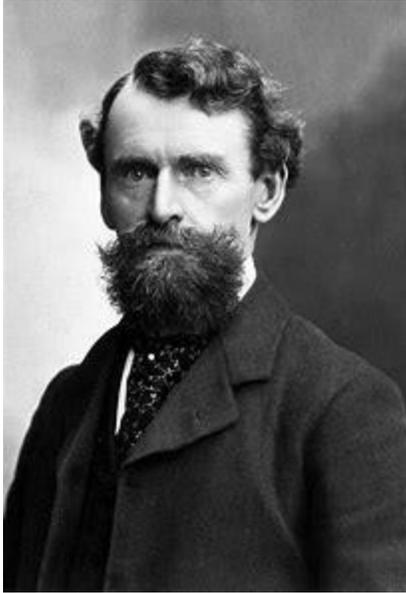


## William A. Clark and Townsend?

William A. Clark, Marcus Daly and F. Augustus Heinze are the three men often referred to as the “Copper Kings”. All three men amassed huge fortunes from the copper mines in Butte; but, William A. Clark quite often gets mentioned in Broadwater County history.



Clark studied law at Iowa Wesleyan College, but came to Montana to be a miner. He only made a moderate amount of money as a miner but invested well and made a substantial amount of money importing and selling basic supplies to miners.

He soon changed careers and became a banker in Deer Lodge. He repossessed mining claims from miners that defaulted on loans. He acquired claims in Butte and made a huge fortune from his holdings in Butte. He expanded into small smelters, electric power companies, newspapers and railroads.

A 1907 article in the New York Times state that based on money in the bank John D. Rockefeller was the richest man in America. However, based not only on money in the bank, but the value of his copper holdings, William A. Clark might be richer than John D. Rockefeller.

Clark was not as charismatic as the other Copper Kings. He was perceived as a cold, ruthless and morally bankrupt man who waged many political wars and feuded with Marcus Daly. Mark Twain once said of Clark: “He is as rotten a human being as can be found anywhere under the flag. He is a shame to the American nation”.

Referendums were held in 1892 and 1894 to determine the location of the capital of Montana. Marcus Daly favored his company town of Anaconda. Naturally, William A. Clark opposed Daly and championed Helena to remain the capital. The 1894 referendum was marked by huge sums of money spent legally campaigning for the towns and illegally bribing votes. Of course, Clark won out and Helena has remained the capital of Montana.

Clark also had political ambitions and wanted to become a U.S. Senator. Amid widespread allegations of bribery, Clark was elected by the Montana Legislature as a Senator. Clark's son reportedly said "We will send the old man to the Senator or the poor-house".

Once in Washington, the U.S. Senate refused to seat Clark due to the wide-spread allegations. During the hearings, Clark was unrepentant and quoted as saying "I never bribed a man that did not want to be bribed".

Clark eventually resigned as Senator (never having been seated) and returned to Montana. Once back in Montana, Clark conspired with the Lieutenant Governor of Montana to have the Governor sent out of state on business. In the absence of the Governor the Lieutenant Governor became acting Governor.

The acting Governor immediately appointed William A. Clark to fill the Senate seat that was open due to the resignation of --- William A. Clark. Since there was no bribery involved in the appointment the U.S. Senator would certainly have to seat the appointed Senator.

The Lieutenant Governor that conceived and orchestrated this political maneuver: A. E. Spriggs, the Townsend resident largely responsible for the creation of Broadwater County.

Upon hearing of the appointment, the elected Governor of Montana returned, revoked the appointment of Clark and appointed Paris Gibson as Senator.

Clark reportedly stayed at Townsend's first hotel – The Townsend House.

He was also tied to Gordon G. Watt from Townsend, who could not be bribed and despised the corrupt Clark.

W.E. Tierney was also investigated as part of the bribery investigation but was found not to have been bribed.

Clark was not from Townsend or Broadwater County but seems to continually be mentioned in the history of Broadwater County.

As a footnote, William A. Clark did finally get legitimately elected as Senator from Montana and served one term. He apparently did not actually care for being a senator and returned to Montana.

Much of the information in this article came from "Montana: A History of Two Centuries" and the research done by Paul Putz, Historian.