



THE WALKER FAMILY

CEDAR
GROVE
PLANTATION



NICOLA
MARSCHALL

NICOLA MARSCHALL
AND THE
WALKER FAMILY
AT CEDAR GROVE PLANTATION
A MID-NINETEENTH-CENTURY PAINTER IN WEST ALABAMA



First Lieutenant J. Mack Walker, C.S.A. 1865
Oil on canvas

In 1865, Prussian-born artist Nicola Marschall painted this full-length, posthumous portrait of a Civil War officer of the Confederate Army, First Lieutenant J. Mack Walker. The Museum acquired this work as a gift of Mr. and Mrs. Hopson Owen in 1938.

Museum staff members researched this painting—the artist and sitter for over ten years, utilizing both scholarly resources as well as local and family histories. This presentation documents a 2010 exhibition which established connections between the artist, the subject's family and their ancestral home, Cedar Grove near Faunsdale, Alabama.

THE ARTIST

Born on March 16 1829, in St. Wendel, Rhenish, Prussia (now Germany), Nicola Marschall came to America at age 20. Exempt from military service in Prussia and disinterested in the family wine and tobacco business, Marschall traveled to Rome, Florence, Naples, Paris, London, Berlin, Dusseldorf and Munich to pursue his musical and art interests before landing in the port city of New Orleans, Louisiana. Marschall then made his way to **Mobile**, Alabama where he had a close relative with whom he could stay. In 1851, Marschall traveled to **Marion**, Alabama where he began teaching painting, music, French and German at **The Marion Female Seminary**, and in 1865, married Martha Eliza “Mattie” Marshall a former Seminary student.

Sometime before 1857, Marschall developed a relationship with the Charles Walker family at Cedar Grove, apparently through one of Walker’s three sons. For portrait painters in the nineteenth century in out-of-the way locales in rural Alabama, relationships with patrons such as Charles Walker were critical, not just for financial support, but for connections to other wealthy families who might utilize the artist’s services.

Marschall briefly served in the Confederate Army as a private in 1862 and again in 1864, serving as a draftsman in Company B of the Confederate Engineers under Lieutenant Colonel Samuel H. Lockett until the end of the war in 1865.



Nicola Marschall
Self Portrait, 1867, Oil on canvas
The First White House of the Confederacy
Courtesy of The White House Association of Alabama

Marschall resumed painting portraits in 1865, as the *First Lieutenant J. Mack Walker, C.S.A.* portrait in the MMFA's collection is signed and dated that year. There are four documented portraits of members of the Walker family.

In 1873, the Marschalls moved to Louisville, Kentucky at the suggestion of Major Jabez Currie a wealthy planter and close friend who felt that the opportunity for portrait commissions might be greater in Kentucky than the war ravaged Canebroke of Alabama. Marschall had a studio in Louisville until his death in 1917. He was awarded medals for his work as a portraitist from several state competitions and from the first official World's Fair in the United States, the International Exhibition of Art, Manufactures and Products of the Soil and Mine in Philadelphia in 1876.

Today, Marschall's portraits can be found in homes and institutions of the Deep South where they are treasured for their documentation of family heritage and in museums where they educate viewers on nineteenth-century regional portraiture. Following are documents related to the life and career of Marschall.

THE ARTIST



Nicola Marschall
Self Portrait, 1893, Oil on canvas
Courtesy of
Alabama Department of Archives and History

NICOLA MARSCHALL



NICOLA MARSCHALL

MORE THAN A PORTRAIT ARTIST

Odalisque, 1852
Oil on canvas
Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts
Gift of Mrs. George Tannenbaum
1969. 0077

RECEIPT TO CHARLES WALKER

Marion Sep 28 1859
Mr Chas Walker
To JS Lockwood
To 45 ft Gilt Moulding \$ 13 95
" Packing & Forwarding 50
" 1 Gilt Frame 7 85
\$ 22 30

Huntington \$ 1.25
Armstrong 10
\$ 33.55
7 86
\$ 25.69
Rcd payment 33.55
Jan 26 1860
Nicola Marschall

