Thomas Johnston Grier—square-stout, tobacco-chewing, Canadian-born—superintended the Homestake Mining Company headquartered in Lead, South Dakota, for nearly thirty years. Under his management, which combined both benevolence and firm control, the company grew from a fledgling enterprise into one of the largest producers of gold in North America. After Grier's death in 1914, mine workers erected a heroic statue on Main Street in honor of his memory, and to this day the Lead Chamber of Commerce gives a public-service award bearing his name. The citizens of Lead remembered Grier's good will, but it was the superintendent's strong grip on Homestake's operations and employees that kept the company profitable. Indeed, inside the velvet glove of Grier's paternalism, an iron fist controlled all aspects of Homestake's operation.

Lead may have been just another mining camp during the heady days of the Black Hills gold rush of the mid-1870s, but within a decade, it became a one-mine community and took on the accoutrements of a company town. The Homestake presence permeated life in Lead as thoroughly as the pounding of the ore-crushing stamps that dropped twenty-four hours a day. Under Grier's management, Homestake bought out adjacent mining claims, assumed ownership of the land on which workers built their homes, and paid miners through a company-owned store that sold food and goods and extended credit for purchases between paydays. The company also owned the area's first railroad and kept a constant eye on the bottom line, paying regular monthly dividends that made the predominantly absentee owners...
extremely rich. At the same time, Grier cooperated with the local miners' union and facilitated industrial socialism at a level unheard of in other western mining camps. Miners and their families benefited from free medical care as well as a free library, kindergarten, and state-of-the-art recreation center, excellent schools, disability and life insurance, stock options, year-end bonuses, and an eight-hour day. Grier, however, made it clear that what was good for the Homestake Mine came first. As long as the company remained unthreatened, a benevolent paternalism prevailed; when challenged, however, Grier manipulated life in Lead like a despot.¹

The discovery of gold in the Black Hills dated officially to Lieutenant Colonel George A. Custer's 1874 expedition to the region. Immediately after news of its mineral wealth reached the outside world, determined prospectors swarmed the pine-covered hillsides. George Hearst, in partnership with others, bought the Homestake claim from its discoverers in 1877 and moved deftly to consolidate his holdings and acquire the water and lumber resources needed to mine effectively. In an era when "infrastructure" had not entered corporate language, Hearst built the framework that would make the Homestake Mining Company profitable.² In fact, the Homestake mine became the mother lode of prosperity.

Samuel McMaster joined Homestake as its first superintendent. Savvy and experienced, he did Hearst's bidding. Also working with McMaster's management team was twenty-nine-year-old telegrapher and bookkeeper Thomas Grier. Known as "T. J." to his friends, he had a broad smile, a quiet laugh, an eye for detail, and a tremendous capacity for work. Shortly after arriving on the job on 21 September 1878, Grier purchased a three-and-one-half-by-six-inch notebook with cross-


lined pages to carry in his vest pocket. In a meticulous, cramped but clear hand, he penned entries about all aspects of Homestake operations, diagramming claims, noting profit and loss data for corporate activities, and keeping personal accounts. Little missed his attention.3

Discreetly, Grier worked his way into Hearst’s confidence. When McMaster died in December 1884, Grier’s name rose to the top of the list as a potential replacement. Homestake owners mulled over the selection of candidates for several months before the board of directors gave Grier their unanimous support as the new superintendent on 9 July 1885.4 The decision was a bold one. Hearst, McMaster, and all of the other prospective superintendents had practical mining experience. Grier, on the other hand, excelled as a manager and looked beyond simply extracting ore to addressing the “big picture” issues of a complex corporation, such as worker relations and technological innovation.

Hearst reaffirmed his faith in Grier face to face. Beginning 31 July, he spent twenty-three days checking out his interests in the Black Hills. More importantly, he checked out the man chosen to oversee them. Hearst left satisfied.5 Grier went on to make the mine work effi-


Thomas J. Grier, Homestake Mining Company superintendent for twenty-nine years, closely controlled all aspects of the Homestake operation but generously contributed to the betterment of the community.
ciently and pay well throughout his years as superintendent. No evidence in either the Hearst papers or the Homestake records suggests that Grier ever submitted his management decisions to the directors for prior approval. He notified them, often in advance, but they never second-guessed him and overrode a decision. Grier also set a clear ethical standard for himself by choosing not to own Homestake stock. "Having no shares of stock... I was in a stronger position," he later stated. "The door was not open for any criticism." Historians Richard H. Peterson in *The Bonanza Kings* and Michael P. Malone in *The Battle for Butte* both discuss mine owners and managers who came to play prominent roles in the politics and economies of their communities, noting that those who had risen through the ranks themselves shared a sense of comaraderie and displayed benevolence toward their workers. Grier had no vested, owner-based interest in the Homestake. His aim was to manage profitably for others.

