Spring 1985

The Black Community Of Butte: Growth And Decline From 1890 to 1950

Daniel Whyte
Carroll College, Helena, MT

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholars.carroll.edu/history_theses

Part of the United States History Commons

Recommended Citation
https://scholars.carroll.edu/history_theses/57

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the History at Carroll Scholars. It has been accepted for inclusion in History Undergraduate Theses by an authorized administrator of Carroll Scholars. For more information, please contact tkratz@carroll.edu.
THE BLACK COMMUNITY OF BUTTE:
GROWTH AND DECLINE FROM 1890 to 1950

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Graduation with honors from the Department of History

Carroll College

Daniel John Whyte
Helena, Montana
April 1, 1985
This thesis for honors recognition has been approved for the Department of History.

Dr. Robert Swartout, Director

Mr. Dennis Wiedmann

Rev. Jeremiah Sullivan

April 1, 1985
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PREFACE</td>
<td>pp. iv-v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I: WESTWARD NATIONAL MOVEMENT OF BLACKS</td>
<td>3-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER II: The DEVELOPMENT OF BUTTE</td>
<td>12-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER III: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY IN BUTTE</td>
<td>21-35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER IV: THE CULTURAL, RELIGIOUS, AND POLITICAL ACTIVITIES OF BUTTE'S BLACK COMMUNITY</td>
<td>36-49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX: MAP OF BUTTE AND THE LOCATION OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY AND ALSO A LIST OF THE RESIDENTS</td>
<td>56-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>61-63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PREFACE

The history of the Northwest has, for many years, gone nearly unnoticed. Only recently have case studies appeared which reveal the history of the Northwest in its uniqueness and complexity. This work is a case study of the black community of Butte which has heretofore gone unnoticed. Many of those people who inquired about my topic, in fact, typically replied that they were unaware of any black residents in Butte. Therefore, these people have given me understanding of the great deal of untapped history of the Northwest.

Several persons have helped in the completion of this thesis. A great deal of gratitude goes first of all to my advisor and director, Dr. Robert Swartout who first introduced me to the topic and who guided me with criticism and encouragement through the entire study as a teacher and a friend. Thanks also go out to my readers, Reverend Jeremiah Sullivan and Mr. Dennis Wiedmann for their assistance and encouragement. I wish to sincerely thank all of the people at the Montana Historical Society and especially Dr. William L. Lang who gave me a great deal of insight in researching Afro-American history and Dave Walter who put up with my continuous questions and harassment while in search of more and more material. Great appreciation is shown to Cheryl McNurlin, Trenna Kuchenbecker, and Connie Gordon who put in hours of typing, and to Walter and Perdita Duncan and
Octavia Bridgewater who allowed me to ask question after question about their lives as blacks living in Montana; and finally those people at the James J. Hill Reference Library and the Minnesota Historical Society for pouring through Northern Pacific and Great Northern records for me.

Special thanks go to those closest to me: to my parents, Thomas and Eileen Whyte and my brothers and sisters, whose encouragement and advice made this possible; to my friends at Carroll, Philip Suek, Julie Nevin, Molly and Michael Whyte, and Ron Higgins who put up with me for the last few weeks of writing while I made life miserable for all of us. Thank you also for all those people not mentioned here who showed a deep interest in the work I was doing.
INTRODUCTION

Many studies have been written on the boom-town mining city of Butte, Montana. The growth of the city, the politics which dominated front pages for the last years of the 19th century and spilled over into the 20th, the Anaconda Company which made Butte one of the most dominant powers in the world in the copper industry, and the long since, slow decline of mining and population have all been studied. Butte was a big city of the West, but its people still call it a "camp." Big business typified Butte, as did the merchant and the laborer. And finally, the ethnic groups proved to be an important aspect of Butte. However, some of these groups have gone unnoticed in the annals of Butte history. One such group were the blacks who occupied Butte in significant numbers from 1890 to 1940.

But why would a strong Afro-American community have settled in Butte? Historically, Butte has treated the blacks rather poorly, worse than any other ethnic group. For example, feelings of discrimination caused many Filipinos to be victims of "accidents" in the mine shafts. The blacks, in comparison, were not even allowed to work in the mines. Helena, which had a substantial black community was a haven for Afro-Americans because it was a service
town. But Butte was not a service town and this problem, coupled with the harsh discrimination from German and Irish immigrants, should have forestalled black community development. Yet despite all this, a strong social, religious, and political community eventually grew up in Butte in the early 20th century.
CHAPTER I

WESTWARD NATIONAL MOVEMENT OF BLACKS

The arrival of the first blacks who settled in Butte was part of a national trend as they moved beyond the Mississippi. The national westward movement as a whole was greatly influenced by westward emigration of Afro-Americans. Blacks played a definite part in the social and economic development of the West. Nevertheless, they have been given very little credit. A reason for this lack of historical recognition can be termed as "the hero factor." Cowboys came to be seen, in a mythical sense, as the greatest of America's western heroes. They typified the virile, masculine male, independent and able to prosper. In many cases, their status has been elevated to that of legend. But, if black cowboys were given recognition for their contributions, then a paradox would exist. America could be accused of enslaving and discriminating against some of its greatest heroes.\(^1\)

The Afro-American contributions have also been ignored in the area of the military. Black soldiers fought Indians, protected the mail and stagecoaches, built telegraph lines, and patrolled along both the Canadian border and that of the Rio Grande without receiving much credit.\(^2\)

The earliest blacks to migrate west came predominantly
as slaves or servants of explorers. Two of the more famous of these accidental black pioneers were York of the Lewis and Clark expedition and a "man of color," Peter Ranne, as described in the records of Jedidiah Smith's explorations. Both played an important role in the first explorations of the West.

The next group to journey west were the trappers and traders. Both American and British traders brought with them personal servants or employed free blacks. They were important to the fur trade as cooks, voyagers, and hunters for the white trappers.4

The Afro-American movement west continued when the areas of Oregon and California opened to pioneers who ventured beyond the Rocky Mountains. Before emancipation was given to blacks, many hearty pioneers who moved to Oregon in the 1840s took along their black slaves or servants as part of their property ownings. When gold was discovered in 1848 at Sutter's Mill, whites who were part of the great exodus west also brought their slaves. Many of these slaves came under special conditions. They either had to be relied upon to stay loyal to their owners, or they were promised freedom after a certain period of time (often it was a matter of years). Freemen also came to California looking for gold and new opportunities.5

After industrial mining replaced the sporadic placer mining camps, discrimination became a more permanent fixture of 19th century California. There was no place for blacks
as miners. However, many stayed in California and searched for other means of livelihood. Some occupations that blacks found were as cooks, artisans, laborers, and barbers.6

In 1857, when gold was discovered in Colorado, the process began again. Blacks hoping to get a new foothold went searching for gold. Most had very little luck and looked for new occupations. This cyclical process continued until the Civil War ended, dispersing a few blacks into each place where gold was discovered. Shortly afterwards blacks began moving west in greater numbers.7

In 1865, the Thirteenth Amendment banned slavery and declared all current slaves free. But the newly freed blacks had two problems. First, their freedom was very transparent, for discrimination would continue well into the 20th century. Second, they had never known the feeling of independence and were not sure how to survive on their own. The West seemed open, but blacks who were unskilled therefore stayed in the South, enduring the hardship of the tenant farmer. But when Reconstruction policies failed, disappointed blacks moved west hoping to find a new life with the social and political freedoms that they had been promised. Therefore, blacks moved hoping to find greater economic opportunity and truer freedom than the South provided. In addition, they were simply part of a larger post-Civil War exodus westward.9

The first of the post-Civil War drives west by blacks involved black military units. Expansion of the United States
to areas of the Northwest, the Dakotas, California, and the Southwest required large numbers of troops to provide protection for settlers from Indian attacks and the harsh elements. Congress enacted legislation in 1867 which expanded the regular army in order to deal with the larger frontier. Separate black cavalry and infantry regiments were organized as part of the armed forces expansion. These all-black units hopefully would prevent conflict which was bound to occur with mixed units. To further discourage opposition from the army as a whole, white officers directed the black troops. The new Afro-American units were the Ninth and Tenth cavalry units and the Thirty-eighth, Thirty-ninth, Fortieth, and Forty-first infantry regiments. Eventually, the four infantry regiments were combined into the Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth infantries. 10

