BAS 140 post offices Welcome to Butte, America’s Story. I’m your host, Dick Gibson.

Butte City had a post office ten years before the city was incorporated. Anson Ford ran the office beginning July 20, 1868, in his drug store, and typically delivered 20 to 40 letters a week that came into Butte via stage coach or with random individual riders. Before the federal post office was established people received their mail at Silver Bow or Deer Lodge.

Anson Ford got his start in Silver Bow, partnering in a general store with a man named Dresser. He moved into Butte about 1866 and was remembered as one of Butte’s earliest and most aggressive promoters, quoted as saying repeatedly to whoever would listen, that “this camp will never play out.”

The location of Ford’s pharmacy is unknown with certainty. Old-timers argued that it was on North Main, in Dublin Gulch, or the “third house from the southwest corner of Main and Broadway,” but when W. Egbert Smith succeeded Ford in early 1869, the Post Office was established in what is now the 200 block of North Main Street. That location lasted only a couple years, because Butte’s dwindling population meant that the office was suspended from 1871 to 1874.

The rejuvenated Post Office, still managed by Egbert Smith, was housed in many locations. After the collapse during construction of the first Miners Union Hall in 1882, the Post Office was located in the temporary “club rooms” on the west side of North Main, just south of Quartz Street, but with the completion of the new Union Hall in 1885, the Post Office returned to that location. In the late 1890s and early 1900s it was located in the Goldsoll Block, immediately east of the City Hall on East Broadway. By 1899, two substations were established, at 905 Front Street in South Butte and 938 North Main in the Union Hotel, part of the massive Mullins Block in Centerville.

The main Post Office (today’s Federal Building) at Main and Copper was erected in 1904 during the term of Postmaster John Evans, to the design of architects James Knox Taylor and James Wetmore.

The Federal Building served as Bute’s main Post Office until 1965, when the uptown substation was established on West Park Street in what is the Miners’ Hotel today. The new main post office at 701 Dewey began operating about 1986, and the uptown station on Galena, in the historic Paumie Cleaners building, was occupied in the 1990s.

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.