Homestake's new superintendent continued to fill his notebook with operational details. Grier tirelessly acquired adjacent claims, solidifying the company's exclusive access to the ore vein. "Patented," he wrote over a claim deed once the Homestake owned it. Underground, better timbering and the backfilling of stopes improved miner safety. Above ground, the Homestake Mercantile Company, housed in a large brick building in Lead and known as the "Brick Store" or simply "The Brick," took over payroll management to make it more efficient. A two-story frame company hospital and drugstore replaced the original four-room cabin, and Homestake entered the ho-

8. This is not to suggest that Grier did not benefit financially from his involvement in the Black Hills. Homestake paid him well—twenty-five hundred dollars per month by the time of his death in 1914. He also secured financial interests in other regional enterprises. See *Industrial Relations: Final Reports and Testimony*, 4:3657; Richmond L. Clow, "Wasp No. 2: 'The Wonder Mine of the Black Hills,'" *South Dakota History* 15: 278.
tel business. In both the mine and the mills, experimentation with mechanical dry drills, electricity, and steam power took place. Within five years of Grier's assuming stewardship of the Homestake, fifteen hundred men processed up to seven hundred tons of ore from eighty claims through 650 stamps every working day. Homestake furnaces burned one hundred cords of wood daily, part of the one million tons.10


Hearst Mercantile Company, also known as the Brick Store, opened in 1879 to supply the Homestake mine. It eventually became a company store, dispensing pay to workers and serving as Lead's main retail establishment.
board feet harvested annually in a process the *Black Hills Daily Times* characterized as “more scientific and more systematical” than previously.\(^{11}\)

At the same time, Grier sought to develop a positive relationship with workers. When representatives of the Knights of Labor and the Lead City Miners’ Union requested 1 September 1888 as a Labor Day holiday, Grier closed the Homestake, made the company’s railroad available for picnic excursions, and personally spent the day “looking after the comfort and safety of the crowd.”\(^{12}\) In May 1890, the superintendent decided to modify shift times in order to have more men underground at all times as a safeguard against fire. Miners objected, crowded Union Hall in Lead, and organized a delegation to meet with Grier, who went to Union Hall in person. His willingness to compromise paid off, and, on 6 June, both sides agreed to a new schedule.\(^{13}\)

While Grier’s approachability became the hallmark of his successful relationship with labor, he did not, however, let it interfere with his success in getting what he wanted. The superintendent broadened his influence in the wider community, as well. He joined civic organizations, invested in other Black Hills mines, properties, businesses, and banks, and generally used his personal stature and corporate position to better Lead and surrounding communities, including helping to rebuild the neighboring town of Central after a fire in April 1888.\(^{14}\)

Grier had some rebuilding of his own to do in 1891. In that year, his notebook contained a stark entry recorded at the end of February: “Geo. Hearst died.”\(^{15}\) Hearst’s entire twenty-one-million-dollar estate (approximately four and one-half billion dollars today) went to his

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\(^{11}\) *Black Hills Daily Times*, 1 Jan. 1890. See also ibid., 1 Jan. 1889.

\(^{12}\) Ibid., 2 Sept. 1888.

\(^{13}\) Ibid., 25, 27–29 May, 7 June 1890.


\(^{15}\) Grier Notebook, Feb. 1891.
widow, Phoebe Apperson Hearst. Grier's allegiance transferred seamlessly. "I want to thank you most especially," Phoebe Hearst wrote in 1893, "for all your kindness & promptness ... when I have asked for information of any kind, and for your loyalty to my interests." She tapped her cousin Edward Clark to handle many of her business affairs, and both came to appreciate the expertise and vision of Grier, who was unhesitatingly forthcoming with his employers.

Outsiders often saw Homestake as Phoebe Hearst's company, but in reality, she controlled only 36 percent of the stock, or fifty-one thousand shares. California investors James B. A. Haggin and Lloyd Tevis held 31 and 21 percent, respectively, while others held smaller amounts. Shortly after Hearst inherited her husband's empire, miners, mill workers, and others on the Homestake payroll were offered the opportunity to purchase company stock. Given Grier's influence and understanding of what corporate stock ownership could mean for worker loyalty, it may be logical to assume that he played a part in the decision. "We were interested to have as much stock there [in Lead] as we could," Edward Clark later recalled, "because it makes people friendly." Over the next twenty years, employees purchased about ten thousand shares, all in small blocks of less than fifty shares.

