

My name is Ed Holmes I am interviewing my father on an oral history of our family in Butte, MT. I want to start with a little background information when and how did you start doing this research?

Well it all started when my father passed away and I was cleaning out his basement with 40 to 50 years of accumulated junk, and I found several old trunks in his basement and cleaning out the trunks I found old papers, canceled checks lots of things so I threw it in my truck to take to the landfill and while I was throwing them out of my truck I came across a couple of boxes a leather case and I decided to look in them before I tossed them and I found several papers from the 1870's and 1880's and so I started looking through them and I salvaged everything I could find that I thought was worth while and, I hope I didn't throw out anything that was important, but I'm sure I did, but looking thru the papers I found that they were from my great-great grandfather Max E. Mayer who came to Butte in 1878 his obituary from the Montana Standard 12/24/20 says he was born in 1839 and died in 1920 he was born Carlsberg Baton Germany came to the US when he was 14 came to Montana from Utah where he'd been engaged in the business with the daily interest in 1878 and operated the first assay office in the city of Butte. So I already knew some of those things or had been told that thru the family so I started to do research and found out what I could about Max and his family, his life in Butte. And your Aunt Linda has done extensive genealogy and she can tell you where they came from; when they came from and all their relatives and it's really interesting to talk with her and find out the things she's done so that's where I started going to the archives and she taught me how to find some stuff but it's really hard to do because you get side tracked so easy when you find a relative or a story you just get off so my notes aren't very precise and I'm really disorganized but I have several old papers that are interesting and deeds and that's how I got started.

So Max was the first of our family then to enter Butte?

Yeah definitely sure that on that side of the family which is my mothers side of the family your grandmothers side of the family there is some other relatives on my dad's side of the family who are also early pioneers in butte but I haven't got into them yet their related to the Kemper's which the Kemper edition in butte but that's a whole other story yet that's going to take years before I get the connection I've actually found an interesting connection where they shared a party wall agreement I have a paper that they shared an agreement between the Mayer's and the Kemper's but I haven't got to research that yet, but someday maybe.

So my grandmother and grandfather before they were even alive had family connections early Butte?

Yeah interesting enough there were connections somewhere down the line and that's where you get off and it gets really hard to research things because you just get off sidetracked and you lose track of where you are and that's basically where I'm at now I'm trying to get back online with one side of the family and go from there.

Ok so concentrating on just the Mayer side Max came to Butte and started an assay office what do you know about the assay office?

Well the assay office near as I can tell from different articles that my sister researched in the newspapers and things and city directories, came to Butte in 1878 and in the Daily Miner August 6, 1879 it says a framed building is being erected on west Park which will be occupied by M. E. Mayer an assayer and a Dr. A. Talbot a dentist so that building I think was probably at 21 West Park Street which is the earliest I can find anywhere as his assay office and I have a picture of his early assay office which I think is 21 west Park but I don't have anyway to confirm that yet unless I find another picture. And 21 w park was later a theatre where the old Skaggs building was on park street next door to the gamers to the Curtis music hall where 21 West Park street and I think that's where his first assay office was and I have several city directories listing as it down to sometime between 1885 and 1889 and I'm missing city directories from then he moved to 40 w park which is possibly the Pennsylvania block but I don't know when the Pennsylvania block was built so I have to do more research on that but so that was 21 West Park was the first assay office and then I had an actual engagement announcement from the paper from the Daily Miner September 17, 1879 when he was engaged to his wife Dora England Mayer and he got engaged at the residence of Alex Cohen who is an early Butte businessman listed in a lot of history books and a lot of Butte history. And Alex Cohen's wife,

Mrs. Cohen and Dora were first cousin's and she came to Butte to visit, and Max met her and they became engaged and were married in 1879 then I go onto another article that was listed in the paper in the Butte Miner in Oct 7 1879 Max bought a frame dwelling house with lot on Montana street from Joseph Gannon occupied by the family of L.W. Foster and the price was \$1500 and that's probably 216 South Montana which was the family home as far as I can tell it goes back and forth where the family was living there and then they were not living there and there was other people and eventually that became my grandfathers shop Mayer Ignition he bought the bldg from my great grandfather Ed Mayer and if you drive down the alley behind that bldg now, 216 South Montana, it has a brick front because it was an auto repair, later Dolan auto repair, and if you drive down the alley you can see the original wood frame structure from the 1800s. So that's a real, I really can't decide, some of the early census' say that Max was just a border there but other city directories say he was a resident there and according to that he probably bought that property so I don't know over the years they lived there until it ended up as Mayer Ignition from my great grandfather who sold it to my grandfather.

