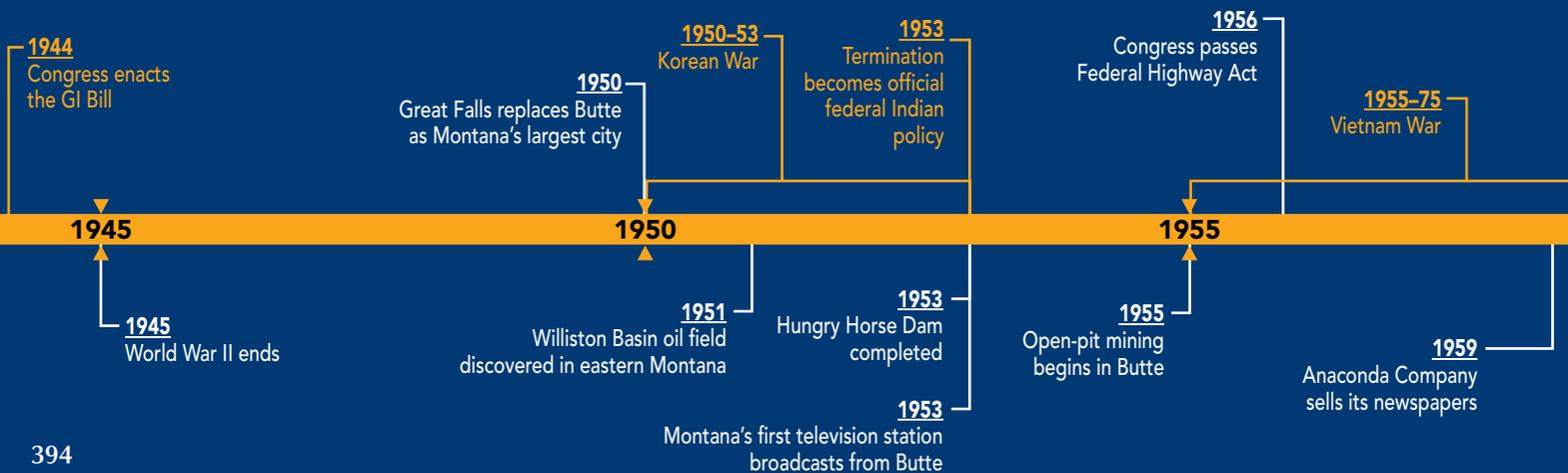


20 Building a New Montana

1945-1965



FIGURE 20.1: Ford's Drive-In, Great Falls, by Brian Morger, 1991





READ TO FIND OUT:

- How the nation's largest economic boom affected Montana
- Why the Anaconda Company dug the Berkeley Pit
- Why more rural Montanans moved into town
- How fear of communism affected everyday life

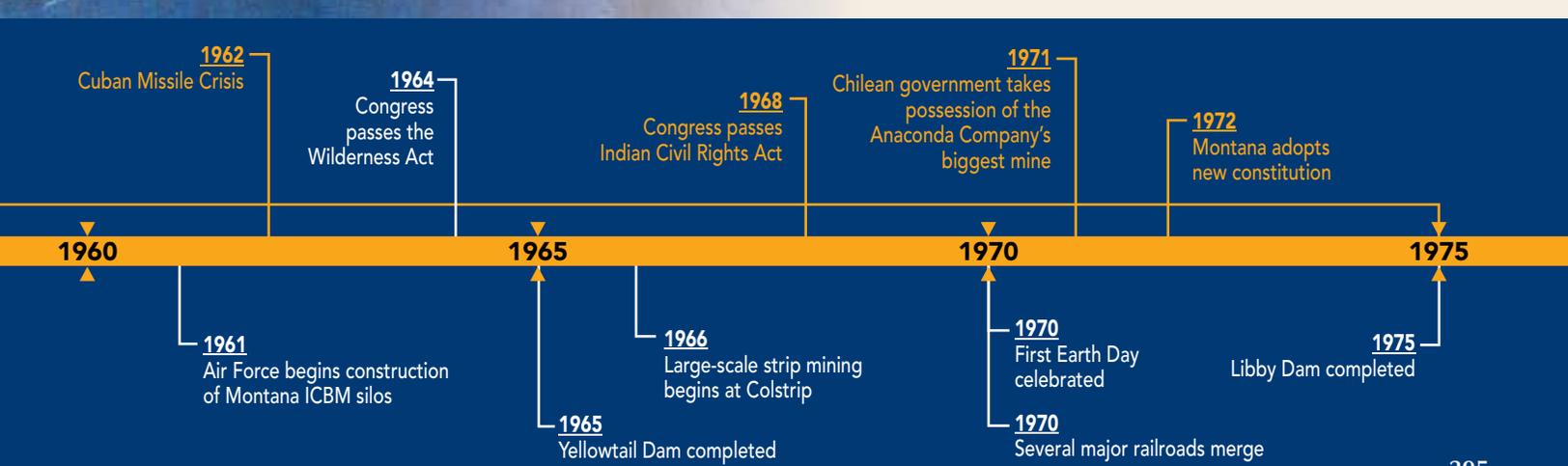
The Big Picture

The great economic boom after World War II brought modern conveniences and new anxieties—and shaped Montana into the place we know today.

In the spring of 1945 a Sheridan County farm wife named Anna Dahl strode into the federal headquarters of the Rural Electrification Administration in Washington, D.C. She plunked down a fistful of paperwork: a federal loan application that would enable the people of Sheridan County to string power lines across the northeast corner of Montana. A year later 600 families in Sheridan, Roosevelt, and Daniels Counties could switch on a light and read in bed.

Many changes swept across Montana in the years after World War II. Electricity lit up rural areas. Interstate highways threaded across the land. Commercial airline travel became popular. Montanans bought their first televisions. People could travel more easily and get information faster. Everybody's life changed in some way.

During this time the nation's economy boomed like never before. After World War II, the United States enjoyed the greatest growth in prosperity in its history. The average American became wealthier than ever before.



Montana's economy boomed, too. But most of the nation's growth happened outside Montana, and in industries Montana did not have. By the end of this period, Montana's economy fell behind the rest of the nation's. Meanwhile dams, strip mines, and a large open-pit mine at Butte changed the landscape.

The modernization of Montana is a complicated story. Many things happened in the 1950s and 1960s that made Montanans' lives easier. But these years also brought new difficulties. In many ways big and small, people during this period watched their state transform into the modern Montana we know today.

A Postwar Boom Sweeps the Nation

The United States emerged from World War II as a **superpower** (a nation with greater economic, political, and military power than most nations). Its industries remained productive, its military was one of the most powerful in the world, and the GI Bill gave the nation's economy an enormous boost (see Chapter 19).

After a decade of depression and war **rationing** (limiting people's access to goods or food), people were ready to spend money. **Consumerism** (the idea that buying consumer goods benefits the economy) became an economic strategy for the nation. You could help keep America strong by buying more goods.

The population exploded as veterans returned from the war, got married, and started families. In 1948 a baby was born in America every 8 seconds. The **baby boom** (a dramatic increase in the number of babies born) created even more economic activity. Americans bought

new cars, strollers, and refrigerators and built new houses, stores, hospitals, and schools.

With more people spending more money than ever before, the United States experienced the largest peacetime economic expansion in its history. Never before had Americans been so well-off.

Montana Supplies the Great Boom

Montana's lumber, plywood, and other timber products helped build new houses and factories. New lumber mills opened to fill the nation's grow-

FIGURE 20.2: Soldiers returned from World War II eager to get married, buy a house and a car, and build a new life. This couple is celebrating their honeymoon in Yellowstone National Park.



ing demand for building supplies. Logging companies clear-cut broad swaths of Montana's forests. Timber towns like Libby and Missoula grew.