In the quest to ensure profits for shareholders, efficiency mattered most. Grier determined that mining and processing the entire ore body would prove more profitable for the company in the long term than picking out only the most valuable ore pockets. Better drills and better mills meant sustained yields, and the superintendent sought out innovative methods to improve the company's bottom line. Grier continued to acquire adjacent mine properties, as well. In 1876, the

16. Phoebe A. Hearst to T. J. Grier, [n.d.] 1893, MS 57, File 1, Box 37, PAHP.
18. Edward H. Clark testimony, 7 July 1920, HMCR. In stock dividends alone, Phoebe Hearst realized approximately $14,000,000 from the Homestake mine during her lifetime. She also received all net revenues from the company store, which averaged between $750,000 and $1,000,000 per year.
Homestake consisted of a single mountaintop claim; by 1901, Homestake Mining Company owned the entire mountain. In the interest of efficient management, Grier also brought the formerly freestanding Brick Store into the corporate structure. The region's largest, best-equipped all-purpose mercantile proved extremely profitable. Phoebe Hearst received 100 percent of the store's net profit, while Grier used the mercantile to dispense pay to workers and Hearst's largess to the community.¹⁹

Because the town of Lead owed its existence to the Homestake, company lawyers were able to leverage an agreement with Lead town fathers concerning the land on which the community sat. Homestake officials wanted perpetual access to the underlying minerals, while townspeople desired lots, streets, and other framework for growth. Grier had retained as company attorney Gideon C. Moody, a former federal judge and prominent Republican politician, who consummated a deal with civic leaders on 18 March 1892. Plain and simple, Homestake owned the land. Lead residents received company-issued permits to occupy the property, but if, at some future moment, Homestake desired the land, it could evict any resident or business by giving ninety-days' notice. The company paid all property taxes, while residents and businesses paid taxes only on their homes and other improvements.²⁰

By 1893, Grier had the distinction of working for the country's richest woman and managing the nation's richest gold mine. The next two years, however, would truly test his management skills. On 13 April 1893, fire broke out on the three-hundred-foot level of the Homestake Mine. Grier had miners and mules evacuated and then sent teams of men down to fight the burgeoning conflagration. The company's mine and mills ceased production for the first time ever. Men struggled in the suffocating smoke and gasses for just fifteen minutes at a time before they had to be evacuated to fresh air. Grier labored along-

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²⁰. Ibid., pp. 151–52; Cash, *Working the Homestake*, pp. 58–59, 73, 75, 77. Nothing in the Lead press indicates any acrimony in the negotiation process, but Homestake officials clearly did not hesitate to exercise the company's economic clout when it came to developing new properties.
side the miners and was overcome several times. According to the *Black Hills Daily Times*, the superintendent sent “no one where he dare[d] not go himself.” Grier’s personal risk taking, like his openness, created a bond between manager and men that would pay dividends for the remainder of his tenure. The firefighting efforts failed, and on 24 April Grier ordered the mine flooded. He learned from the disaster. Initial reporting about the fire’s location had been in error because the men had no idea where they were in the extensive labyrinth of shafts and tunnels. Grier subsequently had signs made to identify all levels of the mine clearly.

In the aftermath of the fire, the superintendent also had to deal with the effects of the 1893 depression. Officially, Grier maintained the standard $3.50 daily wage, but he reduced expenses by converting some underground mining to contract bids. Such savings failed to make the Homestake mines around Central City profitable, however, and Grier closed down those operations, putting hundreds out of work. Amid the resulting discontent, the normally staid Lead City Miners’ Union (LCMU) sent a five-member delegation to Butte, Montana, where the Lead union joined with their Copper City brethren to create the Western Federation of Miners (WFM). The Lead miners formed the number two local of this radical union, which was dedicated to the cause of worker solidarity in achieving better pay and working conditions at mines throughout the West. The Panic of 1893, the collapse of silver prices, and broad unrest further depressed the labor market and left workers with little to celebrate at the grand opening of the new Miners’ Union Hall on Christmas eve in 1893.24


In order to ensure that Homestake could mine the entire ore body wherever it might lead, the company secured the right to all land underlying the homes and businesses in the town of Lead.

Depression deepened throughout 1894. As labor unrest spread from Pullman sleeping cars to western mines, the LCMU went on record opposing what spokesmen called the “ill gotten gains” of corporations determined to “crush out organized labor” and “rob the laboring class at will.”25 Philosophically, the out-of-work Central City miners agreed, but in practice they took antithetical action, proposing on 19 July to accept a decrease in wages from $3.50 to $3.00 per day if Grier would reopen their mines. Unions in Lead and Terry Peak declined to support or oppose the gambit. Grier met with union members in late July at their initiative, not his, and agreed to reinstate the jobs at the lower wage. The distinction was important, for it portrayed Grier as willing to extend the velvet-gloved hand of compassion rather than tightening the iron grip of profitability in the midst of depression. Miners signed on at $3.00 per day and returned underground

on 8 August. Stamp mills resumed pounding ore. Miners held a “resurrection ball” to celebrate the reopening and danced until after midnight.

