BAS 174 Bogk’s Gardens Welcome to Butte, America’s Story. I’m your host, Dick Gibson.

Before Columbia Gardens, before the Basin Creek park, there was Bogk’s.

Gustavus Bogk’s City Park, also known as Bogk’s Gardens and later as Meaderville Gardens, was established about 1879 in the upper reaches of Silver Bow Creek, less than a mile upstream from the area that would become the community of Gunderson in 1883. Gunderson post office was renamed Meaderville in 1903, although the neighborhood had been called “Meaderville” for years prior to that.

Bogk spelled Bogk, immigrated from Germany to Wisconsin in 1847 when he was 21 years old, and from the start dabbled in a wide diversity of businesses, from a bakery in Milwaukee to a second bakery in Oshkosh, where he also built the four-story Revere Hotel. But he seems to have been drawn to establishing “pleasure parks.”

Bogk’s Pleasure Garden on the shore of Lake Winnebago, Wisconsin, was situated within a mile of three breweries, and while it had boating, bathing, and musical entertainment every Sunday afternoon, we’d probably see the place as fundamentally a beer garden today.

Gustavus wasn’t much of a businessman for all his entrepreneurial ideas, and he lost the Oshkosh Pleasure Garden in 1870. He picked up stakes with his wife and four daughters and moved to Butte, where he promptly set up a bakery.

Not surprisingly, Bogk began to involve himself in mining operations, though he does not seem to have been particularly successful at it.

Bogk’s new Pleasure Park on Silver Bow Creek was probably built in the late 1870s, but it did not become well known until the middle 1880s. In 1886, it was managed by William Casey as Meaderville Gardens, site of a community picnic where the Meaderville Band played on occasional summer evenings. It boasted a horse-pulled merry-go-round

Also in the late 1870s Bogk purchased a lot on the west side of North Main Street between Park and Broadway, on which site he built the Revere House, the same name as his old hotel in Oshkosh. Advertised as “the only brick hotel in Butte,” rates were typical, $7 a week for lodging and single meals at 50 cents. It was reportedly the first three-story hotel in Montana Territory, and the first-floor restaurant, run by Bogk, was known as the Virginia Chop House.

By 1892 Bogk had moved to Deer Lodge where he died that year at age 67. As Meaderville and the mining operations on the Butte Hill expanded, the area of Bogk’s Pleasure Garden was overwhelmed by industry, probably by the early 1890s. Today the site is close to the location of the precipitation plant on the northeastern flank of the Berkeley Pit.

Two of Bogk’s daughters married prominent Montana pioneers. Annie married Nick Bielenberg in Deer Lodge, and their daughter, Alma Higgins, is well known as the founder of National Garden Week and for helping establish the University of Montana School of Forestry. Emma married John Steward, locator of the Steward Mine.

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.