

# The Walton Family History

**Compiled by Rev. Dr. Clyde B. Walton** based on the remembrances of his father, John Walton, and his grandmother, Lorende Hinton Jones.

## **Embellished for Readability**

- Some events based on historically accurate conjecture rather than actual occurrences.
- Some names are fictitious.
- All dates are calculated based on later, confirmed dates.

## **A SLAVES GREATEST FEAR**

**Bound hand and foot**, the timid almost-teenage boy stepped on the block outside Market House in Fayetteville. Henry High Walton, freshly delivered from Georgia by slave train, was the next to be sold to the highest bidder in North Carolina's most active slave market.

Slaves adapted to all sorts of misery. They could tolerate an evil master. They endured brutal drivers. They adjusted to working sun to sun with only food enough to sustain a squirrel. They endured the rod and whip as part of the evilness of slavery. Not much in life shocked a slave and even less scared him – not even death. Only one great fear hung like a storm-cloud over his head. That was being separated from his family and sold to a distant owner. Sold off was worse than dying.

A bad year for a Georgia plantation meant *liquidation of assets*, which meant young folks like Henry were stripped from their families, carted to Savannah in shackles then packed tightly into boxcars on a slave train for a long ride to be sold to other plantations where the *adapting* process would start over. Being sold off was walking through fire to end up in hell.

One of those bad years visited central Georgia was 1841. The cotton grew thin under a local drought, then a hailstorm in early fall ruined the standing crop. Henry's master could not meet his banknote without the liquidation of some of his major assets. It made good sense to keep the men-slaves from mid-teens to late thirties, workers in their prime, and sell off most of the others. So Henry was on the block.

A young, fit slave would bring top dollar from a plantation wanting a strong back that could offer many years' return on the investment. Henry listened to the rhythm of the auctioneer as the bid went higher but he never looked up. It was too depressing. He was already depressed and missed his mama so much that his heart was heavier than a Georgia cotton bale.

## **GOD SMILED ON HENRY**

**The auctioneer shouted, "Sold"** with a crash of the gavel. Henry felt his heavy heart fall to the pit of his stomach. Who was his new master? Did he grow cotton, tobacco or what? Would the driver's rod fall hard across his back? He closed his eyes and saw his mama's face. A few scant tears fell from his cheeks but he forced himself back to the moment. It did no good to dwell on used-to-be. He actually had a strange sense of relief. Maybe it was more like resolve. Either way, the deed was done and he was ready to get on with life, no matter what came next.

The iron shackles gave way to rope bindings around his wrists. An older black man led him to a cut-under wagon, the one-horse version of a pick-up truck. He climbed into the cargo box amongst the other *merchandise*. The mule snorted a brief rebellion as the wagon creaked into motion around Market House, then east on Person Street.

Henry was afraid to speak and his escort chose not to, so they rode in silence. They crossed the river and turned right, then another right, then into the driveway of a brick house set back an acre-width off the road. Henry saw no fields of cotton or tobacco or beets or anything. All he saw behind the house was the river, a big house left and another to the right. It was a plantation sort of house but it was in town! Although he had never been sold before, it all seemed pretty unusual and just a little scary to young Henry. But he was about to find out that all slaves didn't work the fields and that all masters weren't tyrants.

**The wagon came to a stop** at the end of the drive behind the brick house. His wrists were freed from the ropes so he could help offload supplies from the wagon. Henry heard only a handful of words from the man – mostly short, choppy orders, telling him where to put the supplies. When they finished, however, Henry found out that his coworker had plenty to say.

He told Henry very bluntly that he was the most fortunate slave-boy in all the Carolinas. His new master was *Mister William* to all the help. He owned no plantation but was an import/export agent, trader of commodities and a land speculator. He lost everything in the fire of '31. His warehouses and inventory, his offices and his house were consumed when the heart of Fayetteville burned to a cinder. Yet, he never considered selling any of his eight slaves to help raise the money he needed to rebuild. Six men and two women worked alongside Mister William and his contractors to rebuild the warehouses first, then a new house a good ways out from city center at his wife's request.

Before the house was finished, both of his children contracted measles and died. 1831 was a hard year for Mister William but he bore it with dignity.