Grier invited both Phoebe Hearst and James Haggin to visit Lead in the late summer and fall of 1894. Hearst made her first visit to the community on 18 August; Haggin followed on 25 October. Both owners left impressed with Grier’s work. Haggin, in particular, praised the superintendent’s “perfectly systematized routine” for operating the Homestake and expressed unqualified “confidence in his judgment and integrity” in conducting mine “improvement, enlargement, and investment.” The superintendent discussed both a free library and a kindergarten with Hearst, who gave him permission to move forward immediately with the first institution. Grier used the library as an opportunity to help the LCMU, which was struggling to make payments on its new seventy-thousand-dollar hall. He rented three rooms on the top floor, had them refitted, ordered books and a piano (Phoebe Hearst liked music in the library), hired a piano-playing librarian, and gave the facility to Lead as a Christmas present from Hearst. The dedication events were a “grand success,” Grier wired her.

Grier continued to institute corporate and community improvements, such as expanded electrical lighting and the construction of a new schoolhouse, which he facilitated by arranging for Hearst to purchase thirty-one thousand dollars in bonds. The superintendent himself awarded cash prizes to the top students from each class. At the same time, Hearst began her lifelong practice of giving Christmas presents to employees of the Brick Store, the library, and, later, the kindergarten. To every church in Lead, she gave two hundred dollars annually. Such acts further endeared her to Lead residents as more a

27. Ibid., 12 Aug. 1894.
30. Telegram, Thomas J. Grier to Phoebe Apperson Hearst, 26 Dec. 1894, PAHP.
benefactor than a capitalistic owner. Grier endeared himself to the new librarian, Mary Jane Palethorpe. Following her divorce, he married her on 8 August 1896.31


Phoebe Apperson Hearst inherited the estate of her husband George Hearst, including the Homestake mine, in 1891. She supported Grier's efforts to improve the lives of the miners and their families who lived in Lead.
Grier’s next challenges came from Washington, D.C. The Homestake Mining Company consumed vast amounts of wood for mine timbering, general construction, and smelter fuel. In 1894, the United States government sued the company for ignoring federal restrictions governing the cutting of timber on public land, contending that it had illegally taken approximately seven million trees over nearly two decades. Homestake fought the charge and lost a four-year court battle but paid only seventy-five thousand dollars in fines, a small sum compared to the value of the timber taken. To help prevent the complete destruction of forests in the Black Hills and elsewhere.

By the turn of the twentieth century, the Homestake mine was largely self-sufficient in all of its mining and milling operations. It generated its own electricity, ran its own railroad, and logged and milled its own timber.
throughout the country, President Grover Cleveland set aside twenty-one million acres of forest reserves nationwide—967,680 in the Black Hills—before he left office in 1897. Grier and mining company officials elsewhere complained about the loss of free timber, but newly elected William McKinley did not rescind the order. National forests became a reality.\(^{32}\)

Mining companies throughout the West, including the Homestake, viewed the reserves, which came with new restrictions on timber cutting, as a threat to their profitability and resorted to fraud in order to continue cutting timber. Gifford Pinchot, a special agent for the secretary of the interior who went on to become chief of the United States Forest Service, sought a solution that would both conserve the resource and satisfy the needs of industry by proposing a plan that allowed for government-regulated timber cutting at a minimal cost. Grier understood compromise and recognized the need to ensure that the timber resources vital to Homestake’s future operation would continue. On 3 November 1897, he and company counsel Gideon Moody held a three-hour meeting with Pinchot, during which they agreed to a process that became the blueprint for the next century of timber cutting on federal land. Under Timber Case No. 1 (1899) Homestake began the first regulated harvest of trees from public land. Over the next nine years, the company cut fifteen million board feet of timber. Grier became the Forest Service’s cause célèbre for progressive resource management.\(^{33}\)

The Homestake superintendent continued to push the company forward technologically, as well. In 1899, it became one of the first large-scale mining operations in the world to use cyanide successfully to process ore and waste concentrates. Grier had cut a deal with the developer of the process, Charles Merrill, who bore all of the costs of experimentation in return for a percentage of profits if the process worked. It did. The innovation made the Homestake operation even


more efficient, allowing the company to recover 94 percent of the gold present in its mixed ores.\(^34\)

On the morning of 8 March 1900, fire, the nemesis of mining communities, swept Lead, destroying homes and businesses in one-quarter of the town. Firefighters and Homestake employees made a stand at the Brick Store and stopped the conflagration. Homestake lost nothing to the blaze.\(^35\) At Grier’s suggestion, Hearst and Haggin thanked the community by donating five thousand dollars to Lead’s fire companies and another one thousand dollars to the firemen of Deadwood. The *Lead Evening Call* effused about Grier, characterizing him as “kind-hearted, generous, brainy . . . [a] truly great man . . . doing many acts of kindness and charity in a quiet way.”\(^36\)

