BAS 119 Tuttle Iron Foundry Welcome to Butte, America’s Story. I’m your host, Dick Gibson.

As Butte evolved from a transitory mining camp to a permanent metropolis, strong building materials were in greater and greater demand. Bricks, obviously, but also iron. Cast-iron columns to help support the multi-story business blocks became common.

The first major iron foundry in Butte was probably the Lexington on Park Street just east of Arizona, but in 1881 Shelly Tuttle established the longest-lived iron works. Tuttle partnered with A.J. Davis, who had made a million dollars that year selling the Lexington mine to a French company, but the iron foundry went to Tuttle & Company effectively by 1884.

Sand for the castings came from a catch basin along the reach of Dublin Gulch that crossed the corner of Arizona and Park. The foundry itself was directly across the street from the vacant lot east of Sparky’s restaurant today. Parts of the foundry complex were still in use as offices, stores, and warehouses in 1900, but by 1916 it was all gone, replaced by newer buildings, which themselves are gone today.

Tuttle joined with Marcus Daly, whose expanding Anaconda operations were increasingly importing massive iron products, which cost a lot to ship from factories in the east. In 1889 Tuttle began to build a machine shop and foundry for Daly’s Anaconda company in the six-year-old city of Anaconda. Construction on a 30-acre site in southeast Anaconda was complete by late 1890 and included boiler and blacksmith shops. Tuttle Manufacturing and Supply eventually evolved into the Foundry Department of the Anaconda Copper Mining Company, with almost 450 workers by 1900. In the 1980s the business became AFFCO (Anaconda Foundry & Fabricating Company), still in business in Anaconda today as a private company.

In Butte, Tuttle’s heritage is most apparent in the 1892 Tuttle Building in the 300 block of North Main. It served as the retail outlet for Tuttle’s cast-iron building services, as well as a long list of hardware, from pumps, drills, and boilers for mining and milling operations to stoves, cutlery, and tools for residential patrons. In the 1940s, this building served as offices for the Anaconda Company, including purchasing, coal sales, and payroll processing.

Tuttle and Daly remained close friends. Tuttle retired about 1896 to California and then to Nampa, Idaho, but returned to Butte in 1907 with Mrs. Daly for the unveiling of the statue of Daly on Main Street, just a block above Tuttle’s hardware building. The statue was moved in 1941 to its present location on Park Street.

The 1892 Curtis Music Hall (Gamer’s) has cast iron columns bearing the Tuttle Manufacturing & Supply Company mark.

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.