Gold Hill

Welcome to Butte, America’s Story. I’m your host, Dick Gibson.

“Gold Hill” has a nice ring to it – but it’s doubtful if Butte’s Gold Hill mines produced any notable gold, and they were only barely on the Butte Hill.

The Washoe Copper Company, with backing from Marcus Daly, began to exploit a vein near Copper Street at Wyoming in the late 1880s. The Washoe Shaft was on the north side of Copper, where Wyoming T’s into it, and the Gold Hill #1 mine was on the south side of Copper where Pennsylvania Street intersects.

Charles F. Booth managed the Washoe Copper Company and lived at 221 North Jackson Street. By 1916, he was vice president of Slemons & Booth, a real estate and insurance firm with offices in the old Silver Bow Block on Granite Street, a parking lot today.

Both shafts reached about 550 feet by 1896, but were soon shut down and apparently not worked again until a brief reactivation in the 1930s. Despite optimistic reports, including a vein about 10 feet wide that seemed to branch from the valuable Blue Jay vein, most of the ore was sphalerite, zinc sulfide, of little interest in the 1890s. Walter Harvey Reed reported in 1912 that “the percentage of copper is almost invariably below the pay limit” at the Gold Hill Mine.

The mine dumps from the Gold Hill #1 mine were still there in the 1950s, when the block was converted to parking lots.

Gold Hill #2 was between Copper and Quartz Streets, just east of Montana Street, where the new Butte-Silver Bow County Jail stands. It was begun before 1888, when its hoist building included a 15-foot iron chimney. Like Gold Hill #1, it was out of business by 1900.

The Gold Hill mines gave their name to Gold Hill United Lutheran Church, which originally stood on the northeast corner of Copper and Alaska. The building there was constructed about 1890 and was gone by 1951, but the name lives on in today’s Gold Hill Lutheran Church on Placer Street.

As writer Edwin Dobb has said, "Like Concord, Gettysburg, and Wounded Knee, Butte is one of the places America came from." Join us next time for more of Butte, America’s Story.