

Florine Walker Walther was interviewed in 1974 to provide background for the application to create the Capitol Hill Historic District. Any use of this material should credit the Ruth Ann Overbeck Capitol Hill History Project website for making it available. It was retyped by Paula Causey in 2012 with street names and house addresses edited to conform to the style used in Overbeck Project transcripts.

Capitol Hill Interviews

Interview with Florine Walker Walther

By Ruth Ann Perez and Hazel Kreinheder

November 11, 1974

The interview with Florine Walther was conducted at her home at 118 Grove Avenue, Washington Grove, Maryland.

MRS. WALTHER: I was born on Capitol Hill 87 years ago in the old home. My maiden name was Bertha Florine Walker. I married Mr. Henry Jacob Walther in 1913. The old home was on the corner of Fifth and B Streets, now Constitution Avenue, the northwest corner. The address is 420 Constitution Avenue NE, formerly B Street.



420 B Street NE, late 19th–early 20th century. See pages 16-17 for comments about the house

INTERVIEWER: Did your father build that house?

MRS. WALTHER: Yes, not from the ground up. I should have the dates for that. My father and mother were married at Bennings at the home of Great-Aunt Annie Scaggs, we called her. They spent their first year of married life down at Pleasant Prospect, Jonathan Thomas Walker's place. [Pleasant Prospect is on the National Register of Historic Places and located in Mitchellville, Maryland.] Then they moved into

the city of Washington. For a short time, they were in a small place on 13th Street and I do not know the address. Northwest. They came up from the country and they said that they brought some chickens and a cow and, of course, they always had horses. Then he became interested in that area over ... now Capitol Hill to us. There was a small house, nothing around it, immediately around it, facing Fifth Street NE. I think that's about 100 years old. I've got that in a paper.

And then the family increased rather rapidly. My mother had eleven children. As the family increased, they needed more room. So from this small house, before my time, facing Fifth Street he added first the bay window section, I would say. And then later on in that other section, also ahead of my day, there was a furnace room—coal heat—and the parlor and a library and on the second floor that same side, two bedrooms, and on the top floor two bedrooms, that was the latest building of the house. I have the picture out there on the porch.

INTERVIEWER: This is Ruth Ann Perez and while Hazel Kreinheder and Mrs. Walther are looking through some other memorabilia, I am going to be reading a very old typed script biography of Mrs. Walther's father into the tape. The title of it is "Major Samuel H. Walker". "Major Walker was born in the City of Washington, District of Columbia, on June 7, 1844 on K Street NW opposite the present Carnegie Library. The son of Jonathan T. Walker and Jane Amelia Benson, he was named after his uncle, the distinguished Texas Ranger of Mexican War fame."

"His father Jonathan T. Walker founded the old firm of J.T. Walker Sons and was active in the war period as a contractor and builder until his retirement to the old family homestead at Toaping Castle, Prince Georges County, Maryland obtained by patent from Lord Baltimore, 1754."

[Toaping Castle was a large white oak house erected by Isaac, Charles, and Nathan Walker circa 1750 in present day Greenbelt, Maryland. The family cemetery is all that remains of the estate. Prince George County Historical Society marker.]

"Major Walker attended Richard's and Farley's School as a boy. Later he entered Columbian College, now George Washington University. At this school he affiliated with Epsilon Chapter of the Sigma Chi Fraternity and now is the oldest living member."

"Following the completion of his college work, he entered the Clerk's Office at the City Hall, June 2, 1862, where he was placed in charge of the DC land records. While there he commenced to follow his father's example in real estate construction and development with such success that he resigned from the Land Office to go into business for himself."

Page 2. "Major Walker served without enlistment in the defense of Washington during the Civil War, but his title comes from his association as Major and superintendent of the Metropolitan Police of Washington, DC, to which he was called by the Commissioners of the District of Columbia in 1886 because of his genius for organization. Here he made radical changes and established the force upon a remarkably efficient basis, often driving alone at night to promote discipline and make his own inspections."

"Finding that his service entailed great financial loss to himself and growing family, he very soon resigned and reorganized his private business of real estate and insurance which he has since followed."

"He helped to organize or develop the Washington Title Insurance Company, the Mutual Life Insurance Company, the National Capital Investment Company, the Capital City Benefit Society, now the oldest investment insurance company chartered in this city and now known as The Capital City Life Insurance Company and of which he is still President."

"Locating his home at 420 B Street NE in 1876, then surrounded by Commons, he has been very active in the development of the Northeast and Southeast sections of the city."

Page 3. "He built entire squares of homes in the vicinity contiguous to his home. His large white house at Fifth and B Streets NE has long been a landmark."

"Major Walker is one of the original incorporators of the National Capital Bank and of the East Washington Savings Bank, in both of which he holds substantial stock interest and serves as Vice President. He is chairman of the Executive Committee of the Savings Bank. He served as Secretary of the East Washington Citizens Association for thirteen years." (The immediate preceding sentence is in pencil.)