Montana copper went into telephone wires, plumbing, and car engines. Aluminum became the new modern metal. In 1955 the Anaconda Company opened an aluminum plant near Columbia Falls. It provided low-cost siding for new homes—as well as for hundreds of other modern products from kitchen foil to space capsules.

Montana's oil fields expanded to produce oil for all the new machines, heat for houses, and gasoline for cars. Montana's biggest oil fields—Kevin-Sunburst near Shelby, Cat Creek near Lewistown, and Elk Basin southeast of Red Lodge—burst into high activity.

In 1951 discovery of a huge new oil field at Williston Basin, on Montana's eastern border, doubled Montana's oil production. Towns like Glendive and Sidney boomed. Billings became the center of activity for Montana's oil business.

Refineries in Billings and Laurel dramatically increased their production. By 1957 Montana's petroleum earned more **revenue** (income) than even copper. By 1960 Montana was the 12th biggest oil-producing state in the country.

Montana's wheat and beef helped feed the growing U.S. population. Crops and cattle herds flourished. Farmers began using more machinery like combines, mechanical hay balers, and large motorized tractors to pull them. Ranchers began timing their calving season to fit with market demands. Scientific developments introduced new fertilizers, pesticides, and drought-resistant strains of grain, which all helped increase profits.

Dams: Power and Water to a Thirsty Land

All the new houses and emerging businesses needed power. And Montana's modernizing farms needed irrigation. With three big river systems flowing both east and west, Montana began building more dams to produce both.

Dam building began in Montana in 1890, when a Great Falls water company built Black Eagle Dam across the Missouri River. Other dams followed.

Many Montanans supported dam-building projects. Dams provided irrigation to farmland, generated **hydroelectric power** (electricity

FIGURE 20.3: More people than ever could afford new automobiles in the 1950s, and everybody wanted one. This Butte Chevrolet dealer sponsored a special promotion that drew a crowd of customers.



generated by water flow), and controlled downstream flooding. Dam construction brought federal money into Montana and provided jobs that supported local communities. But dams also created reservoirs that flooded out farms, homes, historic sites, and even towns.

Between the early 1930s and the late 1960s, the state and federal governments built 48 dams in Montana. The Fort Peck Dam, completed in 1939, was the biggest (see Chapter 18). Second in size was the Hungry Horse Dam. It spans the South Fork of the Flathead River, northeast of Kalispell. When completed, in 1953, the dam provided electric power to the aluminum plant owned by the Anaconda Company at cheaper rates than Montana Power could offer.

The Hungry Horse Dam changed Montana's politics, its landscape, and its economy. When Anaconda began buying its power from the federally owned dam, Montana Power lost its biggest customer. The

partnership between these two powerful companies that had dominated the state for years began to break apart.

Yellowtail Dam: Enduring Controversy

The Yellowtail Dam, completed in 1965, generated years of controversy. The government first surveyed the Bighorn River, on the Crow Indian Reservation, in 1905 to see if a dam there could provide irrigation to the surrounding land. Government leaders wanted to build the dam. But the Crow tribe owned the land.

Crow leaders wanted to retain ownership of the dam site and lease it to someone to build a dam. That way, they would receive annual payments to benefit the tribe. But government leaders believed that the Bighorn River—and the power that came from it—belonged to all the people, not just the Crow.

Crow leader Robert Yellowtail (who served terms as tribal chairman in the 1940s and

FIGURE 20.4: At 525 feet tall, the Yellowtail Dam is the tallest dam on the Missouri River system. A few years after it was completed, a stretch of the Bighorn River below the dam became a popular trout fishing spot, but the dam itself remains controversial.



1950s) fought for many years for the tribe's right to have final control over the dam site. But some Crow wanted the dam project to move along. In 1955 the Crow tribe voted to sell the dam site to the government for \$5 million (equal to \$37.6 million today). In the end the government paid \$2.5 million. Construction began in 1963 and was completed two years later. The federal government named the new dam after Robert Yellowtail, even though it had **defied** (gone against) his wishes.



Libby Dam: Changed Land, Changed Attitudes

Other dams also dramatically changed the landscape and the lives of the people living nearby. The Libby Dam, on the Kootenai River, created 90-mile-long Lake Kootenai. Workers cleared 28,000 acres of forest to make room for the reservoir. The government bought the land, houses, and buildings that would be flooded. It moved the whole town of Rexford several miles east, building by building. People who lived in Warland, Ural, and Gateway left their homes and moved to other towns.

When construction on the Libby Dam began, most people living in the region supported the project. They were excited to be a part of something big that brought energy, safety from floods, and new economic opportunities to Montana.

But even before Libby Dam was completed, in the 1970s, public attitude changed. Across the country, people began to think about the environmental damage that big projects like dams caused. They began to question the value of projects like the Libby Dam, which provided benefits but also damaged the environment. As Jim Morey of Libby said, "I hated to see the valley flooded. The tradeoff for electricity was worth a lot, but the old valley was worth a lot too."

Montana Modernizes

Remember Anna Dahl, the Sheridan County farm wife, from the beginning of this chapter? Anna and her husband, Andrew Dahl, raised five children on their 640-acre Sheridan County farm. No one knew the rigors of living without electric power better than Anna Dahl did.

"When the best years of our lives have been spent carrying coal, wood ashes and water, and when all the work within and without the

FIGURE 20.5: The Libby Dam flooded 90 miles of the Kootenai River Valley, creating Lake Kootenai. Montana's longest and tallest auto bridge spans the lake, connecting a small Amish community on the west side with the Yaak Valley on the east side.

One Does Not Begin a Baking Project in a Thunderstorm

“As a child I learned practical rules about electricity. One does not begin a baking project in a thunderstorm with an electric cookstove. When a lightning strike makes the phone jangle, don’t answer. When black clouds boil over the horizon, unplug the television . . . No one depended on electricity for heat, and no one threw away the lanterns or tore down the outhouse when it arrived.”

—JUDY BLUNT, WHO GREW UP ON A PHILLIPS COUNTY RANCH IN THE 1960S

FIGURE 20.6: Telephones helped rural families spread news and information instantly among neighbors who lived far apart. This ranch woman on the Circle U Ranch might have been checking on a sick neighbor, phoning in a grocery order, or simply listening in on the party line.



home was done by muscle power—if you had it—and grit if you didn’t, the change to cooking, cleaning, washing and ironing with electricity . . . is almost beyond comprehension,” she said.

At the end of World War II, only about half of Montana’s farms and rural areas had electricity supplied by a power company. Many farm families generated their own electricity with windmills or gas-powered generators.

In the 1930s the government established the Rural Electrification

Administration, which provided loans to bring electricity into rural America. But private power companies like Montana Power did not want to build power lines into rural areas or across rugged terrain. People lived too far apart, and there were too few rural customers to make it profitable.

So farmers and ranchers got together and did the work themselves. They formed rural electric **cooperatives** (companies that are owned by

the people who use them). These cooperatives got their own loans and built power lines to places like Geraldine and Alzada.

By the 1970s you could switch on lights, electric irons, water pumps, and washing machines in almost every rural household in Montana. And with electricity came yard lights, hot water heaters, electric water pumps, and indoor toilets.

Telephones Make New Connections

Most Montana towns had telephone service after 1910, but it took much longer for phone lines to reach out into the country. In 1945 only 20 percent of Montana’s rural households had telephones. Farmers and ranchers were eager for phone service, which would connect them to people far away.

Starting in the 1940s, rural communities formed telephone cooperatives that worked the same way electric cooperatives did, and often used the same utility poles. By 1970 almost every rural Montana household had a phone on the wall.

Most rural phone lines were “party lines,”

which meant that several families shared the same line. When a call came through, the phone would ring in all the houses on the line. Each party had a separate ring pattern so everyone knew whom the call was for. Often they all picked up anyway and listened in on one another's calls. People knew not to say anything on the phone that they did not want neighbors to hear.

