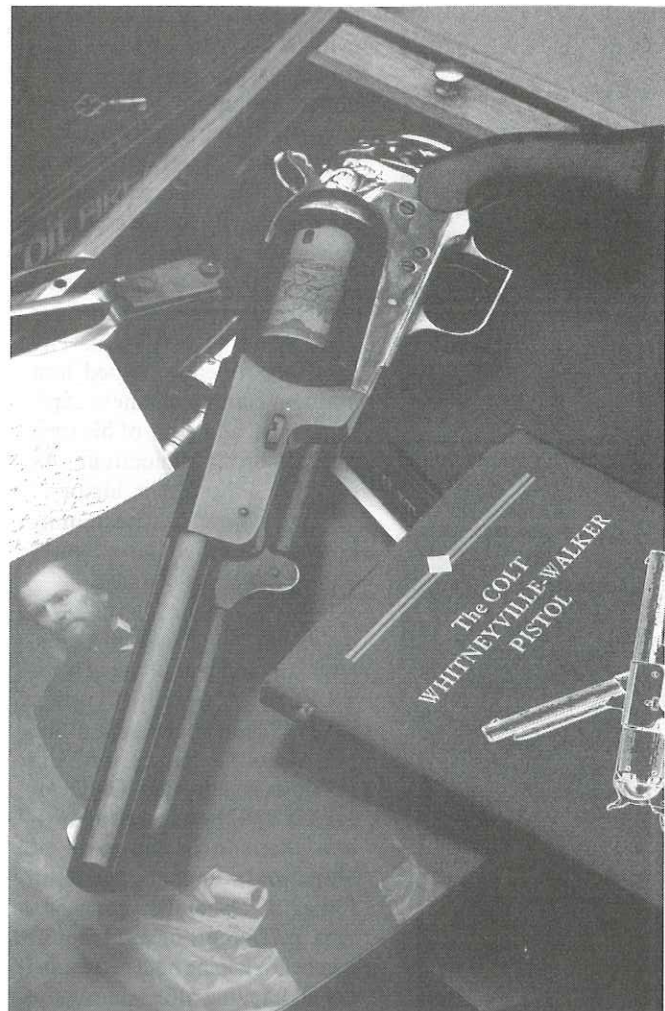


# The 1847 Colt Walker

*This year marks the 150th anniversary of the Colt Walker. Following are accounts of the history and the present course of this revolver.*

All photographs in the following article are by Bruno Circi.

*First repeating arm officially adopted by the U.S. Army, in 1847 the Colt-Walker started the fortunes of one of the most famous firms in American arms making.*

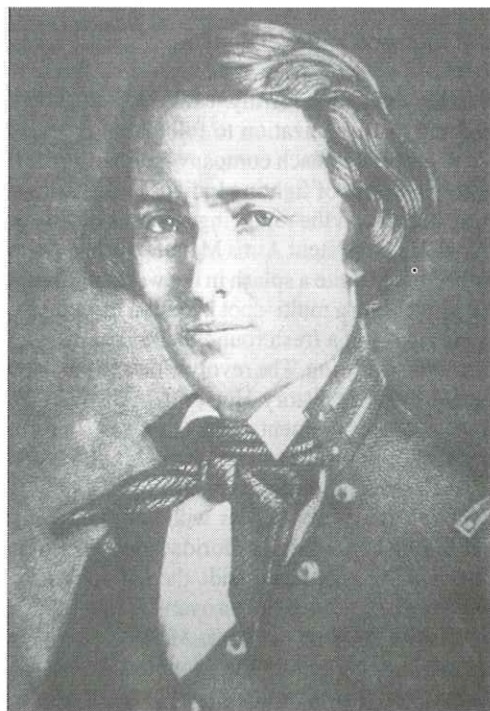


## *The Men and the Events Behind the Gun; Colt's Continuation*

*by Philip Schreier*

Few firearms in history have captured the imagination of collectors and historians like the Walker Model Colt Revolver of 1847. Considered the crown jewel of any firearms collection, the Walker is unique among historic firearms, for it was the development of this revolver that made Colt the household name in quality firearms that it has been for the past 150 years. It was the practical genius of Captain Samuel Hamilton Walker of the US Mounted Rifles that rescued Samuel Colt from the brink of oblivion and bankruptcy and made him the world-renowned manufacturer of "the world's right arm."

