BAS 162 Greeley School Welcome to Butte, America’s Story. I’m your host, Dick Gibson.

Greeley School was built along with many others in Butte as a response to the exploding population in the late 1890s. First through eighth grades were taught at Greeley in its early years. The staffs at Greeley in 1905 and 1910 reveal a diversity of origins, and residences scattered all over town.

The Principal in 1905 was Mary Moran, a Montana native, with 15 years experience (13 in Butte). Teachers included Marguerite McDonald (New York), 6 years experience (4 in Butte). She had graduated from the State Normal School, Winona, Minnesota. Other teachers were Bertha Konen (Illinois), 3 years (7 months Butte); Annie Moses (Michigan), 1 year (7 months Butte); Kathleen McDonald (Michigan), 5 (3); Bessie Vaughn (Wisconsin), 2 (7 mo.); Ida Hillas (Ontario), 13 (3); and Harriet Ballon (Zanesville, Ohio), 17 (3).

Teaching must have been a transitory profession, because in 1910, only one teacher from 1905 was still at Greeley. Principal was Kate Stafford and teachers were Anna Sennett, Elsa Fasel, Mary Harrington, Ada Myersick, Fannie Spooner, Alice Maguire, and the one veteran Kathleen McDonald, who had been in Butte for 8 years in 1910.

John Boyd the Janitor lived at 525 W. Silver. Principal Kate Stafford roomed in the Pennsylvania Block on Park Street and Ada Myersick roomed at 1212 E. Second St. Kathleen McDonald was at 606 W. Park, Fannie Spooner lived at 207 W. Park, and Mary Harrington called 185 E. Center Street home. Elsa Fasel roomed at The Dorothy (corner of Granite and Wyoming).

Alice Maguire lived at 807 W. Galena with Mary (widow of John), Nellie, and Grace Maguire. Perhaps Mary was the mother of three sisters, all of whom were teachers. Anna Sennett of 411 W. Quartz, lived with Helen Sennett, a teacher at Emerson, along with other Sennetts: James, a clerk at Hennessy’s; John, a miner; Mary, a stenographer; and Nora (widow of Michael), who ran the grocery at 306 N. Jackson. 411 W. Quartz was a busy place for such a small home!

Third Graders at the Greeley School in 1905 were to be able to answer these questions:

How were the canyons and gulches formed? What would the level valley south of town indicate? What are sand, clay, loam, alluvium? The City School Superintendent noted that some of the most common properties of the minerals quartz, feldspar and mica could be taught to third graders “with profit.”

On the subject of language, quote “The chief result to be obtained from the study of language is power of expression rather than a knowledge of grammar. The power of expression, however, is useless unless one has something to express. In this branch of work it follows, therefore, that the activities are two-fold, (1) the getting of knowledge, and (2) the proper facility in giving expression thereto.” To that end, third graders would read Robinson Crusoe.

Greeley had served as a community center for several years before it closed in 2004. After several more years of discussion among the Butte School District, County Commissioners, and the Public Housing Authority, with nothing coming of it, in 2013 the school was sold to a developer who planned to try to save the historic building and return it to viable use. But that proved impossible because of asbestos and other problems, and in 2019, most of the original structure and the additions that dated to the 1950s and 1970s were demolished. An attempt was planned to convert four of the original classrooms into a four-plex.

 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.