Marion Sep 28 1859	
Mr. Charles Walker	
To JS Lockwood	
To 45 ft Gilt Moulding	\$13.95
" Packing & Forwarding	50
" 1 Gilt Frame	7.85
	\$22.30
Huntington	\$1.25
Armstrong	10.00
	\$33.55
	7.86
	25.69
	33.55

Rcd. Payment

Nicola Marschall

January 26, 1860

FROM

NICOLA MARSCHALL

AWARD WINNING ARTIST

NICOLA MARSCHALL

WISCONSIN STATE AGRICULTURAL
SOCIETY 1868



Inscribed:
Awarded to
Nicola Marschall
Madison Wisconsin
for best
Portraits in Oil
Exhibition
1868

AWARD WINNING ARTIST

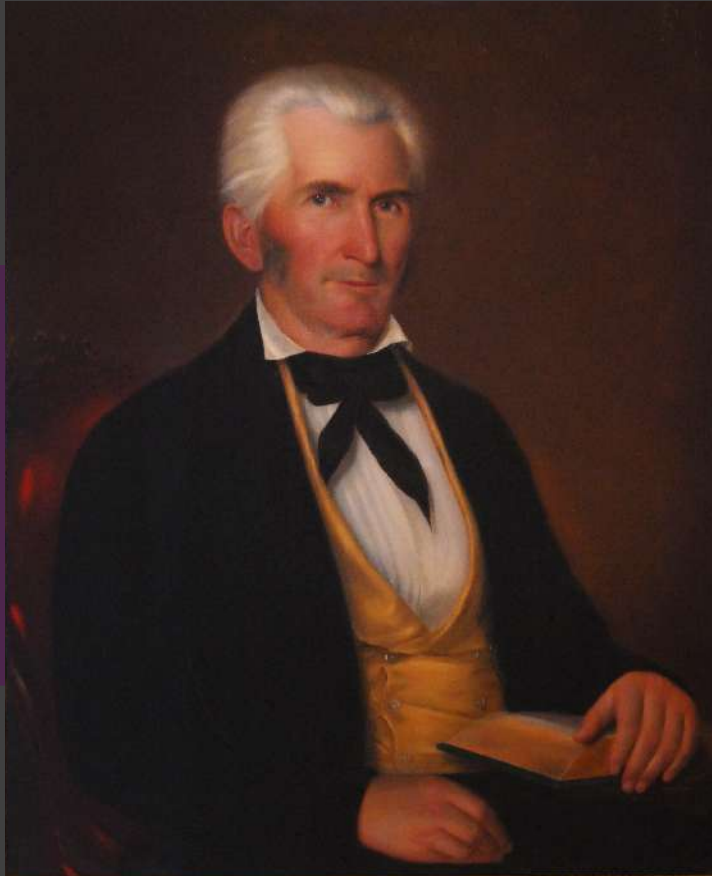
NICOLA MARSCHALL

THE CENTENNIAL
INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION
PHILADELPHIA 1876



Silver Medal Awarded for portraiture to
Nicola Marschall

THE WALKER FAMILY



Nicola Marschall
Charles Walker, 1855
Oil on canvas
Courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. George McKee

CHARLES WALKER

MARGARET JEMISON WALKER

FIRST LIEUTENANT MIMS WALKER

FIRST LIEUTENANT J. MACK WALKER

One indicator of the wealth and prominence of the Walker Family at Cedar Grove is the existence of multiple family portraits painted by the itinerant portraitist, Nicola Marschall.