Radio and Television: Tuning in to the World

Television connected Montanans to the rest of the world in a whole new way. They could see footage of important events that happened far away—like the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963 and the first walk on the moon in 1969. As the 1960s progressed, close-up images of the Vietnam War on the evening news deeply affected everyone.

The first commercial TV stations started broadcasting in New York in 1941. But until the 1950s Montanans could see television only if they traveled somewhere else. In 1953 KXLF-TV of Butte became Montana's first commercial TV station. Soon stations in Billings, Missoula, and Great Falls were broadcasting the evening news and two or three hours of locally produced programs. Montanans raced to the store to buy televisions. They hung coat hangers and bed springs out their windows to serve as antennas.

Television and radio gave Montanans access to outside news reports. Until 1959 the Anaconda Company owned all the daily newspapers in every major city except Great Falls. Radio and television newscasts meant that the Company no longer controlled how Montanans got their news. In 1959 the Anaconda Company sold its chain of papers.

More Women Went to Work

America's new prosperity changed people's lifestyles. More women began to work outside the home during this period than at any other time in U.S. history. In 1940 about 16 percent of Montana's working-age women held jobs. By 1960 more than 30 percent were working.

Some women went to work to help pay for their families' homes, cars, and televisions. Some found work more fulfilling than staying home. And some had to work to feed their families.

Working women changed family life, towns, and the economy of

“Television transformed American social habits . . . When a popular show was on, all the toilets in the nation flushed at the same time, during commercial breaks and when the program ended.”

—STEVE GILLON, *BOOMER NATION* (2004)

“Back in 1954 and 1955, we would clear everything off the air to accommodate the World's Series games. As we had no other way of getting these network shows in, we would film the games right off a picture tube in Fargo, North Dakota, and fly the films to Great Falls on National Guard planes, hoping we didn't lose too much time.”

—W. C. “BUD” BLANCHETTE, *MANAGER OF KFBB-TV, GREAT FALLS*

Montana. They owned and drove cars and bought more consumer items. They even changed what their families ate. Women began buying prepared foods like chicken pot pies (developed in 1951) and fast-cook rice (developed in 1950) because they had less time to prepare family meals. Fast-food restaurants appeared in the 1950s for the working families who could afford to eat out.

Some farm women moved into town for the week to work and came home to the farm on weekends. But there were not many job opportunities besides farm work for women in rural Montana. Most rural Montanans—both men and women—continued to support their families on what they could raise on their farms and ranches.

The Youth Culture Is Born

In town, middle-class teenagers enjoyed new freedoms that came with cars and pocket money. Teens gathered at burger joints and at secluded spots on the edge of their town just to be together away from adults.

The **mass media** (communication technologies that can reach millions of people) like television and radio helped create a music industry aimed just at young people. **Transistor radios** (small, portable radios that run on batteries), invented in the 1950s, gave young people their first opportunity to tune into their own music away from the family living room. Teenagers in Montana and across the country listened to new sounds like rock and roll. A **youth culture** emerged—a feeling among urban young people that they had more in common with one another than with older people, even in their own families or communities.

Montana Economy Falls Behind

In 1950 thousands of Montanans held high-paying industrial jobs. Most industrial workers belonged to labor unions. The average Montanan earned 8 percent more in **per-capita income** (the average annual income per person) than other Americans.

But as America's great boom continued, the national economy grew much faster than Montana's. Montana was too far from major markets to attract the booming factories that other states had. Montana's economy fell behind.

By 1968 Montanans earned 14 percent less than the national average. One reason was that other states' industries were booming. Another reason was that two of Montana's most important industries—copper and the railroads—changed dramatically.

FIGURE 20.7: Young Montanans enjoyed new activities together like roller skating, bowling, and just hanging out. Here the Spinning Marvels perform at the Marias Fair in Shelby in 1958.



From Hard-Rock Mining to the Berkeley Pit

The biggest changes happened at the Anaconda Company. Anaconda emerged from World War II a huge and powerful company. With mines in Montana and Chile, it was the largest producer of copper in the world. It was also Montana's single largest employer, providing jobs for thousands of workers across the state—2,500 at the Anaconda smelter alone. In 70 years Anaconda Copper had earned \$2.5 billion from Montana's natural resources.

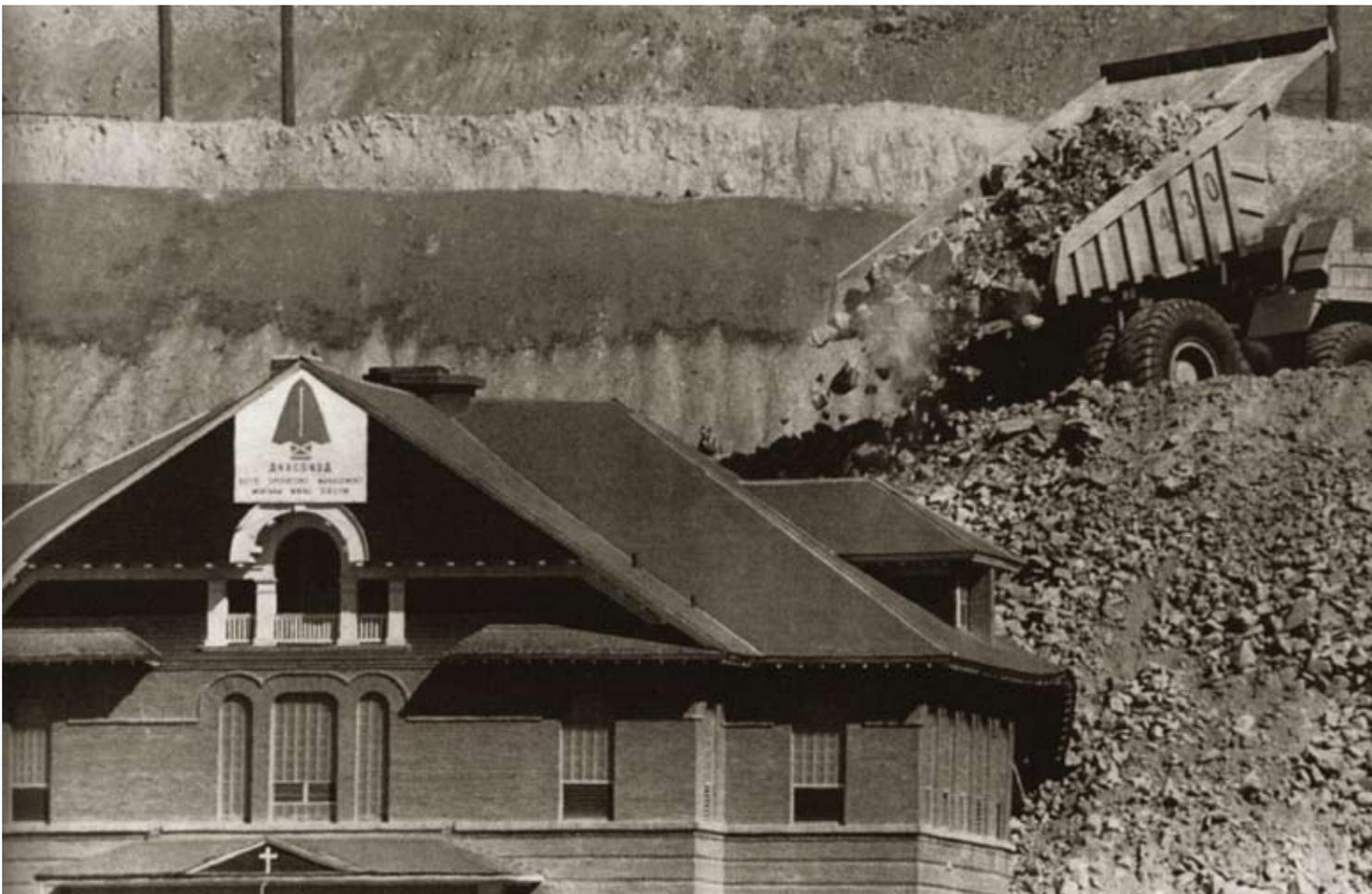
But by the 1950s most of Anaconda's profits came from Chile. Montana produced only 15 percent of the company's copper. So Anaconda shifted its attention away from Montana. It began to phase out underground mining, which targeted high-grade copper veins and required thousands of skilled miners. In 1955 it began **open-pit mining** (removing low-grade ore using huge earth-moving equipment). This was the birth of Butte's Berkeley Pit.