In the spring of 1876, the Ninth and Tenth cavalries began twenty years of service in the West. The buffalo soldiers, 11 which they became known as, received little or no recognition at all. The Tenth spent most of its years on the Great Plains where its duties included putting up miles of telegraph lines, assisting pioneers (especially during the horrendous winters), defeating the Indians and making sure they were securely situated on reservations. The Ninth had orders "... to protect mail and stage routes between San Antonio and El Paso ... and maintain law and order on the troubled Rio Grande. Maintaining law and order meant not only defeating Indian tribes, but also fighting Mexican
bandits and white thieves.\textsuperscript{13}

In 1875, the Ninth and the Tenth (which was now stationed in Texas) were significant in defeating two of the last of the rebel Indian groups, Victorio and his Warm Springs Apaches and Nona and his renegades.\textsuperscript{14} These victories were more important than the defeat of Geronimo, but because the Afro-American troops were heavily involved, little credit was given.\textsuperscript{15}

The Twenty-fourth infantry was stationed along the Mexican border. With never enough men, it had to protect settlers from Indians and marauders. The Twenty-fifth was originally stationed in the South, but in 1881 was moved to the Dakota Territory where it met with arduous tasks and poor living conditions. Both of these units spent much of their time serving as station guards, stagecoach escorts and scouting patrols, and repairing telegraph lines. Still, they were able to preserve a considerably high morale.\textsuperscript{16}

The black fighting units were instrumental in opening the West for settlers. They provided protection for homesteaders and helped civilize hostile areas. The Ninth and Tenth cavalries had the lowest desertion rate of all the cavalry units,\textsuperscript{17} as did the Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth infantries. Furthermore, between 1870 and 1890 fourteen Medal of Honor citations and several other Certificates of Merit were awarded blacks.\textsuperscript{18}

The second major movement of Afro-Americans was in the cattle industry, a period lasting from 1866 to 1900. Some estimates are that one-quarter of all the trail hands were
black. About the only positions that blacks did not fill were those of trail boss and foreman. Mostly, blacks were wranglers and cowboys. The black cowboy on the cattle drive rode all of the positions on the trail (point, swing, flank, and drag), according to experience. Moreover, white greenhorns often served as apprentices under more-experienced black cowboys. Riders and ropers, who held separate responsibilities from the cowboys and managed difficult positions on the cattle drive, also included blacks. And the highest position that a black held was one of the most important on the trail drive. This was the cook.¹⁹

The last great movement west which included blacks was the agricultural movement. A few Afro-Americans had come west as slaves and stayed to work the land after their freedom had been given. Many traveled west because of the prospect of free land. Still others who came from the East and South had been farmers all their lives and loved the idea of owning their own land.²⁰ As the agricultural movement grew, blacks even developed all-black farming communities such as Nicodemus and Langston.²¹

Blacks who moved to the West were looking for new opportunities and employment. But the opportunities proved to be few. Many of the occupations held by blacks were unskilled laboring jobs. Discrimination prevented most blacks from getting an education which could help their social status. Instead, they were forced to accept jobs as cooks, tradesmen, laborers, and
barbers (nearly 1500 by the turn of the century). A few were professionals, especially ministers, while others were able to open up boarding houses as there was need for both of these. Overall, however, the opportunities were few. 22

Many of the patterns of national westward movement of blacks also apply at the local level. Butte, as a case study of ethnic history in the Northwest, is a classic example of the development of a viable and multifaceted black community during the early 20th century in the American West.
NOTES


5Ibid., p. 19.

6Forbes, Afro-Americans in the Far West: A Handbook for Educators, p. 31; Savage, Blacks in the West, p. 31.

7Savage, Blacks in the West, p. 4.

8Porter, The Negro on the American Frontier, p. 2; Savage, Blacks in the West, p. 11.

9Savage, Blacks in the West, p. 4.

10Fowler, The Black Infantry in the West, 1869-1891, pp. xi-xii.

11The term buffalo soldier was the name given to the black soldiers by the Indians. The black's hair was similar to the hair of the buffalo, thus the term. Moreover, the buffalo was an important symbol to Indians and they probably would not have given the Afro-American soldiers that name unless it were out of respect.

13Ibid., p. 83.
14Ibid., pp. 210-229.
17Leckie, The Buffalo Soldiers: A Narrative of the Negro Cavalry in the West, p. 72.
18Fowler, The Black Infantry in the West, 1869-1891, p. 60.
20Savage, Blacks in the West, p. 95.
22Savage, Blacks in the West, p. 95.
CHAPTER II
THE DEVELOPMENT OF BUTTE

Although placer gold was first discovered in Silver Bow Creek and its tributary gulches in the early 1860s, and silver became one of Butte's biggest resources shortly thereafter, many of the miners who worked the area around the big butte knew that the real riches lay in quartz mining, copper, iron, and zinc. But three basic ingredients were needed to make quartz mining profitable. First, the world's most advanced technology was needed. In order to make copper marketable it had to be separated from the other ores contained in the rock through a complex smelting process. Second, in order to connect the copper industry of Butte with national and international markets, railroads had to be built to ship the ore east. But because of monetary problems and political powerplays, the railroads were years in the making. (They would reach Butte in the early 1880s). And third, outside investors were needed to take care of the tremendous costs of technology, equipment, labor and shipping.

Butte was truly a boom town. Gold was discovered in the early 1860s. By 1866, a townsite had been surveyed, and by 1876, 5000 people lived in Butte. Its rich deposits brought prospectors and merchants. But it was not until outside
investors became interested in Butte that it would grow to be a powerful mining city. The three men mostly responsible for this growth were: William Andrews Clark, Marcus Daly, and F. Augustus Heinze.

William Andrews Clark (1839-1925) moved to Butte in 1872. A man from the East, Clark became a merchant and concluded various deals as he made his way to Montana. His genius for business affairs and an all-consuming ambition made him a quick success. Having prospered from previous deals, Clark was able to buy many of the best mines around the area of Butte. He realized the richness of the area and bought a whole series of mines: the Original, the Colusa, the Mountain Chief, and the Gambetta. These would prove to be four of Butte's most important mines. His investments would make him very wealthy.4

In 1878-79, Clark sent 150 tons of Butte's complicated ore to the Boston and Colorado Smelting firm in Colorado owned by Nathaniel P. Hill. Hill had his experts work on it and became very interested. He and Clark merged that year and created the Colorado Smelting and Mining Co., with Hill as the President and Clark as the Vice President and manager in Butte.5

Marcus Daly (1841-1900) was an Irish miner of poor beginnings who had made it big. He was likeable and very friendly and never tried to be anything else than a miner. What made Daly different from many other miners was that he had a nose for minerals. He seemed to be able to see below
the ground and know the potential of a mine. His reputation grew as he went from strike to strike in the West until he landed a job with the Walker Brothers of Utah, who used him as a consultant, an expert mine manager, and an appraiser.6

The Walker Brothers had an interest in the new area around Butte, and with Daly's recommendation, they bought the Alice Mine which eventually produced over $10,000,000 in silver. Daly became a permanent resident of Butte and part owner of the Alice, but sold his shares when he realized the potential of the hill which he would later name the Anaconda Hill. He purchased the Anaconda for $30,000 and with the financial backing of the San Francisco based investment company of Hearst, Haggin, and Tevis, he bought a stamp for the ore and a smelter.7

The mine shaft in the Anaconda had reached a depth of nearly 300 feet in less than a year (1880) when Daly realized that silver deposits were thinner and copper was becoming more prevalent. With his seemingly sixth sense he saw that there was a great store of copper in the hills. But in order to mine the copper, he wanted to buy more of the surrounding mines plus a concentrator, a complex smelter, as well as to make large commitments to refineries and marketers. These transactions would take vast amounts of money and Haggin was willing to take the risk. So, Daly bought the equipment he needed and then purchased the surrounding mines, the two most important being the St. Lawrence and the Neversweat mines.
The hill was a tremendous source of copper deposits.

