BAS 123 Five-Mile House Welcome to Butte, America’s Story. I’m your host, Dick Gibson.

The highway out of Butte to the east went south, along what is now Harrison Avenue and ultimately over Pipestone Pass to Whitehall. The route was marked by inns – Mile Houses – at least at 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, and 18 miles from the heart of uptown Butte, the last one about five miles east of the Continental Divide. The two most famous survivors are the Nine Mile, in Thompson Park, and the Five Mile, at 5100 Harrison.

An inn, with a café and saloon, was probably at this location by the late 1880s and certainly by the early 1890s. The property was owned in the mid-1890s by ticket broker, cigar wholesaler, and later real estate tycoon Adolph Pincus. In 1896, all the personal property in the place, owned by one Ida Au Claire, was offered in security to Pincus for a loan of $855, which he carried at 2½% interest per month. The property included 8 horses, three wagons, two pair of bobsleds, and 150 cords of wood.

The inn on this site in the earliest 1900s was a resort and venue for prize fights “which could not be pulled off in Butte.” “Kid Foley” and “Kid Opie” both boxed there in lightweight bouts in 1901, and the place was well known as a venue for large private parties. Because of the proximity to the cemeteries out Harrison Avenue, it was also a frequent stopping-place for after-burial gatherings.

The original hostelry burned to the ground November 13, 1902. A kitchen fire spread, and the proprietor’s wife (Mrs. Joseph Ethier) reportedly suffered serious burns and injuries when she jumped from a second-floor window. The building was a total loss, estimated at $3,000.

Frank Cash (1858-1931) was an Austrian immigrant by way of New York. He came to the U.S. about 1886 and was in Butte by 1891, and after a short stint as a miner he began to work as a saloonkeeper. In 1898 Mr. Cash lived in Meaderville working as a laborer, but by 1900 he was operating a saloon at his residence at 21 Lincoln in Meaderville. The next year he had a new saloon at 1260 Talbot, the continuation of Mercury Street. His saloon was at Talbot and Watson, with the Monitor Mine in the back yard and the massive Braund Boarding House across the street. The Pennsylvania Mine was just a few blocks straight north. His saloon, with a restaurant in the rear, came to be called the Cash House. This area is all in the Berkeley Pit or eradicated by its margin today.

About 1905 Frank Cash moved out Harrison Avenue to a house and saloon across from the present Five Mile House, which was built probably by 1904 or 1905. In 1906, family lore says the flip of a silver dollar allowed him to buy the Five Mile (if it had gone the other way, the owner of the Five Mile would have bought him out), and the family had many decades of connection to the place thereafter. In addition to managing the Five Mile House, Frank was the regional distributor for the Wurlitzer Music Company in Butte; one transaction in 1914 grossed $1,550 in a sale of a violin, flute, and piano.

Frank left Butte when prohibition started in 1919, moving to the Bitterroot Valley where he established a famous $100,000 ranch on 1,000 acres along Skalkaho Creek where he raised registered shorthorn cattle.

After Frank left Butte, his daughter Louise Kall managed the Five Mile even after divorcing her husband Martin Kall. Her daughter (Louise) and granddaughter (Donna Anderson) ran the place well into the 2000s.

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.