Open-pit mining transformed both the land and the labor force of Butte. Thousands of hard-rock miners lost their jobs; most moved away. Butte lost population and political power. And as the pit expanded, it consumed part of Butte, too.

“When you graduated from high school, you were assured of three gifts. Some benevolent [generous] person in your family would give you a lunch bucket, somebody else would give you a thermos, and you could go down on the smelter road and get a slip and go to work. Everybody went to work for the Company.”

—HOWIE ROSENLEAF, AN ANACONDA SMELTER WORKER IN THE 1950S

FIGURE 20.8: Butte's Berkeley Pit swallowed up neighborhoods and tore at people's sense of community. Dump trucks removing dirt from the pit buried the McQueen neighborhood's Holy Savior School.



“In the four years I spent traveling back and forth to Malta High School, the population of our community had dwindled by a third as the smaller, more marginal places were absorbed by their larger neighbors . . . Overnight, it seemed, the place I grew up on had fallen under the wheels of big business—big land, big leases, big machines. Big debt.”

—JUDY BLUNT, WHO GREW UP ON A PHILLIPS COUNTY RANCH IN THE 1960S

FIGURE 20.9: American Indians and migrant workers who used to travel across the state to work at harvest time found they could not compete with large, efficient machines like these combines, photographed in the 1960s near Helena.



Fewer Jobs for Montanans

The railroads also became more **mechanized** (with machines doing work previously done by people) and employed fewer people. In the 1960s railroads began to lose business to the interstate trucking industry.

Traffic shifted away from railroads. More people traveled by car. First railroads decreased passenger and freight service. Then they stopped running branch lines to small towns.

In 1970 the Great Northern, the Northern Pacific, and the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy railroads **merged** (combined) into one company. A few years later the Milwaukee Road shut down. The railroads that had once dominated Montana’s transportation began to fade.

The decline of the railroads had a double impact on Montana’s economy. Thousands of well-paid railroad workers in small towns across the state lost their jobs. And many towns that the new interstates did not reach lost their major transportation service.

Moving from Farm to Town, from East to West

Agriculture became more mechanized, too. Larger machinery meant fewer people could operate larger farms and ranches. Big operations bought up their smaller neighbors. The average farm grew larger, but fewer families made their living off the land.

Over time more rural Montanans moved to the cities. Billings, Missoula, Bozeman, and Great Falls expanded rapidly. By 1950 Great Falls—not Butte—was Montana’s biggest city. The large, spread-out eastern counties lost many of their people—and remain lightly populated today.

Meanwhile, more Montanans moved away to seek better opportunities elsewhere. They found high-paying jobs in steel plants in Utah, electronics industries in Colorado, and airplane plants in Seattle. Most of the people who moved were young adults just out of high school or college. This increased the average age of Montana’s population.

Two Communities Grow

Two important Montana communities did grow during the postwar years: the Mexican American communities of Billings and Laurel, and Montana's Hutterite colonies.

Mexicans began moving to Montana in the 1920s to work in the eastern Montana sugar beet fields and at the Great Western Sugar Company factory in Billings. After World War II, Great Western recruited even more Mexicans and Mexican Americans to work in the fields and at the plant. Their labor—along with the work of Northern Cheyenne laborers—helped turn Great Western into the largest sugar manufacturer in the United States.

Mexican Americans often faced racism and segregation. They had to sit in separate sections in movie theaters and sometimes at school. Some restaurants refused to serve them. Yet Montana's Mexican American communities grew and steadily fought for social change and equal rights.

In contrast, Montana's Hutterites preferred to separate themselves from **mainstream** (majority) society. Hutterites are members of a religious community formed in Europe in the 1500s. They share all their resources, live simply, and center their lives on work and church.

Hutterites moved to the American Plains in the 1870s. They refused to fight in World War I because their religion forbids going to war. Other Americans treated Hutterites badly for these beliefs, driving many of them north into Alberta, Canada. In 1942 Alberta passed a law prohibiting Hutterites from buying more land. So several Hutterite colonies moved into Montana. By 2007 the Hutterites had built more than 40 colonies here.

Hutterites sometimes face intolerance because they live much differently than other Americans do. As Paul Hofer of the Golden Valley Colony (near Ryegate) said, "It's a very, very simple life compared to the outside world. We try to stay away from it all and stay private as much as we can." Yet Montana's Hutterite colonies welcome visitors and commonly cooperate with their neighbors on irrigation projects and land issues.

“Community life is hard, but you know you'll never have to peel potatoes by yourself.”

—SUSIE WALDNER, A MEMBER OF DUNCAN RANCH HUTTERITE COLONY, NEAR HARLOWTON

FIGURE 20.10: Sugar beet production depended on migrant workers from Mexico like this young boy, photographed in the lower Yellowstone Valley. All family members joined in the backbreaking labor of thinning, cultivating, and harvesting sugar beets.



A New U.S. Indian Policy

Life changed on Indian reservations in the 1950s and 1960s. American Indians bought cars and farm machinery. Battery-powered radios and televisions connected Indian households with mainstream society. But while America boomed, many Indian reservations remained in poverty.

Most Indian military veterans could not take advantage of the GI Bill because banks did not lend money to build houses on reservations. Few Indians left the reservations to go to college—some colleges did not even accept Indians. So the government encouraged Indian people to move to towns and cities.

Some government leaders decided that the problem was the reservation system. They thought it would be better to dissolve Indian **reservations** (land reserved by tribes for their own use) and encourage Indian people to move to booming towns and cities where they could get high-paying jobs. As a result Congress changed its policy toward American Indians once again.

We have already learned that throughout U.S. history the government has shifted between two completely different policies toward American Indians. One acknowledges Indian tribes as **sovereign** (independent and self-governing) nations inhabiting their own lands. Under this approach the U.S. government made **treaties** (agreements between governments) with Indian tribes (see Chapter 7).

The other approach, which is quite the opposite, sees American Indians as an ethnic group within the U.S. population. Under this approach the government periodically has tried to dissolve Indian tribes and to **assimilate** (absorb) Indian people into mainstream society. The Dawes Act of 1887 was one example of this policy (see Chapter 11).

In the 1930s the government returned some powers of self-government to tribes and tried to encourage tribal cultures to strengthen (see Chapter 18).

In 1953 the government changed its policy again. Congress decided to end, or terminate, its special relationship with some Indian tribes. The government called this policy **termination** (the end of something).

The government selected specific tribes to terminate. The plan was to withdraw federal support from these tribes, abolish their tribal governments, sell off tribal lands, and end all **treaty rights** (tribal rights established by treaty). In Montana, Congress targeted the tribes on the Blackfoot, Flathead, Fort Belknap, and Fort Peck Reservations for termination.

“How can we plan our future when the Indian Bureau threatens to wipe us out as a race? It is like trying to cook a meal in your tipi when someone is standing outside trying to burn the tipi down.”

