

Walker, Carleton ^[1]

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Carleton Walker, British-born collector of the [Port of Wilmington](#) ^[2], paymaster of troops in the [War of 1812](#) ^[3], and [Cape Fear](#) ^[4] planter and lavish speculator, was the youngest of three sons of James (d. 1785) and Jane Woodhouse Walker of Wooler in the Cheviot Hills near Alnwick Castle and Berwick-on-Tweed, County of Northumberland, in northern England. In 1791, at age fourteen, he immigrated with his widowed mother to [Wilmington](#) ^[5] to join various other members of the Walker family already solidly established in the Cape Fear area, notably his picturesque, highly successful bachelor uncle, Major John (Jack) Walker (1741–1813), who had immigrated in 1761; three other uncles, Dr. Edward, George, and William Walker; and his own older brothers, Dr. James (d. 1807) and Thomas (d. 1797).

The Walkers had been landholders in the vicinity of Alnwick (one of the gates of the town of Alnwick is called the Walker Gate), and one of the Walkers served as high steward to the Duke of Northumberland whose ducal seat, Alnwick Castle, had been the fortress home of the Percy family for centuries. The Woodhouse clan apparently ranked somewhat higher than the Walkers in the Northumbrian scale of values because they owned several choice estates, including Broadstruther, in the Cheviot Hills near Wooler.

Major Jack Walker, the shrewd, eccentric pioneer of the family in America, quickly established himself as a popular citizen of the Wilmington area. He early became a colorful figure in Cape Fear [folklore](#) ^[6], served as an aide on George Washington's staff, and gradually amassed a considerable fortune in rice plantations and other property. His elder brother James came to America in 1785 "to spy out the land," as James's granddaughter wrote many years later, but died on board ship on the return trip to England to join his family. Six years later, in 1791, James Walker's widow, Jane, and his youngest son, Carleton, went alone to Wilmington.

By 2 July 1801 twenty-four-year-old Carleton Walker was mentioned in the *Wilmington Gazette* as "Clerk" of the Port of Wilmington, and by 17 December as "Register" of the Port. His marriage notice, published in the *Gazette* of 31 Dec. 1801, states that "On Thursday evening last [i.e., on Christmas Eve, 24 Dec. 1801], Carleton Walker, Esq., Naval officer of this Port, was married to Miss Mariah Moseley." His daughter's [Margaret Isabella Walker Weber's] "Reminiscences," written in 1904 when she was eighty, vividly describe her father's departure on his wedding journey in a coach and four accompanied by liveried postillions: "All was merry as a marriage bell." The new bride, however, who was the daughter of Colonel Sampson Moseley and a member of the prominent Lillington family as well as a niece of Sir Walter Blake of Oran Castle, County Mayo, Ireland, died a year later, leaving an infant son, John Moseley Walker, who inherited Moseley Hall and its valuable 3,500-acre plantation at Rocky Point.

Margaret Isabella's "Reminiscences" note that she was once told that her father was "renowned for having married the three handsomest women of his day and for his facility in acquiring fortunes and losing them." Carleton Walker's second wife was Sabina T. Legaré of Charleston, S.C., whom he married in Charleston on 20 Mar. 1804. She also lived "but a short time," and on 11 June 1807, the twenty-nine-year-old widower took a third wife, eighteen-year-old Caroline Mary Mallett of [Fayetteville](#) ^[7], the daughter of the late Revolutionary figure, [Peter Mallett](#) ^[8] (1744–1805), and his second wife, "pretty Sallie" Mumford. Caroline Mary, on a visit to Wilmington in 1806, had found young Walker "handsome, graceful, and of marked courtesy of manner" and regarded as the "catch of the town" with his own establishment, which included his mother, his infant son, and a very sizable staff of servant. Extravagance and impracticality marked all of Walker's undertakings, possibly in part because he regarded himself as the certain heir to his uncle Major Jack Walker's fortune and also as the chief "heir-at-law" to the choice Woodhouse estate, Broadstruther, in Northumberland.

Even this early Walker found himself in extreme financial difficulties. Wealthy [Benjamin Smith](#) ^[9], of Belvidere Plantation on the Lower Cape Fear, senator of the state, governor, and longtime trustee of the university, had become his surety for a debt of some \$50,000 which involved the university trustees. Smith owned over 60,000 acres of North Carolina lands in 1810; he was also the enslaver of some 204 people. The university in 1812 sued Walker and Smith jointly for the \$50,000 debt, and a complicated legal battle was waged for the next six years. The former governor was arrested and jailed although fellow trustees finally came to his rescue. Smith's extreme anguish over "my cruel situation with Walker" and his bitterness towards Walker are reflected in letters preserved in the [Ernest Haywood Collection](#) ^[10]. It was Smith's contention that Walker actually had sufficient money in hand to pay the debt, which Smith insisted was not of his making, and that Walker had gone into hiding until he should hear that Smith had paid it. The debt, as it appears, was finally paid almost wholly by Smith. In 1904 Carleton Walker's daughter in her old age wrote that this murky, bitterly contested affair had been caused by the "treachery" of the governor of the state and that "my father failed honestly and gave up everything he possessed."

