

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

LISTED ON:  
VLR 09/17/2009  
NRHP 12/04/2009

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

### 1. Name of Property

historic name T.C. Walker House

other names/site number VDHR File 036-5053; Site 44GL0455

### 2. Location

street & number 1 Main Street  not for publication

city or town Gloucester Court House  vicinity

state Virginia code VA county Gloucester code 073 zip code 23061

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national  statewide  local

  
Signature of certifying official

11/15/09  
Date

Director, Virginia Department of Historic Resources/State Historic Preservation Officer  
Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register  determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register  removed from the National Register

other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only **one** box)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object
<input type="checkbox"/>	

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
1	0	sites
1	0	structures
0	0	objects
3	0	<b>Total</b>

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/Single Dwelling

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**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Work In Progress

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**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Gothic Revival

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**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: brick

walls: Wood covered by asbestos shingles

roof: Asphalt Shingle

other: N/A

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T.C. Walker House

Name of Property

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Gloucester County, VA

County and State

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**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

**Summary Paragraph**

See Continuation Sheet

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**Narrative Description**

See Continuation Sheet

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Education \_\_\_\_\_

Ethnic Heritage: Black \_\_\_\_\_

Law \_\_\_\_\_

Politics/Government \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

c.1900-1953 \_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1900, 1902, 1934, 1953 \_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

Walker, Thomas Calhoun \_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A \_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown \_\_\_\_\_

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The Period of Significance 1900-1953, based on the date T.C. Walker purchased the house, which was expanded during his lifetime, until his death in 1953.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

N/A

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

See Continuation Sheet

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance)

See Continuation Sheet

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**Developmental history/additional historic context information** (if appropriate)

See Continuation Sheet

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Virginia Department of Historic Resources,  
Hampton University, Gloucester County Clerk's

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Name of repository: Office

T.C. Walker House  
Name of Property

Gloucester County, VA  
County and State

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** 1.89  
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	<u>18</u> Zone	<u>414579</u> Easting	<u>0365292</u> Northing	3	<u>                    </u> Zone	<u>                    </u> Easting	<u>                    </u> Northing
2	<u>                    </u> Zone	<u>                    </u> Easting	<u>                    </u> Northing	4	<u>                    </u> Zone	<u>                    </u> Easting	<u>                    </u> Northing

### Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

The 1.89-acre tract is at the crest of a ridge that leads towards Deacon's Neck. The large two-story frame house commands a wide view of U.S. Route 17 Business (Main Street) to the south, and is surrounded on the north, east, and west by homes and businesses within the village of Gloucester C.H. A lawn surrounds the house and flanks the gravel drive extending perpendicular to U.S. 17 along the east side of the property. The driveway continues across the property to Calhoun Street north of the property. Along the western and eastern bounds of the property are mature oaks, cedars, poplars, maples, and pines interspersed with bushes and seasonal plantings.

The boundary is described on survey completed by Charles J. Kearns, C.L.S. in 1905 with 1973 revision:

N 63° 56' 45" W  
S 26° 02' 30" W  
N 55° 47' 36" W  
S 33° 59' W 18.58'  
N 55° 17' W 19.98'  
S 31° 15' W 91.00'  
S 58° 45' W E 133.17'

### Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

T.C. Walker House boundary exists as the property was deeded to Hampton University by the heirs of T.C. Walker. Walker owned additional land during his lifetime. One of his parcels was donated to construct the T.C. Walker Elementary School. This parcel is the most intact piece of his property and is the lot owned by Hampton University encompassing his home (1900-1953).

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title John V. Quarstein  
organization Gloucester Economic Development Authority date June 2, 2009  
street & number P.O. Box 916=5 telephone 804-693-1415  
city or town Gloucester Court House state VA zip code 23061  
e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

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**Additional Documentation**

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
  
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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**Photographs:**

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Submit clear and descriptive black and white photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

**Name of Property:** T.C. Walker House  
**City or Vicinity:** Gloucester Court House  
**County:** Gloucester **State:** Virginia  
**sdfsdf**  
**Photographer:** Hampton University  
**Date Photographed:** November 2008

**Description of Photograph(s) and number:**

Side view of house showing enclosed porch. 1 of \_12\_.  
Two story bay addition on northwest side of house. 2 of \_12\_.  
Interior of parlor with bay addition. 3 of \_12\_.  
Interior, second floor hallway. 4 of \_12\_.  
View of rear addition chimney 5 of \_12\_.  
View of front section chimney. 6 of \_12\_.  
View of hallway leading to front door. 7 of \_12\_.  
View of front stairwell. 8 of \_12\_.  
East view of building. 9 of \_12\_.  
Front view of house. 10 of \_12\_.  
North side view of house detailing base of windmill. 11 of \_12\_.  
View of windmill. 12 of \_12\_.