"About thirty years ago, he went to Washington Grove, Maryland, for his health, and finding the community a benefit to his physical being entered actively into its civic operations, building numerous cottages and homes. He served as President of the Grove Association for a period of several years."

(The following paragraph has been stricken through with pencil because it was replaced with another paragraph after that.) "He has been a very active Mason being a member of several York and Scottish Rite bodies in the District of Columbia. He is a life member of [inaudible] Lodge No. 16 S.A.A.M. and served over fifteen years as its treasurer. In 1899, because of his conspicuous service to Masonry, he was honored with the 33rd Degree by the Scottish Rite. He is a member of the Almas Temple A.A.O.M.M.S. and in 1898 was the treasurer of the Masonic fair rendered material assistance in the erection of the Masonic Temple and the Masonic and Eastern Star homes."

“He had been a lifelong member of the Methodist Episcopal Church being affiliated with the McKendree Methodist Episcopal Church, which his father helped to build, and with Waugh M.E. Church at Third and A Street NE, where he served as Superintendent of the Sunday School and at present he is Chairman of the Board of Trustees at both Waugh M.E. Church and the Methodist Home for the Aged.”

“On February 22, 1872, he married Sally L. Brady of the Eastern shore of Maryland and they became the parents of eleven children, eight of whom are still living, all married except one, and raising families. Both Major and Mrs. Walker are still living and enjoy remarkable vitality and health.”

“On February 22, 1922, they celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary.” The typed script is undated. There is a written note on the cover and it says, “Copy and mail to Frank P. Black, Office 106, National Hotel, Washington, DC.”

I’m going to be reading in some more. These are obituaries of Sam H. Walker and you will note that there are some discrepancies in dates as they relate to the previously read typed script. This is from *The Washington Daily News* Thursday, January 24, 1935. Its title is “Samuel H. Walker is Dead, Was Oldest G.W. Alumnus” “One time Police Chief Here Dies at Desk of Heart Attack” “Samuel H. Walker, former police chief and one of Washington’s oldest native citizens died of a heart attack at 10:30 am today. He was ninety years old and still active. Mr. Walker died at his desk at The Capital City Life Insurance Company of which he was President. He lived at 420 B Street NE. He was the oldest living graduate of George Washington University receiving his degree in 1864. He was also the oldest member of the national fraternity of Sigma Chi.”

“Mr. Walker served as Secretary of the condemnation committee which selected the property on which the Library of Congress now stands. He supervised the building at 452 Indiana Avenue NW which now houses the Metropolitan Police Department Headquarters. It is called the Walker building and was formerly owned by him. Mr. Walker was the son of Jonathan Walker who came to the District in 1833. He was a 33rd Degree mason and superintendent of the Waugh Methodist Church Sunday School. He was an ardent dry and once served as president of the Anti-Saloon League. He was a member of the Prohibition Party, working actively as a director.”

“Mr. Walker was appointed Police Chief in 1885, served to 1887. He was a director of the National Capital Bank, organizer of the National Capital Investment Company and treasurer of the Washington Title Insurance Company.”

“Surviving him are his widow, Mrs. Sally Walker, 5 daughters, Miss Rosalie Walker, Mrs. Lucretia W. Hardy, Mrs. Florine B. Walther, Mrs. Carrol H. Winters and Mrs. Janet Gibson Smith, two sons Arthur B. Walker and Robert H. Walker.”

The *Washington Star* carried an obituary on Thursday, January 24, 1935 which reads:

“Major S.H. Walker, 91 Dies Suddenly - Former Superintendent of Police had Active Part in Building City”

“Major Samuel H. Walker, 91, a former police superintendent of Metropolitan Police died suddenly in his office at 507 E Street [NW], shortly after eight o'clock this morning. Major Walker had left his home at 420 B Street NE only a few minutes before. One of the best known businessmen in Washington, Major Walker was born here June 7, 1844 and had an active part in building up the Northeast and Southeast sections of the city. He built the building which now is Police Headquarters.”

It goes on to tell that he was President of Capital City Life Insurance Company, etc. It says that he served in the defense of Washington. He was a member of the unenlisted forces that threw lines of defense around the city. He attended public schools here and was the oldest living graduate of Columbian College. This reaffirms the date of his employment at the Clerk's Office as being January 2, 1862. This says also that in 1886 he was tendered the post of Major and superintendent of the police force and says that he remained in office only six months whereas the other one says he was in for two years. This tells about being Vice President of East Washington Savings Bank for many years, talks about his Masonic activities.

