BAS 224 Hotel de Mineral Welcome to Butte, America’s Story. I’m your host, Dick Gibson.

“Having opened the above Hotel with the only Hotel accommodation for lodgers in Butte, we will be pleased to have the patronage of the public, and endeavor to give satisfaction in accommodation and rates.”

With those words the Hauswirth Brothers, Simon and John, promoted the first two-story building erected in Butte. When it was constructed at the southwest corner of Main and Broadway in 1875 it certainly was the only hotel, but by 1878 it had competition from the Girton House on East Quartz Street east of the alley between Main and Wyoming, touted by proprietor Robert Girton as having “no bar in nor saloon near the House.” Lodgings at either hotel were 50 cents a day, with three meals at a dollar (or $6 for a week of meals).

We know it was the first two-story building because it is clearly visible in what is probably the earliest photograph of Butte, from 1875. The three-building complex that included the hotel also held the Post Office, a saloon, and a dentist’s office.

Simon and John Hauswirth, born in Switzerland in 1844 and 1829 respectively, came to Montana in the gold rush of 1864. In Butte by 1875, they became prominent members of the pioneer community. Both played in Butte’s first organized band, which debuted on July 4, 1876, the nation’s centennial. John died in 1884, but in 1895 Simon was managing the Columbia Saloon at 22 West Broadway near the Maguire Opera House. The family operated and resided in the three-story Columbia Block boarding house at 22-30 West Broadway for many years. The Columbia Block was gone before 1951 and the site today is occupied by part of the Piccadilly Museum of Transportation.

Simon’s son Charles was born in Butte in 1882 and was Butte’s first mayor born in Butte. He was elected to four terms (1935-41) but died just a week after his fourth election.

By most accounts, the sawed lumber to make the Hotel de Mineral, which was also among the earliest Butte buildings that was not a log structure, came from Thomas Lavelle’s sawmill.

The Hotel de Mineral stood for only about six years. It was gone by late 1881 to make way for the new Donnell, Clark and Larabie Bank that opened on that corner in early 1882. In addition to the bank, three saloons, including a billiard parlor and a chop house restaurant occupied the site of the former Hotel de Mineral. In 1884, the rest of that block on the west side of Main, south to Park, held five more saloons, a barber (and baths), a restaurant with lodgings above, a tiny jewelry store, and a dry goods merchant on the corner of Park where the Party Palace is today.

There are two slightly different versions of a famous photo of the Hotel de Mineral, with mostly the same people in somewhat different positions.

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.