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

T.C. Walker House

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Gloucester County, VA

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Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)  
N/A

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**Summary Description**

The T.C. Walker House is a post-Civil War vernacular building featuring traces of Greek Revival and Gothic Revival styles and a front porch. The walls are asbestos shingles, the roof is asphalt, and the foundation piers and chimney are brick. The building is two stories high. The roof consists of three intersecting gables. Atop the front section are two gable ends a massive central cross-gable. There is a two-bay addition on the east end of the house's front. The porches are not original and disguise the main entry door, framed with rectangular sidelights and transom. Inside the door the house has one room to each side of a central hall. The wood trim is simple and was modernized sometime after Walker's death. The open porches were enclosed to form additional rooms.

It is believed that the T.C. Walker House was built sometime in the early 1880s. The front porch was constructed shortly after T.C. Walker acquired the house in 1900. The porch was enclosed by his heirs in the mid-1950s. The T.C. Walker House does not have a recorded builder and no dates can be definitively assigned to the completion of the kitchen addition or other improvements. The house was renovated after Walker's death.

**Narrative Description**

**House**

The T.C. Walker House is located on the edge of the Gloucester C.H. business district. It is situated on a hill overlooking the intersection of Route 14 and Route 17 Business. The original property was a small farm. Photographs detail that Walker's property included a detached kitchen, a barn, and a shed as outbuildings. The property was surrounded by a painted plank rail fence. All this has been removed and small brick ranch style houses have been constructed on the adjacent property where these outbuildings once stood. The building is in poor condition and has been mothballed.

This two-story house is elevated on brick piers (raised approximately 20 inches above the ground's surface). The roof of the U-shaped building consists of three intersecting gables of moderately steep pitch. The front block, possibly the earliest portion of the building, displays two gable ends and a massive front-facing cross gable. It is intersected by a rearward-extending gable that, in turn, is intercepted by a gable over the kitchen extension. One or both of these may be additions. The roof originally was covered with wood shingles (an area that remains intact within the attic); but is now covered with asphalt roofing.

The exterior walls are sheathed with wood weatherboards, now concealed and covered (circa 1955) with asbestos shingle siding. There are a total of 25 functional windows that appear to be original. These include six in an early two-bay window addition on the east end of the front block. All original windows are two-over-two light double hung wooden sash. Several other windows have been converted to doors or otherwise lost to alterations. The main entry door is framed with rectangular sidelights and transom. There is a semi-circular vent window at each of the three ends in the front portion of the building.

The house originally had no porches. A front porch, spanning the width of the house with a low-sloping half-hip roof supported by four rectangular wooden columns was an early addition, built shortly after Walker acquired the house in 1900. Subsequent to its historic period, the porch was enclosed.

The front block contains two chimneys, symmetrically placed in line with the walls of the central hall. They are brick, with brick caps, and have been somewhat widened from the originals, which remain visible in the attic. There is a similar brick chimney at the eastern end of the kitchen.

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The front part of the house has one room to each side of a central stair hall. Two chimneys flank the stair hall. There is a one-story kitchen extension to the rear. This extension could be the original "summer kitchen" that was moved and probably attached to the house. The Walkers appeared to have maintained a simple lifestyle. Wood trim generally was simple (as depicted through physical evidence and from the few remaining photographs of the interior taken during Walker's lifetime); the most elegant is seen in the bay parlor window that Walker added. The house was modernized sometime after Walker's death in 1953. Almost every surface was renewed. The chimneys were revised. Asbestos siding was applied over the original weatherboard. Light fixtures were replaced, new plumbing fixtures were installed, and a second bathroom was added. Open porches were enclosed to form additional rooms.

**Contributing Structure: Windmill**

Next to the house remains an agricultural style windmill to operate the existing well. The windmill is of steel construction and is no longer operational. This wind mill appears to have been constructed in the 1920s.

