Eliza Bannister Walker
Social Networks, Local Activism, Poetry with Purpose

Eric Wilson, Executive Director, Rockbridge Historical Society
The Charity Nightingales (Lexington Singing Group)
Third from Left: Eliza Bannister Walker (1872-1939)
What Do You See Here?  Who Do You See Here? Specific People ~ Social Types?
To the Public:
The Colored Soldier’s Appeal
HELP THE SUFFERING OF OUR RACE
Buy a Memorial Block and Help us to Take Care
of the Colored Old Folks and Needy Orphan Children.
We are Asking Someone to Educate Little Violet.

Violet
An Orphan Freak
Born without Hands

Mrs. H. L. Walker
Pres. of Lexington’s Old Folks Home and Orphanage

Virginia
Cannot Walk

Annie
Cannot Talk

Direct Marketing Campaign
1918, During World War I
Building on Black Military Pride
National & Community Service
Naming Sponsors
Naming those Supported
The Orphans' Plea

I am asking for your aid kind friends, O listen to my plea,
I am one of the needy orphans on this side of the sea,
No mother or father in this unfriendly land,
Depending on you to help me, you see I have no hands.

This is an old affliction, set upon me by God,
May be the sins of my mother, upon them a chastening rod;
Would you like to educate an orphan child like me?
I cannot make a living, I have no hands you see.

Here is poor Virginia, a sufferer for many years,
No mother to comfort her, a life of sorrow and tears.
When a babe she was afflicted, there was no friendly hand
To admit to her wants, is why she cannot stand.

It makes her sad to sit and see other girls run and play.
With tireless limbs she hops around and does her task each day.
If some kind friend had given a home & helped her with their care
This sad affliction would not have been for her to share.

P. S. All clothing of any kind can be used to advantage.

First help us to serve Jesus Christ.
Second, help to save suffering at your door.
This home will be build of cement blocks and a memorial block
will be placed in it wall for each contributor. Let us make a block
for your church, lodges or individual. Why you should contribute
now is because we already have inmates in a temporary home.

Plan for the Building

The Lexington prospect modern old folks' home and orphanage
to be erected in Lexington, Va., consisting of four living wards,
one for male, female and for girls and boys; dining room,
kitchen and a few other necessitates that it would take to complete
a modern home.

This home is NOT a State home but we will gladly care for
anyone who needs it.

This work is highly endorsed by the leading white business
men of our town.

Address:
LEXINGTON OLD FOLKS HOME AND ORPHANAGE
You Can’t Live Always.
Please contribute at least 25 cents for the benefit of the OLD FOLKS HOME, Lexington, Va.

Read the Genesis as a plan,
God made mountains then he made man;
It tell us as we read on down,
Moses our leader in the bull rush found.

CHORUS:
I know you can’t live always,
No you can’t live always,
You can’t live always,
You don’t want to die in the Egypt Land.

Pharaoh was a wicked man,
He didn’t obey my God’s command;
There was a rod that ruled the flood,
And all the water turned to blood.

The midnight hour the angel came,
They would not revere Jehovah’s name,
All through the land went the greatest cry,
All the first born had to die.

Pursued Egyptians on the day,
To overtake them on their way,
But Moses’ hand was on the rod,
Stand still and see the glory of God.

Then God told Moses what to do,
Lead the children, lead them through,
He led them down to the water’s side,
He spake to the water, and the water divide.

There was another prophet came,
They say that Jesus was His name,
An humble manger is His cradle,
And His birth place was in a stable.

He healed the sick and raised the dead,
They say the multitude was fed,
The lame did walk, the blind did see,
He treads the waves in Galilee.

Note the Header:

Author: Mrs. H.L. Walker (not her first name)
Location: Husband’s Business, Lexington
Price: 25 cents, not a $$ Memorial Brick
Purpose of Poem: Old Folks Home
Form: Song with Chorus, Couplets
Audience: Who Buys, How Used?

