

MEDAL OF HONOR

MARY WALKER



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MEDAL OF HONOR

MARY WALKER

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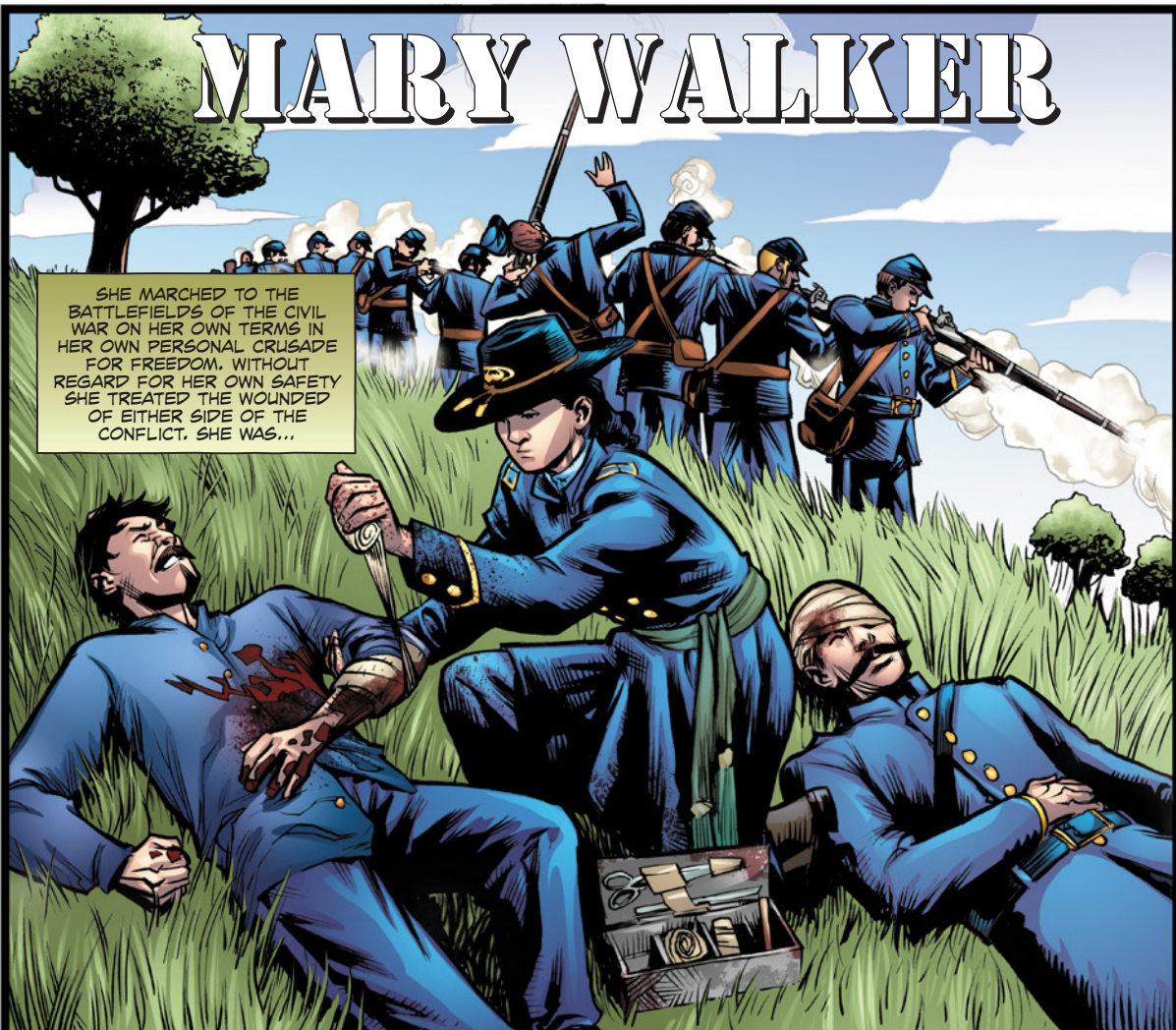
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GENERAL DYNAMICS

MARY WALKER




SHE MARCHED TO THE BATTLEFIELDS OF THE CIVIL WAR ON HER OWN TERMS IN HER OWN PERSONAL CRUSADE FOR FREEDOM. WITHOUT REGARD FOR HER OWN SAFETY SHE TREATED THE WOUNDED OF EITHER SIDE OF THE CONFLICT. SHE WAS...



