BAS 209 Idaho Falls Connection Welcome to Butte, America’s Story. I’m your host, Dick Gibson.

Idaho Falls, Idaho, has had a long connection to Butte’s history. A ferry across the Snake River in 1864 and Matt Taylor’s bridge in 1865 were both largely established to expedite travel to the Montana gold fields. The town that grew up was called Taylor’s Crossing, then Eagle Rock, and finally Idaho Falls, and it was a major station on the Utah & Northern Line, the first railroad into Butte in 1881.

Charles Tautphaus was a well-known entrepreneur in Idaho Falls, and he is commemorated in Tautphaus Park there. He emigrated at age six from Germany to New York, and after a voyage around Cape Horn he settled in southern California, where he met and married his wife Sara Kane Tautphaus. They and their five daughters came to Butte by wagon in 1882, as Butte’s first real boom was taking off.

Tautphaus and his partner Thomas Moffitt established the Palace Meat Market at 65 West Park Street, a little building next to the Butte Skating Rink that would eventually become the site of the Thomas Block. The Tautphaus family lived at 159 West Park, which was probably a small house on the northeast corner of Park and Montana next door to a Chinese laundry. Because of changing address schemes, it’s challenging to be certain exactly where their home was in the middle 1880s.

Like most entrepreneurs of the day, Tautphaus and Moffitt both engaged in other activities, ranging from mining to shipping. Tautphaus had visited Eagle Rock as early as 1881, and in 1884 he and Sarah and Moffitt acquired more than 2,000 acres of land for $800 under the Homestead Act; partner Moffitt transferred his ownership to Tautphaus. Tautphaus established a meat market in Eagle Rock in 1885, spending $3,000 on an existing building.

In 1886, the Tautphaus family moved to Eagle Rock (Idaho Falls). Apparently Moffitt stayed in Butte. The Palace Meat Market moved a few doors down and across Park Street under his management as the Miner’s Meat Market and sausage factory, to 58 West Park. By 1895, Moffitt had sold the business to John Brenner, who changed the name to Beaverhead Meat Market with an abattoir south of the Bell Smelter (near Harrison Street and the Interstate today). The building at 58 West Park was destroyed in the 1905 fire that led to the 1906 construction of the Phoenix Block. The replacement building at 58 West Park is also gone today.

Tautphaus’s primary contribution to the Idaho Falls economy was probably the Idaho Canal, a huge irrigation system intended to create an oasis in the desert of the Snake River Plain. Ultimately, it provided water to around 55 square miles in the Idaho Falls area, and a portion of the $180,000 Tautphaus invested in it had come from his earlier businesses in Butte. Part of Charles Tautphaus’s original square mile homestead is Tautphaus Park today, and the rest is mostly residential neighborhoods. Tautphaus died in 1906.

Idaho Falls today continues to attract engineers and others from Butte and Montana Tech to the Idaho National Laboratory and to explore other opportunities.

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.