Your great grandfather what was his relation to Max?

My great grandfather was Max's youngest son. Max had two sons Bert and Edward, Bert was an electrician and Edward was an electrician but he became an automotive electrician and that's how Mayer Ignition started and sometime in 1906 Max between 1900 and 1906 Max and Bert started Mayer electric located in the same bldg as Max assayer's which had moved from 40 West Park to 7 North Montana and in 1906 Max sold that business to Bert and Bert ran it and I have a picture actually of the bldg in the early 1900s was located at 7 North Montana it said Mayer assay and Mayer elect so Bert bought the electrical part of the business and ed worked for him I think and worked for several other places until he opened his own business Mayer ignition and I don't have that exact date yet I'm still working on trying to get to that point. But my great grandfather ed Mayer married Julia Ornstein who max Mayer for some reason didn't like and cut ed out of the Mayer until Julia died or they were divorced. Which is another interesting sideline which you get on that's how you get lost in the family history is when max died his last will and testament left Bert as the executor of estate and left everything to Bert and Edward but not to Ed as long as he was still married to Julia so it was all held in trust form so I have several canceled checks and receipts and stuff that went down the line so that's another interesting sideline of the family history.

So in any of your research did you find where Ed divorced or outlived Julia that he ended up with any of that?

He outlived Julia, Julia died I don't have the dates here but Julia died and he outlived Julia and he ended up getting his half but according to my father Bert was a crook and basically didn't give my great grandfather his fair share of what he had coming but I don't know if there is truth to that or not but Bert was evidentially the favorite and he was the oldest and so I don't know where the story, I don't know how it all worked out, but it's kind of interesting to see how family feuds start and things but anyway these papers that I have are interesting they go back probably the earliest one I have is a deed from Samuel P Alexander who was supposed to be a character in Butte history I've read a little bit about him, I need to do more research on him, they called him "whistling Sammy" and the earliest is a deed from Samuel P Alexander to Henry Mayer, which is Max's brother, in 1879 for \$100 for a lot in the town of Butte Deerlodge county Montana territory and then I also have receipts from Samuel Alexander to Max Mayer. Ok in 1879 there was a receipt January 28th received from max Mayer for \$300 from Samuel Alexander and it's from Donnell, Clark and Larabie signed J.R. Clark releasing all of his mortgages Alexander's mortgages from the bank to Max Mayer. They go back and forth up to 1899 for and 1899 I think it was released to Max Mayer, yeah it was released from Max Mayer to Samuel Alexander so that's one of the earliest one's from 1879 so Henry Mayer Max's brother is listed as a loan broker in the early 1879 city directory but he died a lot earlier than max and so he max was the executive of his estate and so max handled all of Henry's dealings and what's interesting about that lot is I've got several deeds back and forth from a lot of different people and I wanted to research what that lot was and it's lots 4 and 5 and block number 30 and I think that lot is the happens to be the 216 South Montana no that would be 129 West Park the Mayer bldg where the Mayer bldg is. There are several bargains for sale for deed one of them is from James and Mary Murray to me Mayer well James Murray was a prominent Butte businessman/miner and also there's a lawsuit from Silas King vs. James Murray for somehow Henrietta Mayer who's somehow the widow of, Henry Mayer,

Max's brother, the lawsuit left property to Henrietta and her children and Silas King who was involved in the lawsuit was owner of a saloon King and Lowrey Saloon which was a fairly famous saloon in Butte, which I don't know what the connections are but the lawsuit awarded this land to Henrietta and her children and somewhere along the line Max was the guardian of the children and he bought Henrietta's portion from her and his cousin-in-law, Alex Cohen got the other half, but anyway all these deeds that go back and forth quick claim deeds and deeds ended up the property that the Mayer bldg was built on and the Mayer bldg is on the corner of park and Montana. Max and Dora Mayer built the bldg in 1900s near as I can find out I haven't found the bldg records but they built the Mayer bldg in 1900

Is that the Mayer bldg that currently stands up on park and Montana?