On January 19, 1891, the closed-operation of Hearst-Haggin-Tevis-Daly became the Anaconda Mining Company, now incorporated and open to outside investors. The Company was becoming very wealthy.9

F. Augustus Heinze (1869-1914) came to Butte as a wealthy, well-educated young man. In 1889, after settling in Butte, he carefully studied the geology of the area and decided that with the latest in custom smelters he could offer small miners custom smelting at a low cost. He persuaded his brothers in New York of the same, and they created the Montana Ore Purchasing Company which was an instant success.10

He too had a sixth sense and bought many mines which were supposedly dry, but, as Heinze suspected, were actually quite rich in ore. For example, he speculated that the Rarus Mine was not only rich in copper ore, but also represented the eastern extension to the St. Lawrence Mine. He was correct on both counts. He was a very successful young man.11

These three "Copper Kings" controlled the business and the politics of Butte for many years. In fact, both Clark and Daly presumed that their wealth could buy them political power. Their personalities, wealth, ambitions, and hatred for each other would create a feud that would last for twelve years (1888-1900) and truly hurt Montana politics.12

The catalyst for the feud was struck when Clark's ambition for politics coerced him to run as a congressional
delegate for the Territory of Montana in 1888. He backed President Grover Cleveland's Democratic policies, but one of these policies would hurt the Montana Improvement Company, Daly's chief source of lumber. Daly thus deserted the Democratic party and sent thousands of repeating voters to the polls on election day and aided in the defeat of Clark. Moreover, the delegate-elect, Thomas Carter, was a Daly ally.13

But this was only the beginning. In 1889, Montana as a new state had two empty Senate seats. Clark once again tried for office but was again shot down. By 1892 it was Clark's turn for revenge. Daly was attempting to get Anaconda voted in as the state capital, but when the vote was taken in 1894, Helena was the choice for the state capital.14

Politics were getting dirty in Montana because each of the feuders was using newspapers as his political tool to speak out against the enemy (Clark owned the Butte Miner and Daly owned the Anaconda Standard) and each man was using more and more expensive bribes to get his way. Clark lost the 1892 Senate seat partially because of bribery on the part of Daly and he finally won a Senate position in 1899 because of the tremendous sums of money he spent through bribes, to the legislature.15

Because of the large corporations in Butte and the need for a constant turn of profit, consolidation was bound to happen. A consolidation, trust, or monopoly could minimize profits or even corner the copper market. On 27 April 1899, incorporation at Trenton, New Jersey of the Amalgamated
Copper Company took place. The Amalgamated included the Anaconda Copper Mining Company and its reduction arm, the Washoe Copper Company along with the Parrot Silver and Copper Company and the Colorado Smelting and Mining Company. Daly was named the powerful manager of this entire empire. Clark and Heinze united their interests in fighting the Amalgamated. For Clark it was another part of the feud between Daly and himself, and he was feeling the pressure. For Heinze it meant that all of the small miners would eventually be swallowed up, which would hurt his business, and then he too would be bought out. Clark and Heinze therefore attempted to win congressional seats in order to fight the Amalgamated. The fusionists were successful. But although they had won, and Daly died in November, 1900, the Amalgamated kept growing.

Heinze made many more attempts to keep the monster at bay and dealt shrewdly with the Amalgamated. In 1902, Heinze attempted to influence the governorship and the seats of the Montana Supreme Court Justices, but was unable to control the Amalgamated Copper Company. He held off until he made the Amalgamated pay an exhorbitant price for his companies. Rumors of the sale price range from $10,500,000 to $12,000,000. Now the Amalgamated Copper Company had control of Butte, and in many aspects, of Montana. It was a giant which improved efficiency but seemed too insensitive to the needs of the people. It would rule much of Montana for years to come.
The Anaconda (the name had changed from the Amalgamated to the Anaconda) owned "... smelters, refineries, and reduction works at Anaconda, East Helena, and Great Falls, hundreds of thousands of acres of western Montana timberland, lumber mills at Bonner, a powerful chain of newspapers, and many other investments."19

In 1923, the Anaconda bought the open-pit mine at Chaquicamata in the Andes Mountains of Chile for seventy-seven million dollars. John Ryan and Cornelius Kelly, who now controlled the Anaconda, found open-pit mining to be cheaper than mining in the shafts. Beginning in the 1950s the Anaconda started concentrating Butte's copper extraction with the Berkeley Pit. The Pit was awesome and steadily ate away at the old uptown area of Butte. But open-pit mining required fewer workers and therefore began the demise of the population of Butte.20

The Anaconda itself began to lose money when in 1971, the company declared a net loss of $357.3 million because of the nationalization of copper operations in Chile. By 1974 the Anaconda Copper Mining Company announced the termination of between 700 and 1000 jobs in Butte. Decline was apparent. In 1975 there were 1500 more layoffs and the layoffs have increased since.21 In 1982 the Berkeley Pit was forced to close. All mining activity in Butte has since stopped.

Now that we have examined the general development of Butte, let us turn our attention specifically toward the black community which grew up within that environment.
NOTES


2Ibid., pp. 9-11.


5Ibid.

6Ibid., p. 21.

7Ibid., p. 24.

8Ibid., pp. 28-29.

9Ibid., p. 24.

10Ibid., pp. 49-53.

11Ibid.

12Ibid., p. 83.

13Ibid., p. 87.

14Ibid., p. 88-89 and pp. 98-104.

15Ibid., p. 88-89 and pp. 105-110.

16Ibid., pp. 131-158.

17Ibid.

18Ibid., pp. 159-189.

20 Ibid., pp. 247-248.

21 Ibid., p. 250.
CHAPTER III

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY IN BUTTE

By the mid-1880s Butte, Montana had been transformed from a placer mining camp to a highly industrial, technically advanced quartz-mining city. By 1880 W. A. Clark and Marcus Daly were building their empires. In addition, underground mining called for the use of tremendous amounts of manpower. The use of concentrators and smelters, and increases in production manpower were essential to the mining industry. Therefore, census population increases corresponded to increased technology and mining production in Butte.

In 1870, before the period of substantial growth for the mining industry, only 241 people occupied the camp named Butte City. But it had grown to 3363 occupants by 1880. However, this was only the beginning. In the next ten years the population would more than triple to 10,723, and by 1900 it would again triple to 30,470.1

The black population in Butte grew in much the same way. In 1870, there was only one reported black. By 1880 the number had grown to sixty for Deer Lodge County.2 There was an increase to 186 occupants by 1890, and ten years later they had reached their peak at 248. Moreover, there would be over 240 blacks for the next twenty years living in Butte. Two early conclusions can be drawn from these figures. One, the black population grew in a parallel fashion with the general growth of Butte, and

21
two, there seems to have been a solid Afro-American community for nearly forty years, from the 1890s until nearly 1930.3

There are strong similarities between westward movement of blacks nationally and blacks who came to Butte. Many early white settlers may have brought servants or slaves as they came for the purpose of mining. It is also very likely that the wealthy investors had servants with them when they arrived in Butte. For example, two black men, Aaron Scott Webb and Chris Dorsey, were the valets for two of Butte's Copper Kings, W. A. Clark and Marcus Daly, respectively. These two black men may have been with the destined Copper Kings for years.4

After gold had been discovered at Silver Bow Creek, a percentage of black miners came with the group of miners who went from claim to claim. But as was true many times before, Afro-Americans seemed to have little luck. A man named Jones had some success in the hills above Butte, but he was eventually talked out of keeping his claim. For those who did not make the big strike there were laboring jobs in the new and growing camp.5

There were many black cowboys in the West and when they retired they very often stayed in or around the area in which they had worked. Some of those soldiers who were with the Twenty-fifth infantry regiment also stayed in the area after retirement. There was a number of black soldiers who moved from their posts at Fort Meade and Fort Missoula.6

Until the early 1880s mining on a large scale was all but
impossible because of the absence of railroads. In 1881, the Union Pacific reached Butte and for the first time ore could be processed on a wide scale. Moreover, in 1884, the first great smelter for the Anaconda mine, thirty-one miles from the hill, was linked with the mine by the railroad.7

The railroads not only provided for ore to be shipped out, but they also brought the sorely needed manpower to strengthen production. Furthermore, as the railroads grew, they provided jobs. In the building of the Northern Pacific, the Great Northern, the Milwaukee Road, and the Union Pacific into Butte, blacks and Chinese were essential for the work of laying the tracks.8 Blacks were also employed in substantial numbers as porters, clerks, cooks, servants in the general officers' business cares, and as laborers.9

The Northern Pacific Railway began employing blacks in 1883. Many blacks lived in Butte. They not only worked for years for the railroads, but were highly acclaimed for the work they did. In 1938, a letter to Mr. Charles Donnelly, of the board of directors for the Railway Express Agency of the Northern Pacific, from Joel Sadler and Chester Keller of the Organization Committee of the Express Employees, Chicago, attests to this:

For the last nineteen or twenty years, Negro employees have been hired in the terminals in this section and have given entire satisfaction. Many of the colored employees now working have service records as high as eighteen years which will bear out the contention that they are capable of doing the class of work required of them.10
The blacks had been hired in large numbers because they were willing to do laborer's work (little other opportunity was present) and they were dedicated workers. Therefore, as new trains worked their way west, the blacks went with the trains and stayed west with the trains. In Butte, many blacks stayed because they liked the area, but more importantly because Butte was a terminus for railroads heading west. Because of this, many workers spent layover time in Butte. If they liked Butte they stayed and made a permanent home in the city. The railroads were the major industry which attracted blacks.11

J. W. Duncan arrived in Butte in 1900 because of the railroads. As a postal clerk for the Northern Pacific, he had to spend a substantial amount of time in Butte on layover. He was pleased with the area and so made his permanent home in Butte. After settling in Butte, Duncan augmented his salary as a postal clerk by beginning a barbershop. Later he gave up the postal clerk position and became strictly a barber. He was so successful as a haircutter that he had the first integrated barbershop in Butte.12

To develop new opportunities, Duncan returned east to further his education. In the 1910s he attended professional school and returned to Butte a podiatrist. There he practiced from 1920 to 1952.13

Duncan presents a unique case in the study of Afro-Americans. His early career seems typical of many blacks
traveling westward. He arrived in Butte with the railroad and decided to stay. His early double career easily fits the stereotype of the black laborer in the West. He was a postal clerk and a barber, both jobs for blacks. But unlike most blacks he received a higher education and eventually became a professional.

