

Pleasant Thomas Walker (1810-1883)

By Jerry Long
c.2026



Hartford Herald, Hartford, KY, Wednesday, 28 November 1883, p.3:

Pleasant Thomas Walker.

Uncle Pleas. Walker, as he was commonly known, a colored citizen of our town and county, died at his residence in Hartford, on Thursday, the 22ud, inst., after a brief illness, in the 73rd year of his age, having been born in 1810. Pleas. was born in Virginia and lived in the city of Richmond, the capitol of that State, until he was nearly grown, when he was brought to this State and county by Mr. Thomas, the father of our fellow Mr. James A. Thomas After the death of Mr. Thomas, Sr., he was sold as a slave and was bought by Mr. R. L. Walker, the father of our distinguished citizen, Hon. E. Dudley Walker, who, after the death of his father, became the owner and he was the property of the latter, until he was freed. We have known Pleas. from our earliest recollection and he had many distinguishing characteristics that marked him as a genius.

He possessed an ordinary education could read and write with ease and facility – was intuitively and naturally a mechanic – possessing considerable ingenuity, tact and great fertility of resource in emergencies, and could come nearer making something out of nothing than any one we have ever known. He was Mormonistic in his notions and believed in plural wives and the result of his legitimate issue was twenty children.

Another characteristic about “Mos Pleasant” – as he was sometimes called – was, that he was rarely ever known to get mad and was always smiling and pleasant and that too under the most unfavorable circumstances.

The first recollection the writer ever had of music and serenading was by Pleas. and his band, which consisted of a fiddle, drum and triangle. This was grand music in the primitive days of old Hartford and this will refresh the recollection of many of the older citizens. For years upon top of years, at the first dawn of Christmas morning, Pleas. and his band would greet the inhabitants of the town and take the grands round – always, however – expecting to be treated – as was the custom – at each and every place. For many long years in the past, Pleas. was the only musician that could be commanded about town, and in his palmy days was hard to beat on the violin. Time out of mind, when we were young and attending balls, when towards the "wee sma' hours of the night," Pleas. would fall asleep and we would have to wake him up in order to knock off the set or change the tune. He could play the fiddle as well asleep as he could awake and make as good music and keep as good time, which can be vouched for by many now living and who were engaged in those divertisements, Our old colored friend has taken his departure to that undiscovered country

and that bourne from whence no traveler has yet returned to report good or bad tidings, and we hope his spirit is at rest. We will now "lay down the shovel and the hoe, and hang up the fiddle and the bow," for our poor old darkey friend we hope has gone where the good darkeys go. Requiescat. in pace.



Pleasant Thomas Walker (1810-1883) had formerly been a slave of Christopher John Thomas (1785-1835), who came to Ohio County, Kentucky from Henrico County, Virginia during 1827-1828. Thomas purchased a farm two miles north of Hartford. At the time of the trip west Pleas Walker would have been about seventeen. After the death of John Thomas Pleas was sold to Richard Logan Walker (1794-1857), who came to Ohio County, KY about 1819 from Washington County, KY. He made his home in Hartford. Upon his death ownership of Pleas became invested in his widow, Mahala (Harris) Walker (1790-1860). Her will was probated on 3 September 1860 (Ohio County, KY Will Book C, p.230). To her son, Elijah Dudley Walker (1827-1898), she bequeathed the negro man **Pleas**, the negro woman Almeda and negro boy Anthony Paul. Other slaves that were willed to her other children were – Chloe & her youngest child Paul, negro woman Mary Jane, negro boy Cassius M., negro girl Marilda and negro girl Alma. Elijah Dudley Walker was a prominent lawyer of Hartford. The 1860 census slave schedule for Ohio County lists that E. D. Walker owned six slaves – male age 50, female 21, female 18, male 8, female 5 and male 6 months. The 50-year-old male would be Pleasant Walker. When liberated Pleasant would have been about 54.

See articles – “The Thomas Family”, “James A. Thomas” and “Hon. E. Dudley Walker” in the Ohio County section in the book Kentucky: A History of the State, J. H. Battle, W. H. Perrin & G. C. Kniffin, Louisville, KY, F. A. Battey Publishing Company, 1885.