—EARL OLD PERSON, BLACKFEET TRIBAL CHAIRMAN AND CHIEF

“I think of the Indian people who have been on relocation and have come back home. I think . . . perhaps you come back with more courage, and more determined to make things better.”

—CAROL JUNEAU, MANDAN-HIDATSA STATE SENATOR FROM THE BLACKFEET RESERVATION

Indian tribes everywhere resisted termination. They were trying to build an economic future. They did not want tribal lands sold off, their tribal identity destroyed, and their community ties broken.

Tribal leaders on the Flathead Reservation organized a steady protest and finally convinced Montana's U.S. senators James E. Murray and Mike Mansfield to work hard on their behalf. While 61 tribes nationwide were terminated, Montana's tribes fought successfully to survive.

The government did not terminate any Montana tribes. But it did shut down reservation schools, medical clinics, and other services. After 200 years of shifting federal policy, American Indians once again had to fight for the right to maintain their tribal identity.

Relocation: Indians Were Paid to Move Away

At the same time, the Bureau of Indian Affairs paid for 100,000 American Indians to **relocate** (move) from their reservations, where there were no jobs, to cities where there were jobs. Many of Montana's Indians left their reservations for Butte, Great Falls, and Billings. Others moved to cities like Chicago and Los Angeles.

The relocation program had one unexpected result: it brought many young Indians of all tribes together in American cities during the 1960s. Social and political changes were sweeping the nation. Instead of disappearing into mainstream society, Indian people of all tribes banded together. As Blackfeet educator Stan Juneau said, "We almost became an urban tribe." Instead of discarding Indian cultures, American Indians organized to strengthen them.

The termination and relocation programs ended in 1968. After that, a series of reforms once again affirmed tribal sovereignty over their lands and rights of tribes to govern themselves and to determine their own policies (see Chapter 22).

FIGURE 20.11: The federal government's relocation program encouraged American Indian families to leave their reservations for the city. This family is pictured at the Bureau of Indian Affairs Relocation office in San Jose, California, in 1957. Once they were in the city, racism drove some Indian people to hide their ancestry, but many of their children later joined a nationwide movement to reclaim Indian heritage and civil rights.



The Cold War: Allies Become Enemies

The United States and the Soviet Union were allies during World War II. Yet the two superpowers deeply distrusted each other. The Soviet Union was **communist** (a political and economic system in which property and businesses are owned by the government). Under Soviet influence, other countries also turned to communism as they struggled to rebuild after the war.

The United States, England, and other democratic countries wanted to stop the spread of communism. But no one wanted war. People around the world had witnessed how nuclear bombs devastated Japan in World War II. Many people feared that a full-scale nuclear war could destroy the planet.

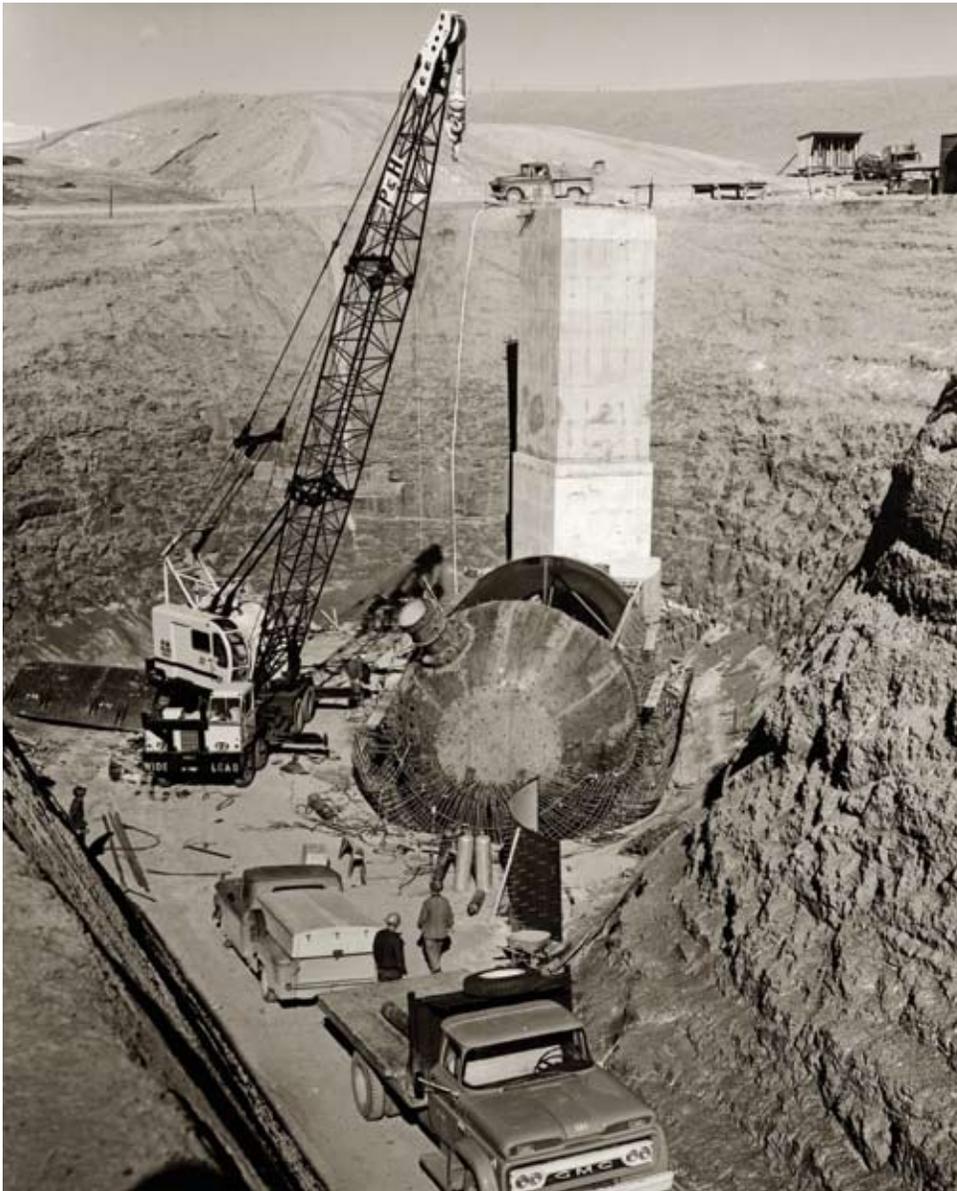
A political and military standoff called the Cold War developed between the United States and the Soviet Union.

People called it the Cold War because the United States and the Soviet Union never attacked each other. Instead, they both spent enormous resources stockpiling weapons in case a war started. They competed for technological, economic, and military superiority. Each country hoped to discourage the other from starting a war.

In 1950 war erupted in Korea, in eastern Asia. The United States backed one side, and Communist China (with Soviet help) backed the other. The Korean War (1950–53) involved some of the most intense fighting American soldiers had ever seen. About 20,000 Montanans served in the military during the Korean War—5,000 of them in combat. And 350 Montanans died in the war.

The Korean War made Americans fear the spread of communism even more. The Cold War intensified as the United States took responsibility for fighting the spread of communism anywhere in the world.

FIGURE 20.12: After the Air Force built the intercontinental ballistic missile silos and launch sites, they buried them deep underground. The Air Force chose Montana for the silos because of its high elevation (which reduced the altitude the missiles had to climb) and stable soil structure. In addition, the state's sparse population made it a more acceptable target if the Soviets attacked the missile sites.



The Cold War had two effects: The government spent billions of dollars to develop new military technologies in case there was a war with the Soviet Union. And the government—and many groups and individuals—attacked communism within the United States in all its forms, real and imagined.

Anti-Communism Fuels New Activities

Fear of communism—and fear that communists might attack the United States—became an everyday part of some people’s lives. In 1952 the Air Force created the Ground Observer Corps, a corps of **civilian** (non-military) volunteers. Their job was to scan the skies around their towns for enemy Soviet aircraft that could not be detected by radar. Volunteers worked four-hour shifts.