TO MOVE TO
REMAINING
WALKER FAMILY
MEMBERS CLICK
ON NAMES
ABOVE

CHARLES WALKER

MARGARET JEMISON WALKER

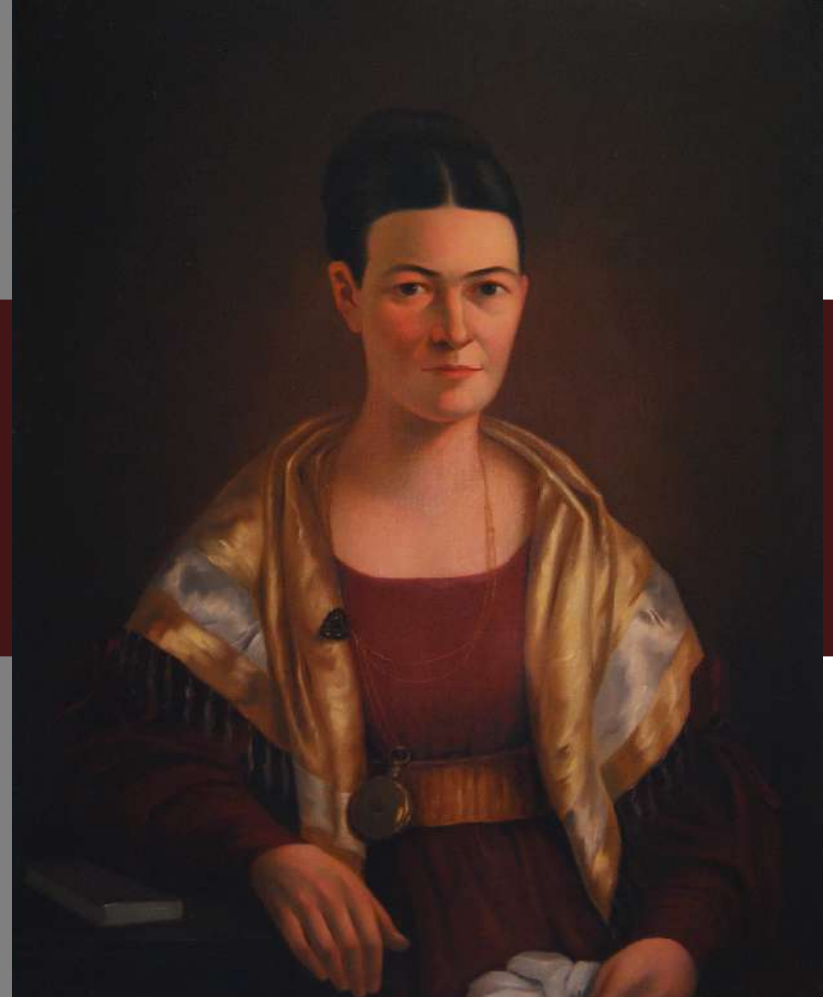
FIRST LIEUTENANT MIMS WALKER

FIRST LIEUTENANT J. MACK WALKER

THE WALKER FAMILY

In addition to First Lieutenant J. Mack Walker, Charles and Margaret had two other sons, David and Mims and two daughters, Sallie and Margaret.

Nicola Marschall
Margaret Jemison Walker, 1855
Oil on canvas
Courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. George McKee



[CLICK NEXT TO VIEW MORE INFORMATION ON MARGARET](#)

[HOME](#)

[NEXT](#)

CHARLES WALKER

MARGARET JEMISON WALKER

FIRST LIEUTENANT MIMS WALKER

FIRST LIEUTENANT J. MACK WALKER



Mims Walker carried this drawing of his mother Margaret with him during the Civil War.
(artist unknown)

SACRED

To the memory of
MARGARET WALKER*

Consort of CHARLES WALKER

She was modest, refined, virtuous, & good,

The joy of her numerous relatives,
the hope of an affectionate husband,
a mother, tender, kind, and true,
a friend whose sympathies were
ever alive to those of her associates,
and whose charity was always
extended to suffering want.

Born on the 23rd. November 1808.

Died on the 27th. October 1845.

She had been for three years previous

To her death, a zealous member
Of the Methodist Episcopal Church;
and beloved by all.

She in her 37th year, the prime of life,
Sank into the grave to rise in Christ.

**Epitaph found on her tombstone located in the
Walker Cemetery, Cochran, Georgia, Bleckley County.*

THE WALKER FAMILY



Confederate uniform worn by Mims Walker at his wedding to Mary Gray Pitts in July 1864. During this time he served under General Evander M. Law, who commanded the 4th Alabama.