He was one of only three black professionals in Butte's entire history. He was not only well established as a professional, but he had an interest in his community and was active in helping that community. For example, he began a newspaper for the Afro-American community (which will be discussed in detail later). Duncan clearly represented the diversity of Butte's black community.14

Another of the early arrivals was a man named Richard A. Brown, who came west from Cumberland, Virginia, in the 1880s. In Butte he and his family set up what was to become a very successful boardinghouse. The Brown family charged five dollars a week and had a thriving business until the late teens.15

A man by the name of Fortune came from Portland as a porter for the railroad some time after 1909 and worked in Butte until his death in 1947. Another arrival was Luther Fenter, who came from Arkansas in 1907, and who owned the Silver Dollar Bar in Butte. When he retired he became a janitor in the Osley Building.16

Fortune's son, Elmo, was born in 1909 in Portland, Oregon, and lived there for a short period until his family
moved to Butte.

In 1942, Elmo began work with the smelter in Anaconda. When World War II seemed imminent, he went to Seattle and worked in the shipyards for the war industry. In 1952, he returned to Butte and again worked for the Anaconda Copper Mining (A.C.M.) Company as a miner. It was peculiar that for the next seven years he worked in the shafts. He was only one of three blacks ever allowed to work in the mines, because of the intense prejudice of other miners. He worked for both the Anaconda and the Kelly Mines. He stated that while working in the mines he was not aware of any prejudice toward him. He worked closely with many men and was well liked. As a chute-runner and the head dynamite blaster, he had numerous responsibilities and was never harassed for not doing his job. In 1964 Fortune returned to the smelter to work, and labored there until he retired in 1972.\(^\text{17}\)

The only other two blacks who worked in the mines were the brothers Hiram (Hi) Brown and Bill Brown (their family had owned the boardinghouse). They worked mostly as a pair in various mines around Butte. They did not have many problems with other miners and worked in the shafts for years. But there seems to be little explanation as to why the Browns and Fortune were allowed to work in the mines when so many other Afro-Americans were not allowed. In fact, it was not until years later, after the unions gave the okay, that blacks in general were allowed to work underground. The prejudice
was so strong toward blacks working underground that these three men were the only ones allowed to work in the shafts.\textsuperscript{18}

Most blacks that did work for the mining companies worked usually as laborers, janitors, in the smelter, or building gable frames. There were few Afro-Americans in the mine shafts but quite a few worked for the companies above ground.\textsuperscript{19}

Some of the occupations held by blacks required better training or greater skill than others. Chris Dorsey was the valet to Augustus Heinze and Aaron Scott Webb was W. A. Clark's valet. Frank Yamer owned the Silver City Club for many years, which was the premiere bar for the Afro-American community. The preachers for Butte's black churches had very important jobs, and were held in high regard. The tradesmen's jobs were highly skilled positions, but because of discrimination, few blacks in the late 19th century were allowed to hold the positions of carpenter, bricklayer, shoemaker, and construction worker. Early in the 20th century however, blacks had been allowed to be craftsmen. But shortly thereafter attitudes again changed, and they were not allowed to pass their skill on, and therefore opportunity for blacks in the crafts died.\textsuperscript{20}

The census of 1880 shows many of the mixture of laboring jobs open to blacks. In that year there were: three barbers, five laborers, three cooks, a woodchopper, a teamster, a boardinghouse owner, a gambler, a number of porters and a paper hanger.\textsuperscript{21} But as Butte grew, more opportunities arose
for blacks. By 1905, in addition to holding the jobs mentioned above, blacks were also employed as shoeshines, cooks, caterers, seamstresses, domestics, a tailor, an iron welder, an engineer, an electrician, and a chimney sweep, plus waiters, waitresses, musicians, and bath attendants.22

After arriving in Butte in 1900, J.W. Duncan not only saw that there were a few blacks who lived in Butte and held numerous jobs, but he also seemed to envision the potential for a "community." In order to nurture this community, he began publishing the New Age, with help from Chris Dorsey and Charles F. Smith, "... in the interests of the colored people."23 And although the New Age was only in print from 30 May 1902 until 7 February 1903,24 it was very influential within the community and in Montana. A sense of community was important to Duncan and his paper attempted to stress community solidarity in two ways; through a sense of family and through racial unity.

Both the fact that many of the families lived within a certain distance of each other and that there were some long-established families, would contribute to the familial feeling. A demographic study shows that many of the Afro-Americans lived near to each other, which might naturally create a closeness. Furthermore, the Duncan families, the Fortunes, the Brown family, and the Fenter family all moved to Butte near the turn of the century and lived in Butte decades later.
There were also activities within the neighborhood which enhanced the black community. The Silver City Club and other bars created a place for blacks to meet and the churches that were in the neighborhood provided a convenient place for families to worship. Because the blacks were closed-off from white society, they had to create a community of their own in order to make things bearable.

The New Age may have realized that the community was there and that its feeling of family should be promoted. Therefore, on page four of nearly every issue of the New Age, the articles were devoted to Butte's black community under the heading of "Local Notes." "Local Notes" dealt specifically with members of the community. Important to this section were those who were sick or recovering from illness, anyone who left for a trip, anyone who was visiting, those who entertained guests for dinner, or those seen on the street. A typical "Local Notes" looked like this:

Mr. Charles McPheeter, Mrs. Lucas, and Mrs. Burnside spent Sunday at Pipestone Springs. 25

Mrs. Lucas is on the sick list being confined to her room for the past three days. 26

Mrs. George Ernest Willis and Master Floyd Brashier left yesterday morning for Helena to remain over Sunday. 27

Mr. John Tate and Professor H.D. Parsons will leave Sunday on a fishing and hunting trip for two weeks. 28
They were written in an informal style, as if relatives were writing to each other. It seems as though Duncan was trying to accomplish two things. He wanted people to feel as if they were part of a large family, and he just generally wanted to keep people informed in the community.

Along with the local notes from Butte, Duncan received "Notes" from many other black communities in other cities and published many of these on page four. "Notes" came from Salt Lake, Ogden, San Francisco, Pocatello, Great Falls, Helena, and more. They all let the Afro-American community of Butte know what they were doing and how the people were. This seems to have given the feeling of relatives writing to the immediate family.29

Also on the fourth page were articles concerning the social organizations in Butte which provided entertainment to enhance social solidarity. The substance of the speeches or discussions did not seem important to those who wrote articles for the New Age, but how the event rated socially. For example, one of the social clubs, the Daughters of Tabor, held a meeting in the auditorium in Butte, and the article which covered the event spoke of the fun had by all and the good lectures heard, but said little of the real substance of the talk; the importance of the woman's role in society. The style was shallow and personal, not too analytical.30 The societies, though, did provide a place where people could gather as a community. The Odd Fellows, a church-related
group, gave an evening of entertainment on 31 July 1902 which was "... well attended. A concert was given after which dancing was indulged in until a late hour." Racial solidarity was the key to the black population. It appeared that Duncan knew, as individuals, Afro-Americans had very little power and their situation would not improve until they had united. He urged the blacks of Butte to consider the victories of other united Negroes. In Lexington, Kentucky, the Colored Mechanical and Agricultural Association as a united group became part of the National Trotting Association. In Montgomery, Alabama, blacks refused to ride the Jim Crow streetcars and finally blacks were allowed some rights.

In attempting to unite the race politically, Duncan asked black leaders to "... awaken the colored voters of this state to the realization of the fact that as a unit we can be a most potent fac[t]or in the political affairs of this state ..." Duncan knew that as a united group the black voters could make a difference in getting certain laws passed and in getting justice. He said that there was the need for a united league.

