Joseph Walker was born in Port Henry, New York, but grew up in Syracuse, where he received his education. After earning a law degree, he joined the Civil Service, where he worked for 32 years. In 1888, he switched to the Secret Service where he served in President Grover Cleveland’s personal security detail.

Later he moved to Denver to take charge of the Secret Service’s field office there and oversee operations in several western states and territories.

In 1907, there was a large land fraud investigation in southwestern Colorado concerning coal mining operations. On November 3rd of that year Walker, another agent, a geologist, and a miner left Hesperus, 12 miles outside of Durango, to investigate a man named William Mason and his mine. While the others defended into the shaft, Walker stayed on the surface. He was ambushed by Mason and killed. He was one of the very first members of the Secret Service to die in the line of duty.

William Mason and Mr. Joe Vanderwiede were charged with murder in Durango, in a case with overwhelming evidence to support the charge. However, the men claimed self-defense. Ultimately, the men were acquitted. When they were re-arrested on a federal warrant, a federal judge ruled that this constituted double-jeopardy and both men were again released. Without Walker’s testimony, the land fraud charges against Mason were also dropped.

As a result of Agent Walker’s death, President Theodore Roosevelt had two laws passed; one that provided federal pensions to families of agents killed in the line of duty and another that made it a federal crime to kill an office in the discharge of his duty.

Walker did not have a marker until 2010.

Located in Lot 28, Block 8.