HISTORY HERE

BUTTE GREW AS A CROSSROAD

SKYLINE PARK

Parking Lot

Playground

Open Dog Area

Restrooms

Fishing Pond

Hang Glider Area

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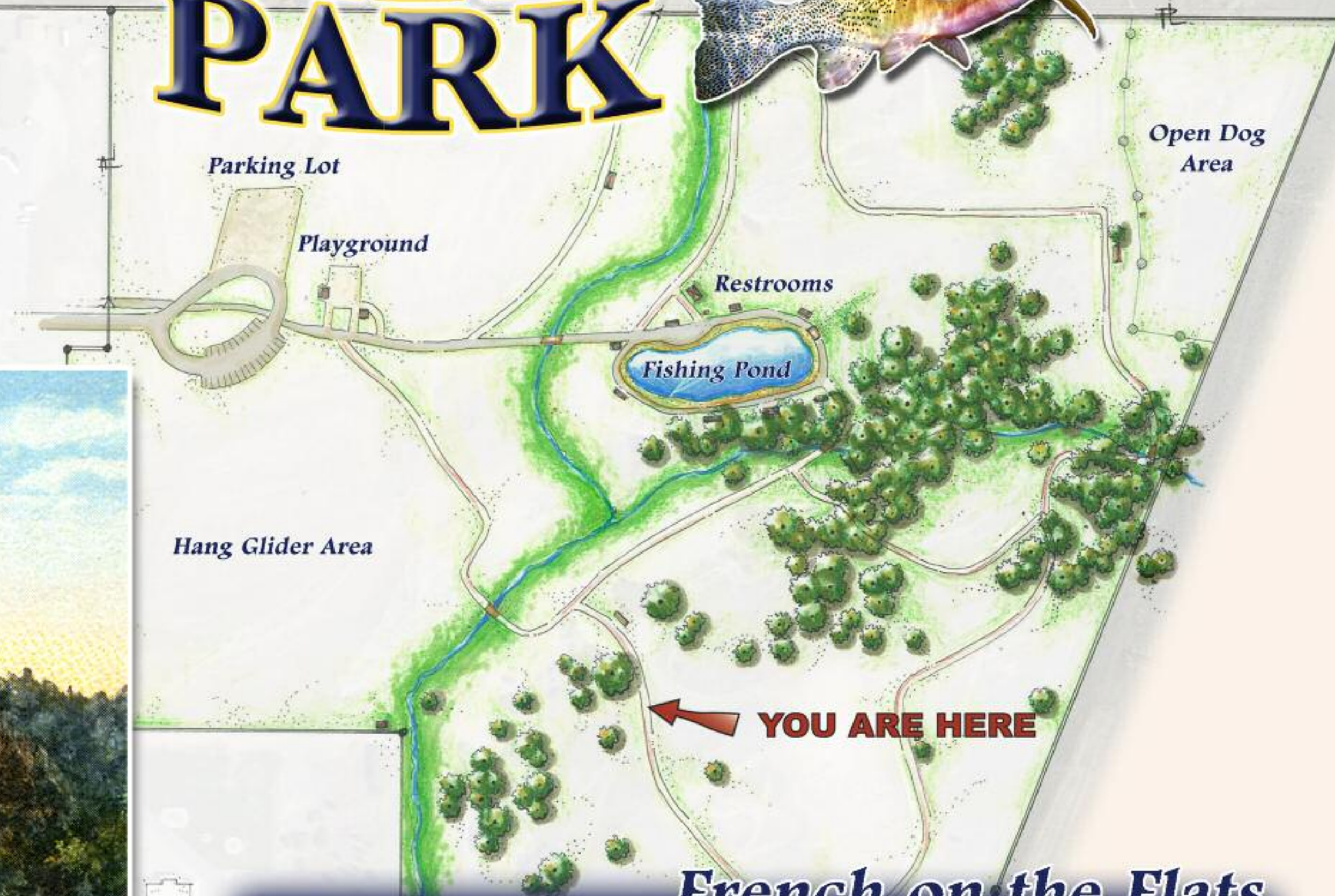
Transportation center