Poetic Tropes:

God, Moses, Jesus & Faith
Cultural & National Freedom
Physical Needs & Care

―Lead the children, lead them through…
All the first born had to die…
He healed the sick …
The lame did walk …
the blind did see‖
Harry Lee Walker & Woods Sanitary Meat Market
Mrs. H.L. Walker Trades on its Community Credibility
Stationery as Anchor for Poems, Community Service
I'm Going to Follow Jesus.


Please contribute at least 25 cents for the benefit of the OLD FOLKS HOME, Lexington, Va.

I am going to fight a battle with satan, sin and strife,
Jesus is my Captain and how hard will be the life,
Yet he has given to me my orders and I must go or die,
Nothing can harm me for my Lord is nigh.

CHORUS— I am going to follow Jesus,
I am going to follow Jesus,
Though the task seems hard for me to share,
Yet I must obey his orders without a tear or sigh
Nothing can harm me for my Lord will be nigh.

I asked the Lord for something for idle hands to do,
Whilst the souls of men are dying when the Master calls for you
Yet the task He's given 'tis hard for me to try
Tho' nothing can harm me for my Lord will be nigh.

A thousand snares awaits me whilst through this world I go
But if Jesus be my leader I'll follow where he goes;
Although the roads be rugged and up the mountains high,
Yet nothing can harm me for my Lord is nigh.
Charity Nightingales (Lexington HS, 1930s)
Note Sacred Spirituals, Tenor of White Praise

“audience of white people … of goodly proportions and a representative one”
Dramatic Cantata

"Japhtha and His Daughter," a dramatic cantata in three acts, will be presented at the First Baptist Church, Lexington, Thursday night, May 30th, at 8:45 o’clock. The proceeds are for the benefit of the Jackson Memorial Hospital and the colored cemetery. Special seats reserved for white visitors at 25 cents for adults and 15 cents for children. Price of admission, 10, 15, 25 cents. Reserved seats on sale at McCrum’s Annex. J. D. Lewis is manager of the cantata.

Decoration Day

Last Thursday, National Decoration Day, was observed in Lexington by the closing of the post office and banks, and special services at the First Baptist church, with addresses appropriate to the occasion. Afterwards a large procession, composed of the various organizations of colored people, such as fraternal societies and church organizations, marched to the colored cemetery and decorated the graves with flowers.
McCormick Reaper Centennial, 1931
Charity Nightingales Perform “Plantation Episode” at W&L
Aunt Chloe's Politics

Frances Ellen Watkins Harper - 1825-1911

Of course, I don't know very much
About these politics,
But I think that some who run 'em
Do mighty ugly tricks.

I've seen 'em honey-fugle round,
And talk so awful sweet,
That you'd think them full of kindness,
As an egg is full of meat.

Now I don't believe in looking
Honest people in the face,
And saying when you're doing wrong,
That "I haven't sold my race."

When we want to school our children,
If the money isn't there,
Whether black or white have took it,
The loss we all must share.

And this buying up each other
Is something worse than mean,
Though I thinks a heap of voting,
I go for voting clean.

Frances Ellen Watkins Harper was born on September 24, 1825, in Baltimore, Maryland. She was a prominent abolitionist and temperance and women's suffrage activist, as well as a poet. She authored numerous books, including the poetry collections Forest Leaves (1845) and Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects (1854). She worked at Union Seminary in Ohio, and died on February 22, 1911 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Sketches of Southern Life: (1872) Six “Aunt Chloe” Poems: Persona reworks Aunt Chloe from Uncle Tom’s Cabin

https://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/poems/aunt-chloe

“Frances W. Harpers’s Aunt Chloe Poems in *Sketches of Southern Life*: Antithesis to the Southern Plantation Tradition.”


https://www.jstor.org/stable/26474873?seq=1


UC Santa Cruz Diss., Heidi Morse, 2014

https://escholarship.org/content/qt66m23223/qt66m23223.pdf
Well, one morning bright and early
We heard the fife and drum,
And the booming of the cannon --
The Yankee troops had come.

When the word ran through the village,
The colored folks are free --
In the kitchens and the cabins
We held a jubilee.