**Contributing Site: 44GL445**

A phase I archeological survey (site 44GL445) was completed by DATA Investigations, LLC in December 2007. Material evidence was discovered that this site encompasses an 18th century household at the outskirts of Botetourt Town on the road to Gloucester Point and Mathews County. Significant artifacts were discovered documenting the Walker family occupancy during the first half of the 20th century.

The modern landscape of Site 44GL445 has changed from what T.C. Walker and his family may have seen during their lives, although they are likely responsible for many of the changes. The southern portion of the site was modified in 2007 with the construction of the sidewalk and parking along Main Street. Additional filling and grading activities likely affected the southern portion of the property particularly during the original paving of U.S. Route 17 and cutting the driveway into the grade of the hill during the middle part of the 20th century. Some of the filling activity appears to have helped preserve archeological deposits. The yard area north of the standing house, while retaining much of its archeological integrity, once consisted of outbuildings related to the main structure and agricultural operations taking place to the north, on land developed into housing subdivisions during the mid-20th century and in the early 21st century. The area of greatest above-ground and archeological integrity is likely the yard immediately surrounding the house and extending slightly to the northeast. The archeological survey suggests that intact stratified deposits remain beneath the ground surface. The presence of 18th century artifacts hints at a more complex and deep history to the property, one that would contribute greatly to the understanding of this area connecting Botetourt Town with Long Bridge Ordinary and the rounds to Gloucester Point and Mathews. Future research could provide more in-depth knowledge about the nature of both periods of occupation, the spatial evolution of the site, and the lives of its residents.

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**Summary Statement of Significance**

The T.C. Walker House was built c. 1880 in Gloucester C.H., Virginia. The house is a post-Civil War vernacular building and was acquired by T.C. Walker in 1900. Walker was then working as a lawyer; however, much of his life's work was already being dedicated to African-American land ownership through his Gloucester & Brick company and work with the creation of African-American schools in Gloucester County. He used his home as collateral to obtain release from jail for wayward African-Americans via the Virginia Board of Charities and Corrections. The T.C. Walker House was Tom Walker's base for his 72 years of service to enhance the well-being of his fellow African-Americans. When Walker died his daughters inherited the house and renovated the structure. The property was donated to Hampton University in 1977.<sup>1</sup>

The T.C. Walker house meets the National Register Criterion B at the state level of significance in the areas of Education, Ethnic Heritage, Law, and Politics/Government as a property associated with the lives of persons of significance in our past due to the life work of Thomas Calhoun Walker. From the late 1880s to his death in 1953, Walker worked tirelessly to improve African-American land ownership and educational opportunities. He worked as a teacher and then passed the bar to become the first African American lawyer in Gloucester County, Virginia. His first partners were two former Confederate officers and he used this legal platform to work to expand African-American land ownership, to break down Jim Crowism, and to broaden African-American educational opportunities via school construction. On the political stage, Walker was elected twice as a member of the Gloucester County Board of Supervisors and received two prominent presidential appointments: Collector of Customs -- Port of Tappahannock, Virginia (McKinley) and WPA Advisor on Negro Affairs (Roosevelt). The period of significance covers the period of Walker's association with the house, c.1900-1953.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

**Education**

Thomas Calhoun Walker was born a slave on Spring Hill Plantation, Gloucester County, Virginia on 16 June 1862. At age 10, he began to work hauling wood, working the fields, and making bricks. Even though he attended some schools, including one organized by his uncle Morris, it was so sporadic that Walker could neither read nor write by age 13. Yet, he was so "seized with a desire for education" that he started to learn using a spelling book called John Common's Book. While traveling with his father to Cappahosic in Gloucester County he was able to observe Brigadier General Samuel Chapman Armstrong speaking to a group of whites and African Americans about educational themes. Impressed by Armstrong's message and demeanor, Walker resolved to attend Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute. He studied briefly under two Hampton graduates at Old Poplars School and then applied to Hampton Institute. Somehow he was able to raise \$2.25 to pay his way via ferry from Gloucester to Old Point Comfort.<sup>2</sup>

Once at Hampton Institute he was faced with various challenges. Walker was unable to pass the entrance exam and met with Gen. Armstrong to try to find a way for him to get some education. Armstrong conceived a concept whereby students like Tom Walker could take night-school to bring themselves to the entrance level and work during the day. It was the start of Hampton Institute's "Work Year" system. Walker's deep desire to learn prompted Armstrong to create this program. Walker studied under Booker T. Washington and received his degree on 16 June 1883. A verse was written by Miss Ludlow acknowledging Walker's role as the 'Plucky Class' as well as his scholastic achievements:

