

# FAMILY RECORD

AND

# BIOGRAPHY.

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COMPILED BY

LEANDER JAMES MCCORMICK.

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CHICAGO:

1896.

8. (Hon.) John Hoge Walker.

Son of John and Isabella McCormick Walker.

Grandson of Thomas McCormick (2nd).

Great grandsno of Thomas McCormick (1st).

Few names are more identified with Northwestern Pennsylvania, and none more associated with Erie, than that of the lawyer and statesman now mentioned. He was one of eight children of John and Isabella (McCormick) Walker; born in Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, February 9th, 1800. His ancestors were of Scotch, Scotch Irish, and English origin, and among the very early settlers of Pennsylvania. His great grandfather, William Walker, came to Pennsylvania in 1710,—but eighteen years after William Penn. The Walkers settled in Lancaster County. His grandfather, William Walker, afterwards removed to Cumberland County, and his father, in 1817, removed from Cumberland to Washington County, Pennsylvania. His mother, Isabella McCormick, the daughter of Thomas and Jane (Oliver) McCormick, was born Dec. 29, 1759, on the present site of Philadelphia, Pa. They came from Ireland in 1737. They had two sons, John and William, and six daughters, of whom Isabella was the eldest.

The reference to Mr. Walker's ancestry and race, will explain his marked tenacity of purpose and rigid pertinacity, while the long identification of the family with Pennsylvania is mentioned as a reminder of his loyalty to her interests. Robert John Walker, U. S. Senator from Mississippi, and Secretary of the Treasury, under President Polk, was the son of John H. Walker's uncle, Jonathan Walker, and born, July 14, 1801.

## *Genealogy.*

John H. Walker graduated at Washington College, in 1822. He studied law with an uncle at Pittsburg, and was the next year admitted to the bar. In 1824 he came to Erie to reside. From that time he was identified, for half a century, with Erie, as a lawyer and public man. He was an advocate of great power, and retained his place as one of the leading men of Northwestern Pennsylvania until his death. His professional career included an amount of continuous and arduous professional work, and a prominent, undisputed and well sustained leadership, which has few parallels in this State. He was thoroughly Pennsylvanian, by birth, lineage, education and residence. This was strikingly manifest in his conspicuous service in the Legislative bodies of the State. In these, his remarkable legislative career has three separate and distinctive but equally removed periods of service. His first four years in the Legislature commenced in 1832. The second, as Senator from 1849 to 1852. The third, as Delegate at Large, to the Constitutional Convention of 1872-4.

As his first service was in the prime of life, the second was in his full orb'd meridian, and the third, after he had passed the Psalmist's limit. Each period, was, in a measure, amid different surroundings of men and of questions. In each period of service his leadership was recognized; for, in the first, he was, as Chairman of Ways and Means Committee, leader of the House; in the second, Speaker of the Senate, and in the third, made President of the Constitutional Convention on the death of William M. Meredith, who, at the head of the Philadelphia bar and Secretary of the Treasury, under President Taylor, was of national renown. The agitating questions of these respective eras, were as different as were the personal surroundings. In the first, the creation of corporations and the construction of canals, were foremost. In the second, the building and regulating of railroads, were of absorbing interest; and in the third and final service, the restriction of corporations and the curbing of their powers, were uppermost in the minds of the framers of the

## *McCormick Family.*

Constitution. In all of the groups of men and variety of questions, Mr. Walker was a leader of leaders. Sound in his principles, clear in his views of public measures, and earnest in their support, he won admiration and commanded respect. In the halls of legislation, as before courts and juries, his presentation of facts was so clear, and his train of reasoning so cogent, that he generally carried his audience with him. He struck his sledge-hammer blows with tremendous power, and his sarcasm was withering. He seldom lost a cause. His heart was in his profession—there, his life-work. Having mastered its fundamental principles, believing its aim to be the enforcement of right and the repression of wrong, he devoted his great abilities to its practice. Though eminently fitted to grace public positions, he was not an office seeker. He despised the tricks of the politician. Three times, in his long career, he accepted public trusts—always to his pecuniary detriment. Each time it was in interruption of professional duties, to him, so much more congenial. Besides, circumstances and his own convictions, had placed him, in early life, in antagonism to the Democracy in their long and hardly intermitted control of Pennsylvania. Always their opponent, Mr. Walker, on each occasion of his appearance in public position, was found in the leadership of a party of a different name from that borne during his former service. In 1835, as the coadjutor of Governor Ritner, Thaddeus Stevens and Thomas H. Burrows, he was the leader of the anti-Masonic majority in the House of Representatives.

In 1851-2, as the elect of the Whigs, he presided in the State Senate, and in 1873-4, as the choice of the Republicans, as Meredith's successor in the President's chair, in a body, of which Governors Bigelow and Curtin, Judges Black and Dallas, were members. He had passed the meridian of his life when the Pennsylvania Democracy were overthrown, but in the "borrowed time" allotted him, after his three-score-and-ten, he aided in forming a

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Constitution to protect the people from mischiefs, which, as a legislator, he had perceived and deplored. He was a public spirited citizen, keenly alive to the interests of Erie and resolute in their defence. He did much to improve the city, having erected an industrial plant and many dwellings. While in the Legislature, he obtained from the State, the grant of the beautiful farm for the Alms House, and the "Third Section" of land in Mill Creek for improvement of Erie harbor. He was active in the development of the railroad system centering at Erie, and devoted much of time and means to maintain a plank road. His domestic relations were unusually happy. In 1831, he married Miss Catherine D. Kelley, a native of New Hampshire. Their home was in the imposing brick mansion on West Seventh street, erected in 1837, still identified with the family name. He was noted for his love of home, and though Mrs. Walker died in 1860, more than fourteen years preceding the death of her husband, the memory of her grace of manner and kindness of heart, lingers like a spell. After her death, Mr. Walker kept open his spacious, elegant home, and by his will, directed that for ten years, his home, with the furniture and pictures, with all their associations, should be continued as a family household.

His exertions in the Constitutional Convention told upon his strength. He returned home enfeebled, and, "full of years and honors," died on Jan. 25, 1875.