



- Minutes of the meeting July 19th at 10:00 am
- Final part of the Series – Walker Murder Trial of 1884

Saturday July 19th, 2003

BWGS

Minutes:

15 people attending: 1. Connie Brubaker; 2. Kathy Davis; 3. Linda Thomas; 4. Tom Stogdill; 5. Barbara Elliott; 6. Ken Manning; 7. Dorothy Manning; 8. Pat Dyson; 9. Estaleene Suman; 10. Nellie Sleppy; 11. Jerry Crandall; 12. Margaret Crandall; 13. Gerri Brown; 14. Rhonda Stoffer; 15. Micky Jones

Opening:

The meeting opened in front of the Wells County Courthouse at 9:50am. We were all to meet in Courthouse Plaza before beginning our tour of the Courthouse at 10am sharp. Connie spoke to us about the Wells County Library wanting us to host a Genealogy workshop in August for the general public. Vi has asked us to do this to help people just beginning to search or those stuck with no idea where to look next. Connie said this may have to wait until September. She needs our input and our help to pull this off, if you wish to help out please contact Connie. We also spoke about our Early Settlers book to be ready for our September meeting, cost is \$40 for members and \$45 for non-members, plus shipping and handling of course. Connie also told us about her 1st Saturday Club, the Club meets the first Saturday of the month at her shop just west of Uniondale. 10am until 2pm at Page's In The Attic, next meeting is September 6th.

Old Business:

We still have Will Index books available, \$15 each, we will not break even until all are sold. We talked about displaying them during the Bluffton Street Fair at the Historical Society Booth, this will be depending on acceptability.

Treasurer's Report:

Balance as of last statement is \$2,532.17

New Business:

Our tour today began at the back of the Wells County Courthouse, Betsy Garrett Noe, our tour guide. The original Courthouse in Wells County was built in 1844 and condemned in 1888 due to sanitary conditions. The current Courthouse was built in 1889. Most records are all public records. Records started as early as 1837. Betsy was County Clerk for 10 years, now retired, but while Clerk she was allowed as Clerk to perform marriage ceremonies, she said that outside of ones performed on County time, on her own time performed 95 to 100 ceremonies per year. Besides Clerk she has worked in other offices in the county, including one at the license branch that used to be on the 1st floor at the Courthouse. Our tour started in the current Commissioner office, where she handed out A brief history of Wells County, and introduced herself with her County history. She then showed us their breakroom which used to be the License branch. The current Surveyor's office used to be the Sherriff's office. We were shown the current Election room and told of the election process, for 10 days after the election, this room is kept locked and no one is allowed to enter in case of a recount. She showed us a table that has been at the Courthouse forever, and an old safe along with some of its history. Then we moved on to the second floor.

We were told that the Assessor, Surveyor and the Mayor are able to run unlimited terms of office. We viewed the Auditor's office where land records are kept along with the history of those lands. Plat books are kept here, they have 4 full time employees and 1 part time employee.

We also viewed the Treasurer's and Recorder's offices. The Treasurer's office is where they keep Tax bill receipts; they have beautiful built in cabinets where all receipts used to be stored. The Treasurer works hand in hand with the Auditor, they have 2 full time employees and 1 part time employee. The Recorder's office is where you find Deeds, Mortgages and some miscellaneous records. Miscellaneous records are whatever they do not know where to put something. Example: children born out of wedlock. There is 1 full time employee and 1 part time employee in this office. Next we were off to the Assessor's office were they handle tax assessments and they have control over the Tax Board. This office works with the Auditor and Treasurer. They have 2 full time employees and 1 part time employee. The last office we visited on this floor was the Clerk's office. The Clerk's office contains Wills, Marriages, Marriage applications and Civil court records. This office is also in charge of child support payments, Estate records, Guardianships, Passports, Divorce and Adoption records. In the Back corner of this office is a spiral staircase that leads to the 3rd floor Courtroom. This is used to remove unsavory people from the courtroom.

The County Clerk can perform Marriage ceremonies for anyone in Indiana, but the marriage must then be recorded in the county were these married people reside. The Clerk is responsible to make sure that the residing county gets a copy of the marriage license. The married couple is allowed 2 copies for free and must pay for more than 2.

The third floor contains the Superior and Civil Court rooms. We were able to enter the Civil Court room. In this Courtroom there is a leaded window above the Judge's bench that they call "Lady of Justice". Throughout this Courthouse the woodwork is beautiful, as well as the built in cabinetry. Our Tour ended back on the first floor at the Commissioner's office where we had a last minute discussion about the workshop suggested by Vi. And Tom was asking for input on our speakers for our 2004 lineup, if you have any suggestions please let Tom know.