When they told us Mister Lincoln
Said that slavery was dead,
We just paused our prayers and blessings
Upon his precious head.

We just laughed, and danced, and shouted
And prayed, and sang, and cried.
And we thought dear Uncle Jacob
Would fairly crack his side.

But when old Mister heard it,
She groaned and hardly spoke;
When she had to lose her servants,
Her heart was almost broke.

Twas a sight to see our people
Going out, the troops to meet;
Almost dancing to the music,
And marching down the street.

After years of pain and paring,
Our chains were broke in two,
And we were so mighty happy,
We didn't know what to do.

But we soon got used to freedom,
Though the way at first was rough:
But we weathered through the tempest,
For slavery made us tough.

But we had one awful sorrow,
It almost turned my head.
When a mean and wicked creature
Shot Mister Lincoln dead.

Twice a dreadful solemn morning,
I just staggered on my feet;
And the women they were crying
And screaming in the street.

But if many prayers and blessings
Could bear him to the throne,
I should think when Mister Lincoln died,
That heaven just got its own.

Then we had another President, --
What do you call his name?
Well, if the colored folks forget him
They wouldn't be much to blame.

We thought he'd be the Moses
Of all the colored race;
But when the Rebels pressed us hard
He never showed his face.

But something must have happened him,
Right now I'll be bound.
Cause I heard 'em talking 'bout a circle
That he was swinging round.

But everything will pass away --
He went like time and tide --
And when the next election came
They let poor Andy slide.

But now we have a President,
And if I was a man
I'd vote for him for breaking up
The wicked Ku-Klux Klan.

If freedom seem'd a little rough,
I'd weather through the gate;
And as to buying up my vote,
I hadn't it for sale.

I do not think I'd ever be
As slack as Jonas Handy;
Because I heard he sold his vote
For just three sticks of candy.

But when John Thomas Reed brought
His wife some flour and meat,
And told he told him to vote
For something good to eat.

You ought to see Aunt Kitty raise,
And heard her blaze away;
She gave the meat and flour a toss,
And said and they should not stay.

You'd laughed to see Lucinda Orange
Upon her husband's track;
When he sold his vote for ration
She made him take 'em back.

Day after day did Milly Green
Just follow after Joe,
And told him if he voted wrong
To take his legs and go.

I think that Samuel Johnson said
His side had won the day,
Had not the women radicals
Just got right in the way.

And yet I would not have you think
That all our men are shabby;
But 'twas said in every flock of sheep
There will be one that's scabby.

I've heard, before election came
They tried to buy John Slade;
But he gave them all to understand
That he wasn't in that trade.

And we've got lots of other men
Who rally round the cause,
And go for holding up the hands
That gave us equal laws.

Who know their freedom cost too much
Of blood and pain and treasure,
For them to fool away their votes
For profit or for pleasure.

Harper/ Aunt Chloe (1872) “The Deliverance”:
War – Emancipation – Reconstruction – Voting – Fraud
RockbridgeHistory.org ~ Local Black Histories

RHS Series (Wilson & Spurgeon): Legacies of 1867 Election → First Black Men to Vote in Rockbridge & Virginia
From Reconstruction to Voting Rollbacks; The Rise of Jim Crow → The Rise of ‘The New Negro’
Oscar De Priest: 1st Black Congressman Elected Outside the post-Reconstruction South (1928)

Black Women’s Crucial Advocacy for Local, State, National Black Candidates

(Smithsonian Digital Exhibit on Women’s Suffrage)
Virginia Federation of Colored Women: Eliza Walker, Rockbridge Chapter President
June 30, 1921: First State Convention after the Passage of the 19th Amendment
Pres. Walker Hosts at Blandome, First Baptist, Outing to Natural Bridge
Re-Working ‘Aunt Chloe’: Ventriloquizing a Black Woman’s Persona, Poetic Voice, Politics

AUNT CHLOE QUARRELS OVER THE CAMPAIGN

By MRS. ELIZA WALKER

Well I thought I'd stop reading de papers for I couldn't bar de news—
Chicago folks kept rumblin' and got things all confused.
Now we ain't had no congressman, for thirty years or mo';
And didn't anybody say a word, or even try to go.
But DePriest got busy, while some ob dem made fun.
Den eby Negro in de state thought he'd make a run.