He was also a member of Almas Temple Ancient Arabic Order Noble of the Mystic Shrine and goes on into the fact that in 1932 Major and Mrs. Walker celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary. It gives the names of his survivors. It says that there were also 16 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Ruth Ann Perez reading from the obituary page and it does not say from which paper. “Walker, Samuel H., District of Columbia Society, Sons of American Revolution announces with regret the death of Compatriot Samuel H. Walker who will be buried Saturday, January 26, 1935 at 2 pm from the Waugh M.E. Church at Third and A Streets NE. The following committee is named to attend the funeral: Dr. Clifton P. Clark, Major Charles C. Griggs, Major Lawrence Minard, Mr. Robert C. Tracy, and Commander S.S. Williamson.” Mrs. Walther, his daughter, says that he had the Rose Croix service at Waugh Church, which is the highest funeral service honor that the Scottish Rite confers on any of its members.

I'm now reading from a three by five card engraved "US Marshalls Office, Washington DC" with the following writing on it, "February 23, 1889, Dear Sir: Please call at this office, sign vouchers and receive the amount due you (\$44.00) as juror in the Library site condemnation case. Very respectfully, A.A. Wilson, US Marshall." Addressed to "Samuel H. Walker, Esq."

There is also a newspaper clipping undated that does have a date that reads "... ber 14, 1908" and I believe from the following article we may get some additional dating on that, but I'm not really sure. It does not have any pagination or any title on it. It talks of a reunion. "One hundred members of the Walker family and a few friends gathered at the home of Major S.H. Walker, 420 B Street, yesterday afternoon, the date being the anniversary of the golden wedding ceremonies held in honor of Mr. and Mrs. Jonathan T. Walker a quarter of a century ago at Toaping Castle, Prince Georges County, Maryland."

"Many of the family greeted one another for the first time since the golden wedding. Family history was told and retold." It talks about the fact that those three brothers, Isaac, Charles and Nathan Walker, who engaged in the Scottish rebellion against George I of England, were forced to hide themselves. Five hundred pounds was offered for each. The trio came to America in 1750 and built a white oak log house at the headwaters of Bear Garden Branch, about nine miles northeast of Washington. It remained standing until about fifty years ago.

The parts of this that are most pertinent to us begin with Jonathan T. Walker. "He was born in 1811, came to Washington in 1829. He was prominent in the building trade and lumber business. He built the row of houses on K Street between Eighth and Ninth Street and some houses on F Street between 11th and 12th." Those addresses Mrs. Walther assured us were in Northwest. "He built McKendree M.E. Church in 1844." This particular McKendree Church that he built was the one that was on Massachusetts Avenue. This gives the date of 1833 as the marriage between Jonathan T. Walker to Miss Jane A. Benson of Bladensburg. It says that there were 12 children by this marriage, instead of 11 as we heard previously, eight of whom reached majority. Then it tells that an Isaac Walker, who was a member of this family, and his wife Elizabeth Stewart, raised three sons and a daughter who married into the Sheriff family. A son Isaac married a Miss Hamilton from near Baltimore. A man named Charles Walker settled near the city and was the father of Mrs. Sarah Davis, who died in East Washington at the age of ninety-six. It gives a pretty good picture of how important the family was to the Southeast and Northeast quadrants of Washington.

Attached to this same paper, pasted on side-by-side is another newspaper clipping that gives the details of a November wedding solemnized at Waugh M.E. Church. Perhaps we'll be able to get the date later on from Mrs. Walther. This tells of the wedding of Lucretia A. Walker, who was her sister, to Mr. William

H. Hardy of Staunton, Virginia, and it says that the couple when they returned from their honeymoon trip will go to housekeeping at their new home at 119 Fifth Street NE.”

This is from a newspaper article by John Proctor from the *Sunday Star*, September 13, 1931. The article was on pages six and seven [of the magazine section]. I’m reading from page seven. “Near the close of May 1844, the Reverend French S. Evans, having been duly authorized by the presiding elder, Reverend Thomas E. Sargent of the Potomac District, inaugurated a home mission for such localities in the city as were destitute of church facilities.” We’re talking about Methodism. “His program opened by an appointment for preaching at 3:30 pm at the Northern Liberties Fire Company Hall, a two story brick building which stood in the center of H Street in the space now improved and known as Mt. Vernon Park. For some reason this hall was not available and the assemblage by invitation of Jonathan T. Walker moved northward, beyond the park on H Street where from a carpenter’s bench Mr. Evans delivered his message with decided effect. At the conclusion of the service, Jonathan T. Walker obligated himself to build a suitable frame building for Sunday School and mission purposes and for the present needs he tendered the use of his carpenter shop situated at the rear of his dwelling which cornered at Eighth and K Street NW. The offer was gratefully accepted and every Saturday afternoon the shop was swept, seats provided of rough inch boards on empty boxes. The Sunday School was organized June 7, 1844 by the election of John C. Harkness and Zephiniah Jones, who without further formality agreed without pomp or public notice to build a church and with the courage amounting almost to temerity they determined a McKendree M.E. Church on Massachusetts Avenue between Ninth and Tenth Streets NW as the outcome.”

