BAS 049 Fire Station No. 3. Welcome to Butte, America’s Story. I’m your host, Dick Gibson.

The little triangular tract bounded by Excelsior and Caledonia Streets and the walking trail that follows the former BA&P Railroad bed has an interesting history. In 1891, the area around Excelsior was platted, but few homes had been built. Andrew Jackson Davis’s twin-sister homes at Granite and Excelsior were a year old, anchoring burgeoning upscale development along Granite and Broadway, but west of Excel and north of Granite there were only nine homes in the area north to Copper and west to Henry, and three of those were little shacks.

By 1900, Silver Bow County, which was mostly what we think of as Butte today, had more than doubled its 1890 population, from 23,000 to 48,000. The west side was growing, and in the same area, Granite to Copper and Excel to Henry, there were 37 houses, including five large two-story structures. West of Henry was more sporadic, but homes were popping up there, as well as to the north along Caledonia.

The growing west side was served by its own fire station beginning in 1901. It stood in the angle between Caledonia and Excel that was cut by the BA&P railroad. A photo from 1901 shows the fire station in its last stages of construction. It still bears the sign proudly announcing “this work is being done by Howard L. Hines, Contractor.”

When it was built in 1901, this became Butte’s third fire station. The department’s headquarters and main station was on Quartz, the site of today’s Archives building, and Station Number two was at Mercury and Arizona, a building that’s still standing today.

By 1916 the station had one hose wagon, an 1100-foot 2½-inch hose (made of quote “first class cotton”), two 400-foot second class cotton hoses, and it was staffed by 6 men on two shifts, supported by two horses. The station was only 40 feet wide, facing on Caledonia Street, but it was a two-story building with a prominent flat cornice extending from the roof.

In 1951, the building together with the railroad tower house behind it was still standing, but was in use as an auto repair shop. In 1957 it was gone. Today the site serves as a small open space along the walking trail.

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.