

CHAPTER TWELVE

SILVER AND COPPER

As placer gold disappeared and the early mining camps died out, other metals took the place of gold in importance in the Montana economy. With the rise of the importance of silver and then copper, one of the most fascinating episodes in the history of Montana took place, the War of the Copper Kings.

Vocabulary

smelter	gregarious	minerology	ambitious
economy	hardrock	egotistical	stocky
immigrant	geology	delegate	disgrace
political	cultured	influential	bribery
dominated	engineering		

Silver Mining

Gold mining became much more difficult as placer gold played out. Permanent gold mining required much more in the way of money, machinery, and transportation. As deposits of gold ore were developed, it was discovered that silver was often mixed with the gold.

After the gold or silver ore was brought out from the vein and crushed, it went through a process called smelting. This meant that the ore was heated and mixed with chemicals to get out the pure gold or silver. The earliest silver smelter was built in Argenta, near Bannack, in 1866. Other silver mines and smelters operated in the towns of Elkhorn, Granite, Philipsburg, Butte and Castle.

From 1868 to 1874 there was little silver mining due to a poor economy in the rest of the nation. In 1875 silver mining became profitable again. This time, the main silver mines were in the town of Butte, and it was soon famous for them. The arrival of the railroad in Butte between 1880 and 1883 made silver mining boom, because now the ore could easily be hauled to smelters and the finished metal could be taken to market. In 1887 Butte was the top silver producer in the United States.

Silver mining was a very risky business, however. The price of silver rose and fell because it was dependent on purchases by the Federal Government. By the

1890's, the age of silver had ended. The great silver camps of Castle, Granite and Elkhorn became ghost towns. At this time, however, a new metal became even more important - copper. Copper would soon dominate the state of Montana both economically and politically.

The Rise of Copper

As miners mined gold ore in the 1860's and silver ore in the 1870's, they also found quantities of copper. With the invention of the electric light and the telephone, copper became much more valuable because it was used to make wire. Great deposits of copper began to be mined, especially in Butte, in the 1880's. Many immigrants came to Butte to work in the mines - Irish, English, Germans, Finns, Chinese, Italians and Slavs. Butte was a tough town which dominated the political and economic life of Montana. By 1885 Butte had become the greatest mining town in the West. To understand copper mining in Butte, however, it is important to know the story of the three men who dominated Butte. They were known as the "Copper Kings."

The Copper Kings

The first of the "Copper Kings" to arrive in Butte was **William A. Clark**. He was born in the East but at the age of 24, in 1863, he was living in Bannack. In 1872 he was in the banking business in Deer Lodge, near Butte. Before prices began to boom, he bought some silver and copper properties. He also studied mining and mineralogy at New York's Columbia School of Mines. He was very rich at a young age and was also very ambitious and egotistical. His biggest dream was to be a United States Senator.

The second "Copper King" was **Marcus Daly**. He arrived in Butte in 1876. He was a stocky, gregarious Irishman who was well liked by the miners. Before coming to Butte he worked in the gold mines of California and at the Comstock Lode in Nevada, a famous silver mine. He learned hardrock mining by actually working in the mines, so he had a practical knowledge of geology and mining methods. He was sent to Butte to buy mining property for his bosses in Nevada. He bought the Alice Mine for them and then stayed to manage it. In 1880 he bought the nearby Anaconda Silver Mine. With some

rich partners, he developed this mine and found that it contained one of the richest deposits of copper in the world. He then built a smelter on nearby Warm Springs Creek, twenty-six miles west of Butte, and started the town of Anaconda. A railroad from Butte brought the copper ore to the smelter at Anaconda.

The third "Copper King" was **Frederick Augustus Heinze**. He was the son of wealthy and cultured German immigrants and had a good education in America and Europe. He went to the Columbia School of Mines in New York City, where he earned an engineering degree in 1889 at age 20. He arrived in Butte in that same year, and went to work in the copper mining industry. In partnership with his wealthy brothers, he built a smelter and began the treatment of ores at good prices. Heinze was an excellent speaker and very persuasive and popular.

