

Major Newton Walker



Major Newton Walker was born in Virginia in 1803 and by the age of 21 was a Major in the Virginia Militia. He commanded the company which escorted the Marquis de La Fayette, the famous French General of the American Revolution, through Virginia during

his "Grand Tour of the United States"

in 1824 -1825. Walker was said to have heard such men as Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, John Randolph, and Henry Clay speak.

Edgar Lee Masters in the opening poem of Spoon River Anthology titled "The Hill," mentions Major Walker specifically as one of the people "sleeping on the hill" with the phrase "Major Walker who had talked with venerable men of the revolution." Masters rarely used the actual names of the characters he wrote about.

Major Newton Walker and his family came to Lewistown in 1835. He bought 100 acres of property on the north edge of town which was first settled by Ossian Ross, the founder of Lewistown. The Walker family lived in the Ross log cabin until 1851 when he designed and built the brick home that still stands today.

Besides being a distinguished soldier in the Virginia militia, Walker was also an architect, farmer, merchant, and politician. As an architect, Walker designed the plans for this house, and in 1838 designed and supervised construction of the third Fulton County Courthouse, that burned in 1894. As a politician

he served two terms in the Illinois General Assembly where he formed a close friendship with Abraham Lincoln, who visited him here at this home on several occasions.

Major Walker lived here in "the house with the steps at the top" until his death in 1897. Although the house was owned by a number of successive owners, there have been few major changes since it was originally built over a hundred and sixty years ago.

A distinctive feature of the house is found in the buttressed gable ends of brick masonry. The interior is finished in plaster and wallpaper, with hard maple flooring and cherry wood trim. The rooms are comfortable, with little ornamentation.

The Major Newton Walker home has long been recognized as a historically significant structure. In 1937, details of the Walker home were recorded, drawn, and photographed by the Historic American Buildings Survey. This project was conducted by the U.S. Department of the Interior-National Park Service as part of an initiative to document historic structures in the United States. These documents can be found today in the archives of the Library of Congress. This was the only building in Lewistown recording during this survey.

In 1958 the Walker home was referred to as "one of the three most outstanding homes in Lewistown" by John Drury in his book *Old Illinois Houses*, published by the Illinois State Historical Society. Further details of the Walker home were recorded by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency in their Illinois Historic Sites Survey Inventory, conducted in 1972.

Today, the Walker house is visited by historically minded sightseers, Lincoln scholars, and devoted readers of the works of Edgar Lee Masters.

Major Newton Walker Home, 1937 Historic Building Survey.



Restoration 1127

In July of 2012, the city of Lewistown approved the purchase of the Major Newton Walker home located at 1127 N. Main Street. With this purchase, Lewistown hopes to preserve one of the most historically significant homes remaining in town. Now that the property is in public hands, plans for the future of the home are being developed by the Lewistown Legacy Committee, who have organized the project called "Restoration 1127".

The Lewistown Legacy Committee was formed in the fall of 2011 during Lewistown's "Mapping the Future of your Community" workshop, a program facilitated by the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs at Western Illinois University. One of the five primary goals identified by the Mapping workshop was to develop and highlight Lewistown's extraordinary history. As a result, the Lewistown Legacy Committee was formed by a group of workshop members who are passionate about exploring and sharing Lewistown's history.

Lewistown is a small town with a big history! The Lewistown Legacy Committee strives to educate residents and visitors

about the history of Lewistown by preserving, promoting, and interpreting the historic character of our community. Through these efforts we highlight the people, places, and events that have shaped Lewistown through tours, museums, wayside interpretive exhibits, historic attractions, festivals, events, and more.

The ultimate goal of "Restoration 1127" is to restore as much as possible of the Major Newton Walker home to its original condition to be outfitted with period furnishings so that it can be opened as a museum dedicated to the memory of Major Walker and his friend Abraham Lincoln who spent much time here discussing politics, telling stories, and listening to the Major play his fiddle. This will require research, planning, funding, and many volunteers. We need your help to achieve this goal!

We invite you to assist us as a member of "Restoration 1127" in our effort to renovate and interpret the Major Newton Walker home.



Restoration 1127 Membership Form

I/We hereby pledge my/our membership to "Restoration 1127." It is understood that membership in this organization constitutes an endorsement of and support for the Goals of "Restoration 1127."

Enclosed is the following amount, \$ _____, to cover the cost of membership fees at the _____ level.

New Membership

Renewal

Donation

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Benefactor	\$500.00+
Corporate	\$100.00
Business	\$50.00
Family	\$25.00
Adult	\$15.00
Student	\$10.00

Please mail to: 119 S Adams St, Lewistown, Illinois. For more information contact Lewistown City Hall at 309-547-4301 or Kelvin Sampson at 309-645-7109, ksampson@museum.state.il.us