~ Kathy Davis, acting secretary



Newsletter Query Form

Please print in capital letters, the last name of the person you wish to query. Please include maiden name for women. Keep queries to a maximum of 25 characters. Thank you.

<u>Last Name</u>	<u>First Name</u>	<u>Birth Date</u>	<u>Death Date</u>	<u>Marriage Date</u>	<u>Children</u>
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Your Name: _____

Address: _____ E-mail: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Wells County Will Index

The price for the book is \$15.00, plus \$5.00 shipping for Society members. The price for non-members is \$20.00, plus \$5.00 shipping.

To order your book, send your money to: Blackford-Wells Genealogy Society / PO Box 54 / Bluffton, Indiana 46714. You may pick one up at our Society meetings or at *Pages from the Attic* / 7077N – 100W / Uniondale. Books will be shipped as soon as the money is received.

William Walker The Great Murder Trial Blackford and Wells Counties, Indiana 1883-1884

These events took place 119 years ago



Transcribed and contributed by:



© 2001 Dawn Maddox Montgomery
montgomery@parlorcity.com
(Photo of Wm. Walkers g-g-g-grandsons)

Bluffton Weekly Chronicle
May 22, 1884

Guilty! **So say the Jury in the Case of William Walker**



The jury in the Walker murder trial returned a verdict of guilty of voluntary manslaughter and assessed the punishment at twenty-one years in the penitentiary. The scene in the court room was one of considerable excitement. At the first tap of the bell, men left their business and rushed pell-mell to hear the verdict. The prisoner was not

visibly affected but maintained his reputation for coolness to a remarkable degree under the circumstances. Mrs. Walker, his wife who was at his side, was effected to tears. This ends one of the most remarkable trials in the history of our county, lasting exactly four weeks before being given to the jury.

Bluffton Weekly Chronicle
May 29, 1884

Some Reflections

Now that the great murder trial is over, it may still be interesting to look over the field and note some of the interesting features. William Walker was found guilty of manslaughter on Thursday forenoon about 10 o'clock, received his sentence of 21 years in the penitentiary in the afternoon of the same day about 2 o'clock, and by 3 o'clock of the same afternoon was on his way to the penitentiary. The trial occupied a little over twenty days; each of the twelve jurors received \$40.80 apiece for their services. Making a sum of \$489.60 for jury fees. This does not include the fees of the 94 other men who were summoned as jurors and rejected for one cause or another. They are each entitled to \$2.00 per day for the time they were held before being discharged by the court; so it is safe to add \$200.00 more to the above and say the jury alone cost the county in the neighborhood of \$700.00. The sheriff is entitled to fees for each juror he summoned, which should be added to the above and will swell the cost of the jury alone to nearly \$1000. A pretty expensive jury and a good one it was. Now the reader may go on and figure the balance for himself. Perhaps 200 witnesses were summoned. The taxpayers did not have to

pay them for their services, but they do have to pay the sheriff for their summons and their board and lodging while in town amounted to several hundred dollars to them. Now figure the judges salary at \$3,500 per year, and the prosecutor's at \$500 per year, with \$10 added for conviction; add \$400 for help received by the prosecutor. Walker's attorneys did not get less than \$2,000 for their services. Now add the clerk's fees, the deputy sheriff's and balifts; and if you can think of anything else, add it to the sum total, then ask yourself what caused it all and the answer must be, WHISKY. Is this not enough of itself to make a man want to try prohibition, just as an experiment, if for no other reason? The last legislature kindly looked after the welfare of the convicts of our penitentiary. They have passed a law placing a premium on good behavior on the part of the inmates of the penitentiary. We are told that a man sent u for one year can gain 12 days. One sent up for two years can gain 36 days, and so on geometrically. William Walker, who is sentenced to 21 years, can, by good behavior, serve his time out in 13 years and one month. He is 42 years of age now and if not pardoned will be 55 years old when

given his liberty. The question is frequently asked, why did they hurry Walker off so suddenly? In the first place he was anxious to go and be getting in his time. Secondly, there were threats by anonymous writers, of a mob in case Walker was not given a life sentence or hung. As early departure would obviate all that if there was anything to it. The jurymen each pledged their word that they would not inform the public as to how any man stood, but one of the jurors has furnished the following table concerning the ballots of the jury. Three ballots were taken regarding his sanity, which are as follows:

	1 st	2 nd	3 rd
Sane	9	11	12
Insane	3	1	0

The jury then cast eight ballots before an agreement was arrived at. The votes were cast as follows:

	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th
Murder	5	4	3	3	3	2	1	0
Manslaughter	7	8	9	9	9	10	11	12

Bluffton Chronicle
 September 3, 1893

Obituary

Nancy Walker was born in Greenup county, Kentucky, Dec. 7, 1817. Died at her home in Wells county, Indiana Feb. 18, 1893. Aged 75 years, 2 months, 11 days. She emigrated with her parents William West and Sarah (Arthur) his wife, to Preble county, Ohio in 1831. She was married to Alexander Walker in 1840. Moved to Wells county, Ind. Oct. 30, 1841. She was the Mother of nine children. Six children and

They pooled their opinions and gave the prisoner the highest extent of the law for manslaughter.