Mister William was back on top in a matter of months but his children could never be replaced. Maybe that's why such a generous portion of their affection was redirected toward those who had helped them regain their place in society.

He made sure Henry understood that the work would be serious and just as taxing on his brain as on his body but, if he showed good, Mister William would treat him right. He said it wasn't unusual for Mister William to cut loose a slave after he proved himself able to be a good citizen.

Henry's future was in his own hands.

**With that, he was escorted** to meet his new master face to face. Mister William was coming out of the carriage house as they rounded the back corner of the house. He instructed the black man, Simon, to cool down his horse and stow the buggy. There they were, just the two of them: a twelve year old slave-boy; and his new master who, from a boy's up-close perspective, appeared as a giant white man. Henry was not at all accustomed to such a meeting. He remembered what Simon told him about the man but, for the moment, there was little comfort in it. He stood before Mister William looking at the man's polished shoes.

The first thing that became strikingly clear to Henry was that this man expected to be looked square in the eye by anyone with whom he talked. That was different. His previous master and even the driver wanted a slave to hang his head as though he wasn't good enough to look a white man in the eye. It was a bit difficult for Henry but he managed. The rules were laid out for him and Henry was keen to remember them all. He was determined to make every one of them part his regular habit – even the ones that were foreign to a slave-boy, like personal grooming and proper attire.

## **RENEWED MIND – RESTORED SPIRIT**

**It was Mister William's wife** who made it possible for Henry to exceed the boldest dreams any field slave could possibly dream. He worked in the warehouses by day and studied with her in the evening. *Mistress*, as the help called her, taught him to read and write. She realized the boy was very bright and learned his lessons quickly so she pressed on. He became well read and good with numbers.

His education did not start so smoothly, though. He got a little discouraged one evening while practicing his first reading lesson and slammed his primer to the floor in frustration. That was a big mistake to make in the bunk-room where all the men slept. The room went silent. Simon slowly walked to the table, picked up the primer from where it landed and read the pages aloud. Shoving the book in front of Henry, he told him to read. Henry haltingly read the pages. Simon told him how big a thing it was to be able to read. Reading was so important that it was illegal to teach slaves to read in North Carolina. That changed his attitude at once and he never faltered again.

It gnawed at him for a few days so badly that he finally had to ask Mistress about it. But she wasn't concerned at all. She said for him not to worry about that. She didn't expect to be arrested for it any time soon.

Mistress was just as concerned about Henry's heart as his mind. She took him to church where he listened intently from the colored side of the balcony every Sunday. Sunday afternoons, they discussed the sermons and what it all really meant. It was only a few months before Henry made his confession of faith in Christ and was baptized into the Christian faith.

**The call of Christ is "Follow Me"** so Henry undertook that call as his life's purpose. Upon making his commitment, the LORD called him to become His messenger to the lost and dying world around him. He was heard by the Church and licensed to preach the gospel of Christ Jesus among his people. He put his whole being into the work and did so well that he was ordained as *A Gospel Minister* of the Missionary Baptist Church.

Mistress saw the potential for good that Henry's ordination represented and shared her opinion with Mister William. Her husband agreed with her and granted him freedom to pursue God's will. The papers were filed and Henry High Walton was a free man.

**With Freedman Papers in hand** and the *walking money* Mister William gave him in his pocket, the ordained minister of Christ, Reverend Henry High Walton, struck out on a mission to proclaim the Gospel anywhere listening ears could be gathered. He proclaimed Christ Jesus to freedmen and even among local slaves when opportunities arose. His itinerant ministry led him wherever opportunity opened. But opportunity always seemed to lead him further from home – a few days here; a week there. Living by faith as the LORD opened doors of hospitality and generosity became his semi-nomadic lifestyle until he found opportunity for the Gospel in a Croatan Indian village about twenty miles south of Fayetteville, near the Red Springs community. Henry did not expect the short visit to so radically change his life, but such is the plot to love's saga.

## **NEW LOVE – NEW LIFE**

**Native Americans shared** many of the slaves' hardships. While they were not owned by anyone, neither were they entirely free. Just as cotton and tobacco brought a world of misery to blacks in the form of slavery, it also brought Indians misery by deposing them from ancestral lands. Neither black nor Indian was viewed as equal human beings to those who subjugated them, making it near to impossible for either to get along very well in the South. So when Henry met Hester, a Croatan maiden who attended his services, the attraction was immediate.

