BAS 212 Paumie Dye House Welcome to Butte, America’s Story. I’m your host, Dick Gibson.

In 1888, the southeast corner of Dakota and Galena Streets held a log cabin and some sheds. Dakota Street itself was “not improved,” and it didn’t even exist between Galena and Park. The stretch where it was pushed through as a narrow, alley-like continuation of Academy Street from the north in the mid-1890s held a grocery, meat market, and bakery on Park and a Chinese laundry and a small house on Galena. Half a block east of the Dakota-Galena intersection, an “open sewer” marked the continuation of an old ditch that came down from the east side of the Original Mine.

There was an “old mine” just to the south, north of Mercury where the Post Office parking lot is today, and to the west, on Mercury between Dakota and Montana Streets, the Morning Star mine with its 40-foot iron chimney still stood, although it was not in operation in 1888. There was a bridge from the Morning Star across Mercury, nine feet above ground level.

Three years later, in 1891, that corner was becoming a prominent part of booming Butte. The southeast corner held the new three-story Parisian Dye House, one of Montana’s first dry cleaners. Only the west half of the building that serves today as the Uptown Post Office was constructed in 1891. Maria and Camile Paumie, French immigrants to Montana in 1887, ran the dry-cleaning business and sub-let the upper floors to others who managed the furnished rooms there.

In the early 1890s, much of the red-light district was still on East Galena Street, although it was shifting toward Mercury with the construction of major brothels such as the Dumas and the Victoria. Much of the Parisian Dye House’s business came from prostitutes.

Camile Paumie died in 1899, a year after the dye house doubled its size by expanding to the east. Maria ran the business until the 1920s. By 1928, Ludger Michaud, Jr., was President of the Paumie Dye House and dry cleaning establishment. His father, who died Feb. 24, 1917, age 64, was a smelterman at the Parrot Smelter for much of his time in Butte, but he had worked at the dye house as a cleaner in 1910.

The original cast-iron elements of today’s post office building were made by the Montana Iron Works of Butte, probably in their foundry just a few blocks away on Main Street between Mercury and Silver.

The corner opposite the Parisian Dye House, the southwest corner of Dakota and Galena, saw the construction of another three-story building in 1891. The Nadeau Block, also known as the Cottage Hotel, had steam heat, a restaurant, and a cigar factory just a few doors down. French-Canadian brothers Arthur and Joseph Nadeau built the Cottage Hotel shortly after they constructed the Dumas Brothel. The Nadeaus also had the huge Copper Block built at the southwest corner of Galena and Wyoming in 1892. It was demolished in 1990-91.

The dye house was still in business in the early 1950s, but the Cottage Hotel had evolved into a machine shop. It was gone by the early 1980s.

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.