BAS 201 Stringtown Welcome to Butte, America’s Story. I’m your host, Dick Gibson.

A reporter in the 1920s characterized the Anaconda Company this way: “Like the Lord God Almighty in His universe, the Anaconda Copper Mining Company is everywhere. It is all, and in all. Its titular Mercy Seat is on the sixth floor of the Hennessey Building at the intersection of Main and Granite streets, but it is enthroned in the heart, brain, and wallet of every man and woman from Nine-Mile to Stringtown, from the Main Range to Whiskey Gulch.”

Stringtown was the definition of the northern limit of Butte. It was north of Walkerville and its northern “suburbs,” Butchertown and Seldom Seen (North Walkerville), in the trees west of Yankee Doodle Gulch and near today’s Moulton Reservoir Road. The Moulton road was called the road to the Lowlands in 1906 – meaning the route into the hills and on to Lowland Creek. Stringtown developed as a logging community, supplying cordwood into Butte.

The town probably got its name from its single street, with a string of 40 to 50 log houses along it, although the Montana Standard noted they were “laid out with all the regularity of a snake trail or a corkscrew.” They were dirt-roofed, dirt-floored, and mud-daubed, often with a window “just about large enough to throw a cat through.” The woodchoppers who settled there were reportedly largely French-Canadian, but certainly not exclusively so.

Stringtown’s heyday was before the mid-1880s, when railroads reached Butte and coal could be imported relatively easily. Caplice and McCune, the general merchandisers in Walkerville whose pre-1881 store is still standing, were among the largest contractors taking wood from woodcutters and marketing it into Walkerville and Butte, typically paying the cutters in goods ranging from flour and bacon to whiskey.

The first Moulton Reservoir was constructed in the 1880s high up Yankee Doodle Creek, and the lower, larger reservoir, still used today, was built about 1900. Both supplied “the best water in the world” initially to Walkerville and later into Butte as well.

Although coal took over for wood for both industrial and home heating in Butte, Stringtown’s loggers continued to supply cordwood until the late 1890s and early 1900s, when the forests were effectively gone. Even the abandoned cabins of the woodcutters were cannibalized for firewood. Today’s trees in the Moulton area are mostly relatively new growth in the past 120 years or so.

By 1906, one old stable was all that remained of Stringtown, still in use then as a dairy barn, but long gone today.

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.