Across the country, 250,000 people volunteered to help in this way. In Shelby the Ground Observer Corps built an observation tower on top of the City Hall. In Missoula, corps members surveyed the skies from the top of the Palace Hotel.

Lettie Pierce Gilbert, a St. Ignatius mother of five, volunteered for the corps. Her job was to report and describe every plane that flew over the Mission Valley. It was a constant job. “Every time you were doing something, there’d go a plane,” she said later.

Some people feared that communist ideas might seep into American life. They formed anti-communist groups like the John Birch Society, which monitored society for communist ideas and activities. They often accused people and organizations they disagreed with of spreading communism. Sometimes they went overboard. In the Bitterroot Valley, anti-communists accused the Darby school superintendent of being a communist because, after buying new Bibles for the school library, he destroyed the old ones.

“I remember how afraid I was of communists. I don’t know what I thought a communist was . . . I guess we were told that Anaconda was a real potential spot for them to bomb because of the smelter. So we grew up with the idea that if there ever was another war that we’d be one of the first places to get wiped off the face of the earth.”

—ALICE CLARK FINNEGAN, AN ANACONDA TEENAGER

FIGURE 20.13: Ads like this one from the *Billings Gazette* in 1961 reminded Americans to fear a communist military attack. Citizens were advised to build bomb shelters and stock them with a 14-day supply of food and batteries for the radio. In some Montana communities, air-raid sirens blasted the “all clear” signal once a day.



Politics Changed during the Cold War

How would you feel if you were told that your enemies might bomb Montana at any time? Many Montanans became more fearful. They voted for conservative political candidates and for government programs that increased America's military and industrial strength. Conservatives helped elect an anti-communist governor, Donald G. Nutter of Sidney, in 1960.

At the same time, other Montanans continued to support the more liberal ideas made popular in the 1930s (see Chapter 18). In Montana, farmers and labor-union members joined together to counteract the corporate power held by the Anaconda Company and the Montana Power Company, which still dominated Montana. These groups helped elect Democratic senators James E. Murray and Mike Mansfield.

Tension between conservative anti-communists (who feared government social programs) and liberal reformers (who supported them) shaped Montana politics—and politics across the country—during this period.



Mike Mansfield: Man of the People

Mike Mansfield was born in an Irish American corner of New York City and came to Great Falls when he was seven. He left high school to fight in World War I, then worked as a miner, and later returned to college to study history and political science.

In 1942 Montana voters elected Mansfield to the U.S. House of Representatives as a Democrat. Voters respected him for his humility, straightforwardness, and knowledge of international politics. In 1952 they elected him to the U.S. Senate. He served as Senate majority leader for 16 years, longer than anyone else in history.

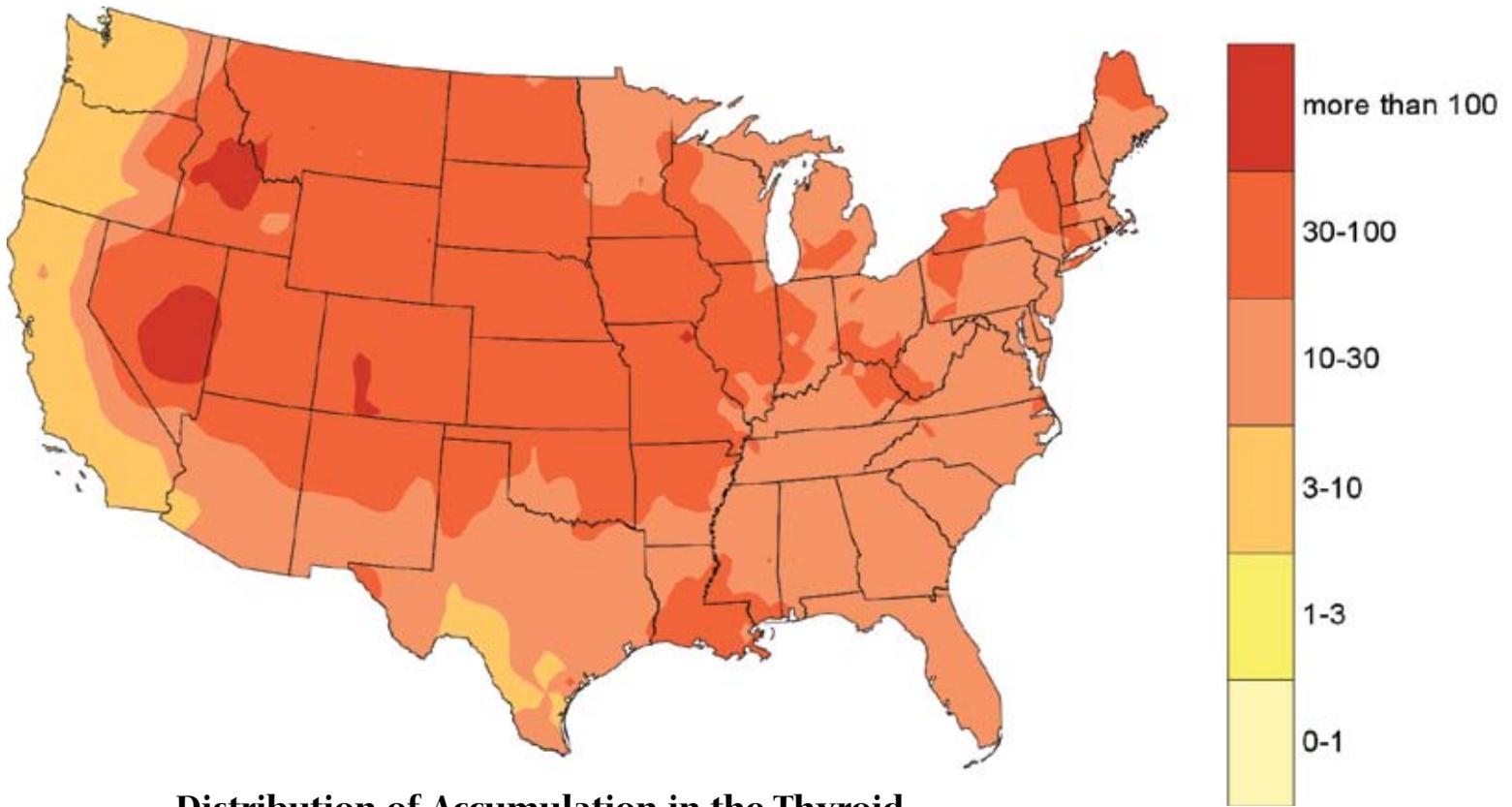
Mansfield was equally devoted to helping Montana and to improving the nation. He drew national attention to Montana's growing environmental concerns. He helped Montana's Indian tribes fight termination. He believed in Montana's youth and wrote the bill giving 18-year-olds the right to vote. And he continually opposed the war in Vietnam.

Mansfield retired from the U.S. Senate in 1976, after 34 years. He then worked for 12 years as U.S. ambassador to Japan. When he retired, in 1989, President Ronald Reagan gave Mansfield the Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian award. Mansfield died in 2001 at age 98.

Missile Silos Buried in the Ground

The Cold War brought two enormous projects to Montana. One was a network of Minuteman missile silos buried deep in the ground. As part of its buildup of weapons, the military installed missiles armed with nuclear explosives underground in several western and mid-western states. They were called **intercontinental ballistic missiles**, or ICBMs. ICBMs are armed, self-propelled missiles that maintain a predetermined course as they fly to another continent. Military leaders hoped that with nuclear missiles aimed right at them, the Soviets would not dare attack the United States.

