



## **Firearms Collections of the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum**

### **Excerpt of Project Report by Tom Andrews**

#### **Colt Walker, B Company**

The following article has been adapted from a special project report on key artifacts in the Firearms Collections of the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum. This project report was written in 2018 based on extensive research compiled by project intern Tom Andrews.

## **Colt Walker, B Company**

### **Condition of the Firearm**

The pistol is in overall good condition. The metal has faded to a gray patina. There are several nicks in the metal, mostly on the barrel. The cylinder scene is very faded, but still faintly visible without magnification. All serial numbers are matching. The serial number is observed on the left side of the barrel, the cylinder, the frame below the cylinder, the bottom of the trigger guard, the front of the frame where it meets the barrel, and inside the wooden grips. The wedge is unnumbered, possibly a period replacement. The grips are in very nice condition. There is wear on the cylinder around the primer nipples. There is similar wear in the frame where the hammer travels. There is rust on the top of the frame under the hammer as well as on the inside of the hammer and on the mainspring. There is rust inside the cylinders and on the primer nipples. There is corrosion on the brass grip inside the gun. Mechanical functions are very good, with the wedge spring not completely engaging. The letters "IXL" are cut into the bottom of the grip along with stippling in the shape of a heart. There is an additional design on the bottom of the grip and at the base of the back strap which appears to depict handcuffs. These appear to be period alterations.

### **History of the Colt Walker Pistol**

The legendary Colt Walker pistol is perhaps the single most desirable firearm for collectors of Colts. The Walker was manufactured beginning in 1847, with a total production of approximately 1,100. It features a .44 caliber, 6-shot cylinder and a 9" part round, part octagonal barrel. The pistol tips the scales at 4 pounds, 9 ounces. Grips were one piece carved walnut. Frames, hammers, and levers were casehardened. The balance was blued, trigger guard left in plain brass, and the cylinders were left unfinished, "in the white." Despite the New York City address on the barrels, all examples were manufactured in Whitneyville, Connecticut. The first pistols were shipped to Mexico, and a pair were presented to Captain Walker, who had lobbied Colt to produce a more powerful replacement for the Colt Paterson.

Serial numbers on Colt Walkers begin with a letter denoting the company they were issued to, A,B,C,D, or E. Each grouping begins at 1. The Company marked revolvers totaled one thousand. Barrel are marked: "ADDRESS SAM COLT NEW-YORK CITY." On the right side of the lug, usually under the wedge retaining screw, the marking: "US/1847" can be found. The cylinders are roll engraved with a Texas Ranger and Indian fight scene. This scene is faded to illegibility on the majority of surviving examples. Government inspector markings are often present on the grips and other parts.

It is estimated that just over ten percent of the total production of Walker Revolvers have survived to the modern day. Some number of the pistols were destroyed when their cylinders burst due to overloading. The chambers were longer than the maximum safe load they could fire, resulting in catastrophic failure when they were loaded to capacity. This researcher was able to find references for the survival of 187 Walkers, or seventeen percent.<sup>1 2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix I

<sup>2</sup> Flayderman, *Flayderman's Guide to Antique American Firearms and Their Values*, 83–84.

<sup>3</sup> Wilson, *Colt Book*, 79.

### Information Specific to this Firearm

This pistol bears the serial number "B Company No. 143" in all of the places one should find it on a Walker. The serial number appears on the left side of the barrel, the left side of the frame below the cylinder, on the cylinder, on the bottom of the trigger guard, on the inside of the wooden grips, and on the trigger guard spur inside the grips. The letters "IXL" are cut into the bottom of the back strap, which was apparently a common modification for favored arms in that period and appears on many knives of the era. (Footnote: Conversation with Byron Johnson 6/25/18) There is also stippling which appears to have been applied with the point of a knife in the shape of a heart and two designs which appear to depict handcuffs.