

**A SHORT SKETCH
OF THE LIFE AND
SERVICES**

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A Short Sketch of the Life and Services by Jonathan Walker

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JONATHAN WALKER

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SERVICES**



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A SHORT SKETCH
OF THE
LIFE AND SERVICES
OF
JONATHAN WALKER,

The Man with a Branded Hand,

WITH A

Poem by John G. Whittier and an address by
Hon. Parker Pillsbury, one of Walker's
anti-slavery friends, and a funeral ora-
tion by Rev. F. E. Kittredge.



Muskegon, Michigan:
CHRONICLE STEAM PRINTING HOUSE,
1879.

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¶ Publisher's ¶ Announcement.

— 619 —

This little pamphlet is the result of an expressed desire, on the part of the friends of MR. WALKER, to have at least a short sketch of his life and services put in such a form that it can be preserved.

The short sketch here given, together with the information contained in the addresses of HON. PARKER PILLSBURY and REV. F. E. KITTREDGE, will enable the public to form a pretty fair estimate of his character and the chief events of his life, which is as much as can be expected in so brief a work, and is all that the publisher has had in view.

If all the events of interest in the life of JONATHAN WALKER were put in book form, it would make a much more pretentious volume, but it has not been considered advisable to attempt this at present.

Muskegon, July 1st, 1879.

W. M. HARFORD,
Publisher.

Jonathan Walker.

JONATHAN WALKER was born on a farm in Harwich, Mass., March 22, 1799, where he lived with his parents until 1816, when he became a sailor boy. All went well with him for about two years, at which time he became very sick, while on a voyage in the Indian Ocean, and for some unaccountable reason, was landed and left in a bamboo hut, without friends or those with him who understood his language. After regaining his health he resumed and continued his sailor life until 1835, with an occasional interruption when on shore employed in a shipping yard. At the latter date having become acquainted with Benjamin Lundy, he went with him to Mexico for the purpose of assisting in the colonization of those who had escaped from American slavery.

About two years afterward, while engaged near the Mexican coast, their small vessel accidentally ran aground and being discovered they were shot at and robbed of everything, including the vessel. He afterwards built another small vessel and engaged in the coasting trade along the shore of Alabama and Florida, at the same time assisting those of the slaves in obtaining their freedom who might chance to come on board. While making a voyage from Florida to the Bahama Islands, in 1844, with a number of such persons on board, he was overtaken, captured and taken back to Florida and put into jail. He was afterwards tried and convicted of slave stealing, was sentenced to be placed in the pillory, to be branded S. S. in the right hand with a hot iron, and pay a fine of \$600 and cost of prosecution. Every portion of the sentence was carried into execution, including his detention in a miserable jail for about one year in solitary confinement.

This cruel treatment of Mr. Walker was the occasion of Whittier's immortal poem, "The Branded Hand." Having regained his freedom Mr. Walker spent most of the time

during the five succeeding years in lecturing on the subject of Slavery, and although he left the field as a lecturer at this time, his interest in the cause he espoused so early in life and for which he spent his best energies, did not diminish in the least until American slavery ceased to exist.

In 1863 he purchased a few acres of land at Lake Harbor, Muskegon County, Michigan, upon which he soon after settled, and engaged in the cultivation of small fruits. Here he continued to reside, and although affable and intelligent, was a quiet and unobtrusive old gentleman, beloved and respected by all those who enjoyed the good fortune to form his acquaintance. His health continued good until the autumn of 1877, after which he gradually declined, the best medical skill seeming to be of no avail, and on the 30th of April, 1878, he quietly and peacefully died at the ripe old age of seventy-nine years.

The funeral ceremonies on the occasion of the burial of Mr. Walker, were held at the Universalist Church in Muskegon, the Rev. Frank E. Kittredge (Unitarian) officiating, who spoke substantially as follows:

FUNERAL ADDRESS.

Friends :—I esteem it a very high honor to have been selected by our venerated and world renowned friend, Capt. Walker, before he passed away, to perform a few brief rites over his sleeping dust. In accordance, therefore, with his expressed desire, made to me personally, I stand in this presence, to say a few words as fittingly as I can, in reference to the life, character and services of Capt. Jonathan Walker, more famously known as the "Man with the Branded Hand." It would not be the desire of our friend, could he speak through those cold lips to-day, that I should enter upon any eulogium upon his public character, or deal in fulsome praise concerning the services he has rendered to humanity and the world. But justice to the living; a tender affection for the departed, and a feeling that it is only right to render honor to whom honor is due, seem to require that I should at least touch upon a few salient points in his character. There may be many present here to-day, who are not familiar with the public services which Capt. Walker has rendered to mankind, as he has not resided in our midst many years, the most active years of his eventful life having been spent in older portions of our country, and amid the scenes and excitements of the

old anti-slavery conflict. And perhaps first in order, on this occasion, would be a very brief history of Capt. Walker's life, and as I have been entrusted with his private papers and correspondence with a view to their future publication, I may be permitted to make an extract or two from these original and highly interesting documents.