MARY EDWARDS WALKER WAS BORN IN THE TOWN OF OSWEGO, NEW YORK, IN 1832.

REJECTING THE NOTION OF "THE WEAKER SEX," SHE WORKED THE FAMILY FIELDS ALONGSIDE HER BROTHER AND SISTERS.



SHE WAS SUSPENDED FROM BOWEN COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE FOR REFUSING TO RESIGN FROM THE ALL-MALE DEBATE TEAM.

A SUSPENSION SHE, OF COURSE, DEBATED.

YOU'VE NO BASIS IN FACT FOR THIS SUSPENSION.



SHE GRADUATED FROM MEDICAL SCHOOL IN 1855.

HER DOCTOR'S PRACTICE FAILED BECAUSE THE IDEA OF VISITING A FEMALE DOCTOR WAS OUTSIDE SOCIETAL NORMS.

IT'S MERELY A TOUCH OF CATARRH, MRS. DODD.



WITH THE THREAT OF WAR LOOMING IN 1861, WALKER TRIED TO VOLUNTEER HER SKILLS AS A SURGEON.

SHE WAS DENIED A COMMISSION.

A WOMAN SERVING AS AN OFFICER?

PREPOSTEROUS!



BUT, AS THE UNION ARMY MARCHED INTO VIRGINIA, WALKER WOULD FIND HER OWN WAYS TO HELP THE CAUSE.

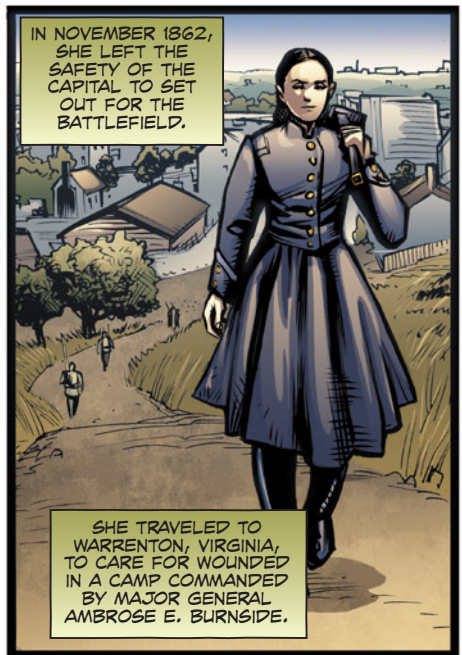
WHAT WAS PREDICTED TO BE A BRIEF CONFLICT TURNED INTO YEARS OF WAR.



WALKER WAS ALLOWED TO WORK, UNPAID, AS A SURGEON'S ASSISTANT AT A MAKESHIFT HOSPITAL OFFICE IN WASHINGTON.

I SEE A BLEED IN THE LOWER BOWEL, SIR.

WELL SPOTTED.



IN NOVEMBER 1862, SHE LEFT THE SAFETY OF THE CAPITAL TO SET OUT FOR THE BATTLEFIELD.

SHE TRAVELED TO WARRENTON, VIRGINIA, TO CARE FOR WOUNDED IN A CAMP COMMANDED BY MAJOR GENERAL AMBROSE E. BURNSIDE.

SHE PETITIONED GENERAL BURNSIDE FOR PERMISSION TO TRANSPORT THE SICK AND WOUNDED TO WASHINGTON.

YOU'LL AGREE THAT THE CONDITION OF THE WOUNDED IS SHOCKING, GENERAL.

THE TRAIN WAS SO CROWDED THAT THE LESS DIRE CASES HAD TO RIDE ON THE ROOFS OF THE CARS.

WITHOUT ADEQUATE DRUGS OR SUPPLIES, WALKER DID HER BEST TO SEE TO THEIR COMFORT.

DURING AN EXTENDED STOP IN THE JOURNEY, WALKER INTERCEDED.

THERE ARE MEN DYING IN THE CARS.

SORRY, MA'AM, WE'RE WAITING ON ORDERS.

I HAVE AUTHORITY, SIGNED BY GENERAL BURNSIDE, TO SEE THESE MEN TO THE CAPITAL. PLEASE PROCEED.

YES, MA'AM.

AT FREDERICKSBURG, THE UNION ARMY CUT DEEP INTO THE HEART OF VIRGINIA WHERE THEY MET STIFF OPPOSITION.

