BAS 146 Harry D’Acheul Welcome to Butte, America’s Story. I’m your host, Dick Gibson.

The parapet at 18-20 West Broadway today says “Christie 1932,” but this building is much older than that. In historic images the sign says “D’Acheul 1890,” reflecting its origin. Harry D’Acheul, born in Missouri about 1845 to parents native to France, partnered with Prussian-born Henry Parchen to establish a prominent drug store in Butte that operated for many years at 32 North Main; the building that housed it was destroyed in a 1912 fire. The D’Acheul Drug Company in 1891 advertised that they were importers of assayers’ materials and dealers in paints, oils, varnish, and window glass.

Parchen-D’Acheul had a store in Helena as well, where D’Acheul acquired a house at 804 Dearborn from its owner, Joseph Russell, who suffered financial reverses. D’Acheul then rented it to Conrad and Augusta Kohrs, who bought that house in 1900. Conrad Kohrs is probably most famous for his ranching operation in the Deer Lodge Valley, now a National Historic Site. In Butte, D’Acheul’s principal construction investment beyond his own business may have been the 1890 four-story business block on West Broadway, today part of Jeff Francis’ Piccadilly Museum complex. It originally had a cast-iron ground-floor store front. Christie’s was the furniture company here beginning in 1932.

In the 1890s the D’Acheul Block housed the Kennedy Furniture Company on all four floors. By 1900 Kennedy boasted “the most complete line of furniture to be found, probably, in the Northwest.” Kennedy Furniture began in 1894, successor to the Northwestern Furniture Company. In addition to rooms chock-full of chairs, they carried hundreds of carpets, rugs, and tapestries. An ad from December 1894 shows a ladies’ desk—expensive at $9.35 but “worth $15.” The interconnected nature of Butte’s business community is reflected in Henry Mueller, Vice President of Kennedy Furniture. He was also President of Butte’s largest brewery, the Centennial, and Mayor of Butte in 1891, with a home at 218 West Park. His son Arthur, a later Centennial President, lived at 803 West Park and had the Mueller Apartments on Granite Street built in 1917 as an investment.

Harry D’Acheul was elected in October 1882 to serve as a director of W.A. Clark’s Moulton Mining Company, which in its first nine months of operation had produced $300,000 in silver bullion. In 1884 D’Acheul was also co-owner of Butte’s first public electric plant on East Mercury Street, together with W.A. Clark, Patrick Largey, John Caplice, and W.M. Young. The investors had formed the Brush Electric Light and Power Company of Butte in 1882. The company initially generated power at the Burlington Mill west of Butte near Rocker, supplying electricity to first illuminate the business district with 25 light bulbs on December 6, 1882. One of those lamps was in Parchen & D’Acheul’s drug store on Main Street, and two years later Parchen-D’Acheul’s store was the locale where Butte residents came to see the power of the then-new Brush-Swan Incandescent Lamp, which promised to be a bulb suited for general household use.

Harry and Hattie D’Acheul’s home still stands at 311 West Granite. It is one of only a handful of existing buildings in Butte built before 1884. By 1902, this house was home to Philomene LaChappelle, whose daughter Anna became William Clark’s second wife about 1901.

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.