Carleton Walker served in the War of 1812 on General Edmund P. Gaines's staff as paymaster of troops and attained the

rank of major. On 6 Sept. 1813 Major Jack Walker died and unexpectedly left his large estate to another nephew, Major John Walker, Jr., the son of his brother Thomas, who had arrived from England in 1803. Carleton Walker, now under the most urgent pressure for funds, began the long, tedious process of attempting to resolve his claim to the Broadstruther estate in the Cheviot Hills. It took over twelve years, from 1815 to 1827–28, according to preserved records of the matter. The estate was sold in 1825 to the Governors of Greenwich Hospital in London for £3,150, of which £1,400 was remitted to Carleton Walker.

After the War of 1812 Walker seems to have devoted himself to the Smith affair and his Broadstruther claim, and to supervising the operation of his son's inheritance, Moseley Hall, and its extensive plantation. [James Sprunt](#) ^[11] wrote in his *Chronicles of the Cape Fear River* ^[12] that "this was a large and quite valuable place and was said to have been handsomely improved, but all that the writer remembers seeing were the remains of what were said to have been fine old avenues."

The Walker family now spent each summer at their [Chatham County](#) ^[13] residence, Walker's Hill, "on the highest point in Chatham County," about seven miles from Pittsboro, near Rock Rest, home of their kinsman, Colonel [Edward Jones](#) ^[14]. When the house at Walker's Hill burned, apparently in 1822 or 1823, the family looked to Hillsborough for a summer home.

Peter Mallett, Caroline Mary Walker's father, had in 1778 purchased Hillsborough property, and during the Revolution he and William Watters of the Cape Fear had bought [Francis Nash](#) ^[15]'s old mill property at the foot of Wake Street—three town lots and a narrow bordering strip called the Mill lands. The two Mallett mills were in 1823 broken and derelict, and townspeople had almost forgotten to whom "the old Mallett property" belonged. The Mallett heirs, Caroline Mary's five brothers, united on 29 Oct. 1823 to convey their interests in the lots to John Moseley Walker, Caroline Mary's stepson, now just barely of age, "for the separate and exclusive use of Caroline Mary Walker."

Margaret Isabella Weber's "Reminiscences" state that John Moseley Walker "lived to the age of twenty-one" (he died on 28 Oct. 1824) and that he was buried in Hillsborough "near the wall" of St. Matthew's Episcopal Church. He bequeathed his own inheritance, Moseley Hall and its plantation, to his half brothers and sisters. It would appear from all indications that Carleton Walker used part of the Broadstruther money to build the charmingly elegant small house, the Walker-Palmer house (still standing and restored) on the corner of Lot 19 on West Margaret Lane in Hillsborough. Walker had drawn on the Governors of Greenwich Hospital, London, even before the English deeds of sale were signed, and sizable "three drafts" sent to London by the Hillsborough merchants Cain & Moore (£600) and Thos. Clancy & Co. (£113) were rejected. (These two bills were later accepted and paid once the Broadstruther sale was completed.) The Walkers lived permanently in Hillsborough, both summer and winter after about 1826, for nearly twenty years.

The large Walker family now included eight surviving children: Sarah Jane, Eliza Henrietta, Mary Pearson, Peter Mallett, Caroline de Bernière (always called de Bernière), the twins Margaret Isabella and another John Moseley, and Catherine Burke. Three children had died in infancy. Although in reduced circumstances, the family lived well in Hillsborough as preserved account books show. Their servants still included the cooks "Aunt Dolly" and Anneke, the valet Glasgow, and a whole retinue of nurses and housemaids. The children attended Hillsborough's various excellent schools of the period. Carleton Walker himself died after a long bout with a kidney ailment. Although the "Reminiscences" state that four members of the family—John Moseley Walker, Mrs. Jane Woodhouse Walker (Carleton's mother), an infant Sophia Woodhouse Walker, and Carleton Walker—were all buried "near the wall" of St. Matthew's, no Walker graves are visible today in the vicinity of the church, and it seems possible that the ten-foot eastward expansion of the church in 1868–69 may have covered the four graves, perhaps left unmarked. Caroline Mary Mallett Walker sold her Margaret Lane home on 14 Feb. 1842 and left Hillsborough. She died on 20 Nov. 1862 and was buried in the old Mallet family graveyard in Fayetteville.

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