

Welcome to Mining City Reflections where we illuminate the history of Butte, Montana through the stories and observations of 20th century women who lived there. I'm your host, Marian Jensen.

In this episode we continue the story of the Women's Protective Union, a 20th century labor organization in Butte that captures the essence of the Mining City spirit. We'll hear from Marilyn Maney, one time chair of the Board of Directors of ButteSB Archives. She was instrumental in the formation of its Labor History Collection and was uniquely qualified for the job as she actually consulted with the last officers of the union.

MANEY 2:17-2:40

George Winston <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y7VyP4sZOkE> 15::38 - 16:02

While In her early 20's, Maney had become acquainted with Union leaders during the last years of its existence. She heard first hand about the union's work.

MANEY 3:45-4:44

The women the Union represented worked at what some would consider menial jobs, but their approach to labor organizing aligned with one of the most radical labor organizations in the country.

Accoustic/vocal Union Maid 4:55-5:09. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rRajPS7L1ds&feature=youtu.be>. start at :53

The IWW's influence in Butte met with controversy, and was marred by the infamous lynching of one of its organizers, Frank Little, in 1917. Members of the Women's Protective Union marched in the silent procession behind Little's coffin. Val Webster, who would one day become a leader of the WPU, actually attended the funeral at the tender age of 5 with her mother.

The WPU concurred with the IWW's approach to trade unionism as a vehicle for social justice. They organized to help their members not just on the job, but also by providing housing options, as well as child care and health care.

George Winston - Fragrant Fields <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U68RyW1P9zs&list=PL70D1199C3FF05718&index=4>

Maney 5:26-6:24

BY 1904 the WPU had purchased their own building in the center of town on Broadway where members could go for a whole host of services.

George Winston - Summer - The Garden <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mK0YkDLIn0Q&list=PL70D1199C3FF05718&index=5>

Maney 16:59-17:46

Likewise, even before Montana women gained the right to vote in 1914, the Women's Protective Union supported a progressive agenda of what they considered important reforms in government.

George Winston - Joy from December <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ktuPOQvVOE8>

MANEY - 6:28 progressive 6:51.

Eventually the Union became involved in women's suffrage and supported the candidacy of the first woman to serve in the United States Congress.

MANEY18:15-18:44 -

After the Miners' Union strike in 1934, Butte entered an era of relative labor stability which benefitted all the unions. After World War II the American economy experienced unprecedented growth. The Women's Protective Union membership felt their wages did not adequately reflect this prosperity. In 1948 the WPU called the one and only strike in its history. With picket lines honored by all the other unions in Butte, retailers and restaurateurs folded after seven weeks. All the WPU's contract demands were met.

George Winston Cast your Fate to the Wind https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_etFsZ72Mk

The Women Protective Union membership thought first of their rights as workers. Their gender came second. No surprise then that the Equal Rights Movement of the 60's and 70's became contentious.

LABOR PAINS 52:50—53:56

George Winston - Rain (include some thunder)https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6taCr-t_UyE

Butte's status as "the richest hill on earth" described the value of the ore extracted and not, except for a handful of mine owners, its citizens. The mining industry attracted unskilled, often immigrant labor, where issues of

class were ingrained, not only in the exclusively male miners but in the women who worked along side them. They had fought for their rights, could take care of themselves, and didn't need any other protection.

George Winston -Ocean Waves https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AFaHctH_mg8

MANEY 22:30-23:45 -

A great irony of the civil rights era came in 1973 when the Women's Protective Union, a well organized, highly successful and deeply committed organization for the advancement of women workers, was forced to allow men to join.

George Winston - Autumn

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H3pdgEwYFpE> (1st 30 seconds)

The leadership of the Union at the time were vehemently opposed to this requirement for what they considered two practical reasons.

LABOR PAINS 40:20 41:03

Objections aside, the membership faced the loss of recognition by other unions and sanctions by the U.S. Department of Justice. Their only recourse was to merge with the all male waiters' and bartenders' union to

form what became Chapter 457 of the Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union.

George Winston - Autumn

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H3pdgEwYFpE>

In Maney's estimation, the WPU members cherished most their status as workers, and that they felt they could hold their own in the Gibraltar of Labor.

George Winston - Autumn Forest <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F01G2cMNtmc&list=RDJKmqyQUDehs&index=5> feather beneath

following excerpts

LABOR PAINS 39:13-39:29 - identity and pride as workers.

MANEY 25:19-26:09 - Butte's unique working class culture/values

The history of the Women's Protective Union bears witness to the tenacity and determination of Butte working women, qualities that permeate the community to this day.

Bread and Roses Instrumental

LABOR PAINS 41:48 - 42:22

Johnson 1:09:50-1:10:20. 1:10:49 - 50 "It was like your family."

