BAS 173 Henry Brundy Welcome to Butte, America’s Story. I’m your host, Dick Gibson.

Although Thomas Lavell, who built his beautiful Second Empire home at 301 West Park Street, is usually credited with providing the lumber for the first buildings in Butte made with sawn wood, he has some competition for that claim.

Henry Brundy, born in Missouri in 1823 to German immigrants, became one of the Forty-Niners in the California gold rush. He found enough gold to return to St. Louis where he built a $140,000 hotel, but gold fever brought him first to Pikes Peak in 1860 and then to Montana in 1862, reportedly on the first boat to ascend the Missouri River as far as Ft. Benton Montana.

Brundy operated the first sawmill at Bannack and built the first house in the town, the house in which the first territorial legislature of Montana held its first sessions. He was a member of the Vigilantes and is also credited with providing the lumber for many of the early houses in Virginia City. His eight-stamp ore mill, used there, ultimately moved to Burlington west of Butte.

His lumber yard in Butte was in the 100 block of North Main, managed by Postmaster Anson Ford from the post office a block away. The lumber yard was gone and replaced by the buildings south of today’s Hennessey Building by 1884. Brundy’s lumber operation may have provided wood for the earliest non-log homes in Butte, but it’s probable that his competitor Lavell supplied the lumber for the larger buildings, such as the two-story Hotel de Mineral at the corner of Broadway and Main.

Brundy retired from the lumber business about 1893 but continued to live at his home near the Pittsmont Smelter, on the road to the canyon where the Columbia Gardens was built in 1899. He continued to dabble in mining, mostly as an investor, including the Altona Mine on the flank of the East Ridge. He died just short of his 89th birthday in 1912.

Brothers Thomas and Geoffrey Lavell, from Quebec but of Irish ancestry, expanded from lumber into the delivery business by buying Warfield & Hauser’s Butte Transfer Company in 1885, operating the stable at 122 East Park Street (variously known as Lavelle & Hart, Windsor Stables, and Butte Transfer Stable). Thomas ran that company and brother Geoffrey continued the lumber business, which was sold in 1895 when Geoffrey left Montana for Oregon.

Thomas Lavell’s stable—advertising “omnibuses, hacks and baggage wagons meet the arrival of all trains”—became the largest taxicab business in Montana.

 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.