Samuel H. Walker was born on February 24, 1817 in Prince George's County Maryland. The light-haired, blue-eyed Walker had three sisters and three brothers. The brothers, Nathan, Jonathan and Charles, grew up on their father Jonathan's farm and acquired an early interest in the outdoors and equestrian skills that were popular in the region at the time. Not one to be tied down to life on the farm, the young Samuel enlisted in the Washington, D.C. City Volunteers on June 1, 1836 and served with distinction in the Creek War, and then in Florida against the Seminoles. He ventured to Texas and joined Jack Hay's Company of Mounted Texas Rangers in 1844. As a member of the famous Texas Rangers he busied himself, along with his command, in dealing with Comanches and troublesome Mexican guerrillas. When the Mexican war broke out, Walker



*Samuel Hamilton Walker (1817-1847) forever linked his name to that of Samuel Colt in a crucial moment of American industrial history.*

was commissioned as a Captain on 11 April 1846 in what would be known as Walkers Co. of Texas Mounted Rangers. By June 24th of the same year he had risen to the rank of Lt. Colonel. His meteoric rise in rank was no doubt due in part to the aggressive way that Samuel had decided to fight the war. Taking risk after risk, even once volunteering to run the gauntlet through enemy lines to reach General Zacary Taylor's besieged troops, Walker had earned a reputation as a man who could be depended on and trusted to accomplish any task.

General Taylor initially refused to accept volunteer troops under his command. He reasoned that volunteers were undisciplined, knew nothing of military customs, and were impossible to control in a time of crisis. Walker's command began to change his outlook however. By coming to Taylor's assistance at the siege of Fort Brown and at the battles of Palo Alto, Resaca de la Palma and Monterrey, Walker convinced Taylor that there was some merit in the way he and his men brought the war to the Mexicans. Taylor consented to lift his ban on volunteer troops and mustered Walker and his men into the Federal Service as Co. C, United States Mounted Rifles (USMR). The USMR became a new branch of the Regular Federal Army. Walker was sent by Taylor to recruit and equip the organization to full strength; five companies, lettered A through E, each company numbering 100 men.

From his days of fighting Indians and Mexicans, Walker came to rely heavily on the revolving firearms of Col. Samuel Colt and his now defunct Patent Arms Manufacturing Co. of Paterson, N.J. Colt had made quite a splash in the world of firearms manufacturing by inventing a multi-shot handgun that employed a revolving cylinder to bring a fresh round to the breech of a single barrel in preparation for firing. The revolver that he patented in 1836 would eventually change history. However, initial sales were sluggish and government procurement of the arms was not forthcoming. Eventually Colt was forced to declare bankruptcy, and he sold his factory, tools and equipment to repay creditors.

Walker had great success with some of Colt's Paterson carbines during his service in Florida against the Seminoles. His exploits as a Texas Ranger made the national media when he and Captain Jack Hayes held off an overwhelming number of Comanche Indians with the Paterson Texas Model Colt revolver. Directed by General Taylor to equip the Mounted Rifles, Walker sought to procure the finest in military hardware for his men. He met with Colt to offer him a contract for 1000 revolvers of an improved design more suitable for the hard uses of mounted warfare. Together they designed an improved revolver nearly twice the size of



*Expressly requested in 1847 by the U.S. Ordnance Department, the frame's casehardening would remain a basic characteristic for Colt military revolvers until the turn of the century.*

the Paterson. With an enormous cylinder bored to accept .44 caliber bullets, this four-pound, nine-ounce behemoth could serve double duty as a firearm or a substantial club. For over 130 years the Walker revolver remained the most powerful production revolver ever produced!

Walker secured a government contract for Colt to deliver 1000 of these revolvers. The resulting revenue helped him build up enough business capital to open a factory of his own in Hartford, Connecticut. As they say, "the rest is history." Colt revolvers have been military issue in the United States Armed Forces ever since!

Walker's future was unfortunately not as rich as Sam Colt's. He received a pair of the new revolvers (#'s 1009 & 1010) within days of leading a column of the US Mounted Rifles into the Mexican countryside. On October 8th, 1847 he attacked a Mexican garrison in the town of Humantala and engaged the forces of Generalissimo Santa Ana in fierce house-to-house combat. Wielding both his revolvers with telling effect during the fight, he was shot in the head and chest by a Mexican lancer armed with a shotgun. He died telling his men to continue the fight. His revolvers and other personal effects

were returned to his family in Maryland shortly thereafter, where they remained for the next hundred years. Walker's company of Mounted Rifles received their issue revolvers just two weeks after the leader's death. A Walker model that Sam Colt mistakenly believed was originally Sam Walker's (#1020) remained his most treasured possession until his death in 1862.

The list of firsts associated with the Walker Model Colt is long and prestigious. Among the highlights:

- \*The first revolver adopted for use by the United States Military
- \*The largest production revolver ever made.
- \*The most powerful production revolver in existence for 130 years. (60g fff & 451 round ball=1500 fps initial muzzle velocity).
- \*The rarest Colt to collect. Of 1100 produced only 10% are known to survive today.
- \*Captain Sam Walker's personal pair of Walker Colts (# 1009 & 1010) are considered the most valuable revolvers in the world. (\$1.5 million est. value).

This year Colt celebrates the 150th Anniversary of the Walker (1847-1997) with a Limited Edition featuring original A Company No. 1 markings embellished in gold. Serial numbers will begin with #221, a continuation of A Company numbers. For more information on the model and other Colt percussion models, contact Colt Blackpowder 110 8th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11215, telephone (718) 499-4678, fax: (718) 768-8056.