BAS 249 Murray Hospital Welcome to Butte, America’s Story. I’m your host, Dick Gibson.

In the fall of 1884, the short block between Quartz and Copper Streets, Alaska Street today, was a vegetable garden with a cow corral and stable on its east side. The northeast corner of Quartz and what would become Alaska Street held a tiny frame home attached to a log cabin just west of the gulch that flowed south from the east side of the Original Mine.

By 1888 an unimproved Alaska Street was marked by a new Chinese laundry on the northeast corner, but the gulch had been leveled and the stream there was contained by an underground culvert, as it is today.

Sometime in late 1890 or early 1891 the Chinese laundry disappeared, and Alaska Street at the corner of the alley between Quartz and Copper was occupied by the new Murray and Gillespie Hospital. The two-story 35x35-foot building was constructed as a 9-room boarding house, but Dr. Thomas J. Murray converted it into his private hospital in partnership with Dr. Robert L. Gillespie.

Thomas Jefferson Murray, born in Tennessee, came to Butte to practice medicine in 1885 when he was 30 years old. Over time, he served as the Vice-President of the American Medical Association, President of the State Board of Medical Examiners, and President of the Silver Bow Club. He was actively involved in planning and construction of the Silver Bow Club’s new 1906 building, but he is best known for the hospital that carried his name and served Butte for more than 60 years.

Gillespie left Butte for Portland, Oregon, in 1894, and the small Murray and Gillespie Hospital was replaced in the mid-1890s by a 4-story complex occupying the entire corner of Quartz and Alaska, known as the Murray and Freund Hospital. German-born Isadore D. Freund joined Murray when he came to Butte from Michigan in 1893. Murray and Freund were partners in the hospital for 12 years, but after a falling out and a lawsuit in 1906 (a case won by Murray), the hospital became incorporated in 1907 as just the Murray Hospital.

A fifth floor was added to the Murray Hospital about 1909, and in 1910 the annex across the street (today’s bail bonds building) was constructed in 1910.

Dr. Murray lived in the annex, which also served as a nurses’ home, and the laundry for the hospital was in the annex basement connected to the hospital by a tunnel beneath Quartz Street. About 1919 the annex became the offices of Dr. Caroline McGill, Montana’s first female physician.

The Murray Hospital established Butte’s first ambulance service about 1895. Dr. Murray died in November 1930, and the main building was damaged by a fire in the early 1950s and was gone by 1957. The site is a parking lot 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.