WALKER WAS THERE, TENDING TO THE THOUSANDS OF CASUALTIES AS THEY RETURNED FROM THE FIELD.



WITH THE SOUNDS OF THE BATTLE RAGING ACROSS THE RIVER, SHE DIRECTED THE TRANSPORT OF THE WOUNDED.



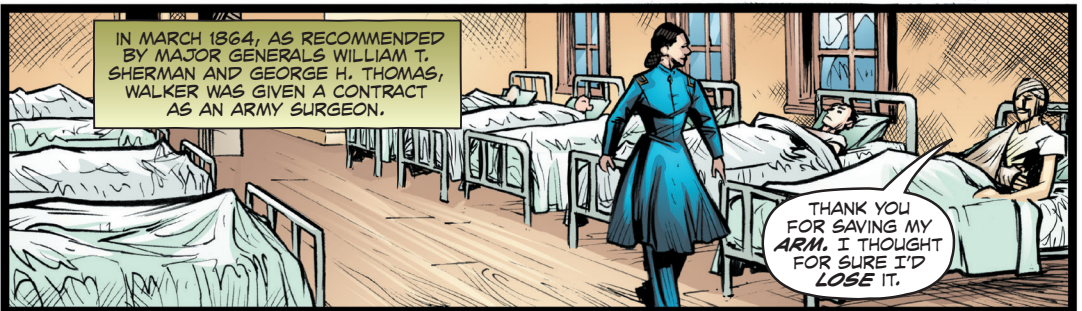
SHE TRAVELLED TO TENNESSEE TO TREAT THE WOUNDED FOLLOWING THE BATTLE AT CHICKAMAUGA IN SEPTEMBER OF 1863.



WALKER KEPT UP A TIRELESS CAMPAIGN FOR OFFICIAL ASSIGNMENT, PENNING LETTERS TO PRESIDENT ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND SECRETARY OF WAR EDWIN M. STANTON.

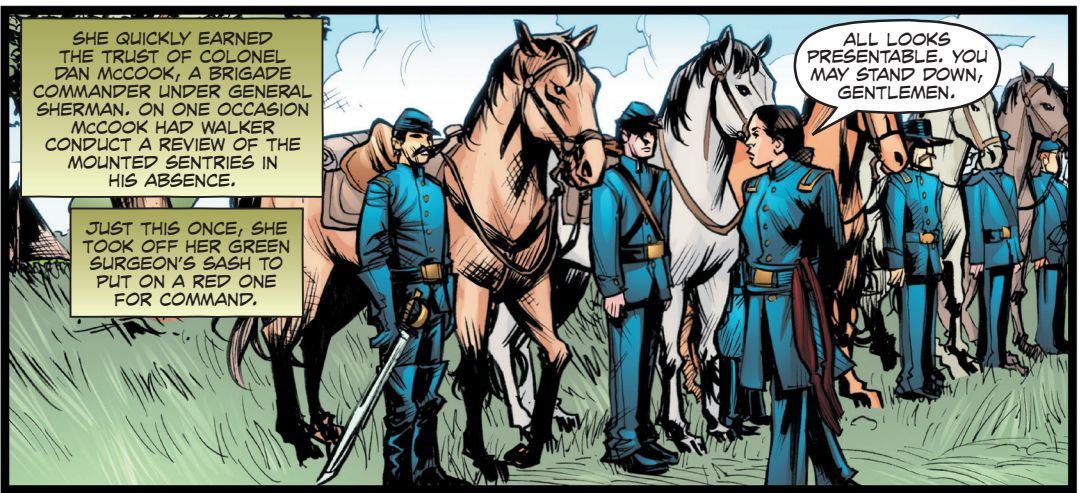


IN MARCH 1864, AS RECOMMENDED BY MAJOR GENERALS WILLIAM T. SHERMAN AND GEORGE H. THOMAS, WALKER WAS GIVEN A CONTRACT AS AN ARMY SURGEON.