With Hearst’s help, Grier accomplished a pet project the two had discussed years earlier—the creation of a kindergarten in Lead. Grier arranged for Hearst to attend its dedication in the spring of 1901 and hosted a reception on the evening of 27 May at which mine employees and community residents had an opportunity to meet their benefactor personally. Between two and three thousand people attended. Thomas and Mary Jane Grier, along with Phoebe Hearst, stood in a reception line for hours and shook every hand. “The soft white hands of ladies, the uncalloused hands of the office man or clerk, the hard brown hand of the laborer, received the same warm clasp,” reported the local newspaper.\(^37\) Phoebe Hearst exulted, “I was glad to see them and it was right.”\(^38\) A mutual appreciation characterized the relationship between the mine owner and the community. In 1903, children and residents of Lead collected nickels and dimes to purchase a silver loving
The Hearst Free Kindergarten, housed in Lead’s Episcopal church, was one of Phoebe Hearst’s favorite philanthropic projects. It opened in the spring of 1901 to an enthusiastic reception from the community.

cup for Hearst. She thanked them and returned for another visit in the fall of 1905.39

Grier also demonstrated a purposeful kindness, presenting himself in a manner as “friendly” to workers as he wanted them to be toward the company. Homestake carpenters fixed the Miners’ Union Hall on several occasions.40 He had the Brick Store buy advertisements in the pro-labor Lead Register and Deadwood’s socialist Lantern. Grier and the store contributed aid to victims of an earthquake in Italy, the native country of many Homestake miners. In 1897, the superintendent

granted company employees a half day off to hear WFM president Edward Boyce speak in Lead, where he denounced the capitalist exploitation of labor but expressed “delight” with local worker conditions.\(^4\)

The LCMU had helped to form the WFM in 1893 but dropped out almost immediately when the organization refused to pay costs for their representatives to attend a convention. Back in the WFM fold by late 1896, LCMU members were well aware of the federation’s visible and defiant stance elsewhere. Even though the LCMU was more a benevolent and protective association than an active labor union and never staged a strike, local members gave financial support to their WFM brethren who were locked in industrial conflict outside of the Black Hills.\(^4\)

Grier characterized his work force as “responsible, decent people, ... bread-winners, and not loafers,” and publically recognized them as an important component in Homestake’s profitability.\(^4\) In some ways, he treated labor much like a fraternity, supporting the formation in 1898 of the Homestake Veterans Association, a social organization for employees with at least twenty-one years of service. Grier belonged, as did other members of management and the union alike. Fraternal “good feelings” had their limits, however, and did not address some of the larger issues that concerned the mine’s rank-and-file workers. Periodically during the 1890s, the LCMU tried to expand its influence and increase its membership, which varied between 30 and 50 percent of eligible miners. In early 1901, the union resorted to intimidation and the placing of recruitment signs on Homestake property. Grier met the organizers head on and personally removed the placards. Any employee was free to join the union, he stated, but no one should be forced to do so. Grier clenched his iron fist, and the union backed off.\(^4\)

\(^4\) Lead Evening Call, 25 Mar. 1897.
\(^4\) Homestake Veterans Association (Lead, S.Dak.: Homestake Mining Association, 1951):
Lead’s miners worked ten-hour days but were well aware that eight-hour days had become a reality in California and the Comstock during the 1860s, throughout Utah by 1896, and in the copper camps of Montana in 1900. Discussion of a reduced workday surfaced as early as 1890 and reappeared periodically. Officially, however, miners did not ask for the adjustment, and management did not offer to bring it about. That situation changed on 9 December 1906, when a union

Lead Evening Call, 5 Sept. 1896; Lead Daily Call, 8 Oct. 1906, 6 Dec. 1909, 3 Aug. 1914. Members also took issue with an assessment of between two and five dollars per month to pay for operating Union Hall. When hall revenues made the assessment unnecessary, membership increased. Lead City Daily Tribune, 29 Apr. 1901.


Miners worked and ate by candlelight in the dark tunnels of the Homestake for ten hours a day until 1906, when Grier granted the company’s workers an eight-hour workday. Other mine owners throughout the Black Hills quickly followed his lead.
committee met with Grier to make the request. Clearly not surprised, the superintendent recognized the opportunity to keep the workers' good will and prevent further union inroads. He dealt with the request two days later. "EIGHT-HOUR DAY GRANTED MINES," a headline in the Lead Daily Call exclaimed. In truth, miners worked a nine-hour day, counting time for preparation and cleanup, but spent eight hours underground. The Homestake also maintained its basic wage of $3.50 per day, effectively giving workers a pay increase of approximately 10 percent. Grier then acted even more expansively, extending the eight-hour day to all Homestake employees in mills, the Brick Store, library, and kindergarten, beginning 15 December 1906. By the summer of 1907, most other Black Hills mines had also embraced the eight-hour day.

Fire broke out underground once more on 25 March 1907. Again, miners descended into gas and smoke in a vain effort to contain disaster; again, Grier worked long hours to meet and care for the men as they came out of the shafts. Both the Lead Daily Call and Deadwood Pioneer Times went to great lengths to compliment Grier's personal attention to employee safety. All the same, the fire proved intractable, and Grier ordered the mines flooded. On 30 May, dewatering began. Eighty-five million gallons had to be pumped from a mine that was much larger and deeper than it had been at the time of the 1893 fire. Full mining operations resumed in October, coinciding with a celebration sponsored by the Homestake Veterans Association that drew five thousand happy people. "Let us all," Grier observed, "as in the past, see to it that for the future no harm comes to the good old goose that lays for us the golden egg."