The Afro-American league should receive the united support of the race throughout the country in their commendable efforts to increase the status of the Negro in the national legislative council. Numerically the Negro population of the country is strong, but divisions and internal jealousies have nullified the political strength of the Negro nationally to almost nothing. Concentration is the password to social success.

Duncan also printed various stories about Booker T. Washington, a good unifying source, and of national and of
international events in the world of blacks. He knew blacks needed to be united not only as a community, but as a race as a whole.35

The black people of Butte had moved west for various reasons and held many occupations in that city. Because their neighborhoods, their churches, and their bars were all in close vicinity and because the New Age urged solidarity both as a family and a race, the black community in Butte became strong.
NOTES

1United States Census Bureau; Ninth, Tenth, Eleventh, Twelfth, and Thirteenth Censuses, Censuses from 1870-1910.

2In 1880 Butte City was part of Deer Lodge County. It was not until 1881 that Silver Bow County fragmented from Deer Lodge County. Also here, the number given of sixty blacks is a county census because no population numbers were given for cities.

3United States Census Bureau; Ninth, Tenth, Eleventh, Twelfth, and Thirteenth Censuses, Censuses for 1870-1910.


5Perdita Duncan, interview, Butte, Montana, 30 October 1984.


8Perdita Duncan, interview, Butte, Montana, 30 October 1984.

Letter, (Not-legible) to R. W. Clark, 31 August 1926. President's Files, Subject File 77-32-1 (1926), Northern Pacific Railway Co., Division of Archives and Manuscripts, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul.

10Ibid., Subject File 281-71.


13Duncan, et. al., Montana Oral History Interview (Butte, Montana) 4 March 1983, Helena, Montana.


15Duncan, et. al., 4 March 1983.

16Ibid.

17Ibid.

18Ibid.

19Perdita Duncan, 30 October 1984.

20Walter Duncan, 30 October 1984.

21United States Census Bureau, Tenth Census, Manuscript Census of 1880, Montana Historical Society Library, Helena, Montana.

22Helena Plaindealer, 11 January 1907; New Age (Butte), 30 May 1902 - 7 February 1903.

23New Age (Butte), 30 May 1902.

24There are no records at the Montana Historical Society on microfilm which show any issues later than 7 February 1903, but taking into consideration the abrupt end there may have been more issues. There is no indication on the part of the editors in the last few issues that the paper would no longer be published.

25New Age (Butte), 4 July 1902, p. 4.

26New Age (Butte), 30 May 1902 - 7 February 1903, pg. 4.

27New Age (Butte), 4 October 1902, p. 4.

28New Age (Butte), 31 July 1902.

29New Age (Butte), 6 June 1902.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>New Age, (Butte), 13 June 1902.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>&quot;Our Position,&quot; New Age, (Butte), 30 May 1902, p. 2.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>New Age (Butte), 6 September 1902, p. 2.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>&quot;United We Stand, Divided We Fall,&quot; New Age (Butte), 13 June 1902, p. 2.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>New Age (Butte), 19 July 1902, p. 2.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>New Age (Butte), 30 May 1902 - 7 February 1903.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER IV
THE CULTURAL, RELIGIOUS, AND POLITICAL
ACTIVITIES OF BUTTE'S BLACK COMMUNITY

The blacks' emphasis on their own community and its development stemmed from the discrimination on the part of the white community. Butte was a city with many immigrant groups and diverse cultures and many of these immigrant groups were prejudiced toward the black race. Therefore, having been shut out from the regular Butte community, the Afro-American population was forced to create their own community, complete with religious beliefs, cultural activities and political activities. Because discrimination kept blacks from participating in community activities they had to create their own social and cultural activities. Blacks were usually not allowed in bars, clubs, or restaurants of white owners. In addition, interracial picnics inevitably turned into brawls and prejudice kept blacks from going many places.

Bars served several purposes in the black community. They were the typical place to stop after work, and a place to "let off steam." But mostly they were a center of social activity and interaction. Some of the bars were the Silver Dollar, the Missouri, Finley's, and the Ozark. But the most famous of the black bars was the Silver City Club. Acting as
the counterpart to the white's Silver Bow Club, it was the hub of social activity. The owner of the Silver City Club was Frank Yamer, who managed the club from 1917 to 1957. Elmo Fortune described the Silver City as "... a permanent fixture."^2 And, with the exception of children, everyone of all ages attended the affairs of the Silver City. When blacks came to town, one of the first places where they could be seen was the Silver City.^3 Yamer's establishment became so popular that other bars and clubs in town began to lose business to it. The competition became so fierce, in fact, there were two bombings of the club. Although some damage was done each time, the club always opened within a short period of time.^4

The Silver City was important for two reasons. First, there was need for a bar for Afro-Americans. They were not allowed to enter white clubs, and therefore needed a social "hangout," and the Silver City provided just that. And second, as a social center, it acted as another unifying source for community solidarity. It was a place where people could relax, ideas could be shared, and friends made.

The Afro-American community in Butte also seemed to have a desire to be a part of the cultured society. The social clubs of Butte, mostly sponsored by the churches, played an important role in black cultural activities. The Odd-Fellows, the Afro-American Women's Clubs, the Daughters of Tabor, the Band of Gideon and the Band of Hope all provided meetings and cultural social services. They had speakers at meetings. They had full programs
where recitations were done, instrumentals were performed, and songs sung for cultural entertainment. The *New Age* published a list of the program from a past Exodus Literary Society meeting which listed the reading of a poem, "We are Rising," by Mrs. W.M. Birthright, the performing of a solo by Mrs. J. A. Smith, and a concert conducted by Mrs. E. J. Brown and her group. And at many meetings even a greater number entertained the audience. The *New Age* also published material about etiquette and how to act properly at dances, parties, and dinners. Therefore, it seems that it was very important for blacks to have the opportunity to enhance this cultural awareness.

Afro-Americans in Butte enjoyed listening to their many black bands, and according to Walter Duncan (whose father was J. W. Duncan), they were always much better than the white bands. The bands not only provided entertainment but they acted as an integral part of the cultural experience. Still, they were destined to die out. There was little opportunity for them to play anywhere outside their own community, and this, coupled with band members who turned alcoholic or developed arthritis, spelled the demise of the bands.

Additionally, there were many miscellaneous forms of social activity. Sports, for instance, especially baseball, which was a favorite of blacks, provided entertainment for the spectators, and activity for the players. Likewise, social groups presented all kinds of activities for filling
leisure time. Two of the more prominent social groups were the Hawthorne Social Club, "with the new Brunswick-Balke pool table . . ." and the Needmore Social Club, which claimed to be "The leading colored social club in the state." And lastly, dances and picnics fit into the miscellaneous category. Union halls were rented by blacks so that they could hold dances. Picnics were a favorite in the summertime. Many groups went to an old cabin near Flint Hill Creek to picnic while some picnickers simply paid train fare and asked the conductor to drop them off anywhere along the line that looked like a nice spot.

The cultural development of the community and its individuals was very important to blacks. The people had more leisure time than in decades past and therefore there was a greater need for activities. The clubs, societies, the New Age, and miscellaneous activities all helped to heighten the cultural awareness of the community.

During the first quarter of the 20th century there were two churches which served the black community in Butte. They were the Bethel Baptist Church and the African Methodist Episcopal Church (A.M.E.). Blacks were not allowed in most of the churches in Butte because of discrimination, so they began their own churches.

The Bethel Baptist Church, on the corner of Mercury and Idaho Streets, was organized in July, 1901 and continued as a place of worship until the late '30s. In 1902 and 1903, the church boasted twenty members and the number had doubled.
by 1904. Between 1907 and 1911 the number dropped to fifteen, at which time the church did not have a pastor. The turnover rate of pastors had indeed been high, which was obviously detrimental to the congregation. But in 1914, Reverend E.B. Reed became the pastor for the Bethel Baptist. He was there until 1918, and the number of members grew to seventy-five. After Reed, left the numbers again decreased until, by 1937, the church was forced to close its doors.  