CHARLES WALKER

MARGARET JEMISON WALKER

FIRST LIEUTENANT MIMS WALKER

FIRST LIEUTENANT J. MACK WALKER



Nicola Marschall
First Lieutenant Mims Walker, C.S.A., (detail)
1864

Oil on canvas
Courtesy of Mr. and
Mrs. George McKee

John Marshall (J. Mack) Walker was born in Pulaski County, Georgia on August 4, 1840, the son of Charles and Margaret Walker. His mother died in 1845 and in 1852 he moved with his father and stepmother to Marengo County, Alabama. During the Civil War he rose to the rank of first Lieutenant in Company D, 36th Alabama Infantry. He died on May 24, 1864 from a leg wound. His brother David Walker brought his remains back to Uniontown, Alabama where he was buried on May 27th.

Intended as a memorial, this portrait hung in the Walker family home at Cedar Grove plantation for many years. The composition of the work suggests that it was most likely based upon a photograph using the daguerreotype or similar process. Walker certainly knew the artist, as Marschall had lived with the Walker family at Cedar Grove over a period of years acting as a tutor to the family's two younger children, daughters Sallie and Margaret. As photography progressed formal portraits such as this became less common even for wealthy members of society.



FIRST LIEUTENANT J. MACK WALKER, C.S.A

TO VIEW LETTERS FROM THE FRONT
AND FROM HOME CLICK NEXT

LETTER

Letter from J. Mack to one of his brothers.
(click on the letter to view transcription)

FROM
THE
FRONT

THE WALKER FAMILY

Camp 36th Ala June 3rd 64

My Dear Brother-

I received your letter from the Rapid Run yesterday. I was having the full enjoyment of a rainy day on the front. It rained all day and night. I had a large box of blankets which I made a sort of a shelter of but as usual in such cases I got as wet as if I had no shelter. We are still at Manchester and are having an unusually good time for the army of Tenn. We are detached from our brigade guarding this place so there are no troops near us and there is just any quantity of fast girls around here. We had a ball night before last and we had an excellent time winning the Tenn. Girls. They are fast for good which you will know that we had just been here a week and had not got acquainted with half a dozen and notwithstanding that they all care for eight or

Transcription

Letter Lent by Mr. and Mrs. George McKee

(x) = illegible

Camp, 36th Ala June 3rd /63

My Dear Brother,

I received your letter from the Rapid Arms yesterday. I was having the full enjoyment of a rainy day on picket. It rained all day and night I had a large (x) of blankets which I made a sort of a shelter of but as usual in such cases I got as wet as if I had no shelter. We are still at Manchester and are having an unusually good time for the army of Tenn. We are detached from our briggade guarding this place so there are no troops near us and there is just any quantity of fast girls around there. We had a ball night before last and we had an excellent time swinging the Tenn. girls. They are fast for good which you will know that we had just been here a week and had not got acquainted with half a dozen and not withstanding that they all came for eight or ten miles around and were just as easy as if they had known us all their lives. Yesterday it rained so that they could not go back those who lived at a distance and the boys carried them up to the hall and had another dance. That of course added to my agonies on picket – Our prospects here are fine if we could only remain here. We would be domesticated very soon as Gen. Slaughter would say – Gen. S. became so domesticated with Mrs. Scott in Mobile that he had to fight a duel about it. You didn't write me any thing about Lee's duel – I heard that he was about to fight with a Col – We are unfortunately ordered off from here at least it is pretty sure that will be in a few days – We are all regretting it. We will join our briggade at war – trace about ten miles above **Tullahoma** We received a dispatch this morning from Gen. Bragg to Gen. Hardee saying that the enemy were active in front indicating active movements and to be ready. Rumors are afloat that the Yanks are evacuating Murphreesboro. If that is the case we will only have hard marching to no purpose. The news from Vicksburg is very good that Grant has fallen back and that has a large force at Jackson ready to pounce upon him. The newspapers are speaking very mysteriously about the operations in VA as if the movements there would soon draw the public attention from Vicksburg to something grander than any one now dreams of. I am sorry that I am not now at Mobile to enjoy myself with (x) Miss (x) and Miss Sallie. There is no chance for us to get back to Mobile now. We are in Clayton's briggade the 18th Ala and (x) (x) battalion also I heard yesterday that (x) Batt had been put in another brigg – Harris from McCurdy is his adjutant. Let me hear from you often. Direct to **Tullahoma**. Your letter was sent me from Mobile. All were well at home when I had heard from there last. I remain

Your devoted brother –

JM Walker

LETTER

Letter from Sally to either her brother Mack or her brother Mims while they were away fighting in the Civil War.