The sheer wealth created by mining in the Summit Valley Mining District drew important roads and trails into Butte. Every major railroad – the Union Pacific, the Northern Pacific, the Great Northern, the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul, and the Butte, Anaconda & Pacific Railway – had stately stations and multiple daily trains that carried passengers, freight and ore to and from bustling Butte. Looking to the East Ridge, you can still see the railroad lines about half way up. The need to transport goods and services to Butte to satisfy the mines and its workers sparked transportation innovations, including electrification of the rail system and engineering feats in highway design to move materials over the Continental Divide. Even today, Butte is an important crossroad in the country's interstate highway system.
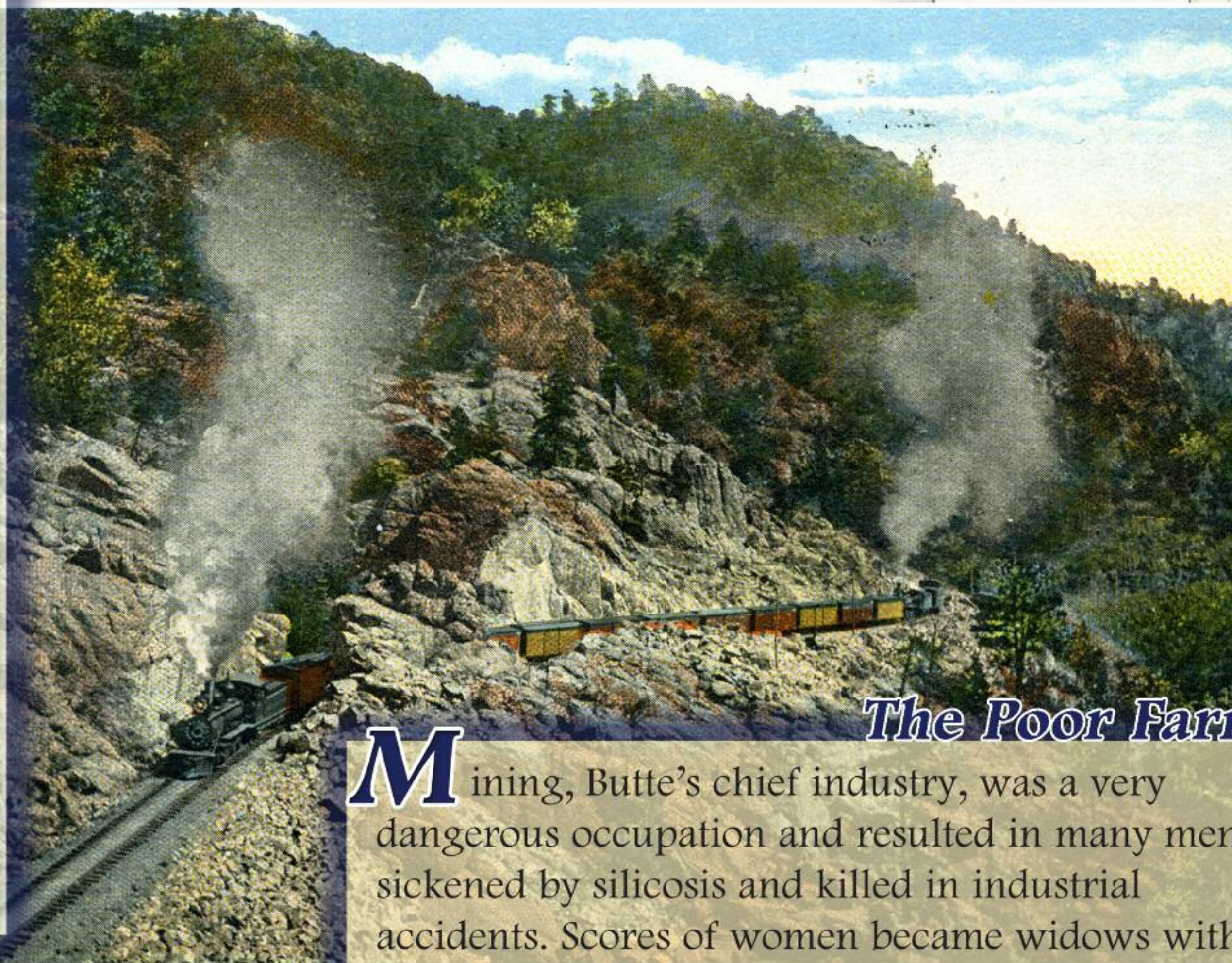
Above is a 1920s-circa postcard of a Northern Pacific train making its way into Butte from the East Ridge.

The county's Poor Farm is seen in this 1945 photo. It looks much the same today from the outside.

The Poor Farm

Mining, Butte's chief industry, was a very dangerous occupation and resulted in many men sickened by silicosis and killed in industrial accidents. Scores of women became widows with limited income to care for homes and children, and services for the poor were in great demand. The building to the north was constructed in 1902 to accommodate that need. The Silver Bow County Poor Farm Hospital was designed by C. S. Haire in a classic style for a hospital of its time. The grounds included a pest house and a burial site. In the 1930s, the Poor Farm was converted to a long-term care facility for the elderly. The complex now is occupied by NCAT, the National Center for Appropriate Technology. It is the only surviving Poor Farm building in the state.

French on the Flats

The first documented Frenchman in Butte was Sieur De La Verendryer in 1742, who said of the region, "This is indeed the land of the Shinning Mountains." The French Canadians were the heart and soul of the Hudson Bay Fur Trading Company, bringing pioneering mountain men into the Summit Valley. Once here, the French Canadians settled on the Flats of Butte, many in this area, and they commonly worked as timber cutters. The Butte mining operations consumed some 21 million board feet of timber between 1885 and 1900. The Flats hosted many home-steading French Canadian farms and dairies, which used the foothills of the Highland Mountains for grazing. Many small farms and dairies served as Mile Houses – Nine Mile, Five Mile and Four Mile. The Mile Houses provided food, lodging and stables for teamsters and travelers before they made the arduous trip over the Continental Divide.