“After the close of the Mexican War, he [J.T. Walker] tried his fortunes in California, but did not succeed and returned to Washington. He engaged in the lumber business in the block between B Street and what used to be called Little B Street, Tenth and 12th Streets, the site now occupied by the Bureau of Internal Revenue. The little office faced north and stood on the southwest corner at Tenth and Little B Street which formed the north thoroughfare of the old Haymarket Block, the passing of which is recent history. Jonathan T. Walker served as a member of the Common Council of the City Council during the years 1854, 1855, 1856. At the beginning of the Civil War, he took up his residence at Toaping Castle.”

Other addresses mentioned in this article include the fact that Thomas E. Walker was in business at Tenth and B Street NW for thirty-five years up to 1907, part of the time with his father and later alone. For a while his people lived at 481 Missouri Avenue when that neighborhood was a very fine one. Thomas Walker remembers when Magruder and Stone kept the wood and coal yard at the corner of Sixth and B Streets NW. Also, Thomas Walker saw his first circus performance on the block now occupied by the Bureau of Internal Revenue.

That's all of the addresses that are in here. There is another reference being made to the fact that there was a "cluster of vices, or vice activities, south of the Avenue." In Lieutenant Arnold's precinct arrests were made and some prominent men were caught in the net. Someone made the statement that these arrests were ordered by the Chief for the purpose of influencing legislation in Congress, which he emphatically denied. The result, however, was an investigation and a trial of a number of officers and much publicity. After the matter had dragged for some time, the findings of the commissioners were announced on November 26, 1886 in which a number of policemen were dismissed, some were reduced in rank and some were suspended. At the same time, Major Walker's resignation which had been tendered was accepted. The following statement appeared on the record: "It is untrue that Major Walker made or contemplated making any such order or suggestion as was attributed to him by Lt. Arnold and there is absolutely no just basis whatever for doubt of Major Walker's entire integrity of purpose and sincerity of statements."

That's about the extent of the article by Proctor. I took out anything that I could find about Jonathan Walker and I extracted all the addresses that were listed in any of the newspaper articles, so that we have those addresses.

I'm sitting here with two pictures, one dated 1883 that says "403-419 B Street NE, Washington, DC" and the other one dated 1884 that says that it is "506-518 B Street NE." It says on this that they were built by Samuel H. Walker, who is your father, Mrs. Walther. In the article it says that your father very soon after 1865 or so left the Clerk's Office of the City Government to go into building with his father and also on his own. Can you just start telling us all the numbers of the houses that you know of or the names of the buildings that you know of that your father built?

MRS. WALTHER: My father built all the houses on the north side of B Street between Fifth and Sixth, also one more around on Sixth Street. That one lot was left. On the south side of B Street between Fifth and Sixth, he built quite a number of houses, up to the corner. I don't remember the numbers. He didn't build the corner. Now on B Street on the side of our old family house [a reference to the north side of the 400 block], he built all the houses down to about three quarters of the block, because there was an old, old lady, Mrs. Reed, who lived [there]. When he first came in that was just sort of [a] commons. He built five or six houses on that same side. Our backyard ran all the way back behind those houses. That was my mother's pride and joy, that backyard. And on Fifth Street, he built all the houses from B Street NE up through 119 because that was the house where my sister, Mrs. Hardy, lived. And he gave her the equity in that when she was married. The rest of the houses on Fifth Street up to the corner, I think, Dr. Hazen built. And on the west side of Fifth Street, I think, father did not build those two story houses there, I'm not sure. He built the big corner one. That big house on the southwest corner. And then he built some

other houses on that side of B Street NE also down. I don't know why he didn't get pictures of all of these and date them the way that he did those two. That big southwest corner was one of the last ones he built because I know we used to play over in that lot until he built about five houses down there through Captain Clapp's. This is the south side of B Street NE between Fourth and Fifth. Down toward the other corner, he did not build those. I don't know who did.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember any of the families who moved into those houses?

MRS. WALTHER: When father built those houses, a great many congressmen, special people ... Champ Clark lived up in one of the houses on B between Fifth and Sixth. I remember mother saying, "Well, he was in Congress, but he didn't know how to run his furnace or Latrobe." We had a colored man lived with us all our lives. So Dan had to go up and help him.

INTERVIEWER: We would like to know as much as we can what you remember about what went on in those blocks when you were living there.

MRS. WALTHER: I was having a good time living. I didn't have many worries.

INTERVIEWER: Anything that you could tell us about where you went to school and I presume that you went to Waugh Methodist Church since your father was very actively involved in that. I presume that you had a "dry" house-hold.