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When we want a man to mount the stump  
We look for a great talker  
Perhaps of all assembled here  
The best is Thomas Walker<sup>3</sup>

Walker returned to Gloucester County to teach, however, he found it extremely discouraging that there were no schools for African Americans. He persuaded the Gloucester County school superintendent to build a one-room school building in 1885, yet, it was inadequate. He was able to raise the money (some of which came from his own salary) and donated materials to expand the school. He added classes during the evening for adult instruction and sought support from local churches for his school. Walker became, as he later wrote, "the self-appointed unpaid superintendent of Negro schools of Gloucester because there was no one else to do the work."<sup>4</sup>

Thomas Walker expanded his work with local churches to create Sunday schools and organized the Gloucester Sunday-School Union in 1885. These meetings moved far beyond spiritual thinking as Walker used this platform to educate "the need of better home life, the training of children, and the importance of owning a home." The Union expanded into the Rappahannock Union Baptist Sunday-School Convention, which included numerous counties and the cities of the Hampton Roads region. Walker used the Union as well as his own political stature throughout the Commonwealth to foster a desire amongst African Americans to seek better educational opportunities via school construction (Walker served as an 'agent' for the Rosenwald Foundation during the 1920s), and helped students enter college. Stories abound of how he would aid African American school construction projects or how he would help students gain admission to schools of higher education. He particularly sought to assist those promising African Americans to attend Hampton University if they expressed a desire to do so. Leola Madison Travis remembered that when she was a young girl, she wished to attend Hampton University:

"I have always believed that my admission to Hampton Institute was made possible by the interceding (or at least strong support) of Mr. Walker... He was a man who stressed education and the ownership of real property. I feel that he helped many, many other young folk (his language) in acquiring their education and labor skills. He was a determined man for helping the young folks to become productive men and women."<sup>5</sup>

Countless students were helped by Walker, who nurtured 'young folk' by his advice and support. Walker's advocacy for higher education made a difference for individuals like Mrs. Travis who was able to use her education to educate others. Without Walker's work, the development of educational opportunities for African Americans in Tidewater, Virginia would have been delayed by decades.

**Legal**

Walker was in Gloucester Courthouse one day in 1883 when he passed by the courthouse and stopped to observe a case against a young African-American girl. When he heard that the girl was found guilty he was filled with a sense of injustice and knew if she had had a lawyer she would have been free. Simultaneously, he befriended an old lawyer and former Confederate soldier, Major Benjamin F. Bland. He did odd jobs for Bland, and instead of pay, Bland helped him study law. He worked as Bland's clerk until Bland became too feeble and transferred his studies to the office of Brigadier General William Booth Taliaferro. Walker took the bar exam in May 1887, and even though many opposed his taking the test because of his race, he, according to the judge, "passed a better examination than anybody I have tested in 40 years!" Thomas Walker became the first African-American to practice law in Gloucester County. He worked with two

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former Confederate officers and slave owners, Bland and Taliaferro, and expanded his practice over the years to the extent that his services were requested by whites and blacks alike.<sup>6</sup>

Walker was called Lawyer Walker or Squire Walker for his becoming an example of how African Americans could rise above Jim Crowism and achieve professional excellence. He was called by his fellow Hampton University graduates as a 'very successful lawyer and a man of influence.' Tom Walker used his position to spread his message of temperance, education, and land ownership.<sup>7</sup> These guides to well-being, he felt, offered African Americans the key to entering the middle class. He used patriotic themes such as 'Flag Day' to instill loyalty to the nation as he wanted his race to be able to be equal partners with whites. As Walker wrote:

"Ignorance... and prejudice has too often blinded the white man to the fact that an intelligent Negro is legally a citizen... and neither race... can get on without the other and attain its own racial height. To this each race must inevitably come. But in order to meet his own wants he must be trained for self-support, taught how to use his citizenship rights, and he must, to be really free, own his own home. Together the races may build a stable, enlightened citizenship."<sup>8</sup>

Many African Americans followed 'Squire' Walker's example. Over 90% of African Americans in Gloucester County, as well as 70% in the 33 counties of Tidewater, Virginia, owned their own land.

