The First Baptist Church on Friday, May 15, 1931.

* See photo: Janie Porter Barrett, President of the Virginia Federation of Colored Women spoke at The First Baptist Church and met at Blandome on July 21, 1921.

Identifiable Women on photo:

Mrs. Eliza B. Walker

Mrs. Nannie E. Wood

Mrs. Leana Clark,

Mrs. Geneva Williams

Mrs. Mamie Jones

* See Photos: My grandmother, Eliza B. Walker made a strong effort to alleviate the suffering of handicapped persons, underprivileged and illiterate. Much effort went into her dream of a Lexington Memorial Old Folks Home and Orphanage. She ventured as far as Washington, D.C., Dayton, Ohio and Chicago, Illinois speaking and soliciting funds for same.

* See Photos: Concerning Spending your Summer Vacation at Blandome -

- * See photo's: Lexington Lodge No 2461 5/30/1917
- Pages * See The Virginia Magazine July 1989
(Cover Turn of Century 1900)
- * See photo: Many Solid Citizens Posing For Miley?
- * See photo: The New Glory Land by Rev. Holt, Pastor
of Randolph Street Methodist Church in
Early 1920's
- * See Photos and Write Ups: Re Charity Nightingales.
- * See photos: Congressman Oscar De Priest
- * See: Satire written By Eliza Walker Re. others
Wanting to Run for Congress after O. De Priest was
Successful.
- * See: Oscar De Priest 1931 and Rockbridge Walker
Redevelopment of Colored Women.
- * See: Programs of Elks, Musicals and Vocal Contests.
- * See: Eliza B. Walker - Orphanage Appeal in local
Washington, D. C. Paper, also three of the girls
from Orphanage in 1920.
- * See: Letter to white Citizens Re. Outside employment

Economic Life In The Negro Community

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There was at one time a real concern about the lack of work opportunities in Lexington among Negroes. A letter of concern was sent out to many white families stating their concern

* See letter to white citizens concerning outsiders employment in the 1920's

* See list of different occupations and good Afro American citizens of Lexington 19 teens, 20's 30's, 40's. Add names of Zack Franklin, Franklin Tourist Home on Tucker Street, 2 doors south of Blandome, Walter Clark and Judge Fisher, Pool Emporium, Main Street, ~~Unit~~ (Unit Block) and many young teen age girls and older women who found domestic work.

How my Grandfather Harry Lee Walker made a living for himself and family.

He purchased the farms we knew it in 1901 14 acres. Purchased 28-30 N. Main Street known once as White Column and Wilson/Walker Restaurant on June 11, 1911, purchased Blandome in April 1917.

As a young man Harry L. Walker was the Master Butcher at the Old Alum Springs Hotel 18 miles from Lexington. He walked the distance each day.

Harry L. Walker worked for the Mayor of Lexington Rhoades for several years. He also had a market that was successful in front of the Stone Wall Jackson House/Hospital in

Harry L. Walker built a slaughter house, a holding pen for cattle and sheep, and a pig pen on the farm outside of the city

Limits on Route 60 East.

Grandaddy bought stock from local farmers and Cattle Men when they had what he needed. The Swisher Family was one of his Major Suppliers. Often it was necessary to order Cattle, Sheep and Pigs from Chicago.

Grandaddy would select 3 OR 4 DROVERS, drive to Buena Vista, 6 Miles East of Lexington and drove the stock on Route 60 from Buena Vista, VA to outside of Lexington. There were few cars on the road during the Teens, 20's and 30's.

The stock Market Crash of October 1929 was devastating to most all of Lexingtonians, especially in the Black Community.

See: Several Contracts that were filled by the Virginia Military Institute and H.L. Walker (4/23/19) (8/1/23)

* See: Letter head of 1930's. Walker and Wood Brothers. The Old Virginia Cured Hams were shipped by the Post office to all parts of the World, like Niece France.

* See: New Prices 1925, Walker-Wood Brothers

* See: Posing Clarence Wood, Joseph Wood and Harry Walker (apron on right).

* See: From Cattle Boy to Business Man.

* See: Harry Walker, Lexington's Butcher.