MRS. WALTHER: He was one of the first presidents of the Anti-Saloon League, I think. He was "dry" if that's what you mean.

INTERVIEWER: Did you know Dr. Hazen? He was quite famous. I wonder if you could tell us about him.

MRS. WALTHER: I knew him, but I don't believe that I could tell you much about him. I knew the daughters. He had three daughters. He was a homeopathic doctor. Dr. Hazen and Dr. J.B. Gregg Custis and father were quite friendly. Dr. Hazen took part of that block as I recall, or I have been told, and Tom Smith another part. But father was the one who did most building.

INTERVIEWER: Who was Tom Smith?

MRS. WALTHER: T.W. Smith. They lived on East Capitol Street, about midway in the block, tall house, used to have a yard on the side and had three daughters, I think. Mabel Smith married Fred Sanderson. Then they moved up on Connecticut Avenue. They lived on East Capitol Street between Sixth and Seventh on the north side. When we went to high school, one of the young men came up from down

near the station and stopped at 420 B and picked up me and some others. Then we picked up some others and went by the Smith's and by the time we went to Eastern High School, which was then down on Seventh Street just north of Pennsylvania Avenue SE, we had gathered quite a bunch. We walked together. That was ahead of cars.

INTERVIEWER: You said that ... when you were looking at the picture of your family home out on the back porch ... you said that there was a small building which faced on Fifth Street where the stable was.

MRS. WALTHER: No, when they looked up the title to it, the earliest part of the building was probably the side, what we called the upstairs dining room and the bedroom over it. And maybe father's room. I can't tell you any more than that. That faced on to Fifth Street. Then after, he built the other side and turned the entrance to B Street NE (420). And then added the porch on both sides.

INTERVIEWER: Was the building that faces Fifth Street behind your house? The stable?

MRS. WALTHER: Yes, we had the little courtyard in between and then the stable. We always had horses. And in back of the stable, the yard ran way down the block behind all those other houses that he built on B Street.

INTERVIEWER: Were the houses along Fifth Street there behind your stable or were they built later?

MRS. WALTHER: I think that I'm right about this. There were five houses between our stable or garage and Peabody School. Peabody School was built about that time, or a little later because I don't think any of the older people went there. He gave a little pathway so that the houses would have some exit. That little walkway is still there.

INTERVIEWER: Did you go to Peabody School?

MRS. WALTHER: Yes, first grade all the way through. I went to Peabody School and then to Eastern High School and then the last year the age limit for Normal School was lowered and I went to Normal School. My father said, "Daughter, I can afford to take care of my children. I don't think you ought to take bread out of somebody else's mouth." At any rate, I went to Normal School. Then I went to George Washington University. I did some graduate work. My field was education, reading. Then I trained some of the teachers from the Normal School. Then I went into the Research Department. I liked that.

INTERVIEWER: Could you tell us about Mr. Walther? I think that he had a very interesting career, too. And could you tell us where you lived when you were first married?

MRS. WALTHER: We went to New York. He was an architect in a New York firm. We were married in June. We've been married 61 years now.

INTERVIEWER: I think that is a remarkable record that anyone could be proud of.

MRS. WALTHER: We went to a Chi Omega Convention in Niagara Falls. Four or five of us had been invited up to Lake Hopatcong [New Jersey] to visit a friend who had rented a cottage for the summer. Mr. Walther and another friend of his working in New York in the Counsel's Office were invited up by the girl of the house and we had a real good time. Then they came up a second weekend and we had another good time, a bunch of us. I've got some of those pictures, but I don't know what I did with them. And Labor Day, he came down here. The only time my father and mother ever went to the station. There was a ten o'clock train there when he was going back to New York. I don't know what they thought. At any rate, we became engaged in October, 13th of October, and we were married in June. He came down from New York every time he had the money to pay for the train.

I sent a couple of the old pictures of the Gunton-Temple, the church that was on N Street NW, to Dr. Stone, who is now the minister at the National Presbyterian Church where we are members. [Gunton-Temple Memorial Presbyterian Church, constructed 1892-3, was located on the southeast corner of 14th and R Streets NW. *Evening Star*, October 29, 1892.] I thought he would enjoy seeing those old, old pictures. One of them had a horse and carriage and the other one of the early automobiles. Did you have anybody in the French family on East Capitol Street? Dr. French?

INTERVIEWER: No, is anyone still alive in that family?

MRS. WALTHER: I'm trying to think. He was a doctor. He lived in a big brown stone house. Steinle Ice Cream Parlor was on the corner. That had the best ice cream in the city. [2014 note: the corner building that housed the Steinle Ice Cream Parlor later became a restaurant eventually known as Mary's Blue Room. The interviewer's comments that follow refer to Mary's Blue Room.]

