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Walker, John [1]

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by H. L. Riddle, Jr., 1996

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John Walker, Indian fighter and Revolutionary [2] officer, was born in Appoquinimink Hundred, New Castle County, Del., the son of John Walker of Derry, Ireland, who immigrated to Delaware in 1720. The elder Walker was the grandson of the Reverend Governor George Walker of Donaghmore County, Londonderry, Ireland, who successfully commanded the Siege of Derry in 1689 against the forces of King James II.

As a young man Walker settled on the south fork of the Potomac River in Hampshire County, Va., and in 1751 married Elizabeth Watson. He served as a volunteer under Colonel George Washington [3] in the Virginia colonial troops suffering in the disastrous defeat of the army of General Edward Braddock in 1755 near Fort Duquesne and fought the rear action during the retreat of the colonial troops. Shortly afterwards he moved to the area that became Lincoln County [4], N.C., on Lee Creek, about ten miles east of the present town of Lincolnton. While residing there he enlisted in Colonel James Grant's regiment and served in a campaign against the Cherokee [5] Indians in 1761. Two years later he settled on Crowders Creek near Kings Mountain and lived there until 1768, when he moved to Cane Creek in what is now Rutherford County [6]. He was appointed by the legislature of 1774 as one of the commissioners to "select a site and build thereon the court house, prison and stocks" for the county of Tryon. In 1775 he and his son Felix accompanied Colonel Richard Henderson [7] and Daniel Boone [8] on an expedition that explored Kentucky and founded the settlement of Boonesboro.

At the beginning of the Revolution he was appointed chairman of the Tryon Committee of Safety and was author of the Tryon Association Resolution of August 1775, when forty-eight settlers of that county resolved "firmly to resist force by force in defense of our natural freedom and constitutional rights." In the same month he represented Tryon County [9] in the Third Provincial Congress [10] at Hillsborough. Shortly after the war broke out he was commissioned a captain in the First Regiment of North Carolina Troops. Promoted to major on 20 Apr. 1777, he resigned his commission on 22 December due to age and poor health. Tryon County was abolished by an act of the legislature of 1778, and Rutherford and Lincoln took its place the next year. The act designated John Walker as one of the four commissioners to survey the dividing line between the two counties and assist in setting up a government in those counties.

In 1779 he was appointed justice of the peace in the new county of Rutherford, and the first session of the Court of Common Pleas and Quarter Sessions [11] was held at his home near the mouth of Cane Creek. The legislature of 1784 named him one of the commissioners of the Morgan District for disposing of confiscated Tory property. It also designated him one of the commissioners in that district "for the purpose of erecting a court house, prison and stocks in the County of Burke [12], for the use of said district, and for levying a tax to complete the same." Other duties of the commissioners consisted of laying out and establishing a town in Burke County [12] by the name of Morgansborough (now Morganton).

In 1787 Colonel Walker moved to the forks of the Green and Broad rivers, in Rutherford County [6], where he died. All of his six sons served in the Revolution, five being commissioned officers in North Carolina regiments of the Continental line. One son, Captain Felix Walker [13], was also a member of the state House of Commons six times and served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1817 to 1823. The other sons were John, Jr., James Reuben, William, Thomas, and Joseph.

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