

“Queer Spots In and About Butte”: An Introduction

Patty Dean

In the spring of 1906, the *Anaconda Standard* initiated a new feature, “Queer Spots In and About Butte,” in its hefty Sunday newspaper. Focusing its editorial eye on such topics as ethnic enclaves, landmarks, nearby natural wonders, and derelict industrial sites, among others, the series profiled a wide range of built environments and landscapes conceived to be “queer,” that is, interesting and singular in early twentieth-century parlance.

While there was no introduction or fanfare announcing the series, it must have been conceived as a continuing feature, given its semi-weekly regularity, its placement at the coveted top of the page, and the distinctive artwork that accompanied the copy. A calligraphic “Queer Spots/In and/About Butte” banner stretched from page edge to edge, flanked by line drawings that often pertained directly to the story’s topic.

In *Copper Chorus: Mining, Politics and the Montana Press, 1889–1959*, Dennis Swibold has observed that the *Anaconda Standard* “owed its existence to Marcus Daly’s wealth, but editor John H. Durston made the paper excellent beyond its means.” Durston’s education (he possessed a Ph.D. from the University of Heidelberg) and vision drove the content and the appearance of the newspaper. Additionally, the *Standard* employed the most



advanced printing technologies available, and by the time “Queer Spots” first appeared, Swibold notes, “Montana’s premier daily was in its prime, its popularity resting on its muscular news and feature sections.”

This supremacy is evident with each “Queer Spots” feature, especially given the many non-stock photographs and drawings that accompany the dense writing. Story

subjects that initially appeared to be of little interest—or even provoke a flicker of repulsion—for some readers seemed to especially intrigue the uncredited reporter who urged the reader to look beyond the surface. The tone of these stories is a blend of stereotypes, racism, and an acknowledgement of some quality indicative of their process toward Americanization.

Following is a listing of each “Queer Spot” feature with its publication date as well as four of the forty “Queer Spot” features—“The Assyrian Colony,” “Chinatown,” “The Chinese Gardens,” and “The Cree Village”—together with contextual essays by scholars Benjamin Trigona-Harany, Christopher W. Merritt, and Nicholas Peterson Vrooman.

Queer Spots In and About Butte

NO.	DATE	TITLE/SUBJECT
1	1906-03-18	Precipitating Plants [Langford, Boston & Montana at Meaderville, etc.]
2	1906-03-25	City & Water Supply
3	1906-04-01	Assyrian Colony
4	1906-04-08	[Street] Car Barns
5	1906-04-15	Recreation Spots [Nine Mile Canyon, Basin Creek Road, etc.]
6	1906-04-22	Dismantled Smelter [Parrot, Colorado, Bell & others]
7	1906-04-29	Butte’s Powder Supply [stone powder storage houses east of Durant]
8	1906-05-06	Silver Bow Poor Farm
9	1906-05-13	Bluebird Mine & Mill
10	1906-05-20	Chinatown
11	1906-05-27	Cree Village
12	1906-06-03	Underground City [copper miners’ environment]
13	1906-06-10	Silver Bow City [Crystal Springs]
14	1906-06-17	Burlington & Rocker
15	1906-06-24	Seen from the Car [route of the “Seeing Butte Observation Car”]
16	1906-07-01	Nine Mile Canyon

17	1906-07-08	Walkerville
18	1906-07-15	The Old Placer Field
19	1906-07-22	House in the Grove [Mr. & Mrs. E.S. Baxter's home & tree grove south of Butte]
20	1906-07-29	Fire Department
21	1906-08-05	Columbia Gardens
22	1906-08-12	Continental Divide & Woodville
23	1906-08-19	Studio of artist E. S. Paxson
24	1906-08-26	Crematory & City Dump [including photographs of Cree, "citizens of the dump"]
25	1906-09-02	Ore Bins [electric ore train at Bell, Original Mines, etc.]
26	1906-09-09	Highland City & Red Mountain City
27	1906-09-16	Railways ["old NP station", NP roundhouse, BA&P station, etc.]
28	1906-09-23	Grading Camp [Milwaukee Road grading camp between Butte & Whitehall]
29	1906-09-30	Playground [public & private, i.e., empty lots]
30	1906-10-07	Chinese Gardens [near Nine Mile & Basin Creek]
31	1906-10-14	Summer Camps [tent camping at various locales]
32	1906-10-21	Silver Bow Creek
33	1906-10-28	In the Silver Bow Canyon
34	1906-11-04	Stringtown & Butchertown [north of Walkerville]
35	1906-11-11	Glendale [home of Hecla Consolidated Mining & Milling]
36	1906-11-18	On Fleecer Mountain
37	1906-11-25	Woodville
38	1906-12-02	Brown's Gulch [behind Big Butte, Italian population]
39	1906-12-09	Police Station
40	1906-12-30	The Big Butte