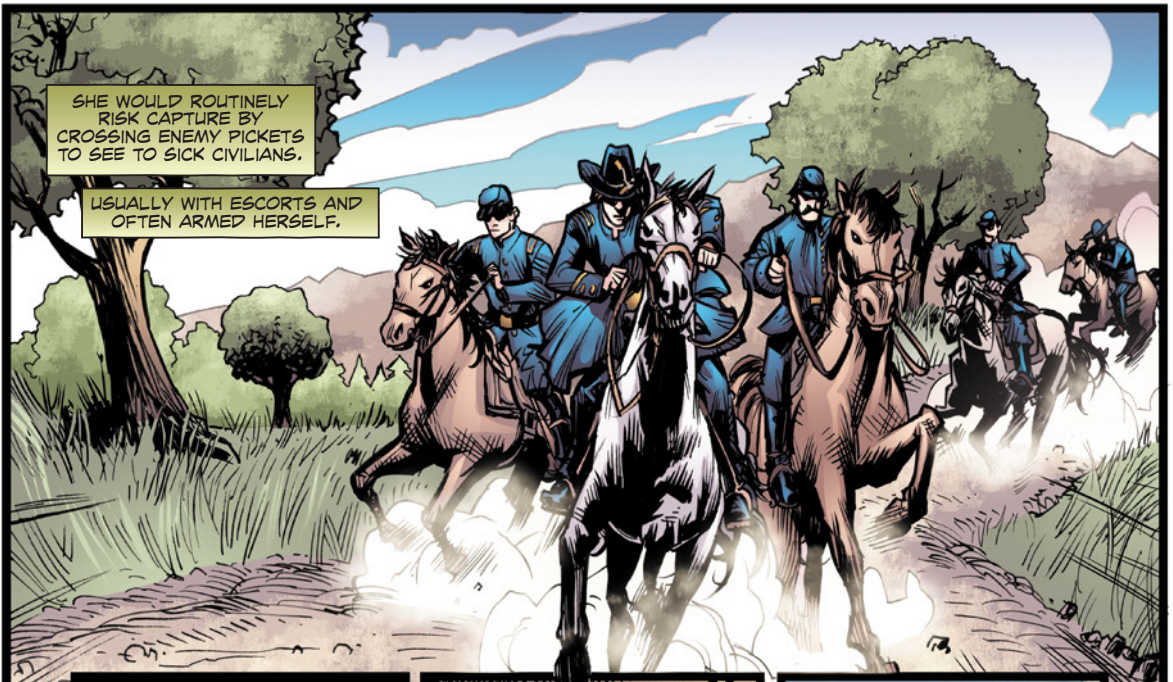
SHE QUICKLY EARNED THE TRUST OF COLONEL DAN MCCOOK, A BRIGADE COMMANDER UNDER GENERAL SHERMAN. ON ONE OCCASION MCCOOK HAD WALKER CONDUCT A REVIEW OF THE MOUNTED SENTRIES IN HIS ABSENCE.

JUST THIS ONCE, SHE TOOK OFF HER GREEN SURGEON'S SASH TO PUT ON A RED ONE FOR COMMAND.



SHE WOULD ROUTINELY RISK CAPTURE BY CROSSING ENEMY PICKETS TO SEE TO SICK CIVILIANS.

USUALLY WITH ESCORTS AND OFTEN ARMED HERSELF.



WALKER BROUGHT HER SKILLS AND COMFORT TO THOSE IN NEED, NO MATTER WHAT FLAG THEY LIVED UNDER.



A MUSTARD POULTICE WILL ALLOW HER TO BREATHE EASIER.

SHE ALSO GATHERED INFORMATION FOR SHERMAN.



SHE SAVED US FROM A *SERIOUS* REVERSE HERE.

SHE WAS ONCE STOPPED BY THE NOTORIOUS REBEL BUSHWHACKER CHAMP FERGUSON.



OH, YOU'RE THE DOCTOR TAKIN' CARE OF *THE FOLKS* OVER YON WAY. ALL RIGHT, PASS ON.

BUT SHE WOULD SUFFER FOR TAKING THESE RISKS WHEN SHE WAS CAPTURED ONCE AGAIN BEHIND THE LINES BY REBEL SOLDIERS IN 1864.



YOU'VE NO CAUSE TO HOLD ME.

WE'LL SEE WHAT OUR *COMMANDER* HAS TO SAY 'BOUT THAT, MISS.



SHE WAS SENT TO THE NOTORIOUS CASTLE THUNDER PRISON CAMP IN RICHMOND, VIRGINIA.



HER POSITION AS A SURGEON, SEEN AS A VOCATION SOLELY FOR A MAN, MADE HER THE PRISON'S MOST FAMOUS INMATE.

EVEN IF SHE THINKS SHE'S A DOCTOR, THAT'S NO OUTFIT FOR A LADY.

I HEAR SHE'S AN ABOLITIONIST.



