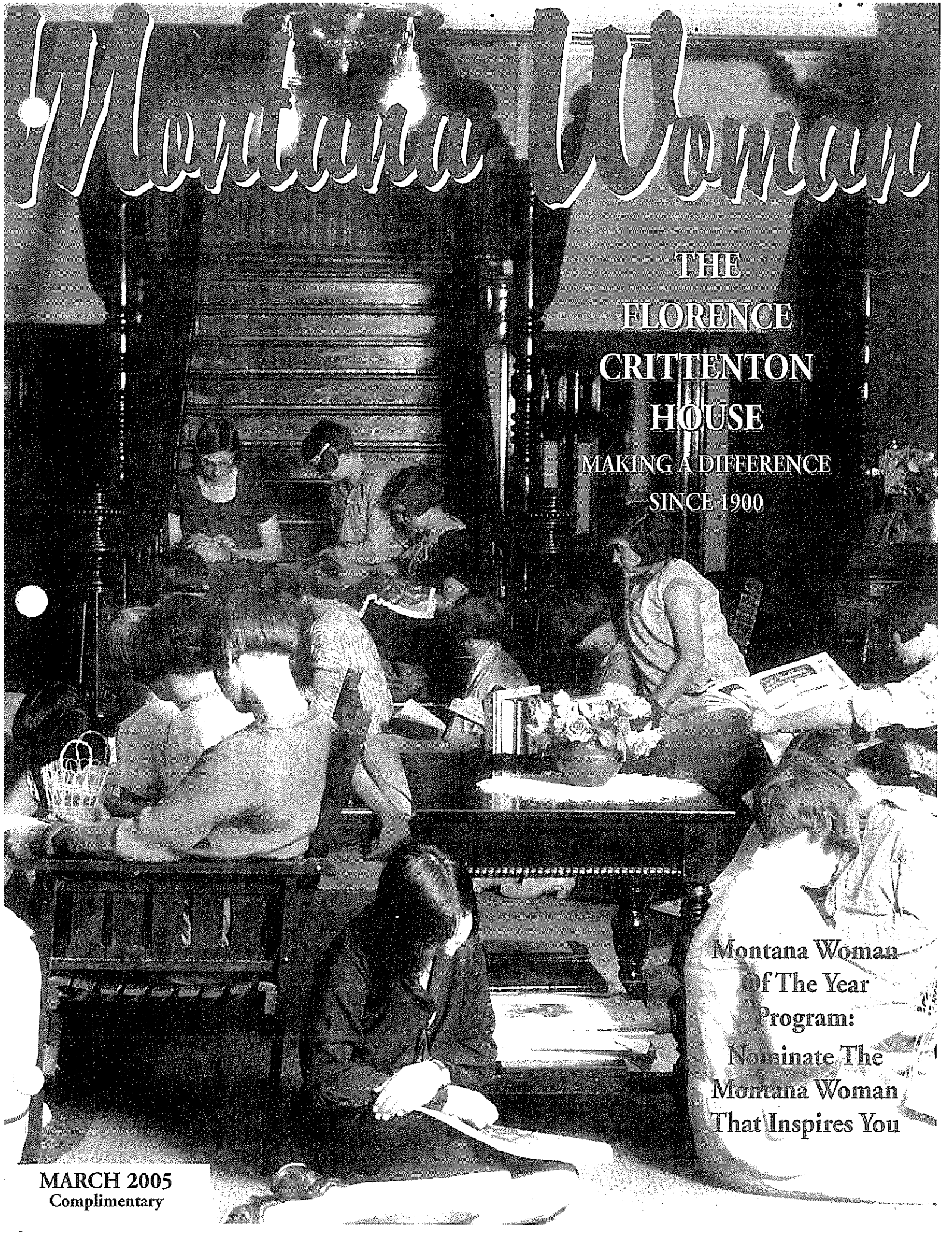


Montana Woman

THE
FLORENCE
CRITTENTON
HOUSE
MAKING A DIFFERENCE
SINCE 1900



Montana Woman
Of The Year
Program:
Nominate The
Montana Woman
That Inspires You

MARCH 2005
Complimentary

Montana Woman

The Making Of A Good Woman



Dr. Kate Waller-Barrett

“A good, warm hearted girl,” wrote the matron in 1905. Her terse phrases told the story of a girl barely out of her teens who came to the home pregnant and alone. When her baby was six months old, the new mother set out with her child to make her own way. The matron added a final note: “She has the making of a good woman in her.”

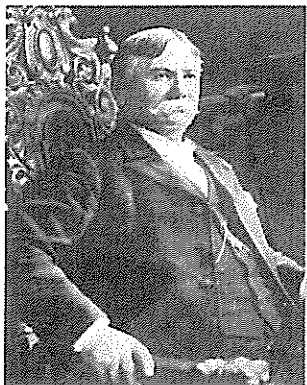
The little book chronicles the significant role of the Florence Crittenton Home in Montana. Its history parallels a national movement whose mission, to offer sanctuary and rehabilitation to women and girls, is as vital today as it was more than a century ago.