The African Methodist Episcopal Church, or Shaffers, as it was also known, had a devoted congregation of twenty until 1925. Although its congregation was smaller than that of the Bethel Baptist, its membership did not fluctuate as much during the time that it was providing services (1903-1930s). In 1903, the *New Age* devoted an article to the grand opening of the A.M.E. Church and praised its first minister, Reverend Jordan Allen. Both he and Reverend C.C.X. Laws, of the Bethel Baptist Church, were held in highest regard by the *New Age*. However, there was a high turnover rate of pastors in both churches which was probably imperious to the churches. Only twice did any pastor serve for more than one year, Reverend Benjamin McIntyre--1905 and 1906-- and Reverend Harrison H. Jones--1907 and 1908-- for Shaffer Chapel. The same thing can also be said about the Bethel Baptist. With the exception of Reed, only Samuel A. Norris--in 1907 and 1908-- was the clergyman for two consecutive years. This might help to explain why neither church had substantial congregations. It was only during the five-year period that
Reed was pastor at the Bethel Baptist that there was any significant membership.11

The churches not only acted as a place of worship and a source of spirituality, but also served to provide the community with religious and social activities. By using the *New Age*, the churches could promote their religious and social activities. They used available space to publish information about the social clubs and ask people to come to the meetings. For example, the Exodus Literary Society had an article published in the first issue of the *New Age* on 30 May 1902. The article announced the new officers and informed all readers that the society was open to the public. Anyone who was interested was to meet every Tuesday evening at the Bethel Baptist Church. The motto of the Exodus Literary Society was also stated: "Our motto is to endeavor to make an evening of pleasure."12

It was obvious that the *New Age* supported the churches and the churches used the *New Age* effectively in passing on the beliefs of the church. C.C.X. Laws, for example, preached to the black community through the written word. He requested that everyone attend Wednesday evening's prayer meeting "... for your soul's benefit. Listen not to the whim of Satan, for he will certainly carry you away in captivity."13 Laws even printed a previously given sermon to reemphasize his point in the 13 June 1902 issue. He used the *New Age* as a source to preach the word and unify the community religiously. The newspaper also advertised the
Hawthorne Social Club, the Band of Gideon, and the Band of Hope, while supporting groups like the Afro-American Women's Clubs.\textsuperscript{15}

The A.M.E. Church also used access to the \textit{New Age} wisely. Through the paper, Shaffers attempted to enrich the people's religious spirit. In July, 1902, the \textit{New Age} announced the church's establishment; the grand opening on 26 December 1902 received a great deal of attention in the paper.\textsuperscript{16} Shaffer Chapel also provided societal organizations such as the Daughters of the Sermon and the Odd-Fellows as religious outreach programs for the community. Furthermore, the A.M.E. Church held a fair, which was highly acclaimed, during four days of summer in 1902. Local merchants provided prizes and Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt sent a token of her esteem, a small globe of the world, from the White House.\textsuperscript{17}

In summary, the Bethel Baptist and the African Methodist Episcopal Churches greatly influenced the community by providing religious, cultural, and social services.

The \textit{New Age}, although it was published for only a short period of time, seemed to touch on the major concerns of the black community. It summarized the interests and the problems, not only of that period, but of the whole period of time that blacks lived in Butte. J. W. Duncan, along with his associates Chas. F. Smith and Chris Dorsey, attempted to unify the community and endeavored to act as a voice for the black society. Each week the editors provided Butte readers with both local news
and regional news about other black communities in Pocatello, Salt Lake, Helena, Great Falls, Ogden, San Francisco, Bozeman, and Alaska. The paper also provided national news which was pertinent to Afro-Americans. Moreover, for literary buffs there was prose and poetry. But to Duncan political news seemed to be most important. He stressed its importance and attempted to use the New Age as an active, political voice for the Afro-American community. He preached much of this in the early issues of the New Age. He declared that there was a struggle to unify the black race and to seek equality with the white race. On 4 July 1902, he made his purpose clear:

We are now marching onward to political warfare. Many thousands strong our voices can now be heard and recognized because we bore the banner of prosperity. We shall endeavor to gain nothing more than is justly due us and evade issues that are not beneficial to our common cause.

The editors knew that strength could be acquired only through political activism and unity. Time and again they called for a solid front to challenge the wrongs which had been inflicted upon blacks. In an article called, "United We Stand, Divided We Fall," Duncan and his associates stated the importance of unity.

There is one inherent weakness of the Negro which in this 20th century marks an era of [t]his great progression, which should be eliminated, and that is the lack of confidence, the lack of feeling of power within ourselves. It is a surprising fact that few of the statistical politicians of our country realize or seriously comprehend and consider, and that is that the Negro in a close presidential contest in our country can absolutely dictate the politics of our nation--i.e., determine the election of President.
Because of the lack of confidence in themselves and because of internal jealousies, which kept blacks from acting as an organized power, Duncan called a state convention of black representatives in order to unify the race and accomplish the necessary goals.¹¹

Through the call for a state convention the *New Age* showed its growing concern for the political strength of Afro-Americans in Butte and Montana. For the next few weeks Duncan continued to call for a representative body to meet in order to harmonize the black race's needs and to bury the feeling of a lack of political efficacy. He knew a league would promote unity, and his plea thus became more anxious.²² "Let us awaken from our lethargic state in which we have been repining, to a consciousness of our own power and usefulness. One active 'alive' man is equal in force and power to a dozen 'dead' ones..."²³

One of the reasons Duncan was asking the blacks to become so politically active was because of the upcoming general election of 1902. In November, the offices for the state would be decided and Duncan felt that blacks could influence the outcome. In this light he asked that the black voters support those candidates who, regardless of affiliation, would support the blacks' call for justice.²⁴

Then, on 4 October 1902, the *New Age* declared its support for the Democratic party in the upcoming election.²⁵ Moreover, in that and every subsequent issue, the *New Age* published short biographies of some of the more important candidates of the campaign. Some of the candidates from the Democratic ticket were, M.P. Gilchrist for state senator; Mr. C.E. Alsop, George
R. Brown, J.T. O'Brien, and W. W. McDowell all for state legislature; John L. Templemen for county attorney; Mr. James T. Finlen for county treasurer; and Bernard Noon for associate justice of the Supreme Court.26

This action by the New Age to support the Democratic party is peculiar because blacks during this period tended to be Republican. It seems as though the editors of the New Age showed some insight into their political understanding of local conditions. They did not support the Republican party, the party blacks had been affiliated with since the Civil War. They instead chose to support the party which could best fulfill their needs. The interests of the blacks were in justice, which could be reached through a fair, impartial judicial system. But they felt threatened by political foes who were trying to control Montana's Supreme Court. The New Age called "... for the protection and maintenance of a pure and untamable judiciary ... to keep this state from being ruined by the one party who seeks again the machinery of our judiciary for his personal lust and benefit."27

Augustus Heinze was attempting to keep the powerful Amalgamated at bay. In doing so and to protect his own business interests, he needed a weapon with which to fight. His weapon was the local government which he would attempt to fill with candidates that suited his purpose. He also felt that his best chance in fighting the corporation was through the judiciary. The Democrats saw all of this and split with him.
Hence, he created a fusion party with many of the fragments of other parties. The New Age felt threatened by Heinze's attempts to control the judiciary. It is possible that they joined the Democratic party simply to reject Heinze and fight him in the election.

On the whole, Heinze still advocated many things that the Democratic party stood for. He was against trusts for the corporations. The Democratic party platform was in favor of labor and against trusts or pools of the railroads. Heinze also would have been against pools. Therefore, much of the political in-fighting stemmed not from a difference over the basic beliefs held by the Democratic Party, the New Age, and Augustus Heinze, but more from the latter's attempt to control Butte's city government.

The Colored Democratic Club met on 25 October 1902 in order to unite the black voters in the state. With a full house they spoke in favor of the Democratic party. Their statement summarized much of what the New Age had urged:

This is not a question of politics, not a question of party, it is a question shall we protect our homes, our legislation for the good of all people and all parties and of the administration of justice to all without strings on it.

In the November elections Heinze's fusionists were victorious. He also won in the Supreme Court when his pet candidate, William Holloway, was elected as associate justice. The Democrats and Butte's Afro-American community received little of what they wanted. Politics and racial
unity had been important to the New Age. Duncan attempted to awaken black voters, in order to have an impact upon the government. Because of the lack of political activism, though, the Afro-American community was not a threat to the complex politics of Butte. Therefore, they were never able to truly become an influential group in Butte's political history.

As a whole, cultural, religious, and political activities gave the community of blacks in Butte a strength which allowed them to endure. This sense of a strong self-identity was particularly important in light of the fact that discrimination was often a way of life for Butte's black residents. Let us now turn our attention to this issue of discrimination.
NOTES

1There is some question as to the actual existence of these bars. The information was attained through interviews and those being interviewed were unsure as to the names of many of the bars.


4Walter Duncan, et. al., Montana Oral History Interview, 4 March 1983.


6Walter Duncan, et. al., Montana Oral History Interview, 4 March 1983.

7"Local Notes," New Age (Butte), 30 May 1902, p. 4.

8Ibid.

9Perdita Duncan, interview, Butte, Montana, 30 October 1984.


