

# Julius Wagner

Julius Wagner was born 24 January 1848 in Prussia, Germany.<sup>1</sup> He immigrated to America in 1854 and was a naturalized as a citizen before 1900.<sup>2</sup> In 1875, he was a machinist in Lincoln, Nevada.<sup>3</sup> He was living in Silver Reef, Washington, Utah Territory in 1879 when he patented a new tap for tin cans that allowed its contents to be drawn out a little at a time without waste or dumping into another container (see diagram below).<sup>4</sup>

Julius owned a drug store in Silver Reef on the corner of Main and Center Streets, next to the Elk Horn Saloon.<sup>5</sup> In 1879, the store was spared in the great fire, but Julius served on the fire committee.<sup>6</sup> In 1881, Julius was one of six men who signed the lease of the community center for use as the new public school building.<sup>7</sup>

Julius moved to Pinos Altos, Grant, New Mexico Territory, a gold mining town. He ran a drug store there, which he closed in 1890.<sup>8</sup> He moved south a few miles to Silver City, Grant, New Mexico Territory.<sup>9</sup> He married Maria Gregoria Roque Chaves Walcott in 1893 in Silver City. They were both well known, highly respected, refined, educated, and accomplished.<sup>10</sup> Julius was a mining assay expert and druggist.<sup>11</sup> He served as a member of the committee to draft resolutions against the proposed division of Grant County.<sup>12</sup>

Julius served as city councilman for Silver City, New Mexico from 1896-1900.<sup>13</sup> On the 1900 census, he was living with his wife in Silver City<sup>14</sup>, but shortly thereafter he resigned as councilman<sup>15</sup> and moved to El Paso, El Paso, Texas<sup>16</sup>, for mining assay work.<sup>17</sup> In 1908, he was voted a member of the chamber of commerce.<sup>18</sup> He was listed as a miner on the 1910 census, living with his wife<sup>19</sup> but was referred to as Dr. Wagner.<sup>20</sup> In 1914 there was a court case, Gregoria C Wagner vs Julius Wagner, for divorce and restoration of former name.<sup>21</sup> Then three years later, there is a marriage record<sup>22</sup> so it seems they remarried.

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<sup>1</sup> Texas Deaths, 1890-1976.

<sup>2</sup> United States Census, 1900.

<sup>3</sup> Nevada State Census, 1875.

<sup>4</sup> Specifications and Drawings of Patents Issued from the US Patent Office, 1879, p. 159; Scientific American, 1880, Vol 42, p. 50; Official Gazette of the US Patent Office, 1880, Vol 16, p. 834.

<sup>5</sup> *Silver Reef Miner*, 24 February 1877; 5 November 1881, p. 1; United States Census, 1880.

<sup>6</sup> *Silver, Sinners, and Saints*, by Proctor and Shirts, 1991, p. 127.

<sup>7</sup> Silver Reef School Board Minutes.

<sup>8</sup> *Las Vegas Daily Optic* [East Las Vegas, New Mexico], 14 January 1890, p. 7.

<sup>9</sup> *Deming Headlight* [Deming, New Mexico], 23 August 1890, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> *Western Liberal* [Lordsburg, New Mexico], 27 January 1893, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> *El Paso Herald*, 30 October 1919, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> *The Eagle* [Silver City, New Mexico], 23 January 1895, p. 10.

<sup>13</sup> *Southwest Sentinel* [Silver City, New Mexico], 24 March 1896, p. 3; *The Eagle* [Silver City, New Mexico], 5 January 1898, p. 16; 30 March 1898, p. 2; 23 September 1896, p. 15; 9 April 1898, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> United States Census, 1900.

<sup>15</sup> *Albuquerque Citizen*, 26 September 1900, p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> *Western Liberal* [Lordsburg, New Mexico], 30 August 1901, p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> *El Paso Herald*, 30 October 1919, p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> *El Paso Herald*, 10 October 1908, p. 13.

<sup>19</sup> United States Census, 1910.

<sup>20</sup> *El Paso Herald*, 15 September 1910, p. 2.

<sup>21</sup> *El Paso Herald*, 21 December 1914, p. 11.

<sup>22</sup> Texas Marriages, 1837-1973; Texas County Marriage Index, 1837-1977; Texas Select County Marriage Index, 1837-1965.

