

Marcus Daly

(1841 – 1900)

Born to a poor family in Ireland, Marcus Daly came to America at age 15. After a brief stay in New York, Daly went to California where he quickly became a skilled pick-and-shovel miner. After moving to Nevada, Daly worked on the Comstock Lode, and acquired more technical mining skills. Having built a reputation as a knowledgeable practical miner, Daly soon attracted the attention of Walker Brothers, an investment firm with significant interests in mining, who sent him to Butte on their behalf. Upon arrival, he bought the Alice Silver Mine in partnership with the firm, but soon sold his interest.

Convinced that Butte's unusual land formations held great riches, Daly persuaded California investors to participate in his purchase of the Anaconda Silver Mine. The silver soon ran out, but underneath where the silver had been lay a rich vein of copper. Seeing his opportunity, Daly closed his mine and quietly bought up the surrounding operations. These properties formed the nucleus of the Anaconda Copper Mining Company that would build and operate the world's largest copper smelter, in Anaconda, Montana by 1884. For the next decade and a half, the Anaconda Company not only produced copper, but also mined its own coal to fire the smelter, cut its own timber for mine support beams, and operated its own railway from the Butte mines to the Anaconda smelter, twenty-seven miles away. During this period, Daly also established banks, built power plants and irrigation systems, and founded the *Anaconda Standard* newspaper.

Daly's feud with rival "Copper King" William A. Clark dominated Montana politics, particularly in the Democratic Party, from 1888 to 1900. Unlike Clark, Daly never ran for public office, but he unabashedly exerted influence over state and national affairs. Daly spent lavishly on various causes, from the location of the state capital (which he wanted for his company town of Anaconda) to the defeat of the Senatorial ambitions of his rival Clark.

Married to Margaret Evans in 1872, Daly built a 20,000-acre ranch in the Bitterroot Valley. Here he planted extensive orchards and raised fast, world-renowned race horses. At the peak of his career, in 1899, Daly traded his Anaconda holdings for shares in the new, giant firm, Amalgamated Copper. Marcus Daly had just become president of the seventy-five million-dollar holding company at his death in 1900.