INTERVIEWER: Yes, and they demolished that building. We had a big battle. We got out and picketed and everything, but it didn't do any good. They tore it down. The Capitol Hill Metropolitan Baptist Church demolished it. We had quite a confrontation out there a couple of summers ago. I stood in front of the bulldozer at 6:30 in the morning, but it didn't do any good. But anyway, tell us about Dr. French.

MRS. WALTHER: He had a big family. There were two boys. I know I had my first ride in a locomobile with a single handle, you know. Then at one stage of the game father bought, I don't know what you call it, an automobile, the first ones that they had were Orients and we had a remarkable drive

up the Canal. It had a chain sprocket. We got home quite late. Then there was a little open buckboard. That was wonderful. That first locomobile of French's had a stick steering.

INTERVIEWER: When did you come back to the Washington area? You and Mr. Walther were in New York for how long?

MRS. WALTHER: During the first war. We lived up there for three years. Having lived at 420, the time I went up [to New York] to look for someplace to live, I said, "Oh, Dearie, I don't think that I can live in these little rooms." So we looked at quite a few and went back and took the first one, a walkup. But we looked over the Hudson. That was lovely. When the war broke out, that's the first war, they closed the office in New York and both Mr. Walther and the man with whom he had been working went into the War Department. And then he was an Associate Architect there, retired. His office was here in Washington all that time.

INTERVIEWER: Where did you live when you came back to Washington?

MRS. WALTHER: Well, I guess we went to 420. I'm sure we did because we had the room over the parlor and I have a picture of it. It was a grand old house, I loved it. We had that room and the back room and an enclosed porch and I think that I had a two-burner gas stove on top of the machine and I had one orange crate on top of another one and I had a beautiful great big floor screen, Chinese screen, which we sort of enclosed the kitchenette. We were there for quite a little while. Then we lived across the street in the big house, in the apartment over there. When my sister came back from the west, we moved into the other apartment and that was very, very nice.

INTERVIEWER: Do you recall the big house that's across the street from Peabody School? It faces Stanton Park.

MRS. WALTHER: I think somebody by the name of Appleton Clark, now I'm sure about that. Because there were five houses between our little lane, our garage and Peabody and father could never understand why the man squeezed five in because they were narrow. I think Appleton Clark built those houses, they are three story houses, but they are narrow. I'm not sure if he lived in the big house. I don't know who lived in that big house. I think that Clark must have bought the lots because I've heard father say that he put five houses where he thought four ought to go. After father found the Grove and liked it so much, he used to go in and out on the train to his office every day. Dan used to come out every Monday morning and go back on Saturday for his Ebenezer Church.

INTERVIEWER: Did he build these houses in Washington Grove?

MRS. WALTHER: Not all of them, but quite a few. He built this one - 118 Grove Avenue. He built this house on two lots, fortunately, instead of one. Washington Grove started as a camp meeting ground and people bought shares, stock, and, of course, when the town was organized, you had to go down and put your deeds in at Rockville. We do have our own government here. We have a Council and set our own tax rates, that doesn't mean we don't also have to pay Montgomery County taxes and state taxes, but we do have The Grove taxes. Father built quite a few houses out here.

INTERVIEWER: One other person that I found a reference to was a Mr. Garges.

MRS. WALTHER: Daniel Garges, he was Secretary to the Commissioners. I doubt that any of that family is still alive. They had a tiny little house way at the end. You see this place was built for camp meetings and the big tabernacle was in the center of the circle and you had to walk up Grove Avenue from the train to get to it. Then from the tabernacle there were six spokes of the wheel, six avenues. Dan Garges lived way up in the last one in the summertime. Of course, so far back, everybody closed up in the winter and went in for school and that sort of thing. We just came out in the summertime. We came out on weekends. We had a furnace with a great big register. And then after camp meeting, we had Chautauqua. We had good music programs, lots of nice things. We celebrated one hundred years recently. They had tours of lots of the little cottages. They've done all sorts of things to make them larger and smaller and whatnot. And music, they built a gazebo in one day's time for music. They had a very nice program for a whole month, I guess it was.

INTERVIEWER: Did your family go to Eastern Market for shopping?

MRS. WALTHER: I don't believe so. I'll tell you why. There was a Barnes, the fish man, that came regularly every Thursday and took mother's order. There was some Baum, I've forgotten his name, that had a grocery store and he came every morning and took mother's order and it was all delivered. I guess she was too busy having eleven children. I had four sisters, two younger, two older, and I had brothers, also. I was the middle child.

INTERVIEWER: In one of the articles it said something about that there were twelve children and eight of them lived to be adults. Were there only eleven?

MRS. WALTHER: Eleven. Nine of us lived to be adults. We used to get up in the morning and we wore long white skirts. We had a laundress that took from Monday through Thursday to get the laundry done. That was ahead of washing machines. We had a maid and a cook and a laundress.