In 1915, Julius lost his right thumb to an accident at the big saw mill he was in charge of near Lordsburg, New Mexico.<sup>23</sup> At this time, Gregoria was blind and crippled, having broken a thigh as a result of a fall that had not ever knitted. She suffered gastric and bronchial illness that caused severe coughing spells. Her life had been nothing but suffering during all of that time and she often begged Julius to “let her have what would give her lasting sleep”. Caring for her made it impossible for Julius to earn a living; he had sold his properties to cover costs.<sup>24</sup>

One day, a servant arrived at the rear door of the Wagner residence and found a note, written in Spanish: “Do not come into the house alone. We do not want you to be frightened by finding us dead. We have left for another world. Please notify the police. The telephone number is 55.” The girl walked around the house and noticed that all of the curtains were drawn and each window raised several inches. She went to a neighbor and telephoned the police.<sup>25</sup>

Two patrolmen arrived and entered the house. They found Mrs Wagner in the first bedroom, lying naturally in her bed, with a handkerchief tied around her head and a white cloth over her face. She had been dead several hours. In the second bedroom they found Julius Wagner, lying with hands folded and the covers arranged in perfect order. On a chair near the bed stood a glass containing the dregs of poison, along with a flashlight. On a table were found several letters, all stamped with various addresses. They were written after Mrs Wagner was dead.<sup>26</sup>

In a letter to the coroner, Julius gave a complete explanation of the deaths: “It is a case of double suicide, with potassium cyanide...in my possession for several years...in assaying and testing ores in mining camps in Arizona... We have no relations to be notified, as our people are all dead. I leave no debts... I have no property... I request that we be buried in such a simple manner that the proceeds from the sale of the articles found in the house will cover the cost...I have always dreaded living too long and imposing my infirmities on others.”<sup>27</sup> They were buried in Concordia Cemetery in El Paso.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> *El Paso Herald*, 18 November 1915, p. 7.

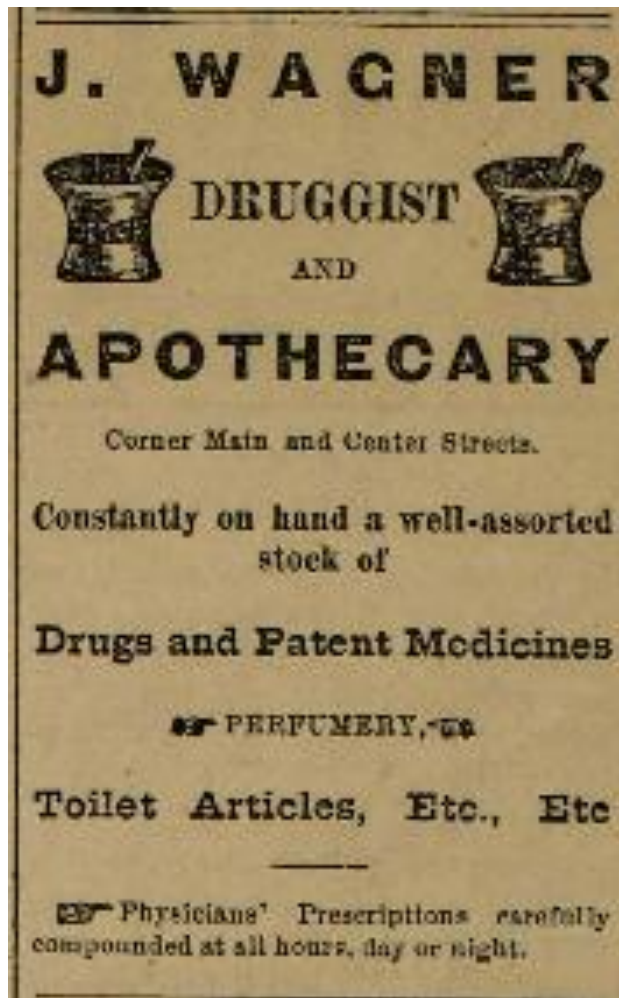
<sup>24</sup> *El Paso Herald*, 30 October 1919, pp. 1, 3.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*; *Arizona Republic*, 31 October 1919, p. 1; *Arizona Daily Star*, 31 October 1919, p. 2; Texas Death Index, 1903-2000; Texas Deaths 1890-1976.

<sup>28</sup> Texas Deaths, 1890-1976; Texas Death Certificates, 1903-1982; Texas Death Index, 1903-2000.