49. Ibid., 5 Oct. 1907. See also ibid., 14 May, 3 Oct. 1907.
Grier continued to do his part to keep the goose profitable, but other factors complicated the task. In 1909, the WFM launched a campaign to accomplish what the LCMU had not been able to do—increase union membership. Organizer William Tracy arrived in February, intent on bringing every Homestake miner into the WFM fold. Labor Day brought reinforcements in the form of Emma Langdon, editor of the union's Miners Magazine, James Kirwan of the executive board, and Mary Harris ("Mother") Jones, the fiery orator and agitator. Nearly two dozen different unions marched in Lead's Labor Day parade and assembled afterward for a picnic and Mother Jones's two-hour speech, which "drifted very strongly into socialism," from the perspective of the Lead Daily Call.50

Grier was less concerned with a drift into socialism than with the miners' bold march toward a closed shop. Through a series of resolutions, the WFM made it clear that if, by 25 November 1909, all Homestake miners were not union members, the federation would call a strike.51 Nothing of the sort would happen on Grier's watch. He knew the extent to which the closed shop restricted management in other western mining districts. Union forces may have become accustomed to Grier's velvet gloves, but he would not have them bind his iron fist. In response to the union threat, Grier notified the company's board of directors and Phoebe Hearst that he intended to shut down operations at Lead for "a few weeks" until miners came to their senses. Furthermore, when the mine reopened, he would make it strictly nonunion.52

On 10 November 1909, Grier had Homestake's corporate counsel Chambers Kellar sue the LCMU for ten thousand dollars in damages resulting from the union's intimidation of miners. One week later, on 17 November, Grier took out an advertisement in the Lead Daily Call stating that after 1 January 1910 Homestake would "engage only non-union men."53 For the first time ever, editorials attacking Grier personally appeared in the Lead Register and Deadwood's Lantern. Free-

50. Ibid., 7 Sept. 1909. See also ibid., 1 Sept., 27 Dec. 1909.
52. [Edward H. Clark] to Richard A. Clark, [n.d.] Nov. 1909, MS 58, File 11, Box 37, PAHP.
53. Lead Daily Call, 17 Nov. 1909. See also ibid., 10 Nov. 1909.
man Knowles, the Lantern editor, foamed over corporate “parasites” like Grier, who posed as a “friend of labor” but assessed miners a mandatory $1.10 per month for medical coverage. Furthermore, asked Knowles, what had Grier ever done for a single Homestake widow? “DRAW CLOSER TOGETHER,” the editor warned; Grier and all other Black Hills mine owners were simply waiting “to strike you under the fifth rib.”

Tempers flared on the night of 18 November 1909. Speaking in a packed Union Hall, William Tracy worked miners to fever pitch and then invited Grier to come and speak. The superintendent arrived to applause, but as he began to talk, Freeman Knowles interrupted with an anticorporate harangue. Grier left. The WFM next sent a delegation to plead its case with Phoebe Hearst. She declined to hear it, leaving everything in Grier’s hands. The superintendent did not give miners an opportunity to strike on 25 November; he closed all Homestake operations on the twenty-fourth, locking out workers before they could strike. If the miners guessed that a closed shop would come as easily as the eight-hour day, they had guessed wrong.

The lockout split Lead into pro-union and pro-Homestake camps. Rhetoric flashed in the press and spewed from pulpits. The Reverend Marshall F. Montgomery, rector of Christ’s Church, waxed most eloquent on behalf of Homestake in his Thanksgiving message. “The outward and visible sign of [the] bountiful providence of God is the Homestake mine,” the pastor intoned. “God’s goodness and mercy is seen in every activity pertaining thereto; . . . every wish for the common good granted, every contrivance for the common welfare inaugurated, everything that . . . the betterment of humanity could suggest has been undertaken.”

Grier became a vengeful angel, closing the company hospital and pulling advertising for the Brick Store from both the Register and the Lantern. Notice went out that miners who wanted to return to the

54. Deadwood Lantern, 18 Nov. 1909.
57. Lead Daily Call, 29 Nov. 1909.
The Homestake hospital, built in 1889, became a point of contention during the 1910 lockout. Once his miners had returned to work, Grier did away with their monthly hospital assessment and instituted free health care.