INTERVIEWER: I think that tells a way of life that we don't have now.

MRS. WALTHER: I guess that's true.

INTERVIEWER: You said that you remember getting electricity in your house with a drop light in each room. Before then did you have gas lighting in your house?

MRS. WALTHER: Yes. We had two beautiful chandeliers in the parlor and the library. When electricity was put in, they said no, not to change all those. They were too beautiful, too unusual. So every other one was electrified and they left the gas. I must have been in grade school when this happened. I don't know about that date.

INTERVIEWER: Did your house always have indoor plumbing?

MRS. WALTHER: Oh heavens, yes. That's an interesting thing. Someone said, "How on earth did we have only one bathroom with all those bedrooms?" And I said, "Well," (my room was on the top floor,) "we had maid service." You know, you go some places now and see those crockery sets, some are very lovely and very expensive. They have a jar and a basin and pitcher and all the things. So, I guess, we lived all right. We kept clean. When my youngest sister was married—I guess that was sort of wartime, we were up in New York at the time—on the top floor there were the four big rooms, quite big, and they divided one into a bath and kitchen. So they were there until they built a house in Chevy Chase. All those houses father built had plumbing in them.

INTERVIEWER: Were there many black people in that part of Washington when you were little?

MRS. WALTHER: I don't recall any.

INTERVIEWER: Where did your colored servants live?

MRS. WALTHER: Dan owned a house with his mother, Aunt Grace, down southeast below Pennsylvania Avenue. C Street SE.

INTERVIEWER: This is one of the things that we're trying to figure out, how the community moved and where different people lived at different times.

MRS. WALTHER: Most of the houses that father built were three story houses and I think that that makes it more difficult to buy because it requires a lot of money. I was astounded to find out, to really realize, that so many of those little places in Georgetown had been occupied by colored people. But they were tiny little things. And his houses were all larger. They were occupied by congressional people and professional people. Champ Clark lived in one of the houses on the north side between Fifth and Sixth. I don't remember the house.

INTERVIEWER: Did your father build in any other area of the city or did he mostly build just around here? Did he build any commercial buildings?

MRS. WALTHER: I think, up here. He built the big investment company, the Walker building where the police were housed. It was on Indiana Avenue, 458, across from the court-house. That was the old District building.

INTERVIEWER: How did he get the title Major?

MRS. WALTHER: It was an honorary title because he was the chief of police, a very short time because he found that it interfered with his other interests.

INTERVIEWER: That was in the Proctor article. Proctor wrote for about twenty or thirty years.

MRS. WALTHER: There was a man out in Maryland who wrote about the old home, [Toaping Castle] the first home, the old log cabin out in Maryland, that withstood the years very well until it was too near to the beltway so finally it was taken down.

INTERVIEWER: Would you tell us about the Fourth of July celebration when you were little?

MRS. WALTHER: A lot of us would go up in that cupola at 420 B Street NE to watch the fireworks down at the monument grounds. It was just on the Fourth of July, because after father came out here and we all enjoyed this so much we just closed up. That was when I was in high school. We used to have a grand bunch out here. The men were home from college then. They didn't have to work in the summer. We played tennis all day long.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember any tennis courts or any other recreational facilities on Capitol Hill?

MRS. WALTHER: No, unless there may have been at 421 B Street NE, before the big building. I remember playing there. I don't believe tennis was in vogue as it is now.

INTERVIEWER: Where did you play as a child, when you weren't out here?

MRS. WALTHER: When we were smaller, I remember we used to make leaf houses out on the street, on Fifth Street. Take our furniture out there. Can you imagine that now? Well, you see Stanton Park was sort of at the end so there wasn't much traffic on Fifth Street.

INTERVIEWER: Was the street paved?

MRS. WALTHER: I think so.

INTERVIEWER: There is some sort of hard finished surface in these pictures dated 1883-1884.

MRS. WALTHER: We'd play under the table for a long time and the dumb waiter, the children used to love that, going down to the basement kitchen. As long as the family was living there, we had the kitchen in the basement and we had the dumb waiter in the corner of the pantry. When Rosalie was there, they didn't use the basement. You pulled it up and down and I don't believe anybody tried to ride on it.

INTERVIEWER: I was wondering whether all of those houses on B Street had their kitchens built into the basement also.

MRS. WALTHER: I would say yes because if they were basement house, that would be different from the basement at 420, because it was just a couple of steps down. They were very attractive houses, very nice.