Religious Life in the Negro Community Nineteen Teens, 20's, 30's, 40's

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- * See: Founding Fathers, First Baptist Church
- * See: Pictures of Baptist and Methodist Church
- * See: Vacation Bible School 30's, 40's
- * See: Eliza B. Walker's Church in Murat, Va
- * See: Tom Thumb Wedding 1940's
- * See: Old and New Baptist Church
- * See: ~~Portrait~~ Picture of Rev. W. T. Johnson and Wife and Mother's Cousin Charlotte Harvey (Former slave) sitting next to lady with glasses on second row from right to left.
- * See: Founding Fathers, especially Trustee and

Bondsman Jefferson Shields - **a town character.**

Lexington has been tremendously blessed over the years because of the unselfish roles the Baptist and Methodist churches have played at all times. Randolph Street United Methodist Church, formerly the Colored Methodist Church was formed on October 17, 1864. The Lexington African Baptist, now known as First Baptist Church was organized on September 22, 1867. For over one hundred years, the first 100 years, these two churches were the bulwarks of the community.

~~is~~

Politics IN The Black Community

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All of The Wood and Walker Families Voted in The City of Lexington, ^{PR} The County in The State of Virginia. Ownership of Property, a good education, Register to Vote and Vote were stressed mightly in Lexington. Many Times The Black Vote swayed The election.

Ever hear of Poll taxes? The White Mans devised plan to disenfranchise The Negro in The South. In 1954 when I came to live in Lexington, I was not there but a few days before My Father told Me and My Wife what to Do.

It was Necessar to **Memorize** a certain Portion, I believe it was The Constitution or some other Political Segment. My Uncle Joseph Wood's Barber Shop in The Old Ruff Building helped you to Memorize Same. When he Thought That you were ready, you went to The Court House at Main and Washington Streets and a certain White clerk would either Pass you or Failed you. I Passed. Don't Forget The Payment of The **Poll Tax** which was about \$1.50 or \$2.00. Doesn't sound like Much! It was a lot of Money to Many Black Prospective Voters, especially in The deep South where it was difficult to keep "body and soul" Together.

In The teens and 20's The Ku Klux Klan was Very Visible in Rockbridge County. It was a Secret Organization, Mostly in The Southern States, who after The Civil War aimed to Suppress The Newly Given Powers of Negroes. No real incident of The organization's attempt to stymie The right to vote in Rockbridge County.

Mrs Eliza Walker, My grandmother, was

the epitome of the word **"Activist"**. No one white or black treated her with disrespect. When there was a referendum to be of value to the Black Community or whether it was a referendum that was to be considered objectionable to the Black Community she voiced her opinion in one of two ways. Either she confronted directly to the most influential person(s) and told them OR she hired a bus or an open air truck, with a megaphone and a cow bell rode the primary streets with her bellowing voice.

Poll Tax

Don't forget the payment of the poll tax which was about 20 or 25.00. Doesn't sound like much! It was a lot of money to many Black prospective voters, especially in the deep south where it was difficult to keep "body and soul" together. In the 1950s and 60s the Ku Klux Klan was very visible in Rockbridge County. It was a secret organization, mostly in the southern states, who after the Civil War aimed to suppress the newly given powers of Negroes. The real incident of the organization's attempt to strip the right to vote in Rockbridge County was Mrs. Eliza Walker, MN Grandmother.

Recreation in the Black Community

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Lexington always had an abundance of rather good recreation. There was, however, poor areas housed and outside on which to play on.

The two major schools, Washington and Lee University and The Virginia Military Institute could always be counted on to use their outside facilities. The football fields at VMI and the Practice Field at Wilson Field at Wanh were used frequently for High School games and the Lexington Blue Devils, a semi-pro football team.

Basketball and other inside games were played in the R P Hall on Main Street. Boy Scout basketball teams practiced at the Garden Grillon the Farm of Harry L. Walker in the 1940's. The grounds of the Lylburn Downing School were used for Soft Ball, Basketball, Half Ball, Tennis Ball, Practice for High School Football. Lylburn Downing Hi-Y Club had a most successful Soft Ball Team, whose sponsor was Mr. White.

Late evening Softball teams competed and winners received trophies as rewards. Mr. Leroy "Tiny" Richardson and Mr. "Bunny" Moore were two of the most noteworthy, dedicated men who valued seeing young men grow up to be successful.

In the summer there was a 4 week chance opportunity for girls to go to camp at Rockbridge Baths.