Now while he's dare we's gwineer let him stay dare, and send mo';
If you fool after dese birds in de bushes, you'll jes' let dis one go.
Sure de bird dat's in de hand's worth all dem in de wood.
Den 'spose you caught a dozen and none ob dem no good.
And we shore don't want no poor bird dat you can't even fry.
And we ain't gwine hab no congressman dat anyone kin buy.
Lexington, Va
And we didn’t want no Congressman be the any body could buy.

Sure while he’s dare let him stay here and send us another.
And see that you don’t do a thing to ruin mine speculator.
Why you’re like acting crass folk. Had sense enough to know.
If you act like this time, they wouldn’t git back no more.
Shame on you, Chicago, you had be worth the eye on you.
And every Nation was watching. To see what you would do.

We knew, you wasn’t doing nothin’.
Running with de harse of them a while.
You and running for a kick off.
And know you quinny git shot.
Den we knowed who told you to come git in dis book.
Diz to be a mebbein and ride.
We did vote,
And we ain’t quinny git no where.
As I say at first, stick.

Don’t try to beat your own folk.
But de ater go that slick.

Now, Mr. Dog, you will be a good boy.
And no more try to folk.
Just don’t let de other party see you.
For a fool.
Experience, might have been to tell him, but he not be time.
For while you was a fooling, we might come out behind.
And to every Negro in de State don’t talk right to you.
If he ain’t got no job, get something else to do.
All you got to do is say law pay high, there will be plenty work and work.

Why you could sit on the street, you might about it matter.
When de Coalition party was about to win and share the trade dem.
Shatter.
And he only had de picture of him, and his wife.
Virginia folks got so scared
And ran back for their lives.
Talking about President Congress
For cause De fight is far.
You said he's having a good time.
That's what you can't have.
Why they done more fighting
In one year for us
Than ever Uncle Sam
Men if we need some baby done
Why killed he de man.

Now lies in what I can't get over out
Of hundreds more.
Why dey after die one man's job later.
What I want to know.
Mr. Abbott shows good sense, I'll tell.
You de reason why.
The price dat might have been offered
Wan't enough to try buy.
All de Negroes in de country out of a
Birth right.
He had better nibbled at dat hook
Before he took a bite.
Then War was Stefflin, ready to put up
Another fight.
About expectancy Congress far
Burning extra light.
Eliza Walker: Political Satire in Dialect

"Publicans, Democrats, Negroes: Alliances? Splits? Who's Counting on Whom? "Dead Republicans" (Lincoln, Grant, T. Roosevelt)

1928 Presidential Election:
Al Smith (D) vs. Herbert Hoover (R)
15,000 Black Virginia Voters Figured as Force
The colored Democrats of Lexington are requested to meet at the residence of H. L. Walker Friday, Nov. 2, at 8:30 p.m.

You think we all is Publicans, But let me get you told, Dis new Negro you’s dealin’ wid Can’t fool him like de ole; Mammy used to tell us De Publicans sot us free, But dey’s all gone to heaven And dead as dey can be.

MRS. H. L. WALKER.

CONGRESSMAN
OSCAR DE PRIEST
OF CHICAGO, ILLINOISE
Will Appear in Person at
First Baptist Church
LEXINGTON, VA.

FRIDAY
MAY 15th
at 8:30 P.M.
Admission 50c

First and Only Member of Colored Race to be elected to Congress of the U. S. in 28 years.