(click on the letter to view transcription)

FROM HOME

THE WALKER FAMILY

Jan 19 1863 Cedar Grove

My Dear Brother

I tell you we are some of
these "flaming" ones now. We had a "puffy" the other
day for dinner. Mr. King is hanging up the meat to day
and it will keep for a long time. We are making
a good smoke in the smoke house. Mr. Maschall
is going to take Sally's portrait to send to
Germany, he is going to start in about two months.
Jan 14 I have been working hard all day to
make some, but I did not get them done. If I had
thought that crying would have done any good
I would have cried all day, rather than to mind
doing them. Mr. Maschall is here and he is sick
to day. Mr. Mimi came to see him to day, and found
him in bed. We have got a good joke on him.
When we first came up to him this evening, I got
a Latin Bible and told Mrs. Miller to let him read
in the book. Mrs. Miller and myself commenced
laughing, and he said that he would not
read until I read and so got out of it nicely.
Jan 15 It is now night and Mrs. Miller, Mr. and
myself have just got up from a grand round

Transcription:

Original Letter Lent by Mr. and Mrs. George McKee

(x) = illegible

January 15, 1857 Cedar Grove

My Dear Brother,

I tell you we have some of those “flaming dinners” now. We had a “puppy” the other day for dinner Mr. (x) is hanging up the meat today and it will keep me busy to make Polly to keep a good smoke in the smokehouse (x). **Mr. Marschall is going to take Polly's portrait to (x) Germany; he is going to start in about two months.**

Jan 14 I have been working hard today on my sums, but – I did not get them done. If I had thought that crying would have done any good I would have cried all day, rather than to missed doing them. **Mr. Marschall is here and he is sick today. Mr. Mitti came to see him today and found him in bed.** We have got a good joke on Sis. When we first came up school this evening, I got a Latin Bible and told Mrs. Mellen to let Sis read in this book. Mrs. Mellen and myself commenced laughing and Sis said that she would not read until I read (x) so got out of it nicely.

Jan.16 (x) is (x) night and Mrs. Mellen, Sis and myself have just got up from a grand supper.

I am very tired from it. Sis and I had a romp today at dinner (x) my sums came out better today than they did yesterday. I have been keeping house all this week, and it is right hard to go to school and keep house at the same time. **Mr. Marschall has had another chill today and is sick in bed to night again. We are getting on finely with our drawing. Sis draws horses and I draw castles.**

Jan. 16 Sis and I have got a swingern out in the yard! We have just come in from the swing. I wonder what Ma and Pa are doing today in Mobile. I expect they are flying around the city. Today is the (x) in the week that we have to go to school. I would like to know what you are all doing now I would when we shall hear from any of you.

Jan. 18 Mr. Mitti and Mr. Raillard, Dr. Harris our French teacher came over to see **Mr. Marschall this evening, and they are playing the violin, piano, and guitar now.** We had syllabub and cake for supper. I do wish you could be here to see and hear them talk and play. Mr. Mitti was playin so pretty that all the carpenters had to come in the house to hear him play. Pa has got old Willis up here to cut wood and old Willis came in the house to hear Mr. Mitti, and he said that if I could play that way he would come every night and hear me play.