Homestake had until 15 December to renounce all union ties and register with the company's general office. The Lead city council, yielding to Grier's pressure, agreed to pay for "special policemen" to keep order. Armed Pinkerton "detectives" arrived immediately thereafter. Grier also played the trump card of Homestake's land ownership, warning that troublemakers with property "upon any lands belonging to my superintendency . . . will lose their improvements." In accordance with the Homestake action, the owners of all of the smaller

58. Ibid., 7, 8 Dec. 1909.
59. Ibid., 30 Nov. 1909.
60. Ibid., 27 Nov. 1909. An article in the 13 January 1910 issue of the Lantern suggests that Grier may have evicted a "peaceable Russian family," but Grier later stated emphatically that the "Homestake Co. has never issued an order revoking a permit" (Industrial Relations: Final Reports and Testimony, 4:3575).
mines in the Black Hills agreed to shut down and hire only nonunion labor upon reopening.\(^61\)

Twenty-four years of good will paid off for Grier. The WFM relied on threats of strikes and violence to leverage change. Grier simply outmaneuvered the union’s tactic at Homestake, where longtime miners had too much respect for the superintendent to resort to violence. Cracks appeared quickly in the union façade as miners quietly signed Homestake’s nonunion pledge. On 15 December, the WFM organized a parade of “non-signers,” but Grier had eight hundred and fifty names on his list (“the horde of lickspittles,” Freeman Knowles called them).\(^62\) The WFM helped Grier’s cause when it announced strike benefits of only two meals per day (for members only; not families) and $3.50 per week.\(^63\)

To bolster his position further, Grier orchestrated the formation of the Loyal Legion, composed of men who wanted to return to work, on 6 January 1910. Legion organizers passed out red, white, and blue buttons and immediately signed up five hundred men, loyal to Grier as much as to the Homestake. In return, Grier promised to reopen the mine on 13 January. That morning, the Ellison hoist’s big whistle called Loyal Legion and nonunion members back to work.\(^64\) The sound was “the choicest music” Lead had enjoyed in nearly two months, according to the \textit{Daily Call}.\(^65\)

Despite this success, Grier had one piece of unfinished business—breaking the miners’ union structurally and financially. As promised, the other Black Hills mine owners—thirteen of them—went non-


\(^62\). \textit{Deadwood Lantern}, 30 Dec. 1909. See also \textit{Lead Daily Call}, 30 Nov., 6, 9, 15 Dec. 1909, 6 Jan. 1910; Thomas J. Grier to Edward Clark, 28 Dec. 1909, MS 57, File 4, Box 37, PAHP.


union and took out an ongoing advertisement in the *Lead Daily Call* asking all businesses to give “vigorous” support for “Non-Union labor conditions” everywhere. At the Homestake, Grier instituted background checks on men and rejected those with WFM or Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) records. In the spring of 1910, vandalism flared up in connection with an unsuccessful effort by the WFM to influence Lead city elections. Animosities lingered for the next couple of years, but in 1912, the LCMU went bankrupt and lost its charter.\(^\text{66}\)

The Homestake resumed full production on 3 March 1910, but Grier had felt the sting of employee criticism during the lockout. Immediately, he dropped the $1.10 per month hospital assessment and opened the facility free of charge to all employees and dependents. On 1 August, he initiated the Homestake Employee Aid Fund, a generous workmen’s compensation program. An employee-dominated board exercised control over sick and disability pay, setting disability payments that ranged from two hundred dollars for insanity to eight hundred dollars for total disability. In addition, the fund included an eight-hundred-dollar death benefit to be paid to the widows Freeman Knowles had lionized during the lockout. Grier also upgraded mine facilities to make employees safer. He improved “dry” rooms, where miners cleaned up after work; instituted a “First Aid and Mine Rescue” program to identify dangerous conditions, correct them, and train rescue crews; gave out awards to employees who worked a year without injury; and added a year-end pay bonus of 7 percent of wages earned for all employees.\(^\text{67}\)

The crown jewel among the benefits Grier provided workers was the recreation building he announced on 13 November 1911. The multipurpose structure would house the library, a swimming pool, bowling alley, game and exercise rooms, and a large auditorium. Use of the facilities would be free to the community.\(^\text{68}\) Construction had just be-

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68. For a history of the building to 1984, see Donald D. Toms and William J. Stone, *The
From the lobby of the Homestake Opera House and Recreation Building, pictured here, visitors could proceed to the auditorium, library, gymnasium, bowling alley, billiard room, or swimming pool. All of the facilities, except for the theater, were free to Lead residents.
gun in the spring of 1912 when the sixty-two-year-old Grier had a heart attack, followed by surgery in mid-October. He returned to Lead in early 1913, but company physician D. K. Dickinson laid out a stark prognosis: reduce stress, leave Lead’s high elevation, and live ten, maybe twenty, more years; return to work and live three. Phoebe Hearst sought to smooth the way for Grier, offering to allow him to retain his salary and position while superintending in absentia and visiting Lead once or twice annually. Grier declined. He did, however, make out a will in May of 1913 and begin construction of a second home in Los Angeles, California. 69

