The Battle for Butte: Mining and Politics on the Northern Frontier, 1864-1906

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Lowitt used a wide range of source material, especially the collections in the Roosevelt Library at Hyde Park and at the Library of Congress. He labored among the massive reports issued by the various cabinet departments and their subagencies. The view which resulted reflects the president’s study at Hyde Park, the Oval Office, and the corridors of power in Washington. This is the New Dealer’s history written cautiously and with shrewd insight, but often missing is the perception from the West. Little credit is given to state and local governments for initiating projects such as the Grand River Dam Authority in Oklahoma or the Interstate Oil Compact which reduced the flood of crude oil after Ickes failed to obtain federal control of petroleum output. There are numerous essays and articles available on the individual states in the West during the New Deal as well as a large number of biographies of political figures in the region, and these works could have provided yet another dimension to Lowitt’s conclusions. Nevertheless, this is a well-written and thoughtfully argued study which enhances our understanding of the New Deal and the history of the West in the 1930s. Lowitt’s carefully considered conclusions based on his work in a wide array of sources illustrate both the extreme complexity of the New Deal and the successes it had in the western states in less than a decade. This is a substantial book which represents a major contribution to American history.

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In *The Battle for Butte* Michael Malone describes the “economic-political struggle to win supremacy over and consolidation of the great Butte Hills” (xiii). The battles—political, between copper kings Marcus Daly and William A. Clark, and economic, between F. A. Heinze and Amalgamated Copper Co.—have been told elsewhere, but Malone provides the first solid study, detached from hero worship or bias. This is not an apologist’s history, for Malone portrays and condemns all players as “ruthless capitalists engaged in an epic struggle, one of the roughest in the roguish history of western mining” (59). Malone, well known as a historian of Montana with three previous works, places the battles for Butte in the broader context of western mining and politics,
thus providing an understanding of the political culture (chaotic factionalism, he labels it) that allowed, even condoned, bribery, manipulations of the legal system, and debauchery of the state's economy. The battle for Butte had no winners. And it left "a bitter legacy which far outweighed any positive results" (188).

Butte began as a second-rate gold camp of the 1860s, but by the 1880s had reached preeminence as a silver and especially copper producer with numerous mines and owners. William A. Clark, an Iowa farm boy who became the West's richest Bonanza King, developed its first major silver mine and was the camp's first millionaire. He entered politics and, in 1888, sought the U.S. Senate seat of the newborn state. It would take him eleven years to reach that goal, only to be expelled.

Marcus Daly was the cause of Clark's troubles. An Irish immigrant, Daly had worked in Nevada and Utah before his timely purchase of the Anaconda mine in Butte (in 1881) established his fortune. Backed by California capital from George Hearst, Ben Ali Hagggin, and Lloyd Tevis, Daly built the largest copper operation in the West: the Anaconda Copper Company. Daly's and W. A. Clark's competition at Butte flared into open warfare in the political arena; Clark desired a Senate seat and Daly the capital status for his company town, Anaconda. Malone outlines the bribery and debauchery as the Daly-Clark feud escalated in the 1890s and their mining money was "spreading like a cancer through the body politic" (104).

Malone describes well the causes of the feud, the bribery, supposed and real, and the actions of Clark, who was like a man-possessed, striving for his goal. Clark stopped Daly's company town, Anaconda, from becoming the capital and succeeded also in being "elected" by the state legislature to the Senate. But the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections examined the election and found its corruption inexcusable. Clark resigned. In 1901, the year of Daly's death, Clark was finally seated without contest after election again by the legislature. Malone concludes: "Thus, after the expenditure of hundreds of thousands of dollars, the soiling of dozens of lives, and the debilitation of an entire state's body politic, W. A. Clark won his cherished Senate seat" (160).

Malone's second battle for Butte waged over the consolidation of claims on the "richest hill on earth." Besides Clark's and Daly's operations, Butte had several other prosperous companies. In the late 1890s entrepreneur Thomas Lawson convinced the Standard Oil group led by Henry Rogers that it could obtain a corner on the copper market by consolidating western copper mines, particularly at Butte. The group formed the Amalgamated Copper Company and acquired several companies, among them Daly's Anaconda, all through stock jobbery
and coercion, later revealed by Lawson in *Frenzied Finance* (1905). But Amalgamated faced one serious holdout, F. Augustus Heinze.