Actually interesting enough I found papers dating in the 1930s 32 there was a fire and so I tried to research some of the information about the fire and I found out that till the bldg was rebuilt in 1932 the Mayer bldg didn't go all the way to the corner there was a bldg on the corner called the Adelaide block which occupied the corner and the Mayer bldg was next to it and I have a party wall agreement signed between Adelaide Abraham and the party wall agreement is for lot number 5 the west 8 ft of lot number 4 in block number 30 town set of Butte between Dora Mayer and lot number 4 immediately joining the west 8 foot of lot number 4 on the west side of block 30 belonging to Adelaide Abraham which took me a long time to I didn't understand what that was well there was a wall between the two buildings and until I started to research the fire of 1932 I didn't realize that the Mayer bldg didn't go to the corner. So somewhere along the line they (Bert and Edward) acquired the rest of the property and built the bldg all the way to the corner in 1932 after a fire which destroyed Adelaide block the fire started in the basement of I think it was the Fuller Paint Company at the time and what's interesting was when I was a young kid my mom and dad used to for a week or two every summer had to go clean the Mayer bldg because the janitor, his name was Ray he lived on the second floor had a room he'd go on vacation and my mom and dad would have to go clean the bldg then and we thought it was great fun to go to the bldg and get pop out of the pop machine and run thru the bldg at night while they were cleaning the bldg but the bldg was in the family until the 1960s when it was split between too many relatives it was probably split 4 or 5 ways and it wasn't making much money and my mom was taking care of the books and the rental and stuff and so they decided that they'd be better off to sell it now I'm sure if they were alive they would regret with the price of real estate they probably would wish they'd held onto the bldg but at the time there just wasn't, it was split too many ways and there was no money being made and so part of our family history was lost to... so the history of the Mayer bldg is really kind of interesting and I've got ledgers with rental receipts and stuff from the 1900s thru the 1930s I think so trying to follow those ledgers and see what was occupied the buildings and stuff which was kind of what I find out about the fire is when I read about the fire Gamers confectionary was on the corner, but I had no rental receipts for Gamers confectionary there was no record of gamers so that's when I started to research and find out why that was and that's why is because it wasn't in the Mayer bldg it was in the Adelaide block. And interestly the Mayer bldg was named the Dora block for part of it's history Dora after Dora England Mayer and it was a rooming house but they rented out the second and third floors to a lady who, Ida Teague was her name, and she ran a rooming house out of it and the Mayer's just rented out the bottom floor the stores that were in the bottom floor which over the years housed a liquor store, fuller brush, a Safeway store at one time where the present liquor store is now on the corner was onetime a Safeway store.

That was just going up thru the 1930s?

Yeah that's into the 1930s but we should probably get back into how the Mayer bldg came about.

The original Mayer bldg then was on 21 park street?

That was the original assayer office. Actually the Max never operated none of the Mayer's actually operated out of the Mayer bldg. The closest they got to it would be 18 north mt which today is the antique store just north of the Mayer bldg. where Bert moved Mayer electric from across the street at 7 north mt he sometime during the years moved to 18 north mt which I don't know if that was part of Adelaide block or across the alley I don't know how far. I need to find some pictures and do more research on the Adelaide block and see when Bert moved and yeah I'm so far basically trying to just work I decided to just go back to Max and work, I decided to go back and try and follow Max's moves where he lived and how and different residences and it's really proven difficult because the city directories are so inaccurate, the city directories and the census don't match and so it's really I don't know really where to go next maybe some picture archives I can look to see but and like I said the Pennsylvania block maybe I'm not sure 40 west park when he moved from 21 west park to 40 west park if that was b/4 the Pennsylvania block or after but according to his obit he spent a lot of years in the Pennsylvania block so I have to research that farther but

what I can really tell as far as max being an assayer he was also kind of a loan broker because I have deeds sent back and forth to him for mining property and mining claims and mining stock that aren't in his name that he was holding and I have releases for mortgages for jewelry and things so I'm sure he acted as like a loan broker for property.

And that came from his bother?