(Image from *Silver Reef Miner*, 5 November 1881)

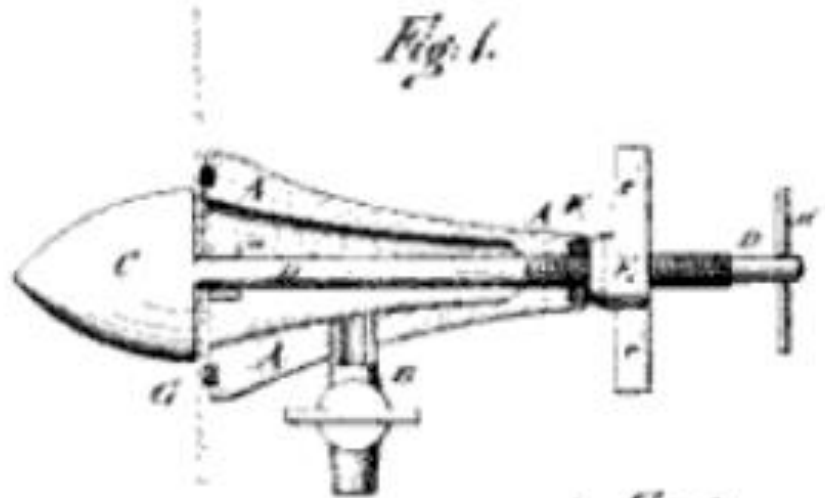


Julius lived in Pinos Altos, Silver City, and worked at Lordsburg, New Mexico. Gregoria was raised in Mesilla, just south of Las Cruces, New Mexico. They both lived and died in El Paso, Texas.

J. T. COOPER & J. WAGNER.  
Tap for Tin-Cans, &c.

No. 221,285.

Patented Nov. 4, 1879.



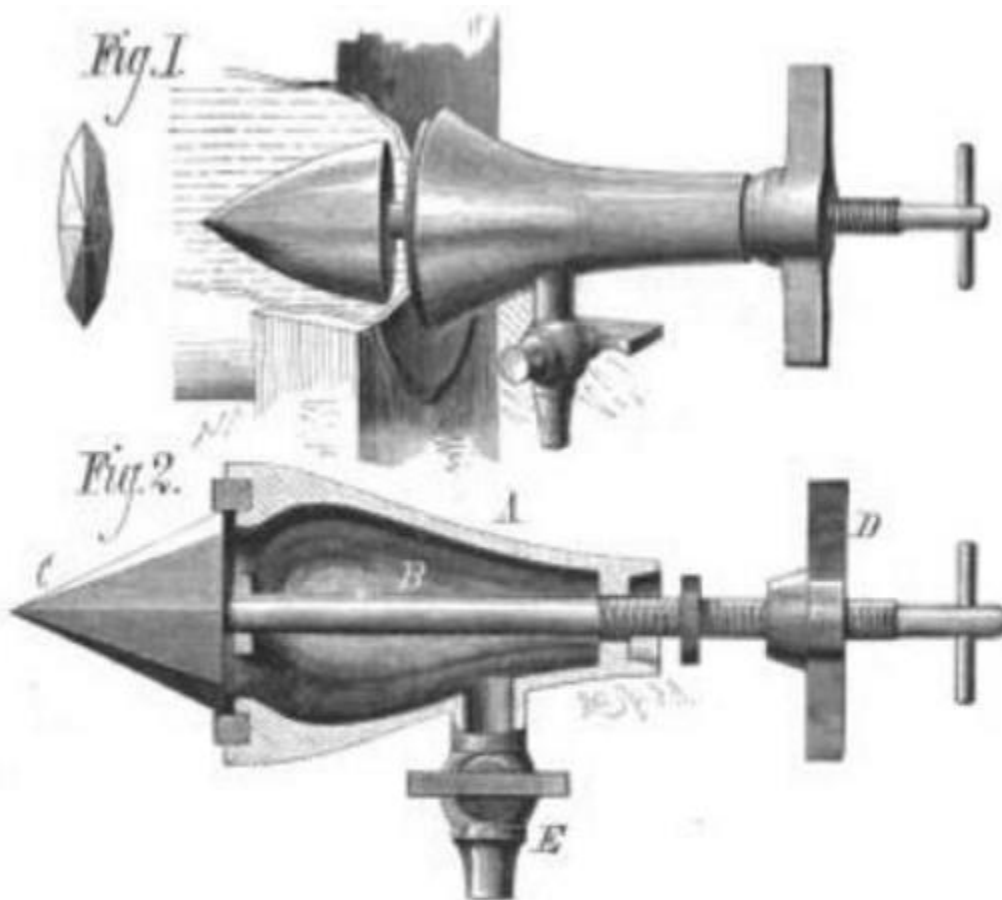
*Fig. 2.*



WITNESSES:  
*Chas. A. ...*  
*...*

INVENTOR:  
*J. T. Cooper*  
*J. Wagner*  
BY *...*  
ATTORNEYS

Original 1879 patent drawing for a tap for tin cans (image from Specifications and Drawings of Patents Issued from the US Patent Office, 1879, p. 159)



**IMPROVED TIN TAP.**

Patented tap for tin cans (Image from Scientific American, 1880, Vol 42, p. 50)