Florence Crittenton Homes were the brainchild of wealthy New Yorker Charles N. Crittenton whose four-year-old daughter Florence died of scarlet fever in 1882. After months of deep depression, Crittenton had a religious awakening. He followed street evangelist Smith Allen into the heart of New York City’s underworld. Appalled at the despair of the district’s prostitutes, in 1883 he founded the Florence Night Mission, named for his daughter, as a haven for “lost and fallen women and wayward girls” who had nowhere else to go.

A decade later Crittenton expanded his vision to found shelters across the United States. Forming a partnership with Dr. Kate Waller Barrett, whose own crusade targeted young single mothers, the National Florence Crittenton Mission incorporated in 1895 and by 1897, forty-six homes operated across the country. Because of

Dr. Barrett’s involvement, many focused upon unwed expectant mothers. “Christian and parental” in character, the homes encouraged young mothers to keep their babies.

In 1896, Crittenton brought his mission to Montana, establishing homes in both Helena and Butte. Butte’s home closed by 1898, but Helena’s flourished, and in April 1900 the Florence Crittenton Home Circle of Helena purchased a six-room building in Kenwood with a \$500 donation from the national mission. It could serve thirteen women and



Charles N. Crittenton

children. The national organization sent Mrs. Maria Dadman to Helena as matron at the end of April 1900. On May 21, Mrs. Dadman noted in the little book the first birth since her arrival. The child’s nineteen-year-old-mother named her baby Florence Dadman.

The Helena home incorporated on June 12, 1900 and a litany of troubled, sick and homeless women and teens found refuge there in next few years. The pages document cases referred by the judicial system, conveyed by relatives or ministers, and occasionally brought by the local sisters of the House of the Good

by Ellen Baumler



Bedroom provides more privacy

Shepherd. The sisters’ mission, to rehabilitate wayward girls, closely paralleled the Crittenton model but did not extend to expectant mothers. Many paid the \$25 maternity fee, but refused no one.

In December of 1903, Dr. Kate Barrett came to Montana when Great Falls requested its own Crittenton Home. Proponents argued that Great Falls was its own community, not tributary to Helena. But Dr. Barrett countered that her organization had all it could do maintain the Helena home. Besides, she said, “it would not be advisable to place Great Falls girls in a Great Falls Home.” Dr. Barrett

promised to help establish a Great Falls circle, “to look out for fallen women” to refer to Helena. Florence Crittenton Home Circles formed in Great Falls, Butte, Anaconda, Miles City, Billings, and other

communities. The book records many girls referred by these local circles.



22 Jefferson

Over the next few years, six different matrons recorded the brief story of each temporary "inmate." Many were pregnant, but some were homeless and some were victims of abuse. They came from all ethnic, economic, and religious backgrounds, from across Montana and neighboring states. Most kept their babies as the Crittenton Mission recommended.



Lena Cullum

each girl, treating her as an individual with a future.

Eighty-one-year-old Lila Schroeder Anderson recalls with fondness that need was the only criterion for admittance. Orphaned and sent to the Montana Children's Home, Lena Cullum saw the ten-year-old marching tearfully down the

sidewalk with her belongings in a pillowcase. Mrs. Cullum took her in. In return, Lila proved her worth. She did chores, helped the staff, and sometimes held the hands of girls her own age through hours of labor. Mrs. Cullum saw Lila through school and gave her away on her wedding day. Thanks to the generous matron and the parental emphasis that characterized the home, Lila Schroeder Anderson has wonderful memories—although a little unconventional—of growing up.

The Crittenton Mission adapted to changing attitudes and needs. By the mid-1930s, the sixty-two homes nation-wide reevaluated their policies. As the first legitimate adoption agencies emerged, laws began to recognize parental and child rights. Adoption became a more feasible choice and young mothers were discouraged from keeping their babies.

After World War II, social workers with college degrees replaced occupational staff. This was true in Montana as well. In 1945, Mrs. Cullum resigned.

Jessica Simmons, former head of the Warm Springs State Hospital student nurses, became superintendent. With professional experience in mental illness and social work,

Mrs. Simmons followed national models emphasizing the stigma of teen pregnancy and counseled adoption as the best choice. By 1957, ninety-eight percent of Helena's

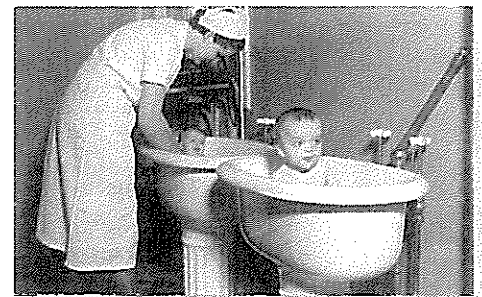
Crittenton teens chose adoption through four licensed agencies: the Montana Children's Home, State Welfare, Lutheran Social Services or Catholic Charities. In 1960, the Helena home had cared for approximately 5,800 girls since its founding.