He was born in Harwich, Mass., on Cape Cod, March 22, 1799. His boyhood was spent on the sandy farms of his parents and grandparents. In 1816 he went to sea, and in 1818 was landed from a ship on an island in the Indian Ocean 8,000 miles from home, where he spent 21 days in a bamboo hut in extreme sickness, with no friend near him who could speak the English language. From 1818 to 1835 he divided his time between the shipyard, and the sea. In 1835 he went to Mexico to assist in colonizing American colored citizens who had escaped from their masters. In 1836 his vessel was grounded on the Mexican coast, where he was wounded and robbed at the hands of pirates. In 1844 his vessel was seized by sanction of the America Government, while he was taken, ironed and imprisoned in Florida, on the charge of assisting negroes to gain their freedom. He remained in prison, in solitary confinement for one year, when he was brought before the United States Court for trial. He was judged guilty, and sentenced to be branded in the right hand S. S. (slave stealer) with hot irons, be put in the pillory, and pay a fine of \$600 and costs. Whittier has immortalized this event, and transformed the intended odium of S. S. into the highest badge of honor a man could wear, in that ringing poem of his, "The Branded Hand," written in 1845, wherein he interprets those mystical letters S. S. to mean "Salvation to the Slave." From 1845 to 1849 he devoted his time to lecturing on Anti-Slavery subjects in various parts of the country. He was intimately associated with such anti-slavery workers as Wm. Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips, Theodore Parker, Stephen S. Foster, Parker Pillsbury, Governor Andrew, J. G. Whittier, Lydia Maria Child, Lucretia Mott, Charles Sumner, and others. In 1863 he removed to this State, and settled at Lake Harbor, in this county, on a small fruit farm, where by dint of hard work he was able to make a comfortable living for himself and wife, till within the past few weeks, when his health and strength failed him. I make the following extract from one of his letters, written to his grand-daughter, des-

criptive of his sufferings while in Florida:

"The United States Marshal for the Western District of Florida, an old acquaintance of mine from the State of Maine, took me in charge and provided me with snug quarters, heavy irons, and a hard floor to lie and sit upon in the city jail, for which he charged me twenty-five dollars, rent, &c. It was in front of the Court House, on the West side of Polifax street, directly up from the wharf, where your grandfather was fastened in the U. S. Pillory for one hour, and pelted with rotten eggs, and then taken into the Court House and branded with the U. S. branding iron, after passing through the form of a trial in a United States Court four months after my incarceration in Pensacola jail.

O. Persecution, fearful as thou art,
 With seowling brow and aspect stern and rude,
 Thy hands in blood of innocence imbued,
 Wrung, drop by drop, from many a tortured heart,
 Why should we dread thy gibbet, axe or stake?
 Thou dost our faith, our hope, our courage try,
 Thou mak'st us valiant where we thought to fly,
 Who shuns thee never shall the crown of victory take.

Had any of my friends seen me in the first few weeks of my imprisonment, they would have hardly recognized me; and in fact I could hardly recognize myself. My sickness and the severe treatment I received reduced me very near to a skeleton. Many a time have I grasped round my leg above the knee joint, over my pants, with one hand so as to meet thumb and finger. The hungry and thirsty mosquitoes tried hard to draw a little support from the emaciated form of the prisoner, to but little purpose. Their bills were harmless, so far as pain was concerned, nor did they get much reward for their labor. Notwithstanding the eleven long and tedious months that rolled around and found me chained up in solitary confinement, joyful expressions of sympathy met me there from various parts, and directly around me, and when your grandfather left that abode of suffering and disgrace, he left, a respectable man even there. For it was abundantly evident that the act for which he was punished was performed under the best of motives, viz: *to deliver the oppressed from the hands of the oppressor.*

Among his papers also, I find the following interesting document, which reads more like a romance than anything else. After minutely describing seven negro slaves, and offering a reward of \$1,700 for their apprehension and delivery at Pensacola, it continues as follows: