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For downloadable images, visit [pbs.org/pressroom](http://pbs.org/pressroom)

For the program companion website, visit [pbs.org/butte-america](http://pbs.org/butte-america)

**THE SWEEPING SAGA OF THE RISE AND FALL OF A GREAT AMERICAN CITY, "BUTTE, AMERICA," TO AIR NATIONALLY ON THE EMMY® AWARD-WINNING PBS SERIES *INDEPENDENT LENS* ON TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2009 AT 10PM**

**"BUTTE, AMERICA captures the gravity and history of the most interesting city in the American West.**

**A memorable film about an unforgettable place."**

**- Thomas McGuane, author**

(San Francisco, CA)—**BUTTE, AMERICA** recounts the sometimes glorious, often sorrowful, but always fascinating story of Butte, Montana, the most lucrative hard rock mining town in United States history; a place known as "the Richest Hill on Earth," "the Gibraltar of Unionism," "the town that plumbed and electrified America" and "the Pittsburgh of the West." In this copper-mining metropolis, the Industrial Revolution collided with the romance of the frontier, corporate capitalism battled organized labor and the country's ever-increasing appetite for metals laid waste to land and water, yielding vast fortunes for the copper barons and a tragic environmental and economic legacy for the people of Butte. A film made by Pamela Roberts and narrated by actor Gabriel Byrne, **BUTTE, AMERICA** will air nationally on the PBS series *Independent Lens* on Tuesday, October 20, 2009 at 10PM (check local listings).

The epic story of the rise and fall of Butte is told through the people that forged this tightly-knit community: the miners and their families, people who were initially immigrants from Ireland and England but who eventually represented nations from across Europe (signs in the mines were written in 16 different languages). Theirs is a tale of hardship, fleeting joy, pride and community, hard-won and ever in peril; a camaraderie born of danger where every day in the mines could be the last. An urban-industrial island, surrounded by ranchland and wilderness, Butte was home to one of the largest corporations in the world: the Anaconda Copper Mining Company. The film chronicles the miner's volatile relationship with the "Company," which led to the birth of the Western Federation of Miners, a predecessor of the Industrial Workers of the World, or Wobblies.

As the title suggests, the Butte story is inseparable from the story of America. The town contributed mightily to the industrialization of the country during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, helping build the world all Americans live in today. Besides the constant dangers underground, the people of Butte weathered a massive fire, strikes, mine shutdowns, health and environmental problems and finally, the bulldozing of long-established neighborhoods to make way for open pit mining. "When they killed the houses," one character recalls, "they killed the people." As other once-great American cities see jobs and industry disappear—and with it, established communities that generations have called home—**BUTTE, AMERICA**'s relevance extends far beyond the towering mountains of western Montana.

*-More-*



To learn more about the film and the issues it explores, visit the companion website for **BUTTE, AMERICA** at [www.pbs.org/butte-america](http://www.pbs.org/butte-america). Get detailed information on the film, watch preview clips, read an interview with the filmmaker and explore the subject in depth, with links and resources. The site also features a Talkback section for viewers to share their ideas and opinions.

### **About the Filmmaker**

#### **Pamela Roberts (Producer/Director)**

Pamela Roberts came to filmmaking as a medium for exploring social issues after graduating with honors from the University of Southern California with a master's in social work. In 1982, Roberts co-founded Rattlesnake Productions, Inc., and over the past 26 years she has produced and directed a number of award-winning documentary films and videos for public television and for national and international theatrical and video distribution.

Roberts produced *Backbone of the World: The Blackfeet*, with an all-native cast and crew, and under the direction of Blackfeet director, George Burdeau, which was broadcast on public television in November 1998. Roberts also co-produced and co-directed *Ishi, the Last Yahi*, a one-hour, NEH-funded documentary that was nominated for an Emmy Award in 1994. Broadcast on *American Experience*, *Ishi* was immensely popular, winning several awards. Prior to *Ishi*, Roberts co-produced and co-directed *Contrary Warriors: A Story of the Crow Tribe*, broadcast on A&E and PBS nationally.

### **About *Independent Lens***

*Independent Lens* is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing Tuesday nights at 10:00 PM on PBS. The acclaimed anthology series features documentaries, and a limited number of fiction films united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement and unflinching visions of their independent producers. *Independent Lens* features unforgettable stories about a unique individual, community or moment in history. Presented by Independent Television Service (ITVS), the series is supported by interactive companion websites and national publicity and community engagement campaigns. Further information about the series is available at [www.pbs.org/independentlens](http://www.pbs.org/independentlens). *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by ITVS and PBS, and is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding provided by PBS and the National Endowment for the Arts. The series producer is Lois Vossen.

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