The weather is so cold that I can do nothing but stay by the fire and study or read. Sis and I did not practice today it was so cold that Mrs. Mellen would not make us practice. I do believe that if she had made us practice our fingers would have frozen to the piano keys. Sis and Mrs. Mellen are writing downstairs in the sitting room. **I tell you that Mr. Mitti is playing a pretty piece now and Mr. Marschall is playing the violin now.** My hand is so cold that I can hardly write. I tell you that the weather is so cold that if you leave any water in anything it will be frozen solid before morning. Bettie put some water for dinner and it froze before we had gone up from the table. Please answer soon. I have written two or three letters and I haven't got a letter from you yet nor Bud Mac either. I don't like this way of writing letters and don't get answers if you don't answer them I will stop writing you. Give my love to all the girls. Tell Bud Mac he (x) (x) and give my love to Mary. Tell her to write to me that if she don't write to me I will think she is mad with me.

Your affectionate sister,
Sallie



THE WALKER FAMILY GATHERS ON THE PORTICO ROOF OF THE CEDAR GROVE PLANTATION HOUSE, CIRCA 1900.

CEDAR GROVE PLANTATION

Originally the house was a two-story frontier log house built in 1830 by the McAlpin brothers, Dougal and Malcolm.

In 1852 Charles Walker, the father of John Marshall (J. Mack), purchased his family home, Cedar Grove, in Marengo County near Faunsdale and Uniontown. Once Walker bought the property, he began building a larger frame plantation house that incorporated the existing log dwelling. Embellished with Greek Revival detailing and lattice-work trim, renovation was completed in 1858 by builder Theophilus Gilliam Fowler of nearby Uniontown. Typical of a southern antebellum home the kitchen was detached from the main house as a safety precaution. Fire was a great fear for those living on plantations, which were largely self-sufficient, but often physically isolated.

Other buildings included a smokehouse, carriage barn, stables and cotton warehouse that could accommodate 200 bales of cotton. A schoolhouse that served the children of Cedar Grove and the surrounding area until 1925 is still located near the rear of the main house. It is believed that Nicola Marschall used this school annex as a studio at various times in the 1850-60's.

According to the 1860 Marengo County census records Charles Walker's real estate and personal estate holdings and slave ownership made him and his family one of the most prosperous in rural nineteenth-century Alabama.

CEDAR GROVE PLANTATION



The appearance of the home changed around 1900 when Mims Walker's daughter, Margaret renovated and modernized the structure. The kitchen was relocated from the outbuilding into the main house. The original turned columns were replaced by paneled box columns, and the arched-latticework was removed from the exterior and a small porch was added to the second floor.

The Cedar Grove Plantation house is located near Faunsdale, Alabama, on the old Demopolis Road. It is still and imposing site to travelers on the dirt road which makes a loop near this quiet country village, deep in Marengo County. A few remaining cedar trees stand sentinel in front of the home that is named for them.

Cedar Grove was sold out of the family after the death of Mims Walker's granddaughter in 1982 and currently belongs to Thomas Lide Alison and family.



TOMBSTONE OF
JOHN MARSHALL WALKER
ROSEMONT CEMETERY

The 2010 exhibition Nicola Marschall and the Walker Family at Cedar Grove Plantation: A Mid-Nineteenth-Century Painter in West Alabama and this online project serve as a visual summation of an important part of Alabama history in the mid-nineteenth century, documenting this time period through art, architecture, cultural artifacts and manuscripts. The starting point was a single portrait, which has given contextual meaning by the wealth of historical data collected by researchers over the past ten years. Thus, the painting becomes an important primary source document, both as an example of nineteenth-century portraiture, as well as a record of material culture at the time of the Civil War.

The exhibition was conceived and curated by Alice Carter, who served as the Museum's librarian from 1987 to 2010. She utilized research by a number of former Museum staff, Kapelanski scholars, and scholars of State and local history. The online presentation was designed and implemented in the summer of 2010 by Catherine Wright and Courtney Border.

The Museum expresses its sincere appreciation to the descendents of the Walker Family, Thomas Lide Allison, the First White House of the Confederacy and the Alabama Department of Archives and History for their participation in the project as lenders to the exhibition as well as providers of documentation, photography and other data.

The information and images in this presentation are intended for educational use only, and no other use is intended or authorized. Please direct any questions or comments to info@mmfa.org.