Kentucky: A History of the State, J. H. Battle, W. H. Perrin & G. C. Kniffin (Louisville, KY: F. A. Battey Publishing Company, 1885) Ohio County, KY section:

HON. E. DUDLEY WALKER was born at Hartford, Ky., January 29, 1827, son of Richard L. Walker, who was a prominent merchant of Hartford. Richard L. Walker was a native of Washington County, Ky., and, when a young man, clerked three years at Hardinsburgh, after which he came to Hartford, and engaged in mercantile and milling business until his death, September 15, 1857. His wife was Miss Mahala Harris, of Breathitt County, Ky., who died June 29, 1860. They had five children, three now living: Martha, wife of Dr. W. J. Berry, who served two terms as State senator and one as representative from Ohio County, now residing in Florida; E. Dudley and Dr. W. L. D. Walker, of Logan County, Ky. Our subject was given a thorough literary training, and at seventeen went to Independence, Mo., and read law in the office of Robert G. Smart. At eighteen years of age he was admitted to practice, and soon after returned to Hartford, where he has achieved distinction as a criminal lawyer. Though making the practice of criminal law a specialty, he is retained in almost every case of prominence before the court of the county. In 1857, during the Know-nothing excitement, he was elected to the State senate, though opposed to Know-nothingism. He was the youngest member of the senate during his term. In 1860, during the

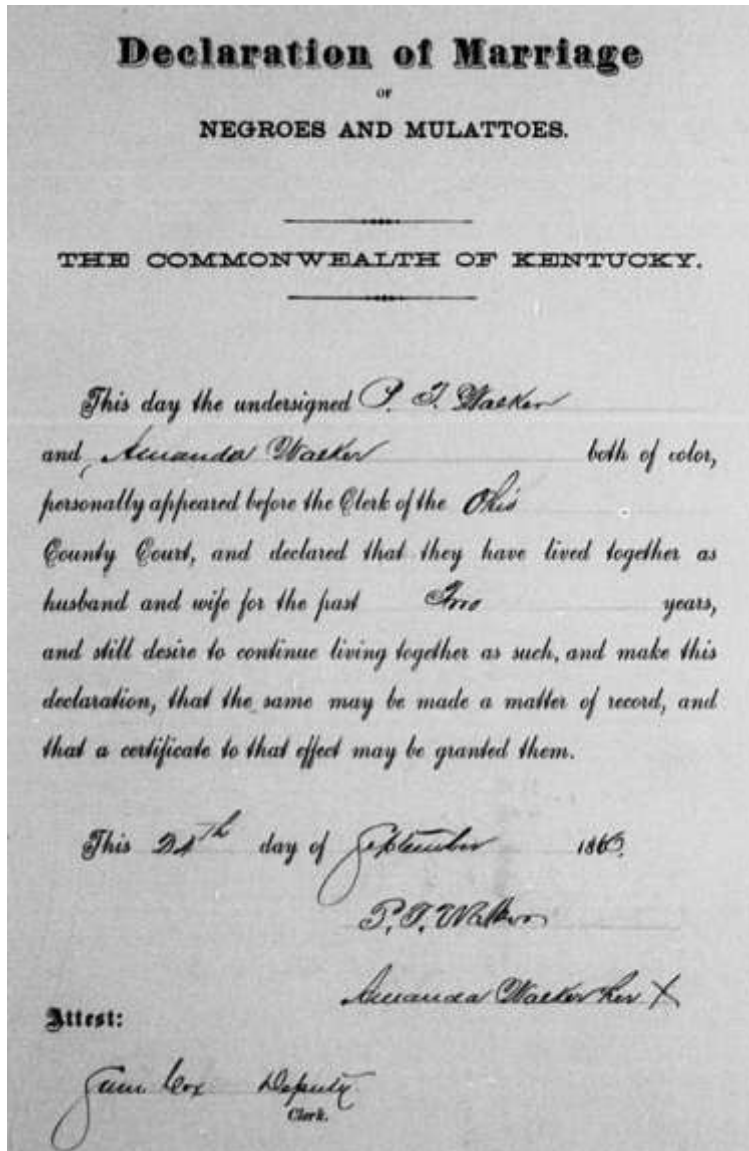
Douglas campaign, he was Democratic elector for the Second Congressional District. In 1878 he was indorsed by a large part of the State press for governor, but declined to allow his name to be presented to the convention. In his business career he has been eminently successful. In August, 1857, he was married to Miss Elvira English, daughter of Maj. Robert English, a merchant of Hardin County, Ky., who held various positions of trust and honor, among which were those of sheriff and representative. By this union were born five children: Logie (wife of J. E. Rowe, of Hartford), Lizzie C., Lulie, Lidie and Robert D.



Elaborate monument marking the grave of Elijah Dudley Walker (1827-1898) in Oakwood Cemetery, Hartford, Ohio County, KY. He is the former owner of Pleasant Thomas Walker (1810-1883). Photo by Jerry Long on 15 December 1986.