Red Springs became the home base for his ministry. No longer did he wander so far from that base. Opportunity for ministry was close around. Besides, he had someone in Red Springs whose soul meshed seamlessly with his. She was God's gift to him and Henry was not one to neglect any of the gifts he received from the LORD.

When Hester came of age, the courtship began. They married in the Spring of 1852 according to her tribal tradition. Henry continued his ministry circuit but, as his family grew, the demands of providing for them exceeded the offerings he received from his

<b>Henry and Hester</b> had five sons and two daughters: Willie; William; John; Robert; James; Mary and Sallie.
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grateful congregations. He needed another source of income and another place to live.

He found the perfect solution when he heard that a local landowner was looking for a tenant farmer to work his land. In return, he would receive a place to live with a small tract of land to raise his family's table food. No shares came with the position but he could make do. The life of a farmer/preacher was not an easy one but it allowed him to share his life, his faith and a few worldly goods within his community and beyond. The landowner grew to like Henry and trusted him enough to lend small amounts of money without usury as needs arose.

To keep accounts, he would split a stone for each dollar and put half in a bag and give the other half to the landlord. When settling accounts, the stones were paired and that was the amount due. Their relationship was based on mutual trust and respect which served both of them well, even during the war.

## **THE YEARS OF WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION**

**The Civil War was actually a peaceful time** for Henry and his young family. Most of the men who harassed them were gone to the Confederate Army. Word got around that the economy went bad but poor folks never noticed any difference. Their economy was always bad.

Although General Sherman visited Fayetteville with sixty-thousand men in 1865, Henry didn't even know it until he saw the smoke coming from the Confederate arsenal that Sherman burned. After the war, though, trouble returned to Red Springs like never before. Confederate veterans returned home with worse attitudes toward blacks than before they left.

Hatred of anyone but bitter white Southerners like themselves was the founding principle of the Ku Klux Klan. Hiding behind white robes and hoods, Klansmen made nightly raids on black communities, destroying, stealing and killing as they saw fit. Henry learned to sleep lightly so he would hear the horses coming.

Late one night, he was aroused by the sound of running horses. He quickly gathered his family and all nine of them took refuge under the house. Klansmen broke in the door but found nothing worth stealing nor anyone to torment. They never suspected that Henry had meat, corn, flour, lard and sugar stored in a cave that ran between the house and the wood pile or that nine souls lay dead still right under their feet. The Klansmen passed directly over them without realizing it. They left without taking anything or hurting anyone. When he was sure they had ridden on, he brought his family out of hiding.

## **THE GREAT TRAGEDY**

**Henry's working relationship** on the farm went well until his landlord died. Without a will or heir-apparent, his supposed brother claimed the whole estate for himself which was quite easily done during the tumultuous days of reconstruction. The man was not from Red Springs but he had already made his presence known by harassing everyone who owed the estate money. When Henry saw the brother for the first time – it was also the last time.

Whenever Henry borrowed from his landlord, it was never more than two or three dollars and he always settled up as soon as he had the money. That was usually after the first Sunday of the month when his congregation gave their meager but personally generous offerings. His debt bag was empty at the time so he wasn't concerned by the man's visit.

When the buckboard stopped in front of Henry's house, followed by a curt shout for him to come outside, Henry walked out to meet the stranger. The man stood on the floorboard, hands on hips in a

dramatic pose meant to intimidate and said without a hint of grief that his brother had died and he was settling accounts. Then he demanded five dollar that he claimed Henry owed the estate. When asked to show the debt bag, the man knew nothing about any bag of rocks. He said the debt was written in the ledger and that was all he needed. Apparently, he was expecting to bully an illiterate Negro into paying a debt he didn't owe out of fear. Instead, he was faced with a gentle man of unshakable resolve and a simple but effective accounting system. Henry calmly told him to go get the debt bag, then they would settle up. The man flew into a rage, jumping from the wagon, cursing at Henry. Henry calmly asserted that he would pay no more than their bags agreed upon and that his bag was empty. As the man raised his walking stick intent on laying Henry's head open, a click then the blast of Henry's old .62 caliber rifled flintlock shook the earth. The mass of lead hit the man's chest and he died on his feet.

