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Mine tales

Mines near defunct town of Walker yielded silver, gold

By William Ascarza For the Arizona Daily Star Nov 8, 2015



A look at early hydraulic monitors operating by Lynx Creek, near Prescott. The creek was named for a lynx was shot nearby in the 1860s.

Courtesy of Arizona, Prehistoric, Aboriginal, Pioneer, Modern



The town of Walker, located 12 miles southeast of its region's mining base of operations in Prescott, was named for Capt. Joseph Reddeford Walker.



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In spring 1863, Walker led a group of 30 about gold prospectors in Central Arizona.

At the time, placer mining was a dangerous business due to Apache raids, so miners worked in pairs. One used a shovel, while the other had a rifle.



Salt mining in Arizona dates back centuries



Mine Tales: Salt crucial throughout history, is found in state

Initial panning along Lynx Creek yielded \$4.80 in gold. Sam C. Miller, a member of the Walker party, shot a lynx nearby, and the creek got its name.

The Walker Mining District was begun with Walker's party being allotted 300 running feet of steam bed apiece in which to conduct gold panning operations.



Mine Tales: Brickmaking in Tucson dates to 1880s

The discovery of gold on Lynx Creek excited the expedition enough to establish the town of Walker. It had a humble beginning, made up of several log cabins built on either side of the creek.

Walker reached a population of 2,700, and eventually included a hotel, schools, saloons, a hospital and a post office that operated from 1879 until 1940.

Sources

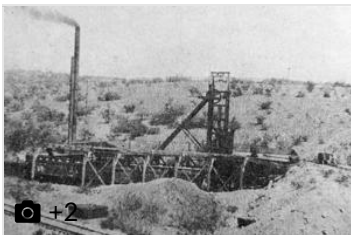
The town's economy was sustained by the local

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Mining claims in former town of Courtland overblown

mines, and their decline in the early 20th century meant decline for the town. A fire destroyed much of the town's integrity in 1909.

Several underground mines in the district included the Amulet, Mudhole and Sheldon mines.

The Amulet Mine was known for its production of high-grade silver ore.

The Mudhole Mine produced \$480,000 in gold and silver between 1897 and 1903. It had an inclined shaft reaching 740 feet deep, with 2,000 feet of workings.

The Sheldon Mine, 1 mile southwest of Walker, saw heightened development in the late 1920s, with a shaft reaching 1,280 feet. It featured several thousand feet of workings.

An onsite flotation plant built in 1924 processed several thousand tons of copper-lead ore from which some gold and silver was derived.

The vein of mineralization composed of quartz, calcite, pyrite and galena is described as having pinched and swelled with an average thickness measuring 5 feet. The ore mined at the site was notable in that it averaged \$5 in gold and 8.5 ounces of silver per ton.

The ore was milled onsite and transported by mule-drawn wagon through the Poland-Walker Tunnel connecting Walker to the rail connection at Poland, while negating an alternative 14-mile route through mountainous terrain.



Mine Tales:
Transportation costs
crucial to Christmas
Mine

Begun in 1897, the entire tunnel stretched 8,071 feet, 1,100 of which were through solid granite. Dimensions were 8 feet high by 12 feet wide at a depth reaching 1,200 feet below the surface. Lit by carbide lamps with ore cars accommodated by narrow gauge tracks, the tunnel was considered a marvel of engineering. It was completed in 1904 at a cost of \$500,000.

Lynx Creek saw a flurry of activity in the form of the construction of arrastras, sluices and hydraulic mining operations.

Hydraulic operations along Lynx Creek began humbly in 1869 with the development of ditches and flumes. Large reservoirs, including one in Rich Gulch, provided necessary water to sustain placer operations.

Giant monitors moved 1,000 yards of gravel a day. Gravels yielded \$1.25 a yard in gold in 1916. That same year, four hydraulic giant monitors owned by Wichita Placer Co. were employed along Lynx Creek, along with two sets of 40-foot-long sluice boxes.

Today, the Walker townsite is surrounded by Prescott National Forest, private mining claims and summer homes. Remnants of Walker's mining history include a nearby charcoal kiln and mill foundations. The entrance to the Poland-Walker Tunnel collapsed in 1949, and its interior filled with water.

Lynx Creek yielded \$2 million of gold by the 1930s, the largest figure of placer gold yet produced in Arizona's stream beds.

Archivist, historian and author William Ascarza's forthcoming book, "In Search of Fortunes: A Look at the History of Arizona Mining," will be published in December 2015, and is available for a pre-order holiday discount. For more information, contact M.T. Publishing Co. at (812) 468-8022. <http://mtpublishing.com/index.php/soon/historical-publications/local-history/in-search-of-fortunes-standard.html#VXnmF1Csi-0>