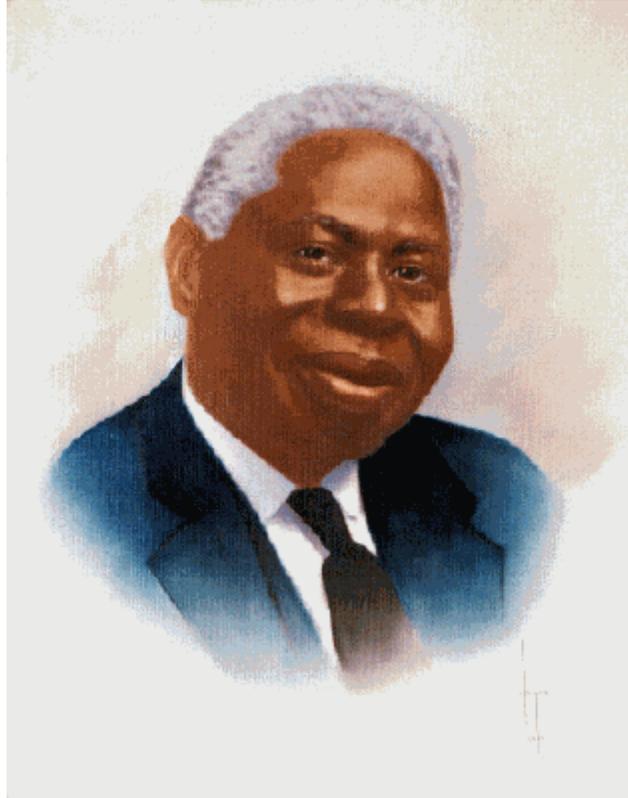


Hall of Fame Photo Gallery
Lawyer Thomas Calhoun Walker
(1862-1953)



The Pied Piper of Gloucester

Born in slavery, Lawyer Walker's life was a tremendous example of determination and accomplishment. As a young teenage lad, Walker went to Hampton Institute with nothing more than a desire to achieve. Due to his background and limited resources, he was unable to pass the examination at the test level required for general admission. When he was preparing to depart from the college a surge of strength and determination bubbled within his soul. He went back and stated the following to General Armstrong,

"I comes here to get some education and I ain't gonna leave till I gets some".

The General then decided that Walker and other young men would be given work to do on the campus during the day and at their level of capabilities would be permitted to attend school at night. This initiated the *work-year* at Hampton Institute which has provided the opportunity for many young men and women, unable to pay, to work their way through Hampton Institute. Upon leaving Hampton Institute he worked with his head, hands and heart. During the course of his life he prepared himself in multiple areas and worked in these areas, primarily motivated by his concern for people. He held among many others the following positions:

- Self appointed, unpaid, superintendent of Negro Schools of Gloucester County. He taught the people because he loved them and despised the ignorance and poverty which they were held in.
- Pastor of pastors. He did much religious teaching enabling the people of Gloucester County to have a better understanding of the bible.
- Lawyer. Motivated by the rampant injustices to his people.
- Fearless organizer. The Honey-Pod Tree autobiography displays the imaginative courage he displayed in organizing many efforts in Virginia and elsewhere.
- Government Customs Officer.
- Farmer that shared with his people new farming techniques learned at the Hampton Institute.
- Justice of Peace.
- County Commissioner.
- Virginia representative on the Notification Committee.
- Delegate from the first district of Virginia to the National Convention to name presidential candidates.
- Collector of customs for the port of Tappahannock.
- Declined the position of consul general of Guadalupe, offered by President Theodore Roosevelt. He desired to remain in Virginia to help his fellowmen.
- Fund-raiser and recruiter for the Hampton Institute.
- School trustee and president of board (Manassas Industrial School).
- School founder and personal financier.
- School principal and teacher.
- Advisor and consultant of Negro affairs for the Virginia Emergency and Relief Administration.

On the closing years of his life he said;

"But do you think I'm going to say that if I started out again now I would find entirely different problems. No, I cannot say that for it would not be true. Everywhere I see the same old difficulties to wrestle with, in changed form but all stemming from the same human weakness an inertia responsible for the situations I found myself facing the day I got back from Hampton and took my initial plunge into efforts for community betterment. The spade work, such as had to be done at old Poplars School, is not by any means finished but it will now go forward under its own momentum and with the help of many new leaders."

"...but I am sorry to say that I believe I would find less interest in home life than in housing, more juvenile and adult delinquency and even less concern for moral training within the home. I would see moral responsibilities placed upon young people not trained to carry them..."

Glo Quips / July 28, 1976.

The Honey-Pod Tree

This autobiography was published in 1958. The title of the book was selected from the famous old landmark which once stood near Gloucester Court House. The honey pod tree shaded a slave

block on which many of T. C. Walker's own relatives had been sold. The aged lawyer lived to see both the venerable tree and the slave block destroyed. In his autobiography, the once famous tree symbolizes the more subtle forms of slavery "young honeypod trees" which Walker saw emerging in the years following World War II.

Walker was just an infant when the Emancipation Proclamation was read to the slaves who gathered around the block under the honeypod tree. During his childhood, he witnessed his parents and other blacks trying to find a better life for themselves with no education and no money. At the age of 13 Walker could neither read nor write. After he finally acquired these skills at Old Poplars School, which was housed in a church, Walker scraped together 92 cents, ran away from home and knocked on the door of Hampton Institute. At this Institute the rising of this great man began.

Gazette-Journal / November 23, 1973