BAS 148 the Mikado Welcome to Butte, America’s Story. I’m your host, Dick Gibson.

Sisters Annie and Katie Nesbitt opened the Mikado Dining Hall on October 1, 1894, in the Barnard Block at 15 West Granite Street. They had been in the restaurant business for at least a few years—in 1892 Annie managed and Katie was a waitress at a café at 45 West Granite. Prior to that, they were reportedly “engaged in conducting fashionable boarding places.”

The Nesbitts were attracted to Butte and Silver Bow County during one of its greatest booms, a prosperous time when the population more than doubled, from about 23,000 in 1890 to 48,000 in 1900. Business opportunities abounded.

The eastern store front of the Barnard Block, on the site where the Montana *Standard*is located today, was part of a large 2-story building that was nearly destroyed in the fire of September 29, 1889. That fire was among the costliest in Butte’s history, with losses estimated at $512,000 in dollars of the day.

Although the Barnard Block was heavily damaged in the fire that began across the street, and although reports at the time indicated it burned to the ground, it appears from the Sanborn maps that the basic structure survived and a third story was added during the restoration. The 3-story Barnard Block stood here until about 1956 when another fire consumed it, and the present 2-story Montana *Standard*building was erected.

By 1910 the sisters had moved the Mikado a few doors west, to 41 West Granite, and their original restaurant in the Barnard Block was occupied by Peter Barrenstein’s saloon. Typical for the time, the sisters lived in the rear part of the restaurant building.

In 1910 Butte boasted at least 75 restaurants, ranging from Josef Blaustein’s “only kosher restaurant in Butte” at 8 West Galena to the Berg Café, 15 S. Wyoming, with “Mexican chili con carne a specialty.” Only one listing in the city directory was for a restaurant outside the immediate uptown area above Front Street. Emil Ericson’s business was at 2046 Farrell, in the Silver Bow Park addition where new homes were just beginning to be built in 1910.

New construction about 1917 eliminated the building at 41 W. Granite, and by 1918 the Mikado no longer existed and the Nesbitt sisters appear to be gone from Butte.

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.