No well I think his brother I know his brother was listed as a loan officer but his brother died. But I think max being an assayer I think that was part of the business, people would bring in things of value and he would give them money to hold the things and he acted like a.. so one interesting thing that I found I have a letter (see attached letter 1). So I assume that has something to do with part of the war of the copper kings the losses going back and forth but I have to research that and find out more about. The research I did find on it I think that the anaconda company won that particular suit but I'm not really clear on that either but that was just one of the interesting papers that I found, that I rescued from the landfill. Here's one dated June 11 1912 (see attached letter 2) so he was holding her jewelry for, there's a few more like that here's one for 5232.06 (see attached letter 3).

That's a note he was holding?

Uh huh, there's several deeds back and forth between max and Dora, which I suppose he did for tax purposes but it was the same property. The other property I found some deeds on in the research I've done I think it to a 216 south mt where Mayer ignition was where his home was but the names on that property aren't the same names that are listed in the paper article, in the newspaper article it says he bought it from. So that's more research that I have to try to do. But there are famous names of people and people that you can read in butte history books that are associated with the; George McFarlin and wife, that's lot 15 and block 51 which near as I can figure out is mayer ignition or in that block, there's alex cohen, James Murray, Sammy Alexander, and J.R. Clark.

55
Mae E. Maysen

Guardian of

Johanna Mayer, Alice Maysen,
Edward Mayer and Joseph Mayer, Miners,
Deceased

TO

Oliver Bohm

DEED.

Dated August 13th 1888

Witnessed at the Request of

Walter E. Bohm

September 18 1888

at 4 o'clock minutes past 11 o'clock
A. M., in Book "L" of Deeds,

Page 281, Records of the

County of Silver Bow

M. J. Black

County Recorder

L. A. Black

Deputy Recorder

74
No. 110

PROBATE COURT,
TERRITORY OF MONTANA,

County of Silver Bow.

In the Matter of the Estate of
Johanna Mayer, Edward Mayer,
Alice, Edward, Joseph
Mayer, Miners
Deceased.

Order Confirming Sale of Real Estate.

Filed this 13th day of
August A. D. 1888

Walter E. Bohm
Clerk.

By
Deputy Clerk.

M. J. Black
County Recorder

L. A. Black
Deputy Recorder

2
Bargain & Sale Deed.

George W. Carlson

TO

Walter E. Maysen

Dated, 1888

Filed for Record,

A. D. 1888

at o'clock, M. and

Recorded in Book of

Deeds, on page Rec-

ords of

County, Territory of Montana.

County Recorder.

Fee, \$

PRINTED AND FOR SALE BY
Miner Publishing Company,
BUTTE, M. T.



\$5230⁰⁰/₁₀₀ Butte, Mont. May 18 1912

Ninty days after date I promise to pay to
the order of M.E. Mayer
Fifty Two & Hundred and Thirty ⁴⁰⁰/₁₀₀ Dollars
At Clark's Bank Butte Mont
Value received with interest at 6 percent per annum

No. Dued Aug 15

A. M. Armstrong

GENERAL
ELECTRIC
CONTRACTORS

OFFICE OF

MAYER ELECTRIC CO.

NO 7 NORTH MONTANA STREET

PHONES
IND. 5752
BELL 901-A.

BUTTE, MONT. June 11 1912

Received of M. E. Mayer all of my personal
property consisting of jewelry, diamonds ect,
which was in his possession for 3 or more years,

Harriet Armstrong

W.A. Clark

J. Ross Clark

W.A. Clark & Brother
Bankers

Butte, Montana, April 6, 1898.

Mr. Max E. Moyer,
Butte,
Montana.

Dear Sir:-

At our request you, having signed a bond in the case of the Coluse-Parrot Mining & Smelting Co., complaintant vs. The Anaconda Copper Mining Co., defendant for the total amount of the bond for one hundred thousand dollars, (\$100,000) and you personally obligating yourself to the extent of twenty five thousand dollars, (\$25,000) on said bond, we beg to guarantee to hold you free from all loss, costs or damages that may accrue, should any such loss, costs or damages be adjudged against you in the event the said injunction be dissolved. We beg to thank you for your courtesy and shall be pleased to serve you at any time.

Yours sincerely,

W.A. Clark & Brother
J. Ross Clark
Asst. Secy

Samuel P. Alexander

To

Henry Mayer

PAID FOR RECORD

Jan 18th 1879

at 10 o'clock P. M. and

Registered in Book P. of Deeds

in of Page 382

of Deer Lodge County, Montana Territory.

