BAS 124 Butte Miner Newspaper Welcome to Butte, America’s Story. I’m your host, Dick Gibson.

The summer of 1876, America’s centennial, came to a Butte City that was growing rapidly from its low point just two years earlier. The new Centennial Brewery and Centennial Hotel were joined by Butte’s first regular newspaper, the Butte Miner.

The Miner’s first issue on June 1 initiated its three-times-a-week publication, with a stated focus on “Mining Intelligence.” But “the local news of Butte and Travona and such telegraphic and general news as our facilities will permit will be presented.”

The first three issues were free to anyone on request, but the second week was available to paid subscribers only, at $1.00 a month or $10.00 a year. Local news included the report that “Chris Nissler, the jolly Silver Bow Brewer, rolled a young barrel of his best beer into the Miner office this evening with best wishes for success.”

Butte businesses that advertised in the first issue included A.M. Esler, “Assays promptly and completely made,” and William Owsley’s livery stable at Park and Main. Joseph Surprenant promised “everything a good blacksmith can do” at his shop on Broadway, and Daddow’s Stage & Express Line offered tri-weekly service to Deer Lodge (an 8-hour trip) and on to Pioneer, up Gold Creek in the Flint Creek Range, a further 3-hour ride.

Many clothiers in Deer Lodge and Virginia City advertised in the first Miner, and other businesses as far away as Corrine, Utah, and San Francisco were represented. The first restaurant ad appeared in the second number of the paper, for the Copperopolis Restaurant managed by Joseph Rosenthal. A square meal (available at all hours) would cost you 50 cents or you could get a week’s board for $7.00. The eatery was in a sod-roofed log cabin on the east side of Main Street just north of Owsley’s stable, where the NorthWestern Energy building stands today.

The Miner’s first editorial correctly predicted that “Butte will pan out and take a stride ahead unprecedented in the history of Montana quartz camps.” The success of Butte helped the newspaper succeed and for decades it occupied an elegant 5-story building on Broadway.

James Mills founded the Butte Miner with work on Montana’s earliest newspapers under his belt. He’d started with the Montana Post in Virginia City and the New North-West in Deer Lodge, and within three years, the Miner was a daily. William Andrews Clark and his brother J. Ross acquired interests in the paper in 1881, and the newspaper became the leading Democratic daily in the state and a powerful mouthpiece for Clark’s ambitions.

After William Clark died in 1925, the Miner continued under the management of his son, William A. Clark, Jr., until 1928. Family feuds with other heirs ultimately expelled Clark Jr. from the Miner and other surviving Clark holdings, and on August 23, 1928, the Anaconda Company took over the Miner, literally overnight, and it was merged with the Anaconda Standard to form the Montana Standard. Through its Butte Miner heritage, the Standard is the oldest business still operating in Butte today.

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.