WALKER WORKED TO KEEP THE PRISONERS AT CASTLE THUNDER ALIVE UNDER THE CRUELEST OF CIRCUMSTANCES.

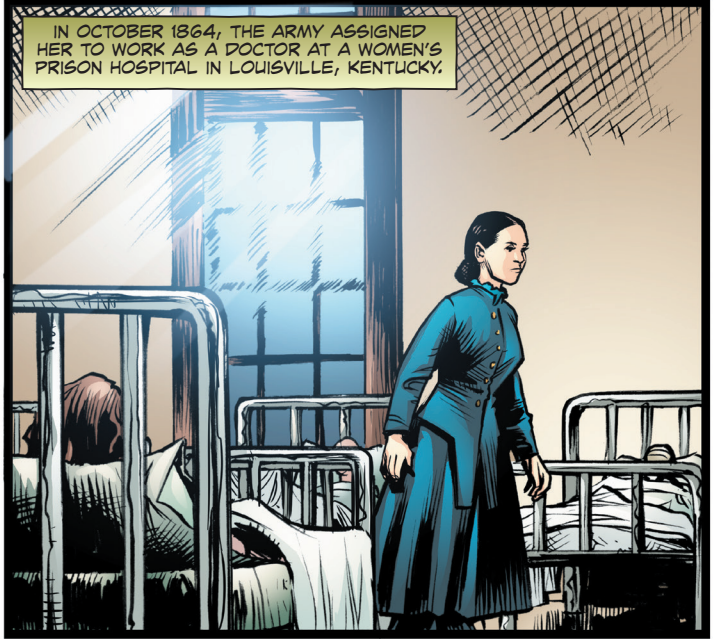
HER TIRELESS EFFORTS SAVED THE LIVES OF HUNDREDS.

AFTER FOUR MONTHS OF INCARCERATION SHE WAS RELEASED IN DIRECT EXCHANGE FOR A CONFEDERATE PHYSICIAN.

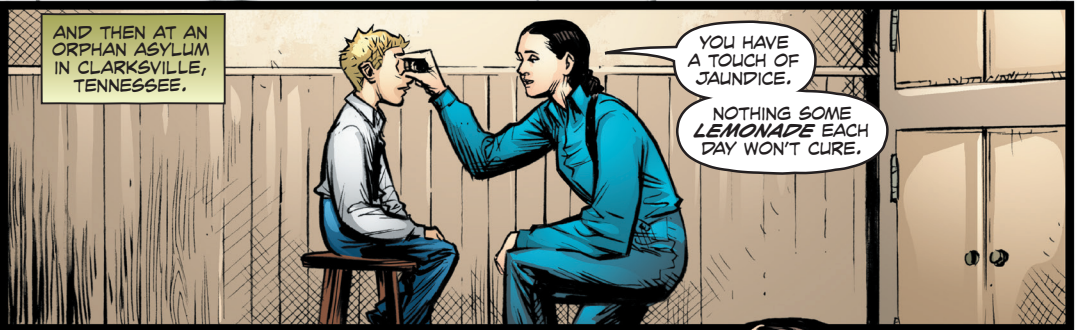


THEY TELL ME HE IS A MAJOR.

IN OCTOBER 1864, THE ARMY ASSIGNED HER TO WORK AS A DOCTOR AT A WOMEN'S PRISON HOSPITAL IN LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY.



AND THEN AT AN ORPHAN ASYLUM IN CLARKSVILLE, TENNESSEE.



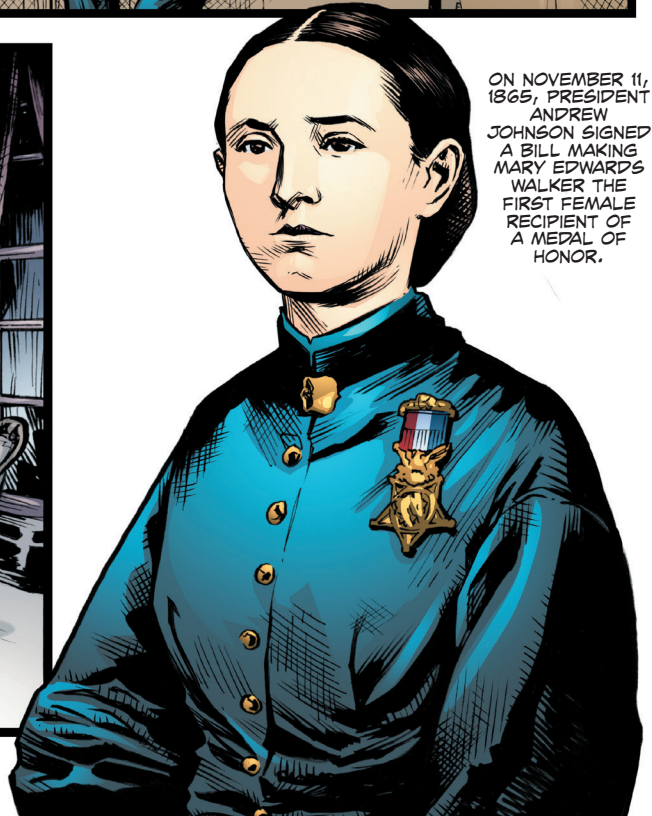
YOU HAVE A TOUCH OF JAUNDICE.