The subject of a petition for pardon has been thoroughly discussed pro and con. Many declare they would never sign such a petition, while other would sign it as soon as presented. Others want him to serve from one to five years before they will lend their names to such an instrument.

Walker was taken to prison without being handcuffed. He wrote back to Sheriff Justus that he had betrayed him in only one thing. He had accumulated quite a lot of morphine by representing to his wife that he had the toothache at different times while in jail, and had it secreted with the intention of taking his life in case the jury should return a sentence of death against him. The morphine was secreted in his boot and remained there until he reached the penitentiary.

her husband live and many friends to mourn their loss. Three children were at the funeral and three were absent.

Those living are William, Elizabeth H., Eliza J., Mary A., Thomas I., and Calvin. Those dead are Francis, Margaret and an infant.

We thank all our friends and neighbors for their kindness toward us during our sickness.

Walker Funeral Saturday

Deceased Chester Township Citizen Was
Well Known in Community.

The Funeral of William Walker, whose death at the home of his son, Alvin Walker, in Chester township was reported by the News Thursday, will be held Saturday forenoon at ten o'clock, from the home of his son. One-fourth mile east of the Chester Center church. The Rev. Merl Wilson will have charge.

Mr. Walker, the decedent, was one of the best known citizens of the south part of the county. He had been in ill health for the past three years. At his death he was aged 73 years, 2 months, and 14 days. He was born on a farm north of Montpelier and had resided within a radius of a few miles from there practically his entire life. At one time he was owner of an elevator at Poneto. He

also engaged in the general store business at Keystone and held the appointment as postmaster. He served as a trustee for some time.

His wife, Mrs. Sarah Miller Walker, preceded him in death about twenty five years ago. Surviving are the following children; Alvin and Edward residing in Chester township; Emma Martin, Poneto; Grace Beath, Indianapolis; Rose Huffman, Rawson, Ohio. One daughter Laura Walker, has also preceded him in death. Also the following brothers and sisters survive; Tom Walker of Arkansas; Mrs. Ann Pace, Wells county; Mrs. Jane Crosby, Oklahoma. One brother and two sisters are deceased.



1870 Census Chester, Wells, Indiana

191	Walker	Alexander	54	M	Farmer
		Nancy	53	F	Keeping House
		Sarah E.	25	F	At home
		Eliza J.	23	F	At home
		Mary A.	21	F	At home
		Thomas I.	19	M	At home
		Calvin	16	M	At home
		Margaret A.	13	F	At home
192	Walker	William	28	M	Farmer
		Sarah	21	F	Keeping House
		Alvin	2	M	
	West	Christopher	62	M	Farm Laborer

1880 Census Chester, Wells, Indiana

Walker	William	M	37		Farmer
	Sarah M.	F	30	Wife	Keeping House
	Alvin	M	12	Son	
	Emma	F	10	Daughter	At school
	Edward	M	8	Son	At school
	Laura	F	6	Daughter	
	Eva	F	1	Daughter	

This census also lists a daughter named Eva. In William's obit, there is no mention of a child named Eva. Eva might be a different name used at that time for the Grace or Rose listed in William's obituary.

Family Lore The Death of William's Daughter



At some point, between the time of the murder (May, 1883) and the actual start date of the trial (May 1884), one of William Walkers daughters was accidentally killed by being hit in the head by a swing. Family lore states that when they went to the prison to tell William, he told them he already knew his daughter was dead because she came to him dressed in white. William was allowed to leave jail to attend his daughter's funeral.

Based on the 1880 census and the information given in William's obituary, Laura might have been the name of the child who was killed.

Additional facts and information:

- The prison where William Walker served his time was in Michigan City, Indiana.
- William's sister, Eliza Jane Walker, married Simeon Crosby's brother Isaac.
- William's sister, Mary Angeline "Ann" (Walker) Murray, married Mary (Pace) Crosby's brother Ephriam (2nd marriage for both).



Membership Form

Name: _____

Address: _____ E-mail: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Daytime Phone: _____ Evening Phone: _____

Surnames Researching: _____

Membership: Single - \$10.00 per calendar year for an individual
 Family - \$15.00 per calendar year for a family

Mail to: Blackford-Wells Genealogy Society
 P.O. Box 54
 Bluffton, IN 46714