BAS 111 Cricket Welcome to Butte, America’s Story. I’m your host, Dick Gibson.

In 1902, Butte boasted two cricket clubs. Not associations of entomologists, but organizations devoted to the English national sport.

The Centerville Cricket Club was established in 1898, and soon became state champions. The 30 members were captained by Dave Rundle, a miner who lived at 17 Lexington Terrace in Walkerville. Club President Thomas Scaddon lived at 123 East Center Street (a little cottage still standing) and worked for the T.J. Bennetts General Store that stood at the northwest corner of Center and Main Streets. T.J. Bennetts himself was the Vice President of the Cricket Club and lived at 1200 North Main.

Secretary-Treasurer William Whitford lived at 104 Missoula Street and co-managed the Whitford and Youlten Saloon at 966 North Main. The club was managed by John M. Spargo, another saloon manager (Tickell & Spargo, at 30 West Broadway, the Columbia Block – gone today). Spargo lived at #11 West Copper Alley (also gone today).

The team practiced on a field in east Centerville, but in 1902 they had obtained permission from Jesse Wharton to use the ball park at Columbia Gardens when baseball games were not scheduled. The Anaconda Standard proclaimed “A good cricket batter must be more scientific than a baseball batter.”

The Centerville team was undefeated in 1901. Helena, Great Falls, and Anaconda had cricket teams, and in 1902, the Centerville team schedule included matches in Salt Lake City, Ogden, and Denver.

Butte’s cricket team in 1902 included Gerald Knott, Captain, a miner at the Steward who lived at 23 West Quartz, that’s the Maryland Block, which stood immediately west of the Fire Station, today’s Butte Archives. William Argall worked at the Gagnon Mine and lived in the same boarding house as Knott.

A city-wide picnic organized by the Butte lodges of the Sons of St. George, at Mountain View Park in Anaconda, was highlighted by the “battle royal” between the Butte and Centerville Cricket Teams. The cricket match was followed by a tug-of-war between the two teams. Centerville “put it all over Butte” in both events. The cricket victory prize was a set of cricket bats and balls, and the tug-of-war victory gained the Centerville team 32 gallons of beer and 200 cigars.

There was a frightening incident at the Sons of St. George Picnic when a woman participating in one of the “numerous” ladies’ races stumbled and fell, knocking herself out for a half hour. Once she was revived, she appeared to suffer no further “evil effects.” The picnic organizing committee was led by Chairman John Nance, a miner who lived at 943 Caledonia Street. The main Sons of St. George Hall was at 959½ North Main in Centerville. It was called the “Peace and Harmony Lodge” and met every Monday evening, with Joseph Richards as President in 1900. He was probably better known as Richards the Undertaker, with his funeral home at 140 West Park and his residence at 409 S. Montana.

The Sons (and Daughters) of St. George was an organization established in 1871 in Pennsylvania, set up to counter the attacks by the radical Irish Molly Maguires in the coal mines of Pennsylvania. The Sons of St. George evolved quickly into a fraternal organization whose goal was to provide benefits to Englishmen and women in distress in America. In addition to social activities like the picnic in Anaconda in August 1902, they provided death and sick benefits to members. The organization was like others of the day in having passwords, secret signals, and fancy regalia.

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.