NOTHING SOME LEMONADE EACH DAY WON'T CURE.

AFTER THE WAR, WALKER'S SUPPORTERS WROTE TO THE NEW PRESIDENT ABOUT HER COURAGEOUS SERVICES.



ON NOVEMBER 11, 1865, PRESIDENT ANDREW JOHNSON SIGNED A BILL MAKING MARY EDWARDS WALKER THE FIRST FEMALE RECIPIENT OF A MEDAL OF HONOR.

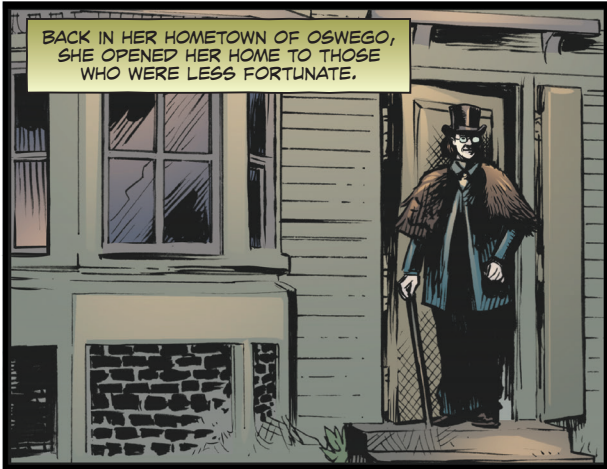




FOR THE REMAINDER OF HER LIFE WALKER MARCHED, SPOKE, AND DEMONSTRATED ON BEHALF OF UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE AND TEMPERANCE.

SHE WAS CALLED TO TESTIFY ON THE WOMEN'S VOTE IN CONGRESS.

I AM GOING TO SHOW HOW WOMEN HAVE ALWAYS HAD EQUAL RIGHTS WITH MEN.



BACK IN HER HOMETOWN OF OSWEGO, SHE OPENED HER HOME TO THOSE WHO WERE LESS FORTUNATE.



LOOKING TO APPLY NEW CRITERIA FOR THE MEDAL OF HONOR, A REVIEW BOARD VOTED IN 1917 TO REVOKE WALKER'S AWARD.



NEVER ONE TO BOW TO AUTHORITY, WALKER REFUSED TO RETURN THE MEDAL. SHE WORE IT PROUDLY EVERY DAY UNTIL HER DEATH IN FEBRUARY 1919.

WOMEN WERE GIVEN THE RIGHT TO VOTE IN THE UNITED STATES THE FOLLOWING YEAR.

IT IS A SHAME THAT PEOPLE WHO LEAD REFORMS IN THIS WORLD ARE NOT APPRECIATED UNTIL AFTER THEY ARE DEAD.



IN 1977, THE ARMY BOARD FOR CORRECTIONS OF MILITARY RECORDS REVIEWED WALKER'S CASE. THEY FOUND THAT PRESIDENT JOHNSON HAD VALIDLY AWARDED HER THE MEDAL OF HONOR IN 1865.

THE ARMY CORRECTED THE OFFICIAL RECORDS.

THE ACTION TAKEN IN 1917 IS VOID.



TO THIS DAY, MARY EDWARDS WALKER REMAINS THE ONLY FEMALE RECIPIENT OF THE MEDAL OF HONOR.

HER SENSE OF DUTY, UNDYING LOYALTY, COMPASSION, AND VALOR UNDER THE DIREST CONDITIONS STILL SERVE AS AN EXAMPLE.

THE END

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