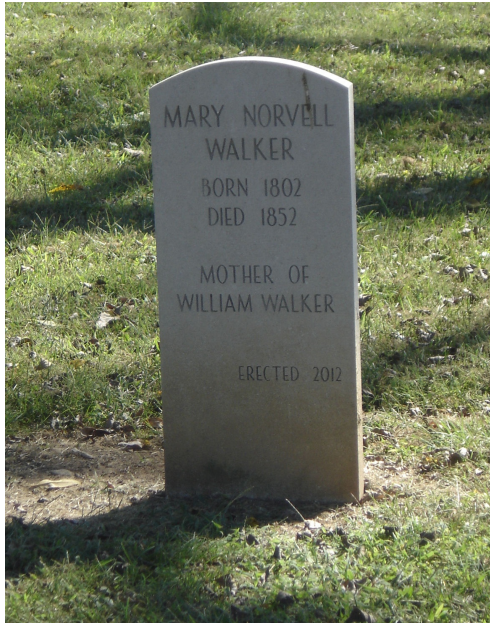


The Mother of William Walker  
Dictator of Nicaragua 1857  
by John E. Norvell <sup>1</sup>



Mary Norvell Walker was born in 1802 in Kentucky, and died January 6, 1852 in Nashville. She was the daughter of Lt. Lipscomb Norvell, a Revolutionary War officer who is buried in the City Cemetery, and his wife Mary (Molly) Hendrick Norvell. <sup>2</sup> She married James Walker of Nashville on August 7, 1823.

A Scot, James had immigrated to the city where he proved he had a head for business, founded an insurance company, and saw his fortunes grow. He married Mary Norvell on August 7, 1823, and the couple built a massive brick house in the city's most upscale neighborhood. The family belonged to the Disciples of Christ Church and the fundamentalist faith followed strict interpretations of the Bible. James Walker's religious convictions prevented him from owning slaves. He did, however, hire numerous free blacks to work for him.

Among Mary's close circle was Sarah Childress Polk, the wife of President James K. Polk. In a letter dated June 18, 1841, Mrs. Polk, discussing an upcoming election, writes to her husband: "Mrs. Walker (from whom you know I get a great deal of news)..." and "... Joe Norvell [Mary's brother] thinks he will be elected." <sup>3</sup>

Although described by a contemporary as interesting and intelligent, she was an invalid most of her life. In one of his letters, her father Lipscomb Norvell called her health "delicate." Mary died on January 6, 1852 in Nashville. <sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Mary Norvell Walker was the great-great aunt of the author.

<sup>3</sup> *The Correspondence of James K. Polk: 1839-1841*, Wayne Cutler Ed., (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1979) p 702 .

<sup>4</sup> James Walker died on June 28, 1874 in Louisville, Kentucky where he lived with his daughter Alice Walker Richardson's family.

James Walker and Mary Norvell Walker had the following children:

1. Infant (Alice)Walker (born October 9, 1831 -died July 7, 1832 ). The gravestone in the City Cemetery says: Sacred To the Memory of Alice Infant Daughter of James & Mary Walker born October 9, 1831 Died July 7, 1832.
2. Alice Walker born about 1834 in Nashville, Davidson, Tennessee. She died in November 1877 in Paducah, McCracken, Kentucky, United States. She married Lawrence Richardson on November 29, 1854 in Louisville, Jefferson, Kentucky. Lawrence was born on September 7, 1828 in Lexington, Fayette, Kentucky and died on November 3, 1910 in Jefferson, Kentucky.
3. James Walker, born in 1828, joined his brother William in Nicaragua and was appointed Captain of Company A of William's expeditionary forces. He died three week after his arrival of "inflammatory rheumatism" in Masaya, Nicaragua on May 15, 1856 and was buried in Granada, Nicaragua.
4. Lipscomb Norvell Walker (born in 1826) served a year during the Mexican War in Mexico as lieutenant in the Third Regiment of Tennessee Volunteers. He joined his brother William in Nicaragua in 1856 where it was noted "when he is not drinking he is talking, and when not talking he is drinking. He has held the office of captain till reduced to the rank a few days ago for perpetual drunkenness." He died on the high seas, on the *Empire City* steamer, between Havana and New Orleans on April 26, 1857
5. William Walker (born Nashville May 8, 1824 -died Nicaragua September12, 1860) the so-called "Grey Eyed Man of Destiny, was a physician, lawyer, journalist and later soldier of fortune, called a filibuster, who organized several private military expeditions. He first invaded Mexico and later usurped the presidency of the Republic of Nicaragua in 1856. He ruled there until 1857, when he was defeated and returned to the United States. He attempted to return to Central America and was subsequently executed by the government of Honduras in 1860. William Walker was the only citizen of Nashville to ever head a foreign government.

Of all Mary and James Walker's children only Alice Walker Richardson had any offspring. William Walker and all his brothers had no descendants.