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## **Butte Mining Disaster 1917 Part II**

**Lead: Late in the evening of June 8, 1917, a fire began in a Butte Montana mine. Scores died, there was union unrest. It was the worst rock mining disaster in United States history.**

***Intro: A Moment in Time with Dan Roberts.***

**Content: The mine called Granite Mountain Mine in Butte, was known as the “richest mountain in the world.” Butte was the leading copper producer in the U.S., and 15,000 miners were working in shifts around**

**the clock to meet the demand for copper during WWI.**

**Early in June, a crew was attempting to lower a 1,200 foot electric line into the shaft of the Granite mine. The cable slipped, and the protective sheath frayed as it crashed against rock and timbers before it became lodged 2,400 feet below ground. Late that evening a recovery crew descended into the shaft. The assistant foreman accidentally contacted the flammable insulation of the frayed cable and set the cable ablaze. The fire spread rapidly up the timber shaft, and the fire and deadly carbon monoxide gas went through the labyrinth of hundreds of miles of underground**

**workings that connected to adjoining mine properties. There were no warning systems besides verbal communication. In spite of heroic efforts of the miners, 163 (perhaps as many as 168) men died in the tragedy. It took two weeks to recover all the bodies.**

**In the immediate aftermath, the miners – whose Unions had been shut down by aggressive management action, organized a strike. The IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) leader who came to Butte to help the miners organize was murdered. With labor unrest at a peak, Butte was under martial law for the next seven years.**

**In 1996 the Granite Mountain Disaster and Memorial Overlook was dedicated to honor the sacrifices of miners in this the worse disaster in U.S. mining history.**

**At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

## Resources

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**<http://www.butteamerica.com/gmtn.htm>**