Heinze had arrived in Butte in 1888 and, through his family’s fortune and luck in finding ore, built the most profitable independent operation at Butte. He also excelled in the machinations of law, especially apex law—the owner’s right to all ore beneath his surface outcrop, following “dips, spurs, and angles,” whatever that meant. Heinze, Malone suggests, used the “War of the Apex” with Amalgamated to stymie their consolidation efforts until he was offered a high enough price for his claims. Amalgamated, with lawyer William Scallon as president of Anaconda, the Montana operating arm, chose legal wars and spent the years from 1901 to 1906 in dozens of lawsuits. Heinze bribed the judges and held the support of local residents by declaring war on the copper trust, like a David against Goliath. Malone details the court battles, the underground fights, and legislative manipulation. In 1906 Amalgamated, with a new Montana manager, John Ryan, bought out Heinze for up to twelve million dollars. Heinze lost his fortune in the panic of 1907, a result of Standard Oil stock manipulations, Malone points out. Heinze died a broken man.

Malone ends with the last days of the copper kings—senator Clark died in 1925, Heinze in 1914, and Rogers in 1909—and a review of the bitter legacy. Amalgamated (reorganized in 1910 as Anaconda) won its consolidation battle, but its legacy was one of bitter feuds and continuing charges of outside control. Malone concludes that “Anaconda dominated Montana after 1906 like no other single company dominated any other state, with the possible exception of the Dupont satrapy of Delaware” (210).

To Malone’s credit he provides many viewpoints about causes of and reactions to the battles, feuds, and legacy. Previous books have tended to be one-sided or anecdotal, such as the one previous study on the topic, Glasscock’s *War of the Copper Kings* (1935). In general, Malone sees all participants as unforgivable, but in comparison to previous writings Clark is less of a villain, Daly more so; and Heinze is just as ruthless as his archenemy, the copper trust. Malone’s work is a balanced analysis based on solid research into little-used sources and obscure collections, including privately held ones in Butte.

Although Malone puts his work in the broader picture, one should remember that the battle for Butte’s riches was an exceptional case—that most western copper mines had far different histories, characterized more often by compromise than feud. That Amalgamated did not corner the copper market can be attributed in part to its battles and delay in consolidating Butte—remembering that another factor was the simultaneous copper discoveries and developments in Arizona,
Utah, and Kennicott, Alaska. My objections to the book are few: maps would have been helpful, as would an appendix of mining companies to help keep the players straight. Some of the photograph captions, and thus the photographs, are useless, such as “Copper smelters and mines” and “Steel Gallows frame, 125 feet high.” Tell me which ones, and help me understand why they are relevant to the story.

Malone’s work now provides another solid account about the economic competition in mining camps and the desires of western mining magnates to join the American aristocracy, the U.S. Senate. It can be used with other recent biographies—on Senator H. A. W. Tabor of Colorado, Senator William M. Stewart of Nevada, Charles Sweeney of Washington, and Senator George Hearst of California—to understand this bonanza-king desire. Malone also, through his statements about the Anaconda legacy and the developments of unionism, leaves the hope for a sequel volume on the growth of the Western Federation of Miners, the Industrial Workers of the World, and the subsequent labor strife—the next Battle for Butte.


**Arizona Memories** is an anthology of the memories and recollections of twenty-eight persons who visited or resided in Arizona from the end of the Civil War through the 1960s. Laid out in chronological order, these accounts represent a panoramic vista of experiences in this state. The mosaic of people represented includes virtually every major ethnic group—Anglo, Chicano, Indian, Chinese, Japanese, and black—that has played a significant role in the development of the state. The range of activities covers the principle endeavors one associates with Arizona life: ranching, mining, soldiering, exploring—as well as just plain living in a southwestern environment.

This is clearly grass-roots history. Except for Barry Goldwater and J. B. Priestley, none of the people represented are more than local celebrities at best. In the main, these are ordinary people whose simple stories evoke a real sense of the area. The editors, moreover, chose to let these people speak for themselves. Each selection has a brief introduction, but the tales are not cluttered with footnotes and other explanatory material. Instead, in the preface, readers are referred to a list of historical works for additional information. This format seems to work