As Grier recovered, Congress was instigating an inquiry into industrial working conditions throughout the country and designated Lead as a site for public hearings. From 2 to 4 August 1914, four members of the Congressional Committee on Industrial Relations walked Lead streets, prowled area mines, and solicited formal testimony. Grier spent most of two days on the stand defending his twenty-nine years as Homestake superintendent. He did not face a friendly audience. Chairman John R. Commons, a vocal progressive and professor of economics at the University of Wisconsin, had founded the American Association for Labor Legislation. Austin B. Garretson, a longtime member of the Order of Railway Conductors, had risen to the presidency of the union. John B. Lennon had unionized Denver tailors in 1883 and in 1914 served as national treasurer of the American Federation of Labor (AFL). James P. O’Connell, a machinist, had belonged to the Knights of Labor in the 1890s and was now vice-president of the AFL. 70

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69. William M. Grier, Jr., The Griers, pp. 72–73; Richard Blackstone to Shattuck & Hussey, 3 July 1912, Homestake Opera House Construction File No. 2, HMCR; Edward Clark to Phoebe Hearst, 10 Oct. 1912, MS 38, File 11, Box 17, PAHP; Lead Daily Call, 29 Sept. 1914; Probate of the Will of Thomas Johnston Grier, Fourth Judicial Circuit Court, Lawrence County, S.Dak., No. 1654.

In his testimony, Grier spelled out every benefit Homestake employees enjoyed, some of which even company counsel Chambers Kellar called “socialistic and . . . progressive.” At the end, Chairman Commons sat back, impressed. First, however, he took Grier to task for having “crushed out all opposition, not only labor opposition but all business opposition, in so far as you cared to do it, during the lockout.” Commons then marveled, “You have here the most remarkable business organization that I have come across in the country. You have developed welfare features which are beyond anything that I know of, and are given with a liberal hand.” Committee members Garretson and O’Connell worried that such features were only a heartbeat away from changing. When Garretson characterized Grier’s administration as “a despotism, benevolent though it may be,” the Homestake superintendent pled “guilty to the charge of benevolence in a high degree,” but took exception to the charge of despotism.

On 31 August 1914, the symbol of Grier’s benevolent despotism, the Homestake Opera House and Recreation Building, opened. Grier made a “neat little address” and then turned the facility over to company employees for the benefit of everyone in Lead. On Saturday night, 5 September, Thomas and Mary Jane Grier walked through the building one last time. The next day, they left by train for Los Angeles, where Grier’s second heart attack killed him on 22 September.

“Today Lead is mourning,” the Daily Call grieved upon learning of the superintendent’s death. Businesses and schools in Lead and Deadwood closed on Monday, 28 September, the day of Grier’s funeral. His body lay in state that morning in the new recreation build-

71. Industrial Relations: Final Reports and Testimony, 4:3655. When Grier ran notice in the Lead Daily Call that troublemakers who supported the WFM during the lockout “would lose their improvements,” he meant not only miners but also businesses with structures on land the Homestake owned under the 1892 agreement with the city. Lead Daily Call, 27 Nov. 1909.

72. Industrial Relations: Final Reports and Testimony. 4:3543–3655; Lead Daily Call, 3, 6 Aug. 1914.

73. Lead Daily Call, 1 Sept. 1914.

74. Ibid., 23 Sept. 1914. See also Edward H. Clark to Phoebe Apperson Hearst, 23 Sept. 1914, MS 38, File II, Box 17, PAHP.

75. Lead Daily Call, 23 Sept. 1914.
Two years after Grier’s death, the Homestake Veterans Association erected this bronze statue on the grounds of the Opera House and Recreation Building to honor the superintendent’s leadership of the company and contributions to Lead.

ing before being taken to the Episcopal church for services. Grier was then laid to rest in the West Lead cemetery, on a knoll overlooking the greater part of Lead and the Homestake works. To commemorate his contributions to the company and the community, members of the Homestake Veterans Association raised funds to erect a statue of Grier at the entrance to the Opera House and Recreation Building on Main Street in 1916.76

76. Ibid., 24, 26, 28, 29 Sept. 1914; Fielder, Treasure of Homestake Gold, p. 215. Grier left an estate of $238,310, approximately $4 million today. Edward H. Clark to Phoebe Apperson Hearst, 4 Nov. 1914, MS 37, File 5, Box 37, PAHP.
The throngs that turned out for the dedication of Grier's statue two years after his death testified to his large and lingering presence. Miners admired his willingness to face the same dangers they did in battling fires underground and appreciated his humane interest in their welfare. They also came to respect Grier's strong, efficient corporate management—always achieved on his own terms—that made people like Phoebe Hearst and James Haggin rich but also gave employees good-paying jobs in an environment that was livable for themselves and their families. While Hearst's broad-ranging philanthropy is well known, it was Grier who focused her generosity on Lead to soften and enrich the lives of Homestake workers. The iron hand of his efficient management flexed itself within the velvet glove of his own benevolent socialism and Hearst's noblesse oblige. In combination, they formed a corporate milieu that was unique among western mining towns.

77. Cash, Working the Homestake, p. 26; Clark to Hearst, 4 Nov. 1914.
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