11Ibid.

12New Age (Butte), 30 May 1902, p. 4.

13"Churches," New Age (Butte), 13 June 1902, p. 4.
14 New Age (Butte), 13 June 1902, p. 2.
15 "Local Notes", New Age (Butte), 6 June 1902, p. 4.
16 New Age (Butte), 2 August 1902, p. 2.
17 "A.M.E. Church Fair," New Age (Butte), 20 June 1902, p. 4.
18 New Age (Butte), 30 May 1902-7 February 1903.
19 New Age (Butte), 4 July 1902, p. 2.
20 New Age (Butte), 13 June 1902, p. 2.
21 New Age (Butte), 13 June 1902, p. 4.
22 "A Negro State Convention," New Age (Butte), 13 June 1902, p. 4.
23 New Age (Butte), 27 June 1902, p. 2.
24 "Our Political Plot," New Age (Butte), 30 August 1902, p. 2.
25 New Age (Butte), 4 October 1902, p. 1.
26 Anaconda Standard, 9 October 1902, p. 4.
27 New Age (Butte), 11 October 1902, p. 2.
29 Ibid., pp. 162-165; Butte Miner, 30 September 1902, p. 1; Bozeman Chronicle, 1 October 1902, p. 1.
CHAPTER V
DISCRIMINATION OF BLACKS AND THE
CONSEQUENT DEMISE OF THE COMMUNITY

On the surface there seemed to be little discrimination in Butte toward blacks. For example, there were no segregated schools in Butte. In 1872, a law for segregation of schools was passed in Montana, but Butte did not have segregated schools. Also, there seemed to be little neighborhood segregation. Although the blacks lived in a general area they still lived with whites and there were a few racial problems in the neighborhoods. Furthermore, blacks were not blatantly discriminated against in the schools. They were allowed to participate in all the school activities such as the bands and sports.¹

But in reality, discrimination was very strong in Butte. On historical reputation alone, Butte is seen as a town of very diverse immigrant groups who were prejudiced toward blacks and other minorities. Historically, unskilled and skilled workers of limited education have tended to be some of America's strongest bigots. In Butte, this was very often the case. For example, some Filipino immigrants were allowed to work in the mines; but there were many cases when the Filipinos had the worst underground jobs and they fell victim to many "accidents."²

The blacks who lived in Butte faced the problem of lack
of opportunity. As far as jobs were concerned, only the laboring positions were open to blacks. J. W. Duncan was a rare figure in Butte. There were the typical jobs for blacks: barbers, domestics, porters, and laborers. But that was about all. There were few opportunities to better oneself. The mines especially were closed down to blacks. As I have mentioned, only three blacks were allowed to work in the mines. During World War II, in fact, black soldiers were sent to Butte to work in the mines because of the shortage of manpower. But white miners would not let the blacks go underground. So, the blacks never worked in the mines. For the duration of the war, they simply went to the head office to collect their paychecks. The mining companies, in order to please the federal government, made it look as though the Afro-Americans were working, but they never did work.3 With the mines closed to blacks as the greatest opportunity for work and the professional fields just as untouchable, there were few labor opportunities for blacks.

Activities around town also banned black participation. Bars, clubs, restaurants, movie theaters, and dance halls all discriminated. Perdita Duncan, a long-time black citizen of Butte and daughter of J. W. Duncan said, "There was a point here when Butte might as well have been in the deep South."4 Because blacks were not allowed in white clubs and bars, an establishment such as the Silver City Club became very popular with the Afro-American community. At restaurants, too, blacks were banned. Perdita Duncan remembers the family going for
walks and the fact that they could not enter many establishments, especially Gamers. Even the Chinese would not allow blacks to eat at their restaurant, the Temple.5

The Y.M.C.A. was also very notorious for its discrimination. Walter Duncan and Elmo Fortune spoke of their attempts to sneak into the Y.M.C.A.: "It was almost sacrilegious. It was almost the same as if you went out and tried to proposition the Virgin Mary, to ask for a membership at the Y.M.C.A."6

Finally, most churches were closed to blacks. They were forced to establish their own churches partly because they were not allowed in the white churches.

The downfall of the New Age seems, in some ways, to symbolize the demise of Butte's black community. Although its effectiveness was at its greatest height during the election period of 1902, there were signs creeping in of gradual ineffectiveness in other areas. Politically it served as a potent, unifying spirit. But the "Local Notes" column did not continue as an important source of unification. This column became significantly smaller and therefore less influential, and was nearly discarded.7 Secondly, hard-hitting issues were no longer the focus of the paper (with the exception of the political stories). By 4 October 1902 fictional stories covered nearly half of the newspapers. Two and three stories filled even more space by November, 1902.8

Thirdly, by December a change in advertisements had taken place. This is peculiar because, prior to December financial support
came from local merchants and especially merchants in the black community. But by December many of the ads were railroad ads from the Great Northern, the Northern Pacific and the Oregon Short Line. Also because of fewer ads from local patrons, there were spots for medical cures and reliefs that were not sponsored by a particular group. This may have been a sign that the local merchants had lost confidence in the *New Age*. At any rate, by February of 1903 no more issues were published.  

The decline of the *New Age* represented both lack of support and lack of opportunity in Butte. The blacks could not get the support they needed from the white population of Butte. They had little opportunity for economic development and therefore began to decline as a community.

Ultimately, the once vibrant black community began to fade in Butte by the end of the Progressive Era. From the late 1890s to the 1920s there was a strong community of over 240 blacks, but between 1920 and 1940 a steady decline began. The numbers declined from 240 to 162 during this time and by 1950 the numbers had fallen to 64 blacks.

There are four possible reasons for this decline in the black population in Butte. First, because of the lack of economic opportunity many Afro-Americans were forced to move away.

Along with the lack of opportunity was the problem of discrimination. Because of discrimination there were few jobs beyond the service sector. Also, there were few businesses
open to the Afro-American community. Blacks had to leave in order to get away from the strong prejudices of Butte.

Third, because of the lack of opportunity in Butte for employment, blacks looked elsewhere. When new war industries opened in the early 1940s in Seattle and other west coast cities, blacks were attracted to these war centers. It is during this period that the Afro-American community dropped from 162 to 64.11

Last, there were many minor changes in the black community which brought about its demise. The black population had grown to a significant number by 1900 and was strong until the '20s. The community was multifaceted and created a good life for its people. But this was not to last. The community thrived as long as there were prescribed areas for religious worship, social and cultural activities and a united spirit. But by 1937, both the Bethel Baptist and the African Methodist Episcopal Churches had shut down.12 The Silver City was forced to close a few years later.13 And there was no black newspaper or active voice to keep the people informed and active.

Despite the ultimate decline of Butte's Afro-American population, black pioneers around the turn of the century created a vibrant black community where there seemed little promise for one to grow. Cultural, religious, and political activism, coupled with the support and encouragement from the New Age, produced a tremendous solidarity in Butte's black community.
NOTES


2Ibid.

3Ibid.

4Ibid.

5Ibid.

6Ibid.

7New Age (Butte), 13 September 1902 to 7 February 1903.

8New Age (Butte), 4 October 1902 to 7 February 1903.

9New Age (Butte), 13 December 1902 to 7 February 1903.

10United States Census Bureau; Sixteenth and Seventeenth Censuses; Censuses for 1940 and 1950.

11Ibid.


