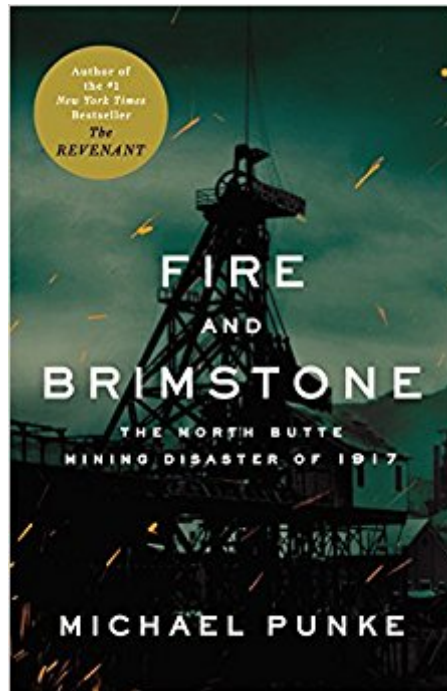




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# Fire And Brimstone: The North Butte Mining Disaster Of 1917



## Synopsis

The author of the #1 New York Times bestseller, *The Revenant*--basis for the award-winning motion picture starring Leonardo DiCaprio--tells the remarkable story of the worst hard-rock mining disaster in American history. The worst hard-rock mining disaster in American history began a half hour before midnight on June 8, 1917, when fire broke out in the North Butte Mining Company's Granite Mountain shaft. Sparked more than two thousand feet below ground, the fire spewed flames, smoke, and poisonous gas through a labyrinth of underground tunnels. Within an hour, more than four hundred men would be locked in a battle to survive. Within three days, one hundred and sixty-four of them would be dead. *Fire and Brimstone* recounts the remarkable stories of both the men below ground and their families above, focusing on two groups of miners who made the incredible decision to entomb themselves to escape the gas. While the disaster is compelling in its own right, *Fire and Brimstone* also tells a far broader story striking in its contemporary relevance. Butte, Montana, on the eve of the North Butte disaster, was a volatile jumble of antiwar protest, an abusive corporate master, seething labor unrest, divisive ethnic tension, and radicalism both left and right. It was a powder keg lacking only a spark, and the mine fire would ignite strikes, murder, ethnic and political witch hunts, occupation by federal troops, and ultimately a battle over presidential power.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In this compelling tale, Punke recounts the grim details of the worst hard-rock mining disaster in

United States history. On June 8, 1917, a fire broke out in the main shaft of a huge complex of copper mines 2,000 feet beneath Granite Mountain in Butte, Mont. The fire raged for three days, killing 164 of the 400 or so men at work that day. Punke, a Washington, D.C., lawyer and novelist (*The Revenant*), takes the reader deep underground and into the heart of the calamity. If the horrifying account of the fire and the trapped men is the heart of this yarn, its soul is Punke's historical contextualization of the event. He paints a vivid picture of a city, state and nation in the grip of industrial monopolies. In Butte, copper was king and Standard Oil, in the guise of Anaconda Mining, owned most of the copper (though not the Granite Mountain mine). In Punke's telling, Standard Oil spent lavishly to control the municipal and state governments; they aggressively fought the miners' union. Immediately after the tragic fire, the workers violently vented their fury on the hated Anaconda. Like the hardworking miners he writes about, Punke gets the job done, with sturdy prose. (Aug. 8) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

By the standards of the early twentieth century, the Granite Mountain copper mine was a model of safety; the shafts were well ventilated and a sprinkler system was nearly completed. Furthermore, the mine was owned by the North Butte Company, which was neither as powerful nor as resented as the rapacious Anaconda Copper Mining Company, which controlled much of Montana. Nevertheless, when a shaft fire broke out on June 8, 1917, it unleashed a variety of pent-up hatreds that had festered in Butte for months, if not years. Initially, the fire trapped more than 400 men beneath the surface. One hundred sixty-four people died, and Punke's recounting of the struggle of the others to survive is tense, exciting, and even inspiring. A lawyer, novelist, and Montana resident, he tells an equally interesting story of the ethnic conflicts, anti-war protests, and labor warfare that quickly exploded and ravaged the area for the next three years. This is a timely work, with the recent spate of fatal mine disasters reminding us that deep-shaft mining remains a dangerous profession. Jay Freeman Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Having grown up in the company town of Anaconda, MT, named for the mine in Butte that started the colossus Anaconda Company, I have often described Butte as phoenix, rising from the ashes time and again. Butte never gives up. *Fire and Brimstone* is much more than a history of Butte and the largest mining disaster of the 20th century. Punke's annotated work spans much of American industry history of unions and management conflicts. The vast fortunes of Marcus Daly, William

Clark, and Frederick Hinze, and later company officials, all left Montana. They left the Berkeley Pit, the defining feature of Butte's landscape. And Butte's persistent optimism for the future. A must read for all Montanans to understand the history of our state and its contributions to national politics and laws.

I'm a Montana history buff, but this is one of the best books I've ever read on any subject - I only wish it was twice as long so I had twice as much enjoyment. Mr. Punke weaves the unique and intensely interesting history of Butte, MT in through the worst hard rock mining disaster in our country's experience to deliver a narrative this is at the same time gripping and emotional.

Fire and Brimstone represents one of the best combinations of accurate historical documentation, with countless examples of word for word quotation, making the events which define Butte's landscape to this day seem as though they happened only last week. Heroes are remembered and chaos is represented in such a manner that puts the boring history classes of childhood to shame. This book is a required work for any truly involved study of the history of Butte, more so that of 18th century mining America.

This is a great history of the 1917 mining disaster in Butte, MT. It's a compelling read and very hard to put down.

I was interested in this book because my paternal grandfather worked in mining in Butte and died of "miners consumption" just 2 months before the mining disaster of 1917. There was good information in the book about living conditions at that time. My paternal grandmother died of Spanish flu 6 months after her husband leaving the 3 children orphaned.

I bought this book as a gift for a friend who is a "mining history" buff. What a quality book (hard cover with dust jacket). I happened to read the first few pages and couldn't put it down. Needless to say, I had to read the book before I could give it away. I'll be buying another copy for a different friend (who I know will really appreciate it). It is difficult to say the book was enjoyable, being written about such a gut-wrenching subject. However, the author does a good job of covering the heroic and very human aspects of it. I learned a lot about mining, what people do to make a living and their actions in dire circumstances. Since the disaster happened in 1917, reading it was like travelling back in time to 1917. The author paints a full picture, not just of the disaster and people but of the

political, economic and environmental conditions surrounding the disaster.

Fantastic book. Couldn't put it down. Gives amazing insight into the time period of the granite mountain fire and the town itself.

The book covers more than just the fire. It covers all the circumstances surrounding mining in Butte. It's pretty well written except for a few times when the author repeats himself. I would recommend this to any mining fans or historical buffs looking to learn more about Montana.

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