

Walker Cabin Docent Tour “MENU”

(The **YELLOW** highlighted text provide cues to show photos or demonstrate an artifact.)

Walker Family

Frank Evans Walker begins homesteading in Placerita Canyon 1905

Hortense and Frank Evans Walker marry 1907 (show marriage photo – album) (show marriage license on table)

1st child Irene was born 1909 (show photo of Hortense and baby Irene on table)

19 years later Richard was born (show photo of entire family on table and in album)

Hortense died in 1931 from spinal meningitis contracted when visiting her son in the hospital for an injury.

All of the 12 children are now all deceased (2015 Melba; 2020 Richard); grandchildren and great grandchildren are alive. Family reunion held at PCNC Open House in 2024 (show family photo in album). Bob Walker is local and meets with Walker Cabin docents regularly.

Houses

Frank Walker builds 1st home (1908-09 ?), known as The Homestead House, on eastern end of canyon (show picture on table and in album)

The Homestead House burns down 1918 . Also, too many rattlesnakes at this house and a better water source needed.

House #2 built by hand around the same time to replace 1st home. Walker moves family to House #2 – also known as the Winter Cabin where they lived from 1918-1929. Children slept in bunk houses that are no longer attached to back of house. (show foundation outside in back of cabin) The cabin housed Frank, Hortense and their 12 children (7 boys and 5 girls). (show photo of house with bunk house in album)

House #3 – also known as the Summer Cabin -- built in 1929 in Walker Ranch section of canyon. (show photo in album of house) . The house was torn down in the early 1960’s after the property was acquired for park purposes.

House #4 started in 1932 but halted by Walker due to 3 tragic deaths of family members (wife and 2 children). The fireplace and floor were used as a dance floor by Walker’s Placerita Camp. Foundation and fireplace are still visible at east end of canyon (show photo in album)

Daily Life

Life was not easy. No electricity. No running water. Outhouse. At the Winter cabin (#2 house) well was dug but needed creek water to prime it. (show picture of well in album). At the Summer cabin (#3 house) water was from a spring with a pipe. (show picture of pipe remnants and sink)

Children were expected to do chores including grading the road that was frequently washed out due to the rainy winter weather. The older children helped with the younger ones. They helped care for the livestock (horses, dairy and beef cattle, pigs). Deer was also hunted with Charles being the primary hunter. (show pictures of rifle in album). Garden produce also grown in rich canyon soil.

The winter cabin (#2 house) was lit by kerosene lanterns and heated by the fireplace and the wood burning stove. The summer house (#3 house) used natural gas from an oil well nearby for light and cooking.

Hortense cooked on the wood burning stove. During summer she likely cooked outside. (Show various cooking implements). Demonstrate butter churner. Demonstrate waffle iron. Demonstrate slow cooker and describe need for a cooked meal 8 hours later on laundry days.

Laundry was done in the tub with an agitator, washboard, and wringer. (Demonstrate.) Water brought from the well, heated and then clothes were washed (probably just 2 outfits per child).

Bath time was in large metal tub. Water hauled from well and heated. Bathed oldest to youngest without changing bath water.

Furnishings

Bed for parents: Strung with rope (box spring). Mattress put on top. (none displayed due to potential for damage from mice). Quilts were hand stitched. The phrase "Sleep tight, don't let the bed bugs bite" refers to the ropes and the need to frequently tighten them so the bed wouldn't sag. (Note chamber pot under bed.) There was also an outhouse likely located under the oak tree.

Kitchen table is the only original furniture made by Frank Walker. (Show photo of Clarence Walkers' initials carved into TOP of table) (they are small, close to fireplace end of the table)

All other furnishings are period pieces that were likely in the Walker's home in the early 1910-30 era. Kitchen cabinet was popular in the time – called a Hoosier cabinet. Note its use for baking (flour and sugar drawers, spices and condiments above).

Not many toys – Christmas the children each received a small ball.

Income

Frank Walker was an entrepreneur. He was involved in a variety of ventures.

-Fancy Rock: The children hauled rocks out of the creek which were sold to local builders. (point out fireplace and encourage visitors to look outside at fireplace when leaving)

-Gold: Frank was able to pan \$22 worth of gold a day when lucky. Frank also charged a fee for locals to pan for gold.

-Fertilizer: The leaf mulch under the trees was very rich and was bagged and sold to locals as fertilizer.

-Clay: Frank mined clay in Sand Canyon and sold it to Pioneer Roofing for shingle granules.

-Moonshine: Frank operated several stills in secret and made 2 gallons a day of moonshine.

-Chickens: Frank and his son Richard raised 10,000 chickens in the 1940s for the war effort.

-Camp: Frank set up "Walker's Placerita Camp" in the eastern part of the canyon which offered furnished cabins, meals, music, parking, and gold panning.

Movies

Frank Walker also rented the cabin to movie studios shooting Westerns. Studios were drawn to the canyon's rugged land and sunny days. (Show typed rental agreements and payments on display board.) Typewriter is a replica of one that may have been used by Frank Walker for business correspondence.

(Show posters on display board from several movies shot on site.) Movies: Robin Hood with Errol Flynn and The Cisco Kid with Duncan Renaldo. Other famous movie stars who were in movies made at Placerita included William Hart, John Wayne, and Roy Rogers. Movie studios were responsible for building the porch, possibly removing the children's bunkhouses, replacing tar paper roof with shingles, and pouring the cement floor (original floor was dirt).

Children were intrigued by the movie people. Clarence worked with Bill Hart from 1925-1930 and was an extra in Cimarron, Best Picture award winner in 1931 (no scenes shot at the cabin).

Park

Frank Walker sold his property to the State of California in 1949, creating Placerita Canyon Park. In 1959 he sold the remaining 288 acres. The park is now operated by the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation. The docent organization provides a variety of high quality programming.

Revised with Bob Walker's comments, 07/31/2024