

# The Mines and Miners of Butte, Montana as Seen on Souvenir Spoons

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Butte, Montana, once home to over 225 mines of all sizes and numerous mills and smelters, was one of foremost mining camps for memorialization on objects intended as souvenirs. As early as the 1850s the area around Butte was drawing the attention of prospectors, at first for gold and later silver. However, copper, was to be Butte's greatest resource. The souvenir industry took advantage of the romance of mining in the west and created thousands of items, e.g. china plates, copper-plated novelties, coins and medals, glassware, mirrors, stereophotos, and postcards for the tourist to purchase. One of the more prominent mementos was the souvenir spoon.

Most often the spoon was sterling silver with a designed engraving, generally hand cut into the silver at a jewelers shop, or a design that was machine-stamped at the factory. Copper alloy spoons were also produced. Many of the spoons feature a prominent miner on the handle. Both the silver and copper spoons are found with enameled designs but this is not a common occurrence. Many of the factory-produced spoons are available in demitasse and teaspoon sizes and are found in silver or copper.

The Anaconda Mine was the most popular mine or at least the most commonly used theme on the spoons and over 20 different designs were available for the tourist by buy. The Montana School of Mines was not left off the list when it came to the souvenir spoon and many designs were produced.



*Fig. 1: Alice Mine.*

The photos will illustrate some of the various spoons that are available to the patient collector. Figure 1 shows an engraving of the Alice Mine. The Alice, a silver mine, was once owned by Marcus Daly. He sold his shares in the Alice so that he could buy into the Anaconda, a promising silver mine.



Figures 2-7 all feature the Anaconda Mine. This property was located in 1882 by Michael Hickey, an ex-Union army soldier. The mine, which began as a serious silver operation by Hickey, and continued, by Daly, took a strange twist of fate when copper was discovered. After the October 1893 repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act, ending the use of silver in the country's monetary policy, copper became an even more important metal. Figures 2 and 3, using a stamped design, present the same view of the Anaconda but feature different miners on the handles. Figure 7 features a multicolored enameled bowl over an engraved design. Figure 4 shows yet another engraving of the Anaconda and sports another miner on the handle; this time he is wearing a candle.

Figure 5 shows the second most common view of the Anaconda and also features the School of Mines on the handle. Figure 6, an engraving, features a desirable windlass on the handle. Often the windlass crank, wire rope, or both are missing but these are relatively easy fixes.

*(Left to right) Figs. 2-4, Anaconda Mine.*



*Top to bottom: Figs. 5-7, Anaconda Mine.*





*Top to bottom: Fig. 8: Butte and Boston Smelter; Fig. 9: Gagnon Mine, Butte, MT; Fig. 10: Lexington Mine; Fig. 11: Minney Healey Mine; Fig. 12: Mountain View Mine.*



The Butte and Boston Smelter is featured on Figure 8. The Butte and Boston Consolidated Mining Company was organized in 1888 and became part of the Boston and Montana Consolidated Copper and Silver Mining Company in 1895. In 1899 it was merged with many other companies, including the Anaconda Mining Company into the Amalgamated Copper Company, a large holding company.

The Gagnon Mine, Figure 9, was owned by the Colorado Mining and Smelting Co. and became one of the Amalgamated holdings in 1910. The Gagnon was rich in silver and gold.

The Lexington Mine, Figure 10, was a prominent silver producer in the 1870s. After a successful labor strike in 1878, the miners formed the Butte Workingman's Union. In 1889 the Lexington's 1400-foot shaft was the deepest in Montana. The mine later became a major producer of zinc under Anaconda Copper Mining Co. ownership.

The Minnie Healey Mine, Figure 11, was owned by the famous F. Augustus Heinze. This mine was later tied up in legal battles with the Amagamated's Leonard Mine (owned by the Boston and Montana Co.).

The Mountain View Mine, Figure 12, was owned by the Boston and Montana Mining Co. prior to its merger with Anaconda (via the Amalgamated Copper Co.) in 1910.



*Top to bottom, Fig. 13: Mountain Consolidated Mine; Fig. 14: Never Sweat Mine; Fig. 15: Parrot Mine; Fig. 16: Silver Bow Mine; Fig. 17: Speculator Mine.*



The Mountain Consolidated Mine, Figure 13, was owned by the Anaconda Copper Mining Co. First located in 1881 and operated in 1886, it was the deepest of all the Butte mines by 1964. Total depth reached was 5,293 feet. This mine was one of the last underground copper mines in Butte and operated until 1973 when all underground mining ceased.

The Never Sweat Mine, Figure 14, located on the Anaconda copper vein, was bought by Daly in 1882. In 1920, the Metal Mine Workers Union, No.800, struck and picketed the mineyard. A shot was fired at the mineyard from an apartment house across the street and soon after a squad of mine guards returned fire wounding 15 persons. The strike was not supported by the other Metal's Trade Unions and it collapsed within one week.

The Parrot Mine, Figure 15, was discovered in 1864. The Parrot was Butte's first copper mine. Owned by the Parrot Silver & Copper Mining Company it was acquired by the Amalgamated in 1899 and later by the Anaconda Copper Mining Company in 1910. It was rich in silver and was one of Butte's top copper producers.

The Silver Bow Mine, Figure 16, was another prominent silver producer in the 1870s. It was owned by the Butte & Boston Copper Mining Company and eventually by the Anaconda Copper Mining Co. in 1910.

The Speculator Mine, Figure 17, was owned by the North Butte Mining Company. In 1917 a great fire broke out at the mine killing over 160 miners.



*Fig. 18 (left): Original Mine; Fig. 19 (top center): Richest Hill in the World; Fig. 20 (second center): School of Mines; Fig. 21 (third center): Copper souvenir spoon and box; Fig. 22 (right): Butte Miner.*

The Original Mine, Figure 18, was originally owned by W. A. Clark. In the 1880s it was principally a silver mine. In 1910 it was sold to the Amalgamated and later incorporated into the Anaconda Copper Mining Company.

The Richest Hill in the World, shown in Figure 19, is an attempt to show the magnitude of the development of mines, mills, and smelters in Butte.

The School of Mines, shown in the engraving in Figure 20, was built in 1896-98 and opened for instruction in 1900. The school first offered degrees in mining and electrical engineering.

A Butte miner, shown in Figure 21, is typical of the romance that mining provided. What could be more typical of the outsider's view of western mining than a miner with a large and presumably rich ore sample in hand?

Figure 22 is an example of a copper souvenir spoon sold in Butte by Right & Fairfield Co., one of its prominent jewelers and self-proclaimed "Headquarters for Souvenirs of Butte." The spoon shows two miners underground in the mine (in the bowl) hard at work with light provided only by candles, while a third man waits above ground (on the handle) ready to lift the recovered ore by windlass.

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