**Freedman's Declaration of Marriage Book #L (1866-1871) p.53
Ohio County, Kentucky County Clerk, Hartford, KY:**



Declaration of Marriage OF NEGROES AND MULATTOES.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY.

This day the undersigned P. T. Walker and Amanda Walker both of color, personally appeared before the Clerk of the Ohio County Court, and declared that they have lived together as husband and wife for the past Two years, and still desire do continue living together as such, and make this declaration, that the same may be made a matter of record, and that a certificate to that effect may be granted them.

This 24th day of September 1866.

P. T. Walker

Amanda Walker

Attest:

Sam. Cox, Deputy Clerk.

[Note by J. Long – In slavery, African Americans could not legally marry. Although many slaves had lived as husband and wife, their marriages had no legal status. After Emancipation, freed people wanted to make their marriages legal, and many applied to the state for marriage licenses. In many states after Emancipation any couple who appeared before a Justice of the Peace or Clerk of the Court and stated when they began living together as husband and wife, would be issued a certificate and would be considered lawfully married. Freedmen’s Bureau officers worked to make all freedmen in their districts aware of the new rules and of the deadlines for complying with them. In response, tens of thousands of freed couples reported their marriages to county courts.]



Ohio County, KY 1870 Tax List – list of negroes

Walker, Anthony
 Walker, Amy
 Walker, Pleasant T.



Ohio County, KY 1870 Federal Census, Hartford Precinct:

Walker, Pleasant	52	Black	farmer	born KY
Walker, Amanda	26	Black	keeping house	born KY
Walker, Dudley	15	Black		born KY
Walker, Alexander	13	Black		born KY
Walker, Mary M.	3	Black		born KY
Walker, Pleasant T.	6 mos.	Black		born KY



Kentucky 1874-1878 Vital Statistics:

George Anna Walker born 2 March 1874 Ohio County, KY; female; Black; father – P. P. Walker (born Virginia); mother – Amanda Lewis (born Kentucky)



Hartford Herald, Hartford, KY, Wednesday, 9 October 1878, p.3:

Criminal Court Proceedings

.... Pleas Walker, keeping bawdy house....



Ohio County, KY 1880 Federal Census, Hartford Precinct:

Walker, P. T.	head	69	Black	married	brick mason	VA-VA-VA
Walker, Amanda	wife	32	Black	married	keeping house	KY-KY-KY
Walker, Mary	dau.	12	Black	single		KY-KY-KY
Walker, P. Thomas	son	11	Black	single		KY-KY-KY
Walker, Martin D.	son	9	Black	single		KY-KY-KY
Walker, Georgia	dau.	6	Black	single		KY-KY-KY
Walker, Logie	dau.	2	Black	single		KY-KY-KY



Hartford Herald, Hartford, KY, Wednesday, 3 January 1883, p.3:

A little daughter of Pleas. Walker, of color, died last Friday morning in this place of pneumonia and whooping cough.



Kentucky Death Certificates:

- Anthony Walker died 21 September 1925 Ohio County, KY; about 80; born 2 September ___ Hartford, Ohio County, KY; Black; married; parents – Pleasant Walker (born Richmond, Virginia) and Chlo. Walker (born Richmond, Virginia); buried Hartford colored cemetery. [note – Anthony is listed as age 23 in the Ohio County, KY 1870 census and as age 31 in the Ohio County, KY 1880 census.]
- Calvin Thomas died 27 September 1932 Owensboro, Daviess County, KY; age 86-3-4; born 20 June 1846 KY; Negro; widowed; wife – Littie Thomas; barber; parents – Pleasant Walker and Emily Morton; buried Elmwood Cemetery, Owensboro, KY. [note – Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 16 July 1899, p.5: Anthony Walker, colored, of Hartford, is a half-brother of Cal Thomas, colored barber, of Owensboro, KY.]
- J. D. Walker died 26 June 1922 Ohio County, KY; age 67; born 12 May 1855 KY; colored; widowed; miner; parents – Pleas Walker & Lila Parks; buried McHenry Cemetery, McHenry, Ohio County, KY. [note – full name is John Dudley Walker, Dudley is listed as age 15 in the Ohio County, KY 1870 census.]
- Alex Walker died 23 December 1942 Owensboro, Daviess County, KY; age 83; born 12 June 1859 KY; laborer; parents – Pleasant Walker and Delia Walker; buried Hartford, Ohio County, KY. [note – Alexander is listed as age 11 in the Ohio County, KY 1870 census.]