

## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

James W. Walk was born near Chambersburg in Franklin County, Pennsylvania on March 14, 1853. He was the son of the Reverend Frederick and Mary Harris (Brown) Walk. He attended Lafayette College and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1875. After graduating from Lafayette he enrolled at the University of Pennsylvania Medical School and received his M.D. from Penn in 1878.

Much of James W. Walk's life was devoted to the advancement of organized charities in Philadelphia. He wrote many articles in local Philadelphia newspapers expressing the need for better, more organized charitable groups.

After practicing medicine in Philadelphia for a number of years he joined the Philadelphia Society for Organizing Charity and became their general secretary. He served in this capacity from 1882 to 1899 and was the editor of The Monthly Register. This journal was produced by the charities to disseminate their ideas and to gather support for their work.

In addition to his work with charities, Walk served two terms as a member of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, 1887-1888 and 1890-1891. During these terms he championed the need for an organized state charity committee to aid local charitable groups.

In 1892 James W. Walk became the first Director of City Charities and Correction. He left this position in 1897 to serve as Philadelphia's Bureau of Health Director. He stayed with the health bureau for two years before leaving in 1899 to return to private practice.

James W. Walk remained active in charity work throughout the rest of his life, though he did not hold any formal positions or titles after he left the health bureau. Throughout his career in charity and medicine James W. Walk worked occasionally as an editor of newspapers and journals. He solicited this work from his various contacts within the profession and by advertising in magazines and newspapers.

James W. Walk remained a bachelor all his life. He died January 19, 1918 at his home in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

## **SCOPE AND CONTENT**

The James W. Walk Papers consist of two linear inches of photographs, articles, letters and newspaper clippings relating to the life of James W. Walk, Class of 1875. The majority of these items were assembled by his nephew, John W. Harshberger after Walk's death in 1918. Notable materials in this collection include a land warrant issued in 1823 and a grouping of letters Walk received in response to his questionnaire about how much surgeons charge per operation.

**WALK, JAMES WILSON PAPERS,  
1866-1918**

**SKILLMAN LIBRARY  
LAFAYETTE COLLEGE**

Much of this collection had been arranged into a scrapbook detailing Walk's life. This scrapbook has been disassembled and foldered. This collection documents James W. Walk's life as a doctor and his interests in editing and charitable organizations. A number of the articles Walk wrote have been removed and are now located in the Lafayette Collection.

**PROVENANCE**

The bulk of the James W. Walk Papers was donated to Lafayette College by Roy and Jean Kulp, rare book and manuscript dealers. Located with this collection were some items of John W. Harshberger, a nephew of James W. Walk. The John W. Harshberger items were donated to the University of Pennsylvania Archives as he was a graduate of the school and had taught biology there for a number of years.

**INVENTORY**

Folder

- 1 "A Life Sketch of the Hon. James Wilson Walk AB, M.D. with Portraits and Selections from his Versifications, Prose Work and General Correspondence"  
Compiled by John W. Harshberger, Philadelphia, PA: January 28, 1918
- 2 Knights of Honor-Beneficial Society certificate: 1906
- 3 Thirteenth (1866) and Twenty-sixth (1879) Annual Report of the Northern Home for Friendless Children
- 4 Notes taken from a lecture by R.W.D. Bryan on the voyage of the Polaris: n.d.
- 5 Joseph and Oliver Brown-Warrant for land in Franklin Co., PA: 1823
- 6 Patent for "Improvement in Sleeve and Cuff Retainers" made out to Martha M. Walk: September 25, 1877