

John D. Walker and the Map, Part II

The Dutchman's Lost Mine story centers around a German prospector named Jacob Waltz, a rich gold mine and the Superstition Mountains. Men and women have tried to locate this "grand daddy of all lost mines" for more than a century.

Several men have searched for this mine and then emerged as key figures in its story. Names such as Bark, Safford, Ely, Corbin, and Walker have all become part of the Waltz legacy. One of these men played a key role in the story, but probably never searched for the Dutchman's mine itself. This man was John D. Walker, and Arizona history treats Walker differently than it treats the other lost mine buffs, pulp writers and storytellers of the legendary Dutchman's Lost Mine.

Walker was born in Illinois in 1840 and later became an officer in the U.S. Army during the Civil War. He was put in charge of a wagon train in New Mexico Territory in early 1862.

Captain John D. Walker hauled supplies to the camps and forts that dotted the Arizona frontier. When he mustered out of the Army in April of 1865 he settled on a farm with the friendly Pimas along the Gila River. He eventually married a Pima named Churga and had a daughter named Juana.

When Pinal County was organized, John D. Walker became the County Engineer. He also served as County Probate Judge for several terms and was a highly respected citizen in Pinal County and Florence.

Walker formed a prospecting and mining partnership with P.R. Beady and Juan Jose Gradello in 1879. He and his two friends filed on the Vekol silver claims on February 5, 1880 and the Vekol Mine made Walker a rich man. A Papago Indian led Walker and his partners to this rich outcrop.

John D. Walker heard many stories about lost gold and silver mines in the mountains surrounding Florence. The rich Vekol Mine had been a mine lost and then rediscovered. Prior to Walker's acquisition of the mine it had been known as the Lost Pima Mine.

The following is a reported scenario as to how Walker became involved with the famed Dutchman's Lost Mine in the Superstition Mountains. Storytellers claim that, while Walker was campaigning against the Apache in the Superstition Mountains with his Pima Volunteers and elements of the U.S. Army infantries, he observed two old prospectors with pack burros in an area that is today called La Barge Canyon.

Walker later learned these two old prospectors were Jacob Waltz and Jacob Wisner (Wieser). It was apparent these two old men were taking a great risk to prospect in the heart of Apache country. The Army had reported finding many skeletal remains of prospectors and cattlemen who ventured into these rugged mountains during their recent campaigns against the Apaches. Nothing would deter prospectors from searching these mountains for gold except a fatal arrow or bullet.

Many years later Walker recalled these two old prospectors and, according to one source, told the following story:

Late one evening, a fatally wounded old man appeared at his ranch on the Gila River. He had two arrow wounds and three bullet wounds. The old man told Walker his name was Jacob Wisner and that he had just survived an Indian attack in the Superstition Mountains two days prior. The old man, with his wounds, had walked more than twenty miles to Walker's ranch.

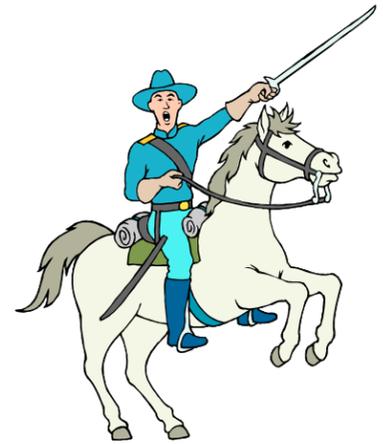
Wisner explained to Walker that he and his partner, Jacob Waltz, had been working a rich Mexican gold mine in the Superstition Mountains. After four days, Waltz returned to Mill City for supplies. Wisner further told Walker that he and Waltz had saved a wealthy Mexican land owner's life in Mexico, and in return for their deed of bravery, the Mexican's family had given them a map to a rich gold mine. The Mexican man claimed their family had worked the mine for over three decades prior to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

Wisner said they had no problems finding the mine, but when they arrived near the site in the Superstition Mountains they found two Mexicans working the mine. They killed the Mexican workers and took possession of the mine. Wisner claimed the two Mexicans looked like Indians so they shot them.

Walker was convinced Wisner could not live long and asked him to draw a detailed map as to the location of the mine. Wisner agreed to draw the map in return for a decent burial. He sketched the map that Walker had requested, hence the 'Walker-Wisner Map'.

Walker never found the Dutchman's Lost Mine and really didn't spend much, if any time looking for it. He had found and developed a rich silver mine called the Vekol. He did grubstake a couple of prospectors who took a look for the mine after the Wisner episode.

Walker later became ill and lost his mind. He was moved to a sanatorium near Napa, California, in 1890. Captain (Brevet Lt.) John D. Walker died there on September 2, 1891.



John D. Walker came to the Arizona Territory as a U.S. Army cavalry officer.