J. E. Dickler
Notary Public
W. H. 85
Henry L. & P. C. Mayer

DEPOSITED WITH

Donnell, Clark & Larabee

By
Butte, Montana, Jan 2 1879

Rec'd of M. E. Mayer
the sum of Three hundred
dollars in full of all
demands against property
owned by S. P. Alexander
for which I hold a mortgage
which I will have
canceled at once
J. E. Dickler

DOLLARS
CURRENCY
CHECKS
NOTARY

\$4000

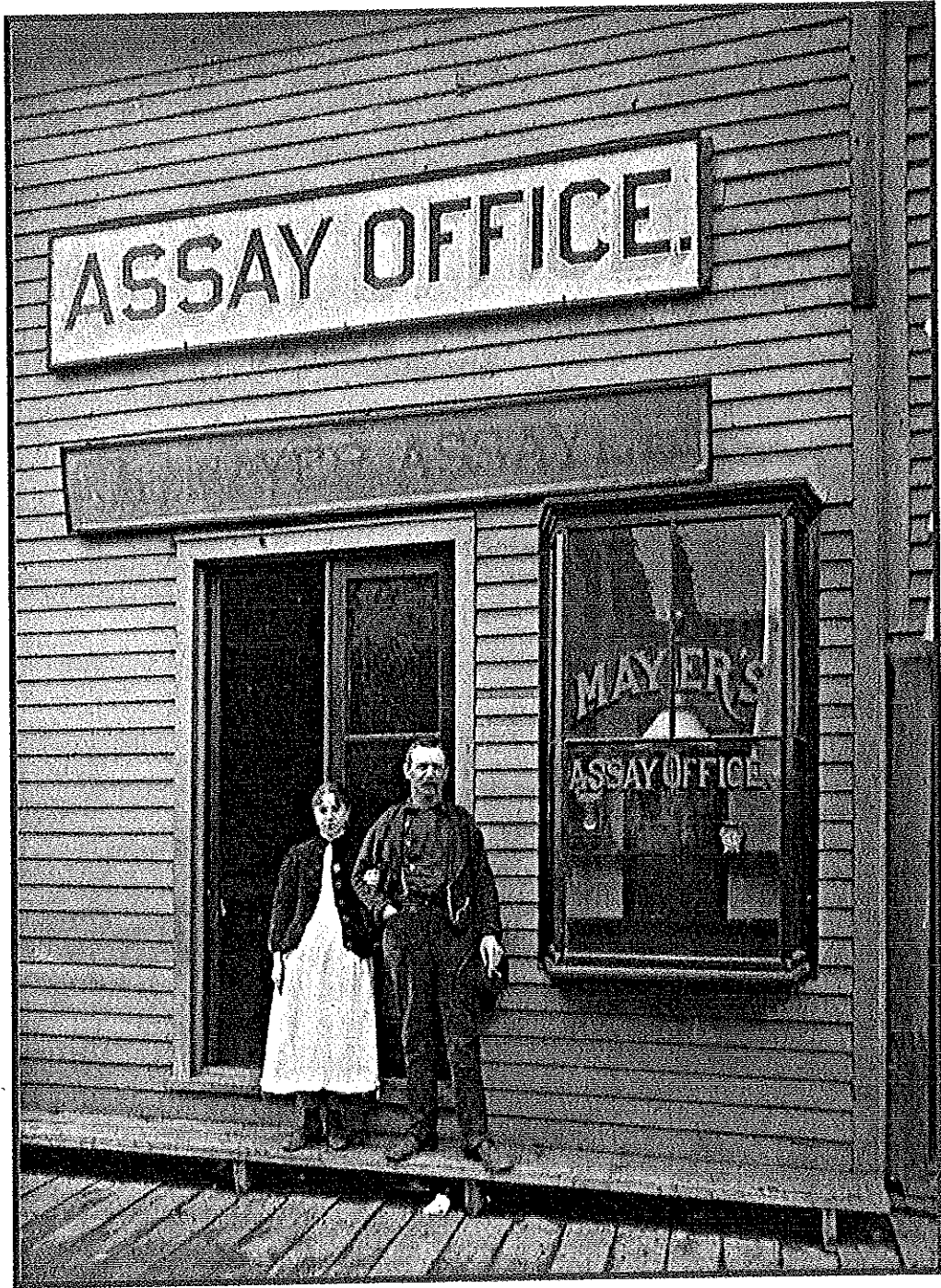


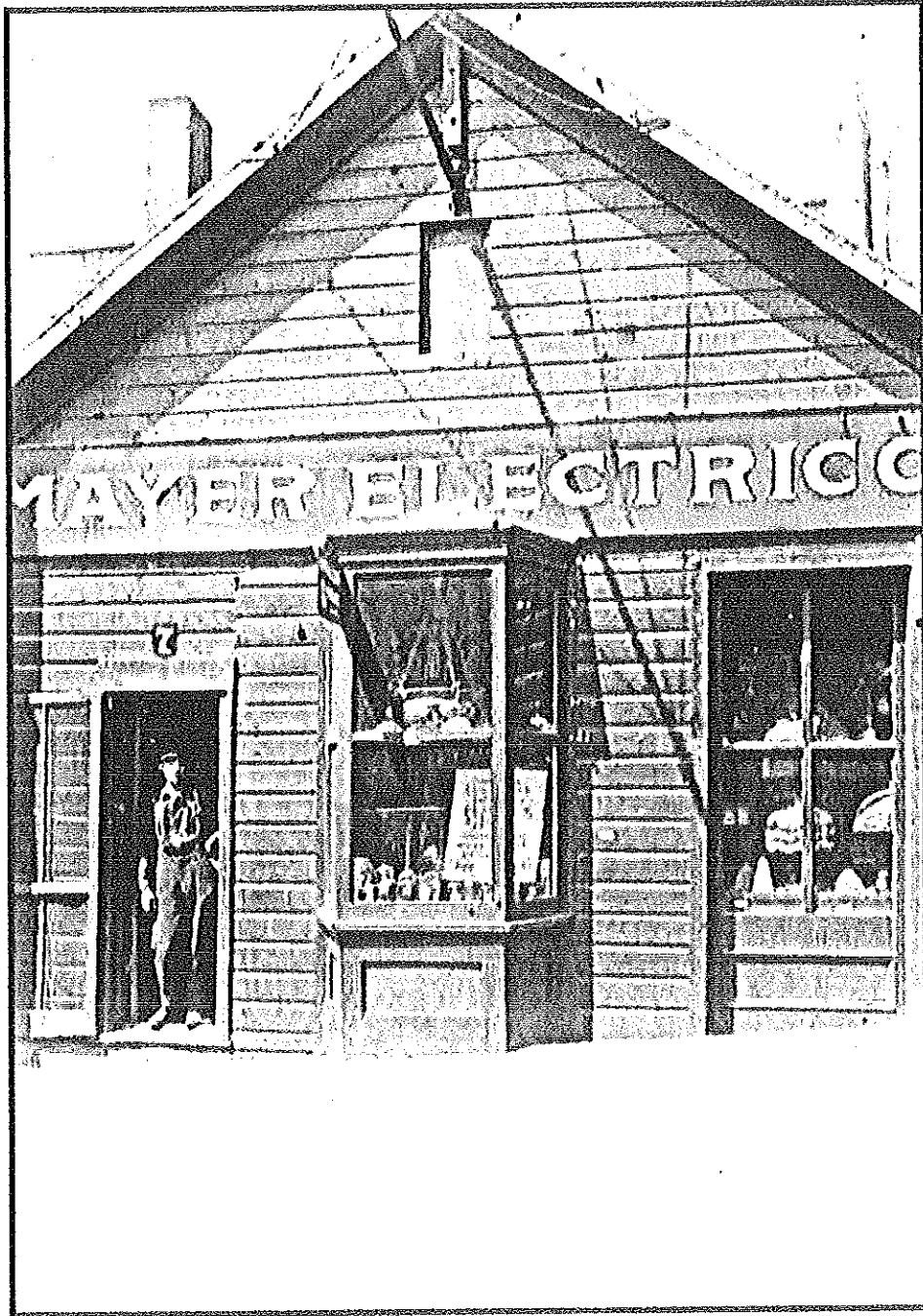
Butte City, M.T. Jan 17 1879
Six Months I after date for value received
promise to pay to
Donnell, Clark & Larabee or order
Four hundred and no DOLLARS
at the rate of M. E. Mayer in Butte, M.T.
with Interest at the rate of Two per cent per
Month from date until paid.