In the 1960s the Air Force



Distribution of Accumulation in the Thyroid of Radioactive Iodine from Nuclear Fallout

Units of scale: mGy

built 200 Minuteman **missile silos** (sites for launching missiles) in an area stretching from Augusta to Ryegate. Each contained a **warhead** (explosive charge) equal to 71 Hiroshima-sized bombs. Malmstrom Air Force Base near Great Falls became the Minuteman missile control center. Federal money—and military contractors and employees—poured in, turning Great Falls into a Cold War boomtown.

FIGURE 20.14: As part of the Cold War, the United States conducted above-ground tests of nuclear bombs. The wind spread the radioactive material released during these tests. Part of that radioactive material concentrated in the thyroid glands of children. Because of this, people living in the darkest red areas on this map had a higher-than-average chance of getting thyroid cancer later in life. The color scale refers to units of mGy, a measure of absorbed radiation.

The Vietnam War: Bloody Battles, Bitter Controversy

In 1955 civil war broke out in Vietnam, in Southeast Asia. Once again, communist countries helped one side, and the United States and its allies helped the other. The Vietnam War (1955–75) quickly exploded into a complicated, bitter conflict. In 1965 the United States began sending combat troops into Southeast Asia. Approximately 36,000 Montanans ultimately served during the Vietnam War, and 268 Montanans died in the war.

Many Montanans signed up to serve their country. But there were also people who did not think Montana’s young men should die in someone else’s civil war. They organized antiwar protests on college campuses and in Washington, D.C. Montanans joined in these protests. Some organized rallies and protest marches at university campuses in Missoula, Bozeman, and Billings. More than 300 people attended a rally in Lewistown.



FIGURE 20.15: College students thought a lot about the Vietnam War because young men their age were **drafted** (required to serve) to fight in it. In 1970 some University of Montana students erected 234 crosses on campus to represent Montana's fallen soldiers and protest the war.



FIGURE 20.16: Sergeant Don Tibbs of Hamilton receives a silver star for bravery in action on the battlefields of Vietnam in 1970.

Interstate Highways Lace across the Land

The Cold War brought another enormous project to Montana: interstate highways. Until the early 1950s cross-country travelers—including truckers—drove along a series of paved and unpaved roads. The fastest highways were two-lane paved roads that passed through the downtown of each community along the way.

During the Cold War, the military pushed for a nationwide network of four-lane highways so military transports could move across the country quickly and efficiently. The military needed roads designed for speed that would bypass stoplights, downtown traffic, and railroad crossings.

In 1956 Congress passed the Federal Highway Act, which created the interstate highway system. It was the biggest public works project in U.S. history. It brought 1,200 miles of four-lane, 75-mile-per-hour freeway to Montana by 1987.

Interstate highways changed cities, towns, farms, and people's lives. Cities like Billings, Great Falls, and Missoula expanded toward the interstate access ramps. New businesses clustered along the streets that funneled traffic on and off the freeway.

Some small towns like Bighorn, Custer, Rosebud, and Fallon shriveled up when the interstates passed them by. It was easier for people to drive to Billings, Miles City, or Glendive than it was to get to a closer town that was not on the interstate. Other small towns like Cascade, Montana City, Clinton, and Park City transformed into **bedroom communities** (towns where people who work in a nearby city live) to Great Falls, Helena, Missoula, and Billings.

The interstates boosted commercial truck traffic. The trucking industry expanded nationwide, and railroads fell further into decline.

The interstates changed the land, too. Early roads followed the natural contours of the landscape. Builders of the interstates blasted through hillsides, built roadbeds across marshes, diverted creeks, and paved over culturally important sites. In the 1960s the government passed laws protecting natural and cultural resources—and farmland—from damage during highway construction.

Interstates Boosted Tourism

The new interstate highways, fast cars, and cheap gas turned the West into America’s vacationland. For the first time, many Americans could afford to travel long distances by freeway for vacations. They loaded the kids into the station wagon and headed west.

Montana developed more parks and historic sites. More Montanans opened dude ranches, fishing resorts, and lodges. And people built ski resorts to expand the tourist season into the winter. By the mid-1970s tourism was one of Montana’s biggest industries.

FIGURE 20.17: A worker bulldozes ground during construction of Interstate 90 near Bozeman. Montana had never had roads like this before. Interstates changed the landscape, brought in tourists, and also allowed long-distance travelers to zip right through Montana, stopping just long enough to fill up with gas.



Life in a New Montana

In the twenty years after Anna Dahl helped bring electricity to her part of rural Montana, life changed dramatically. The electric wires outside her house linked her life to power sources far away. Telephones, interstate highways, and television linked Montana to the rest of the country. The network of underground missiles connected the rural state with world events.

Modernization brought many conveniences. But it also took away jobs, changed towns, and marred the landscape in new ways. By the 1960s the Treasure State had been shipping off its natural resources to outside markets for more than a century. Montanans still depended on **natural resource extraction** (industries based on removing natural resources) for jobs. But they started to think more about the land itself, and its value beyond what mines, dams, and lumber mills could take from it.

Some people wondered if they would have to choose between having jobs and preserving the beauty of the land. Others began to talk about the quality of life in Montana—the things that make people stay here even though they could make a better living somewhere else.

Many Montanans began to talk about defining a new future for the state—one less dominated by corporations and more focused on the people who live here. To create that future, Montana would need a stronger state government. It was time to write a new state **constitution** (a document that sets rules for government).



FIGURE 20.18: Montanans had to think hard during the postwar years about how to make a living and what kind of future they wanted for their state. Many of them decided it was worth living in a place where life was slower, incomes were lower, crowds were fewer, and the scenery was more glorious than just about anywhere else.

Expressions of the People

Abstract Expressionist Art in Montana

Montana is far from Paris, New York, and other urban art centers of the world. Yet Montana owns two important collections of modern art by some of the most notable artists in the country.

The collections started with Everton Gentry “George” Poindexter, whose family had built one of Montana’s earliest and largest sheep ranches. George grew up in Montana, but by the 1950s he and his wife, Elinor, lived in New York City. There they encountered a new kind of modern art called abstract expressionism.

Abstract expressionism is a term that critics gave modern art that emerged in New York City in the 1940s. The worldwide violence of World War II and people’s anxiety about the nuclear age inspired some artists to express themselves in a new way. They broke away from **figurative art** (art representing people, animals, objects, and landscapes) and instead created **abstract art** (art focused on structure and form). Instead of representing scenes, abstract expressionists focused on personal expression: color, balance, shapes, and the play of energy within the canvas.

When George Poindexter first saw abstract expressionist paintings in New York City, he thought they were terrible. He could not believe anyone thought “those weird shapes and messy colors” made great art.

FIGURE 20.19: No one had ever made paintings like this before the late 1940s, and for a long time most people did not know what to think of them. George Poindexter learned that he could teach his eyes to see the beauty, balance, and power of great abstract art like this untitled painting by Willem de Kooning (1904–1997).





FIGURE 20.20: Montana artist Gennie DeWeese called the abstract expressionist movement “an exciting explosion.” She said that paintings like *At Fried’s*, by Michael Goldberg (1924–2007), inspired many Montana artists to explore space and color in new ways.



Instead of just calling the painters crazy, he decided to learn what they were trying to do. He studied the new art form and bought several paintings so he could experience them daily. For a long time, all he saw was a confusing mishmash of color.

“Then one morning it happened,” Poindexter wrote later. He walked into his living room where he had hung an abstract painting, and it suddenly made sense to him. “It was a strong vivid thing of beauty,” he remembered. “Now it had form and its colors harmonized. Black smudges and careless brush strokes became balanced elements.”

The Poindexters began collecting abstract expressionist paintings. And in 1960 they began giving and lending some of their collection to the Montana Historical Society in Helena and the Yellowstone Art Museum in Billings. Poindexter wanted Montanans living far from the nation’s cultural centers to learn about abstract expressionism just as he had—by living with it.