**Henry was stunned** for a few seconds. When his composure returned, he spun toward the house to see nothing but the rifle leaning against the window frame, light smoke still wafting lazily from its barrel. He turned back to the body laying beside the buckboard, hoping for some sign of life; praying for a miracle. No miracle was performed. The man was dead.

Despite questioning by tribal elders, the Federal Investigator and their father, the boys never revealed which one of them fired the fatal shot. It was clear that Willie, William, or John pulled the trigger. Robert and James were still too young and the girls didn't know how to use the gun. Henry preached a fiery sermon about the sanctity of human life to a congregation of three. All three repented of their sins and all three regretted the man's death but no confession came forth.

Henry was known throughout the area and everyone who knew him liked him. He was respected for his Christian spirit and integrity. Even the soldiers who came from Fayetteville to investigate the shooting respected him. His good reputation carried a lot of weight with the Investigator, an Army Captain from Massachusetts.

It took very little investigating to learn that the dead stranger was not related to the deceased landowner at all. In fact, all he knew of his dead victim was what he read in the legal death notice posted at the county courthouse. He was nothing more than a carpetbagger.

He would have lived well on the proceeds for several years had he not been so consumed by greed that five more dollars cost him his life.

**During the Army's cursory investigation**, a small metal strongbox containing much money – not worthless Confederate currency but gold and silver coins – was found under the seat of the buckboard. The investigator determined it was part of the estate. Most of the estate's valuables were also lashed to the flats. The buckboard itself was fitted out to travel. The dead stranger was making his final stop before leaving Red Springs with his loot.

The commanding officer of the Fayetteville garrison was faced with such civil disorder in the city that he cared little about the crime in rural Robeson County. After the first week of the investigation, he wanted an expedient resolution in the case so he authorized the Captain to take whatever action he deemed appropriate and return to Fayetteville as quickly as possible.

Under a more civil judicial system, the resolution of a murder case might have taken months but the Army Captain was a Federal soldier – not a lawyer. Reconstruction was chaotic – not civil. The Captain deemed the death to have been caused by the accidental discharge of a hunting rifle. The farm was seized to be turned over to the county for public auction at such a time as self-governing order was restored in Robeson County. Henry High Walton was appointed interim custodian of the real property and all tangible property of the estate was awarded to him as compensation for his services. Case closed.

**Before he returned to Fayetteville**, the Captain took Henry and the three boys aside. He advised Henry to move his sons elsewhere for their own safety. He reasoned that, regardless of the official

conclusion, the Ku Klux Klan would focus their vigilante justice on any Negroes who may have killed a white man, accidentally or not. Henry agreed and sent his sons out, each with enough money for a solid start far away from North Carolina. Willie went to Houston, Texas; William went to Atlanta, Georgia; and John went to Nashville, Tennessee.

That decision bore hardest on Hester. Those were her boys and she didn't know that she would ever see them again. They weren't even full men. She grieved for them – she grieved a lot. It was hard on Henry, too. It was a slave's worst fear in a different form. Family separation hurt the same as it did so many years before. His consolation was that he had brought them to the Savior, trained them to serve Him, and educated them in words and numbers. They were all still young to be on their own but he trusted them to hold fast to what they knew to be right and to be prudent with their money. He trusted his LORD to care for them, too.

## **JUNIPER LEVEL – FINAL DESTINATION**

**His Croatan in-laws taught Henry** effective methods to produce tobacco and several varieties of vegetables. That ability allowed him to diversify the farm's productivity which earned him modest profits.

When the farm went to auction, Henry was ready for a change. The new owner didn't need a man, especially a black man. He had three sons and a steam tractor. He spoke kindly enough to Henry; even offered to let the house and two acre tract to him at a fair rate. But Henry didn't trust him and Henry was a good judge of character.

No one knows why he chose Juniper Level up in Wake County as his new home. Maybe he had endured the heat and humidity of Robeson County summers for long enough. Maybe there were some painful memories he wanted to leave behind. Nobody knows why but that's where he moved his family.

Having learned to manage a farm successfully, Henry could have bought his own place and made good. But *being good at* managing a farm and *enjoying* managing a farm were altogether different things to him. Managing included marketing. Henry hated that part. He lacked a businessman's ruthlessness. He gave away almost as much as he sold in Red Springs and was happy to do it. But it sure looks bad in the books.