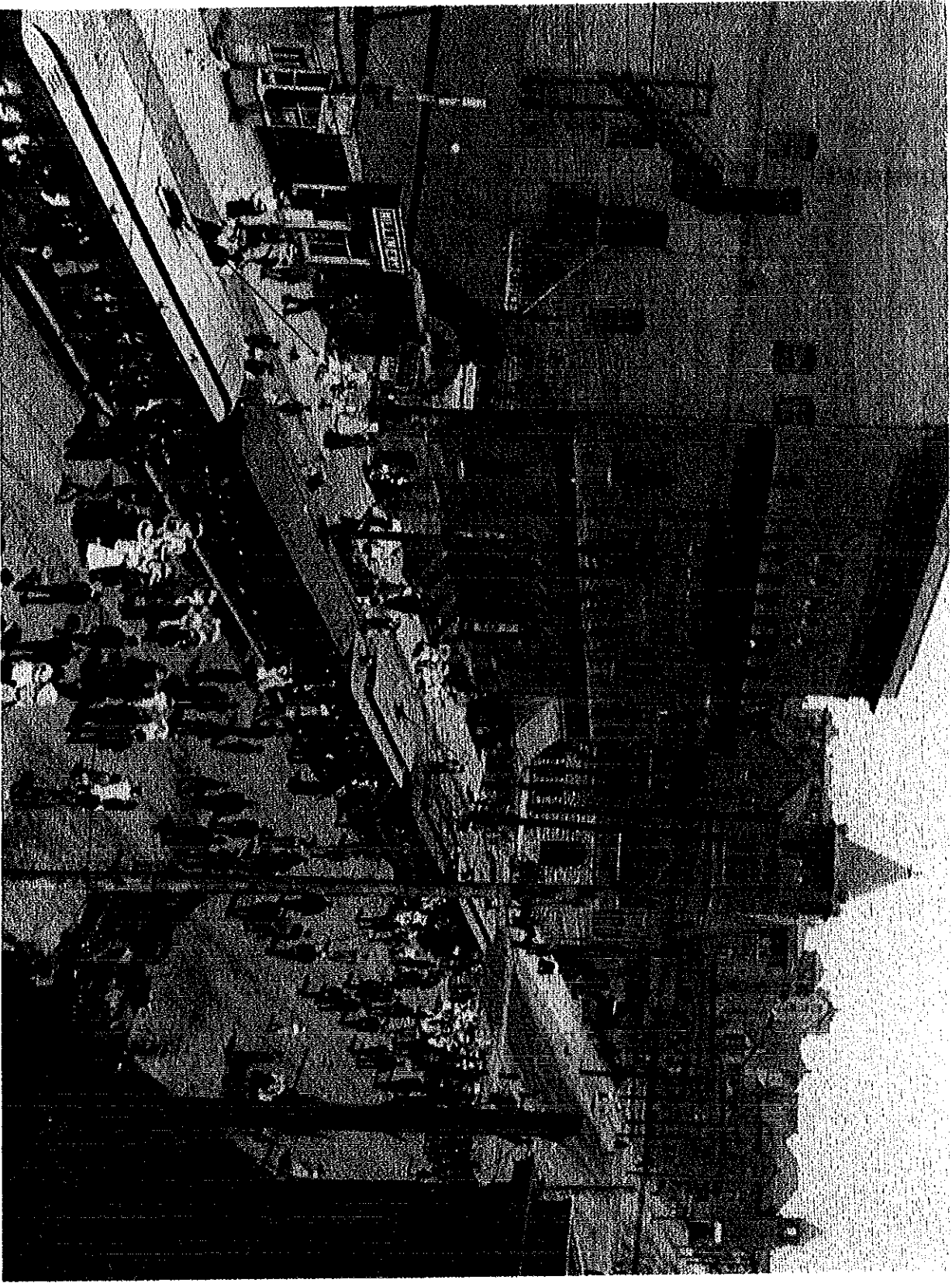
No. 2491

Due July 17 1879

Samuel P. Alexander







Streetcars at the corner of North Montana and Broadway streets in front