The national Florence Crittenton Mission studied trends in unplanned and adolescent pregnancies in the 1960s, and in the 1970s, recognized teen pregnancy as a symptom of social and emotional problems. Young unmarried mothers needed more than medical care and shelter. Services evolved to include day care, planned parenthood, and emergency housing. The need for large-scale services began to diminish with increasing acceptance of single parenthood. This prompted a move to smaller quarters in the old Montana Children's Home in 1973. There was room for twenty-three girls but no



Karen Northey

maternity facilities and no nursery; adoption continued to be the recommended choice. Girls typically stayed fourteen weeks before delivery and several days after, paying \$270 a month room and board if they could afford it. If not, county welfare often picked up the bill, but not always. During her twenty-seven years at Crittenton in Helena, administrator Karen Northey dreamed of a modern facility. But shortage of funds always loomed and sometimes she even spent her own paycheck on groceries for the girls.



Bathtub babies

Lena Cullum became matron in 1907. During thirty-eight years of service, she saw the best endings and some of the worst. Among her first cases was a pregnant fifteen-year-old who came to the home in 1908. The girl's brother, the father of her child, had been sent to the penitentiary. The girl died of consumption at County Hospital four weeks later. The book records other such cases, stillborn babies, and mothers who died in childbirth. But for every sad ending, there were successes, too.

The Crittenton Home at Helena received no financial assistance beyond maternity fees. A field secretary, hired in 1908, traveled the region to raise funds and by 1910, there was enough to build an addition. At this time the household included seven children under two and sixteen young women between twelve and twenty-six. But by 1920, the home had become too small.

Mrs. Cullum and the Helena Circle scraped together \$2,000 to purchase the abandoned Albert Kleinschmidt mansion in 1924. Its refurbishing in a very real sense mirrored the rehabilitation of those who needed its shelter. There was room for fifty women and girls and thirty children.



Girl under an old hairdryer

anonymity was a Crittenton requirement; photographs show the young women with their backs to the camera. Mrs. Cullum welcomed



Children with nurse

In 1982 Northey saw the home through another move to a converted grocery store. Woefully inadequate, it housed fourteen girls and five babies. During this decade, the clientele changed significantly. Girls from supportive families were once typical, but now dysfunctional relationships, multiple foster care placements, abuse, and neglect put clients at greater risk than ever before. A twenty-four-year-old resident in 1990, for example, was five months pregnant when her abusive, alcoholic boyfriend locked her out on Christmas Eve. Driving the streets of Helena in her nightgown, she had no money and nowhere to go. A radio ad for

the Florence Crittenton Home probably saved her life.

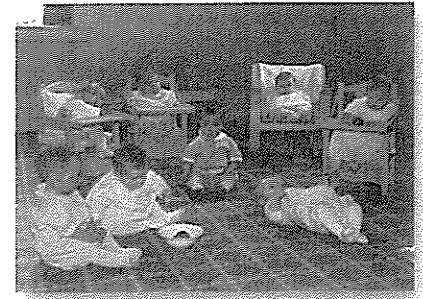
The 1990s marked more changes: seventy percent of Crittenton mothers were keeping their babies and in 1992, Karen Northey rejoiced when the cornerstone of the present Crittenton Home at 901 Harris was laid. Although she did not live to see it completed, her vision became reality in 1995 when the first residents moved in. Divided into two separate programs, the modern cheery facility is a reflection of how



Two nurses with baby

far the home has come. One side offers rehabilitative services for girls who are not pregnant and the other is for expectant and

parenting adolescents. Executive director Pat Seiler says that today, residency at the Crittenton home is not a reflection of mores, but a matter of protection and



Infant Nursery

advocacy for those without options. Helping teens break the cycle of poverty, welfare, and abuse has far-reaching consequences.

Nine presidents have praised Crittenton services including Theodore Roosevelt who said in 1903 that those in need "...pay a heavy penalty and the road to reform is made so difficult that I can conceive of no more worthy work." In recognizing "the making of a good woman,"-an individual's potential and worth-dedicated workers past and present have touched countless lives and influenced generations. The home is needed today more than ever before. Its history in Helena and the vital work of its dedicated staff are profound evidence of the difference Montana's Florence Crittenton Home has made to so many. ^{WU}

The Florence Crittenton Home

has been there to give young women a supportive hand since 1900.



www.florencecrittenton.org

With your help we can make a difference in the lives of Montana's pregnant and parenting teen girls and their babies. Your tax-deductible donation, in any amount, will have a lasting impact. For more information contact Barbara Burton - Toll free at 1-888-777-9888 or send your contribution to 901 North Harris, Helen, MT 59601.



Ellen Bauml, interpretive historian at the Montana Historical Society, is editor of *Girl*

from the Gulches: The Story of Mary Ronan (2003), a Finalist Award Winner in the 2004 Willa Literary Awards. She is also author of *Spirit Tailings: Ghost Tales of Virginia City, Butte and Helena* (2002) and *Beyond Spirit Tailings*, forthcoming in Spring 2005.