INTERVIEWER: I want to say something else about this picture that is number 403-419 B Street NE. There are rectangular panes of stained glass outlining the upper half of each of the windows in the row that has triangular bays that are not connected by the porch. Also they do have what looks like wooden banisters going from street level up to the front porch. Those particular ones do not have wrought iron banisters. It looks like the group from 506-518 B Street NE has essentially an iron pipe type banister arrangement, rather than a wooden banister. All of them have widely spaced metal stairs. There is a row of houses on Sixth Street that would be at the east end of the 500 block of B Street NE that would be on the north side and they have essentially the same type of iron fretwork at the top of those rooflines that show in the metal fretwork on the row on B Street. Trees are very recently planted in both these pictures. There are sidewalks and there are hard finished streets. There are tree boxes. The fences are simply a continuous type wooden slat fence that encloses each yard separately and does have gates across in front of each entry way into the yard. This is strange because the fence goes all the way down the side of each set of banisters and yet having the bay across there, too. In the middle of each block there is a mounting block, it looks like. It doesn't look like there is a mounting block in front of each house. It looks like there was a mounting block perhaps every third or fourth house.

We are now examining the photograph which Mrs. Walther has of her family home. The mounting block there is hexagonal, it's quite heavily carved around the side and is marble. The mounting blocks that are in front of the houses that her father built look like they are concrete or some kind rectangular hewn stone. The fence around the original house of her parents is a hairpin fence that has knob decorations on top of the straight vertical pieces. The top of the cupola has a wooden crossed timbered fence arrangement with rectangular posts in the corners. It looks like it would stand up maybe waist high.

I'm reading from a letter dated August 12, 1970 from Lansing Bach Real Estate in Washington. It concerns the property of which Mrs. Walther's family home is a part. I'm extracting one paragraph from it, "The appraisal takes in all existing improvements included with the above premises known for tax purposes as lots 800 and 821 in square 814. The old residence, as near as I can learn, indicates that part of the same was built about 1876. Probably the east side which fronts on Fifth Street NE having the original entrance on this front and later about 1890, the west wing was erected and the present entrance changed to Constitution Avenue NE frontage. A photostatic copy of the subject (property) was taken from the District of Columbia plat book."

INTERVIEWER: Would you tell us about Stanton Park and when you were a teacher at Peabody?

MRS. WALTHER: No, when I was younger than that, going there to school we used to have races around that circle, the Stanton Circle. It was a very pretty park. They had a chain fence around the park. I think that's all gone. When I was teaching at Peabody, I had to make some units about the different Eskimos and the different people that weren't in any of the books at that time for third graders. So I did have them printed up and started that. That was when I was having some of the Normal students come to do student teaching with me. Stanton Park was a really lovely park and that was why we would play out in the street because there weren't many automobiles and, in fact, not many people around had horses. When we first came out here, there was one other lady that had horses here at The Grove.

INTERVIEWER: Would you give us your uncle's name and his address?

MRS. WALTHER: That was 418 B Street NE. My uncle was John Walker. He didn't build any houses. 418 was my uncle's. Then 416, 414, 412, 410, my father built those. From there on down to Fourth Street father didn't build. They were built by a man who got into a lot of trouble with his building.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned a family that you knew which was quite prominent who lived in the 800 or 900 block of East Capitol Street. Who were they?

MRS. WALTHER: Malnati. I think that he was a stone mason. They had a lot of money. They were on the north side of the street, in the middle of the block. [712 East Capitol Street] There were two or three little flat ones and then this was a rather imposing looking house. I think it had a side yard. She went to Eastern, also. She married Van Emon. There were Carl Van Emon and Walter Van Emon, two brothers.

INTERVIEWER: I know that name, Van Emon. I think that they owned a drugstore along on East Capitol someplace, possibly at Lincoln Park.

MRS. WALTHER: There was a drugstore across Lincoln Park and there was another big one on this side of the park at the end of East Capitol Street. Malnati was an Italian name and he had quite a bit of money.

INTERVIEWER: Is there anyone else whose name comes to mind that you'd like to mention.

MRS. WALTHER: I said Dr. Hazen. Dr. French lived on the north side of East Capitol. The Weideys were next door to Steinle's ice cream store.

INTERVIEWER: They lost their house too, when the ice cream store was demolished.

MRS. WALTHER: I wish you all would do something about the cemetery, Congressional cemetery. We have our lot there. One of the picture companies came and wanted to know if they could take a picture of the rose bush at the old house. It was at the corner of Fifth and Constitution, on across the front. It was always there, perfectly beautiful.

END OF INTERVIEW

Washington Star News, Saturday, February 1, 1975

Walther, Florine W. On Thursday, January 30, 1975, Florine W. Walther, beloved wife of Henry J. Walther; mother of Mrs. John William E. Bageant and the Rev. John A. Walther. Seven grandchildren and four great-grandchildren also survive. Services will be held at the Chapel of the Presidents, National Presbyterian Church, 4101 Nebraska Ave NW on Saturday, February 1, at 2 pm. Internment private. The family will meet friends in the parlor of the church after services. The family requests contributions to the memorial fund of the National Presbyterian Church.