13Ibid.
# PARTIAL LISTING OF THE BLACK RESIDENTS OF BUTTE BY 1910

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Mr. and Mrs. C. F. Alexander</td>
<td>porter</td>
<td>220 S. Idaho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Reverend J. Allen</td>
<td>pastor</td>
<td>Platinum S.E. Corner Idaho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Mr. and Mrs. Thomas E. Amos</td>
<td>porter</td>
<td>66 W. Silver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Mr. Frank Armstrong</td>
<td>laborer</td>
<td>11 W. Porphyry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Mrs. Eva Barker</td>
<td>dairy</td>
<td>1224 W. Silver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Mrs. Elizabeth Bartlett</td>
<td>organist</td>
<td>322 W. Broadway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Mr. and Mrs. Enis Bell</td>
<td>porter</td>
<td>209 W. Broadway Alley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Mr. and Mrs. Lee Bell</td>
<td>janitor</td>
<td>92 Owsley Blk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Miss Fannie Binnum (Bynum)</td>
<td>clerk</td>
<td>207 W. Broadway Alley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Mr. and Mrs. W. M. Birthright (Birthwright)</td>
<td>cook/hairdresser</td>
<td>114 W. Broadway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Mr. Charles Wesley Black</td>
<td>porter</td>
<td>rear 220 S. Arizona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Mr. and Mrs. Jas Brice</td>
<td>laborer</td>
<td>421 S. Arizona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Mr. and Mrs. E. J. Brown</td>
<td>porter</td>
<td>315 S. Idaho Alley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Miss Minnie Brown</td>
<td></td>
<td>737 E. Mercury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Mr. and Mrs. James Bullet (Buliet)</td>
<td>cook</td>
<td>422 Colorado</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Mr. and Mrs. William Burnside</td>
<td>bartender</td>
<td>525 E. Broadway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Lonnie Clayton</td>
<td>clerk</td>
<td>35 E. Broadway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Mr. James Collins</td>
<td>valet</td>
<td>209 W. Broadway Alley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Mr. Jurdon Curd</td>
<td>laborer</td>
<td>216 W. Mercury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Mr. Frank D. Darnell</td>
<td>conf.</td>
<td>103 W. Porphyry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>C. I. Davies</td>
<td>janitor</td>
<td>220 W. Mercury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Mr. and Mrs. John F. Davis (Davies)</td>
<td>deputy clerk</td>
<td>748 Colorado</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Miss May Davis</td>
<td>domestic</td>
<td>315 Dakota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Mr. and Mrs. Stephen E. Dedrich</td>
<td>bootblack</td>
<td>207 W. Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>Mr. Chris Dorsey</td>
<td>valet (Augustus Heinze)</td>
<td>28 E. Broadway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>Miss Duffield</td>
<td>clerk</td>
<td>820 W. Broadway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>James W. Duncan</td>
<td>barber</td>
<td>107 E. Broadway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>Earl Dunn (Dunne)</td>
<td>cook</td>
<td>423 1/2 S. Arizona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>Mrs. Saline Estes</td>
<td>laborer</td>
<td>216 E. Silver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>E. O. Excell</td>
<td>laborer (mop smelter)</td>
<td>336 E. Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>Mr. and Mrs. John D. Fagan</td>
<td>shoemaker</td>
<td>1231 W. Granite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>Larry (Charles) Fagan</td>
<td>laborer</td>
<td>234 S. Main</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>Osborn Fenter</td>
<td>porter</td>
<td>206 W. Granite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>M. C. Fischer</td>
<td>shoemaker</td>
<td>812 Dakota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>Mr. and Mrs. H. L. Fletcher</td>
<td>proprietor, Acme string parlor</td>
<td>627 E. Broadway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>Mr. Joseph Fletcher</td>
<td>fireman-Silver Bow Mine</td>
<td>11 W. Porphyry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>Mr. and Mrs. Charles Fortune</td>
<td>porter</td>
<td>66 W. Silver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Freeman</td>
<td>bath attendant</td>
<td>Reynolds &amp; McDowell Blk. Arlington Hotel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.</td>
<td>Mr. John (Thomas) Givens</td>
<td>clerk</td>
<td>108 Quartz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41.</td>
<td>Mr. Fred Golden</td>
<td>teamster</td>
<td>8 N. Montana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42.</td>
<td>Mr. H. Goodbar (Goodbro)</td>
<td>clerk</td>
<td>11 W. Gold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td>Sam Harden</td>
<td>clerk (Hennessy's)</td>
<td>614 Nevada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44.</td>
<td>Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Hayes</td>
<td>porter</td>
<td>Park City Addition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45.</td>
<td>Mrs. Lula M. Henry</td>
<td>seamstress</td>
<td>128 S. Arizona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46.</td>
<td>Mr. and Mrs. Hocker</td>
<td>bath rubber</td>
<td>107 E. Fremont</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47.</td>
<td>Mr. Harvey Holmes</td>
<td>saloon</td>
<td>312 S. Idaho Alley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48.</td>
<td>Mrs. Harriett Jackson</td>
<td>laborer</td>
<td>220 S. Idaho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49.</td>
<td>Mr. and Mrs. Robert Jackson</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50.</td>
<td>Mrs. Josephine I. Jacobs, (widow)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
51. John A. James          house & chimney sweep
52. Jim Jefferson         barber
53. Mrs. Jenkins          laborer
54. Mrs. E. H. Johnson    domestic
55. Miss Eliza Johnson    seamstress
56. Mr. and Mrs. Henry Johnson  laborer
57. Miss Anne Jones       mining
58. Mr. Charles Fiske Jones  porter
59. Mr. L. B. Jones       porter
60. Mr. Sam Jones         porter
61. Mr. H. King           porter
62. Mr. Charles A. Lair   porter
63. Robert Lawrence       porter
64. C.C.X. Laws           Reverend Bethel Baptist Church
65. Mr. and Mrs. George Lee laborer (Neversweat Mine)
66. Miss Ella Lewis       domestic
67. Mr. Frank Lewis       porter
68. Mrs. T. M. Lucas      palmist, cardreader
69. George (Gus) T. Mason laborer (MOP concentrator)
70. Mr. Walter McMurray   porter
71. Mrs. Belle Miller     porter(sleeping car)
72. Mrs. Anna Nelson      music teacher
73. Louis O'Neill         student
74. Mr. and Mrs. Henry C. Parsons  porter
75. Mr. Frank Pearl      caterer
76. Mrs. L. S. Phelps    carpenter
77. Mr. Lee Philips      secretary (C.W. Clark)
78. Mr. George S. Reeves  porter
79. Chas. Roe            secretary
80. Mrs. Alice Sager     domestic
81. Mrs. John D. Scott   domestic
82. Miss Kate Shackleford porter
83. Bishop D.D. Shaffer  porter
84. Mr. and Mrs. L. S. Sheets    steward
85. Miss Babe E. Simmington  musician
86. Mr. Chris F. Smith   musician
87. Mr. J. H. Smith      porter
88. Mr. John Tate        porter
89. Mr. and Mrs. Robert Taylor     carpenter
90. Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Vass  (MOP smelter)
91. Carl H. Wagner       caterer
92. Mr. and Mrs. Dudley Walton   messenger
93. Master Morris Ward   musician
94. Mr. E. D. Washington janitor
95. Mr. and Mrs. Wm. A. Washington  bricklayer
96. Mr. Charles M. Watts  valet (W.A. Clark)
97. Mr. and Mrs. Aaron Scott Webb  headwaiter (Silver Bow Club)
98. Miss Sarah White     janitor
99. Mr. and Mrs. J. E. Wilds  laborer (B & B Smelter)
100. Mrs. Ida Willis     janitor
101. Mrs. J. W. Wilson   Pres. Silver City Club
102. Frank Yamer        famous musician
103. Mr. James S. Yancy(Yancey) corner Idaho & Mercury

517 W. Galena          Southern Hotel
462 E. Broadway       B 1/2 S. Wyoming
12 N. Idaho St.      12 W. Aluminum
1105 W. Galena        116 S. Idaho
224 1/2 S. Wyoming    8 N. Main, Meaderville
1231 W. Granite       324 1/2 S. Arizona
25 E. Quartz          1029 E. Galena
626 Dakota           407 1/2 Dakota
315 S. Dakota        rear 516 W. Granite
112 S. Idaho         220 W. Mercury
628 W. Granite       106 S. Idaho
45 W. Granite        114 East Third
233 E. Porphyry      107 E. Freemont
The Butte          220 S. Idaho
rear 616 Colorado    711 W. Broadway
217 W. Mercury      20 W. Silver
415 E. Park           46 S. Wyoming Alley
522 S. Idaho          318 Colorado
236 S. Arizona      102 S. Montana
636 Placer           318 Colorado
118 S. Idaho        236 S. Arizona
1036 Iowa Ave.      102 S. Montana
416 S. Main          636 Placer
118 S. Idaho        316 Colorado
AREAS OF INTEREST

A. Bethel Baptist Church
   Idaho N. E. corner Mercury

B. African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church (Shaffer)
   Idaho S. E. corner Platinum

C. Silver City Club

"Democratic State Platform" Bozeman Chronicle, 1 October 1902, p. 1.


Duncan, Walter; Duncan, Perdita; Fortune, Elmo; Fenter, William; Montana Oral History Interview (Butte, Montana) 4 March 1983, Montana Historical Society Library, Helena, Montana.

"Showing of our people in Butte City." Montana Plaindealer (Helena), 11 January 1970, p. 4.

New Age. (Butte), 30 May 1902 - 7 February 1903.


St. Paul, Minnesota. Minnesota Historical Society, President's Files, 281-71(1938), Northern Pacific Railway Records, Division of Archives and Manuscripts. Letter from Sadler, Joel and Keller, Chester to Donnelly, Charles. 11 April 1938.


SECONDARY SOURCES