Any idea he may have entertained of going it on his own faded away when he met a Garner businessman and *gentleman farmer*, Mr. Sauls. Sauls was looking for an honest man to tend his farm. Henry was looking for an honest man for whom he could tend a farm. It was a perfect match. The two men agreed on shares and the deal was done. The arrangement was mutually beneficial for several years with the Walton men working the land and Sauls working the business. Then Robert married Maggie Turner and moved back south to Fayetteville. James married Polly Leach and took shares on another farm. Mary moved to New York leaving Henry and Hester as empty-nesters.

Henry was over 60 and Hester wasn't far behind. The new era of farming with machinery was foreign to Henry but that was the logical, cost effective future for Sauls' Farm. Henry decided it was time to get his own tract and build a house that suited just the two of them.

A man who worked his whole life would not easily adapt to the rocking chair. Henry continued to help out on Sauls' Farm and did other day-work. Hester was of like mind, having kept house for her own family for so long. She did the same work for others to earn money, for sure, but mostly to keep purpose in her life.

Henry and Hester were soul-mates. They had been through the fire together and their lives were lived as one. When she died, Henry lost his motivation to live so no one was surprised when he died soon afterwards. Together they established a legacy of integrity, grace and love for the LORD that still thrives today, going into the sixth and seventh generations after them.

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## UNCLE JIM WALTON – THE LEGACY CONTINUES

**James (Jim), the youngest of the five Walton boys,** met Polly Leach at church soon after moving to Juniper Level. As they matured, so did their affections for each other and they were married in about 1882. As Jim's family started to grow, he and Polly wanted their own home in which to raise their children.

He found a position in the McCuller's Drug Store Community near Nance Hill, a farm on shares with Mr. Penny. When he moved his family from his parents' home and from under the watchful eyes of his Christian parents, Jim began to change and Polly was growing concerned. He was not evil, did not abuse her or the children but it became clear that, although he was raised in church, he had never surrendered His will to God's will.

Polly was a dedicated Christian who had been baptized at Juniper Level Baptist Church. She knew her Savior well and her heart ached that Jim rejected the grace of Christ. She would often tell him, "The devil is going to get you if you don't give your life to Christ." Her pleas settled in his spirit, then God's Spirit conformed everything his wife and parents had been saying for years. He accepted Christ and was baptized at Juniper Lever Baptist Church.

<p><b>Jim and Polly</b> had seven children, five sons and two daughters: John; Willie; Hiram; William; James, Jr.; Lydia; and Lottie.</p>
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**Some folks get saved** just to stay out of hell while others are *radically converted*. Jim was radically converted. Like his father before him, the call of Christ, *Follow Me*, was a command – not a request. But it's hard to seriously follow someone you don't know very well so Jim talked with the LORD as he worked the fields, getting to know his Lord and Savior intimately.

Polly thought something was wrong, an accident or something, when she saw Jim running across the freshly cut furrows. She went to the door to meet him but Jim couldn't contain his excitement. He shouted as he ran, *The LORD called me to preach His Word!* Polly shared his joy. They prayed together for him to learn the mysterious ways of the LORD and that he would wisely use every opportunity to lead lost souls to Christ Jesus.

Jim studied diligently, discussing difficult Biblical passages and doctrines with Polly and with elders of the church. When given the opportunity to be heard by Jupiter Level Church, he was licensed to preach the Gospel. His gifts were evident such that, upon his ordination, he was encouraged to seek higher education at Shaw University, the first all black institution of its kind in the south.

**Call it a tragedy if you like** or call it God's work in progress. Whatever you call it, the fire that destroyed the Walton house along with all the possession Jim and Polly had was used by God as an opportunity for Jim to attend Shaw University. He was granted a scholarship to study theology and education. With the support and financial assistance of his church and community, Jim completed his education and returned to Juniper Level. His gentle spirit and benevolent heart endeared him to all who knew him. He was honored with the moniker *Uncle Jim* for the rest of his days. More than an educator and preacher, Jim was instrumental in organizing new schools, associations, conventions, lodges as well as the personal betterment of many throughout the area. The house where he taught school still stands today in sight of Juniper Level Baptist Church.