Our White Friends are Cordially Invited
PRESENTED BY
Rockbridge Walker Federation of Colored Women’s Club
Mrs. H. L. Walker, Pres. Mrs. M. S. Jones, Secy

Shifting Politics? Economic Shift (Crash of 1929)
1928: Republican Victory – Pres. Hoover Victory
1931: for Chicago Repub. Congressman Oscar De Priest
1932: Democrats’ Victory - FDR (“Rusevelt” Poem)
Maternal Loss:

Walker, “I’m A Gold Star Mother” (WW1)
Harper’s Aunt Chloe: White Mother loses Civil Son

Son Harry Thomas Walker d. 1914 (Age 17)
Walkers then Adopted Son from DC
Edwin T. Walker (ca. same age as Harry)
“I’m a Gold Star Mother” Last Stanza
Genealogy Looks Back to an Enslaved Father
Who Became a Soldier (US Colored Troops)

Thoughts Partnered with Poetry

*Notes for Musical Performances: Nightingales? Church?
Quartett, Duett, Chorus
Sermon
Address: 537 South Dearborn St., Chicago (what was it then?)
To: J. Ford (who is he? how does she know him?)
5 blocks W. of Grant Park, now off Ida B. Wells Dr.
Downtown Redevelopment of The Loop

A Fundraiser? (an invitation to Ford? Chicago advertising?)
First Baptist? Charity Work? Written Later?
Are These Proximate Thoughts to Poems?

“church, cherries, cup, carriage {...} carrier bags to sail [sale]”
Visiting Children’s Homes ~ Moral Notes: Reviewing Staff??
Locally (as President)? Elsewhere (as Consultant?)

Written on Back of ‘Gold Star Mother’
n.b. Still Refining Transcription and Research

“1. Not Qualified  2. I have visited the homes  3. Not example of Truthfulness
4. Purrsanality isn’t that of that would elevate the Child … indiscreet in h{h}elevation {election?} the presence of girls and boys”
Eat your “Jam-Jams” Cookies!  Advertising Jingle?

Shop Local!

(... but don’t presume too much on the Local Store Owner’s credit)
Roosevelt dun just what he sayed
When we were hungray he gave us bred...
he grabed this countray in his fist
and turned it around without a miss
he started the wheels to ring(?) fast
then the people a new hold did grasp

President Roosevelt as new Savior (post-1932)

How do we read this Politically? Economically?
Business & Fundraising during Great Depression?
“Lexington Colored Graded School”: S. Randolph St. next to Methodist Church

Opened as Freedmen’s School, 1865, until Lylburn Downing School Built: 1927-1965
Eliza Bannister may have attended (only through 4th Grade, per grandson)

Opportunity for a Number of Lexington Children, after Emancipation
1920 Lex School Board Minutes, Teacher Salaries: Median White $104, Median Black $45

Nannie and Harry T. Walker Attended Graded Grammar School
She went to Richmond for Additional Schooling
Lylburn Downing School: Opened Same Year as New White Lexington High School (1927)  
Extended Beyond Grade School, but not Full HS Diplomas  
Now Community Center, Lex School Board Offices
Mrs. H.L. Walker Campaigns to Build New “Colored High School” (Lylburn Downing, 1927) Continues Campaign to Hire More Faculty (Self-Funded by Parents, not City Taxes) to Offer Full HS Degrees 1932: Height of Great Depression ➔ Note Parents’ Readiness to Sacrifice $$ or Send Kids Away
Aspects of Black Religious 
and Educational Development in 
Lexington, Virginia, 1840–1928

Theodore C. DeLaney, Jr.

WRITING in the Negro History Bulletin in 1939, Carter G. Woodson, a noted black educator, stated, "A definitive history of the Negro Church . . . would leave practically no phase of the history of the Negro in America untouched." This quote provided great inspiration for me as I searched for a place to begin the task of compiling a history of black people in the Lexington area. The history which follows is by no means complete but represents a mere scratch of the surface.

The churches in Lexington which date from ante-bellum days all have histories which included attempts at slave evangelization. While such evan-
Theodore C. DeLaney, Jr. (1943-2020)
‘A Walker Legacy’

Lexington Native, Lylburn Downing’61, W&L B.A. History ‘85, William & Mary PhD ‘95
Chair, W&L History Dept; Co-Founder, Africana Studies Program; Mentor
Envisioning Eliza … “Who Tells Your Story?” … Community, Politics, Poetry, Music, Family
Eric Wilson, RHS Executive Director
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