BAS 293 Paul Clark Home Welcome to Butte, America’s Story. I’m your host, Dick Gibson.

The Associated Charities of Butte, led by Mrs. J.M. White and Mrs. John Noyes, was organized in 1897 with the mission of “helping the worthy poor to help themselves.” They initially established a small children’s home in a house at 541 Nevada Street, but their goals and capabilities soon outgrew that facility. To support the mission, Mrs. White approached Copper King William Clark with a proposal to construct a home that would house the organization and provide hospital and other services to the poor.

Clark pledged an investment of $20,000 for a building and $10,000 for furnishings, but ultimately allocated nearly $50,000 for a three-story home-office-hospital structure on South Excelsior Street. The only condition Clark placed on his gifts was that the facility should be named for his son, Paul, who had died in 1896 at age 16, from a bacterial infection that caused the painful rash called St. Anthony’s Fire. William Clark also provided an endowment to the home of $350,000 in his will when he died in 1925.

The Paul Clark Home opened in March 1900. It included a sun parlor, reading room, and day nursery in addition to dormitory-style rooms, additional bedrooms, and a well equipped kitchen and laundry. Children of the poor were always the focus of the home managed by the Associated Charities. Services included free hospital care for Butte children as well as day care for working mothers. By the 1960s it had become a home for developmentally disabled adults, and in the 1980s, its mission changed to that of a Ronald McDonald House, accommodating families of children in local hospitals. By that time, William Clark’s endowment was covering less than half the organization’s annual $60,000 budget, and they approached Clark’s daughter, Huguette, for additional support.

Although the multi-millionaire heiress to Clark’s Butte-made fortune declined to help the organization her father intended to outlive his children and grandchildren, according to historian Bill Dedman in his book Empty Mansions, she did authorize her attorney to spend $135,000 on two dolls just five years later. She did leave the Paul Clark Home $5,000 in her will, which was very nearly her smallest bequest.

The Paul Clark Home continues today to offer home-like accommodations for out-of-town families of hospitalized patients and to out-patients visiting Butte.

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.