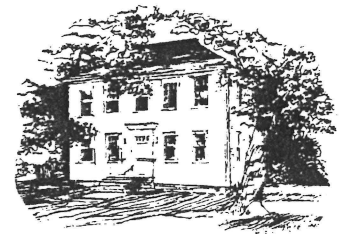


IMAGES

. . . *then and now*

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Remembering Nat Walker

Nathaniel Walker (1909-1996) spent his formative years at Onethebaum Farm on Kugler Mill Rd. The Walker family – which grew to 8 children – moved from Madisonville to Indian Hill in 1915, where they rented the Telford house at the s.w. corner of Kugler Mill and Loveland Pike.



Nat, the third child, was enthralled with their seven acres, roaming through creek beds and hills, climbing trees, and making forts in the woods. There was berrying in spring and nut hunting in fall. Though his brothers trapped muskrats and skunks (selling their hides), Nat hunted rabbits with his .22 rifle. Sycamore Creek and Snake Creek were favorite spots for Nat and his buddies. They swam in the summer as far away as Remington and Miamiville, and prowled old railroad grades. They formed a club and built a 10' by 10' clubhouse, using 2 x 4s and scraps from woodpiles. As schoolmates at the Washington School, the boys played marbles, mumbly peg, and baseball.

The Walker 2-story frame house was simple, and the struggling family had an outhouse and relied upon two cisterns for water. Mr. Walker worked at a factory in Norwood, and Mrs. Walker operated the household. Only meat, and staples like flour, sugar, and salt, were purchased. All else came from the farm or the surrounding woods. The family depended upon three gardens for much of their food: a 1/2 acre plot for early vegetables, 1 acre for later crops, and 1 1/2 acres for space intensive vegetables like corn, and potatoes. Root crops were kept all winter; beans, fruits, and peas were canned; and Mrs. Walker put up preserves and jellies. The Walkers stored eggs in waterglass for months when egg production was slow; milk came directly from their cows; and they made their own butter and cottage cheese, selling the surplus to customers in Madeira. Nat worked on the farm, with his responsibilities increasing as his older brothers left home. He later remarked, "We never wanted for food despite the poverty which seemed to be our lot perpetually."

Growing up on the farm made Nat aware of the natural world, and in agriculture courses at Withrow High School he developed an interest in forestry. The first in his family to go to college, Nat graduated from Colorado College in 1933 and went to work for the U.S. Forest Service as foreman of a CCC Camp in Colorado. In 1934 he married his college sweetheart, Helen Thompson.

The couple moved to Oklahoma in 1944, where Nat was a forester and then an associate professor at the newly formed Forestry Department at Oklahoma A&M, (now OSU). He taught forestry, silviculture, mensuration, and forest management. After attaining a Ph.D., he was named full professor in 1971, and department head in 1973. The fledgling forestry department's faculty developed a strong program, initiating a Forestry Club for students and creating an esprit d'corps by inviting students into their homes for meals and going on field trips together in the woods.

One of the unique features of the OSU forestry program was its Summer Camp, held for 6 weeks at various federal, state, and private industry work camps. Four professors and 25 to 30 students went from Minnesota to Mississippi, living in the woods and sharing work details by day and campfires at night. A regular for many years, Walker later compiled a humorous history of the summer camps, reminiscing about trouble with mosquitoes, vehicles, and swamps. His students remembered him as very knowledgeable; and one recalled a "5-mile hike through the woods (of Kentucky), when he (Walker) identified every plant, gave its scientific name, and specifics about the site requirements. The WHOLE camp was abuzz at his performance."

Nat Walker received awards and honors from foresters' professional organizations and OSU, but it was his teaching that influenced others. Even after retirement, he wrote and consulted in his office on campus. Walker's youthful impressionable years spent in the woods and vales of Indian Hill were an important influence on his later life.

Walker's autobiography, Onthebaum Farm is available at the Hauck Library at Buckingham Lodge.