Over time the Poindexters gave almost 200 works of art to these two Montana museums, including paintings by Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, and Franz Kline, the most famous abstract expressionists of the time.

Because this Montana boy learned how to appreciate art he did not understand—and because he wanted to share that experience with other Montanans—you can see some of the original paintings that changed the definition of art in the second half of the twentieth century.

FIGURE 20.21: Some painters began exploring layers and textures to create a sense of depth and space. *Red E*, by Budd Hopkins (born 1931), plays with space in a very different way than a landscape painting does. The different elements of the painting seem to lie on different layers, yet they create an energetic balance.

CHAPTER 20 REVIEW

► CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

1. Identify: (a) Rural Electrification Administration; (b) party line; (c) youth culture; (d) termination policy; (e) relocation program; (f) Cold War; (g) Federal Highway Act
2. Define: (a) superpower; (b) consumerism; (c) baby boom; (d) cooperatives; (e) mechanized; (f) sovereign; (g) treaty; (h) communism; (i) bedroom community
3. What industries in Montana benefited from the postwar economic boom and why?
4. What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of building dams?
5. Why did Montana Power Company suffer when the Hungry Horse Dam was built?
6. How did rural Montanans respond when private companies did not want to build power lines into their areas?
7. How did television affect the political power of the Anaconda Company?
8. Why did many major industries of the 1950s not come to Montana?
9. Describe the effect on Montana's small towns of the decline in rail service.
10. Compare the two main perspectives on Indians that have guided U.S. government policy throughout Montana's history.
11. Why did the U.S. government want to relocate Indians from reservations?
12. How did the Cold War affect Montana state politics?
13. What projects came to Montana as a result of the Cold War?
14. Describe the reasons that U.S. involvement in both the Korean and Vietnam Wars were the result of the Cold War?

► CRITICAL THINKING

1. Do you think Montana faced more challenges modernizing than other parts of the nation? Why or why not?
2. Do you think Mexican Americans and Hutterites have experienced more prejudice than other ethnic minorities in the state? Why or why not?
3. Compare the postwar Indian policies of relocation and termination to the policies of boarding schools and allotment at the turn of the twentieth century.
4. How has the increase in and need for tourism affected Montanans' perception of themselves and their state?

► PAST TO PRESENT

1. You read in the text that Montana did not attract many new industries during the 1950s and 1960s. Is this still a concern for creating jobs? What industries might be attracted to Montana now that were not before?
2. The 1956 Highway Act resulted in a dramatic decline in rail traffic. Compare the advantages and disadvantages between rail and road for both shipment of goods and passenger travel.

► MAKE IT LOCAL

1. Montana has two interstates: I-90, which runs east to west, and I-15, which runs north to south. If you live near an interstate, how did its construction affect your area economically and physically? Did it change shopping patterns or the layout of your town? If you do not live near an interstate, what effect, if any, do you think construction of the interstates had on your community?
2. Use oral history to research what your community was like in the postwar period. What did kids do for fun? Where did people congregate? What physical changes occurred in your community? Compare life in the 1950s to your life today.

► EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. Research and make a poster recounting the history of one of the major dams in Montana. Make sure you include a map, information about when and why it was built, the areas flooded by the dam, and the way the dam is maintained today.
2. Make a chart describing and comparing the advantages and disadvantages of the capitalist economic system and the communist economic system.
3. As a class, research members of the high school graduating class of 1960. Does this group follow the trends outlined in this chapter?
4. Write a report or make a poster illustrating the life of Mike Mansfield.

Credits

The following abbreviations are used in the credits:

BBHC Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, Wyoming
GNPA Glacier National Park Archives
LOC Library of Congress
MAC Montana Arts Council, Helena
MDEQ Montana Department of Environmental Quality, Helena
MDT Montana Department of Transportation, Helena
MFWP Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Helena
MHS Montana Historical Society, Helena
MHSA Montana Historical Society Archives, Helena
MHSL Montana Historical Society Library, Helena
MHS Mus. Montana Historical Society Museum, Helena
MHS PA Montana Historical Society Photograph Archives, Helena
MSU COT Montana State University College of Technology, Billings
NMAI National Museum American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
MSU Billings Special Collections, Montana State University Billings Library
NARA National Archives and Records Administration
NPS National Park Service
NRIS Natural Resource Information System, Montana State Library, Helena
SHPO State Historic Preservation Office, Montana Historical Society, Helena
TM Travel Montana, Helena
UM Missoula Archives & Special Collections, The University of Montana-Missoula
USDA United States Department of Agriculture
USFS United States Forest Service
WMM World Museum of Mining, Butte

Chapter 20

- FIG. 20.1** *Ford's Drive-In*, Brian Morger, courtesy Don Loose, Great Falls
- FIG. 20.2** Just Wed, Yellowstone National Park, 1951, photo by Jack Ellis Haynes, MHS PA Haynes Foundation Coll. H-51112
- FIG. 20.3** Butte car dealership, MHS PA PAC 80-88
- FIG. 20.4** Yellowtail Dam, MT, photo by Bill Browning, Helena, MHS PA PAC 2002-62.D1-11986
- FIG. 20.5** Lake Koocanusa, courtesy TM
- FIG. 20.6** Ranch woman on phone, Farm Security Administration, courtesy MSU Bozeman, WPA Records Collection 2336, Merrill G. Burlingame Special Collections
- FIG. 20.7** Spinning Marvels, Marias Fair, photo by Jack Gilluly, MHS PA PAC 78-18
- FIG. 20.8** Burying Holy Savior School, photo by Walter Hinick of the *Montana Standard*
- FIG. 20.9** Wheat harvest in Helena area, photo by Bill Browning, Helena, MHS PA PAC 2002-62 A1D-4473
- FIG. 20.10** Young sugar beet worker with dog, photo by Arthur Rothstein, 1959, courtesy LOC LC-USF53-005272-M5
- FIG. 20.11** Family arriving at Relocation Office, BIA, courtesy NARA, Washington D.C.
- FIG. 20.12** Minuteman Missile construction, 1961, photo by U.S. Air Force, Malmstrom Air Force Base Photo Lab, Great Falls, MHS PA PAC 84-91
- FIG. 20.13** "Six Steps for Survival," illustration by Bob Zeller, *Billings Gazette*, October 28, 1961, MHSL
- SIDEBAR, PAGE 410**, Mike Mansfield, MHS PA 943-756
- FIG. 20.14** Internal dose (mGy) to the thyroid of persons born 1 January 1951 from all NTS tests, "Estimation of Doses from Fallout," *Report on the Feasibility of a Study of the Health Consequences to the American Population from Nuclear Weapons Tests Conducted by the United States and Other Nations*, National Center for Environmental Health, Radiation Studies, at http://www.cdc.gov/NCEH/radiation/fallout/feasibilitystudy/Technical_Vol_1_Chapter_3.pdf
- FIG. 20.15** Anti-war protest at UM, courtesy UM K. Ross Toole Archives
- FIG. 20.16** Sgt. Donald Tibbs, courtesy Don and Pat Tibbs, Corvallis, MT
- FIG. 20.17** Interstate 90 highway construction, Bozeman, photo by Bill Browning, Helena, MHS PA PAC 2002-62.H1B-10632
- FIG. 20.18** Sheep grazing near Glacier National Park, photo by Bill Browning, Helena, MHS PA PAC 2002-62.A1H-7002
- FIG. 20.19** *Untitled*, Willem de Kooning, 1947, MHS Mus.
- FIG. 20.20** *At Fried's*, Michael Goldberg, ca. 1957, MHS Mus.
- FIG. 20.21** *Red E*, Budd Hopkins, 1962, MHS Mus.