### **Politics/Government**

Even though Thomas Walker never appeared in a landmark trial, his legal career gave him the stature to play a stronger role in his community as well as to dispel rumors that African-Americans were not qualified by race to intellectual or leadership roles in society. He used his legal training to become Justice of the Peace in 1888 and served two terms. In 1891 he was elected to the Gloucester County Board of Supervisors and was re-elected in 1893. After serving two terms, he accepted an appointment by President William McKinley as Collector of Customs for the Port of Tappahannock, Virginia in 1896. He held this post for six years. President Theodore Roosevelt offered him an appointment in 1902 as Consul General to the island of Guadeloupe, which Walker declined because he knew that he was needed in Virginia to advance the position of his fellow African-Americans. During the next 30 years he focused on African-American educational issues, home ownership, and "movements for betterment." He traveled throughout Virginia before white and black audiences seeking support for these causes. Eventually he would be named to a state office in 1934 as the Advisor and Consultant of Negro Affairs for the Virginia Emergency and Relief Administration. His office was in Richmond, yet he went everywhere he could in the Commonwealth seeking to improve conditions for African-Americans. He resigned from his position in 1946.

### **Ethnic Heritage**

Thomas C. Walker was a tireless advocate for African-Americans. Even though he only taught school for six years, he remained heavily involved in educational activities. In the 1920s he worked to create a high school in Gloucester County for African-Americans. Walker took out a personal note to acquire the land and to build the school, which became known as the Gloucester County Training School. He was able to convince national organizations such as the Rosenwald Foundation, Slater Fund, Rockefeller Foundation, and Jeanes Fund to donate significant dollars to underwrite the school's construction as well as to fund teacher positions. Tom Walker's devotion to improving African American educational opportunities is well-documented. The land for the former site of Gloucester Intermediate School and the present-day T.C. Walker Elementary School was donated by the Honorable T.C. Walker. Walker also worked with the Virginia Board of Charities and Corrections to remove delinquent black children from jails to place them into homes where they could learn and prosper. He eventually became the first African-American to serve on this board. In this position, he was able

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to include African-Americans in Virginia's social welfare network.

Walker knew that the key to betterment was through land ownership. Gloucester County, where Walker resided all his life, was an agrarian community based on farming and seafood industries. Consequently Walker sought to drive within this landscape via property acquisition. He was able to amass his home and an extensive amount of other farming tracts via the leverage of his own work and determination. As he would tell others of how he talked a Gloucester landlord into selling him 36 acres on credit, "I made the crop and made that land buy itself. And when I got that paid for two bought more."<sup>9</sup> Thomas Walker as an ardent believer in the ownership of land to give a person "roots, rights, and responsibility" in their community. Consequently, Walker established the Gloucester Land & Brick Company whose purpose was to enable African-Americans to secure money for land acquisitions. He served as president of the corporation and took all of the financial risk himself to enable African-Americans to gain a stabilizing influence on their lives. By 1940, of the 574 farms worked by African-Americans in Gloucester County, 495 were owned by the very African Americans who worked the land. Only seven African-American families in Gloucester County were on relief that same year.

When Thomas Walker died at age 91, thousands attended his funeral to pay respects to the man who was known as the "Pied Piper of Gloucester." He had spent almost 70 years of his life traveling the Commonwealth prompting his fellow African-Americans to recognize that "freedom is measured by ownership of the land." Walker believed that land ownership was indeed the key to building African American's place within society because it gave a person 'roots, rights, and responsibility.'<sup>10</sup> It was said of Walker that he was a "builder of the race by the race and for the race. Walker tied in land ownership with concepts of self-reliance and race development. He believed that these themes built the character of men and women giving them the stability and growth through service of the institutions and people that they fed and nourished. "He was a giant oak of the forest," Deacon A.W. Lemon of Bethel Baptist Church said. "He spread his branches far and near and spread the gospel of goodwill amongst both races."<sup>11</sup>

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**Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> T.C. Walker, The Honey-Pod Tree, New York: The John Day Company, 1958, p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, pp. 20-23.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 36.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 47.

<sup>5</sup> Leola Madison Travis, letter, T.C. Walker House Committee, June 1, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> The Honey-Pod Tree, p. 134.

<sup>7</sup> Newsclipping marked S.W., Hampton University Museum Archives, July 1898.

<sup>8</sup> The Honey-Pod Tree, pp. 266-267.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 182.

<sup>10</sup> Journal and Guide, November 14, 1953.

<sup>11</sup> Afro-American (Virginia Edition), November 21, 1953.