War of the Copper Kings

Part One

The first part of the "War of the Copper Kings" was between Clark and Daly. These two men had been rivals for some time and were very jealous of each other. In 1888 Clark campaigned to be a **delegate** to Congress from the Territory of Montana, but lost the election. He blamed his loss on Daly, who had supported the other candidate. From then on, the men were bitter enemies. One of the weapons they used against each other was the newspaper. Daly owned the *Anaconda Standard* and Clark the *Butte Miner*. They each used their own newspaper to attack the other.

In 1894 the capital of the state of Montana was to be decided by a vote of the people. Clark wanted Helena, and Daly wanted Anaconda. Both men worked very hard to get their town elected, attacking the other town in the papers, giving parades and free entertainment. In the end, Helena was chosen. Daly was brokenhearted and never got over his loss. Clark, meanwhile, was a hero to the people of Helena.

Part Two

Clark still wanted to be a U.S. Senator more than anything else. Finally, in the election of 1889, he was determined to get elected by any means. At that time, U.S. Senators were elected by the state legislatures. Clark openly bribed the members of

the Montana Legislature, spending thousands of dollars, and was given the Senate seat. However, Daly asked the United States Senate to investigate the bribery, and when Clark arrived in Washington, D.C., he was forced to resign and return to Montana in disgrace.

Part Three

During the 1890's the Anaconda Copper Mining Company, which was controlled by Marcus Daly, was the most powerful company in Montana. This company was purchased in 1899 by the very powerful Standard Oil Company, and the name was changed to the Amalgamated Copper Company. Clark pledged to defend the state against control by this powerful corporation. He allied himself with Heinze, who was becoming a very influential man in Butte, to control the copper mining industry.

Marcus Daly died in 1900. In the election of 1900 for the state legislature, Clark and Heinze gained control of the Democratic Party, and the people they supported were elected. Clark now had friends in the State Legislature, and Heinze controlled local county politics, including the judges.

In 1901 Clark was elected by the Montana Legislature to the United States Senate, where he served from 1901 to 1907. He did not spend much time in Montana after that.

After Daly died and Clark left Montana, only Heinze was left to battle Amalgamated for control of the copper industry in Montana, and with it, control of the state. Heinze fought against Amalgamated using the "Apex Law." This law said that the owner of a mine could follow its veins anywhere underground within a certain limit, even if the veins touched another mine. Heinze began to dig tunnels into the copper veins of the Amalgamated mines, stealing an estimated \$20,000,000 dollars worth of copper ore. There were battles between the miners of the different companies underground in the tunnels, using water hoses, fires, and dynamite. Some miners were killed.

From 1900 to 1902, Amalgamated tried to stop Heinze in the courts, but the judges always ruled against Amalgamated because they were friendly to Heinze. Finally, Amalgamated became desperate. In October of 1903, they stopped production in their

mines, putting at least 15,000 men out of work. People suddenly realize how much power the Company had. Amalgamated refused to reopen unless a law was passed which would allow a court case to be moved out of a county if one party felt it was not getting a fair deal. The "fair trial bill" was passed by the Legislature. Now Amalgamated could use other judges instead of the ones Heinze controlled. Heinze had been defeated. He sold his holdings to Amalgamated in 1906.

The Anaconda Copper Mining Company

In 1910 Amalgamated bought Clark's copper mines. The War of the Copper Kings was over, and all copper production was in the hands of one giant company. In 1915 Amalgamated changed its name to the Anaconda Copper Mining Company. It was now the giant of the world copper industry. By 1915 Anaconda, or "the Company," as it was called, dominated Montana's economy and politics. It owned most of the daily papers, and controlled the state legislature and labor. Montana was a "one-company" state.

Locate the following on the map:

- Bannack
- Castle
- Granite
- Elkhorn
- Phillipsburg
- Anaconda
- Butte

