

From the book "Central Arizona Ghost Towns" by Robert L. Spude and Stanley W. Paher

"Joseph Reddeford Walker, a mountain man and trapper, led the first gold seekers into the unchartered mountains of central Arizona in 1863. In May the party discovered pay dirt along the Hassayampa River and crossing the pine covered divide to Lynx Creek found its rich placers. Word of the strike reached surrounding states and territories and a rush of veteran Californians, Pike Peakers from Colorado, and even miners from districts in Idaho and Montana scurried to the diggings. A census in 1864 found 1610 settlers in the mountains and along streams where only the Yavapai had dwelled two years before."

"A collection of 60 log houses and a store comprised Walker's Camp along Lynx Creek the first winter and a reported 500 miners actively worked the gulch. Of these Pioneers, one visitor wrote "I never saw as many handsome men in the same number before, they are all fine specimens of the physical man...and are quick, intelligent, shrewd men, and very many have superior educations. I saw only one woman on the creek" Many of these hardy Hassayampers, would later discover diggings and lodes throughout the territory – at nearby Poland, at McCrackin, at Clifton, and dozens more."

"With sluice boxes, ditches, long toms, and familiar gold pans, they wash out \$1.5 million in placer gold during the first rainy seasons. In the summer of 1864, Yavapais began attacking the diggings and miners left in droves, either for sprees in San Francisco or for other districts. Any hopes of a permanent settlement at Walker vanished when Prescott townsite was plotted seven miles away as Arizona's first territorial capital."

"A quartz mining excitement in 1865-1867 brought three mills, a wagon road, and hard rock miners to the district, but cursed "sulfurets" (low grade pyrite ores) appearing barely fifty feet from the surface led to a shutdown of operations. At the end of the decade, editor John Marion of the *Arizona Miner* found Walker "the scene of deserted cabins, sluices, and other mining apparatus."

"During winters and the rainy season, fifty or so placer miners manned the gulches, but only Christopher Shelton and aged "Uncle Billy" Pointer resided at Walker throughout the year. The whitebearded "Uncle Billy" had left his wife and tin kids in Missouri to find his fortune in Colorado and Arizona and in 187 the 68 year-old miner returned home after digging out \$50,000 from the Pointer lode."

"In 1879 Shelton became Walker's first postmaster as the permanent population had increased to 150. He also operated a store at the terminus of a buckboard express line from Prescott. Miners still worked the creek but principal activity shifted to lode mining. The nearby camp of Howell and another at the Amulet mine temporarily stole Walker's limelight until the 1890's when Eastern money was poured into the old camp. With railroads at

Prescott, and the Indian war long past, and the availability of new mining techniques, Walker was ready for a boom.”

Pennsylvania investors formed the Penn Gold Mining Co. to open the Mudhole mine, a name indicative of the working conditions there. A Chicago group formed the Metal Mining Co., bought Shelton’s claims, built a mill, and began shipping gold concentrates to distant smelters. These and a half dozen other firms hired miners to dig out ore and millers to crush it and extract the gold. Freight teams hauled concentrates to the railroad at Prescott until May 1904 when the 8,017 foot Poland-Walker haulage tunnel connected the camp with the Bradshaw Mountain Railroad.”

“Adjacent to the Mudhole mine, a camp of 200 supported saloons, lodgings, restaurants, icehouse laundry, hospital, general stores, corral and feed lot, and barber shop.

Walker Hall was the social center, but no red-light district was formed. Women were imported from Prescott each payday.”

“After producing another half million in gold, copper and lead, miners striking for an eight hour work day forced shutdowns in 1903. The Mudhole Mine, Metallic Co., and others remained closed. In June 1909 a fire which swept through hotels, saloons, and other shops destroyed most of Walker and the camp was never rebuilt.”

“Periodic revivals have occurred when metal prices rose or when optimists vainly searched for new bonanzas. During the 1920’s, the Sheldon Mining Co., a subsidiary of the owners of the Humboldt smelter, reopened the mines once by C. Y. Shelton. Equipment included a 200-ton concentration flotation plant, a narrow gauge railroad, and an electric plant operating the hoists and concentrators. Another million dollars worth of metal came out of the Walker hills until the plant shut down in 1930.”

“Walker’s pine trees, flowing stream, and history has attracted newcomers and summer homes. In between them stand remnants of log cabins, mine dumps, wagon trails, a charcoal kiln, and at the Shelton mine a vast orange-white tailing dump.”