

Welcome to Mining City Reflections where we illuminate the history of Butte, Montana through the stories and observations of 20th century women who lived there. I'm your host, Marian Jensen.

The oral history collection in the Butte Archives has preserved the personal reminiscences of many of the city's women. In vivid detail they bring to life the challenges and achievements of the boom to bust town.

A defining influence among Butte's heavily Catholic population came from those women who served in Holy Orders in the many parish schools. The Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth arrived in 1881, and the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary followed in 1907. Dedicated, courageous, and hard-working, many of these women came from Butte's own Irish immigrant families.

Excerpt Tape #1 – 53:40 – 53:48 "My father may have been in the IRA...

That's the voice of Kathleen O'Sullivan, remembering her Irish immigrants parents. A Sister of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, O'Sullivan made a lasting mark on the community. Her oral history was recorded by Lori Mercier in 1987 as part of the Montana Historical Society Project on Women as Community Builders.

O'Sullivan grew up in San Francisco, where she entered the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a community founded in 1833 with a strong calling toward education and social justice. Listen as she describes her eye-opening arrival to teach in one of the city's many parish schools in 1950.

Excerpt Tape # 1 – 19:45 – 21:35.

Like many girls in the city's Catholic diocese, Kathleen's inspiration to join a religious community had come in high school and grew into a lifelong vocation. It's been estimated that during the first half of the 20th century, more than a hundred girls in Butte entered the convent. MUSIC FROM

THE BENEDICTINES - BELLS - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M_VzblEpU-o&list=RDtMF04ErFVaE&index=6

Excerpt Tape #1 - 28:57 -29:10; 30:14- 33

After four years teaching in Butte, Sister Kathleen was transferred to teach in Hawaii and California, but eventually when given the chance, she chose to return to the place she felt most at home.

Excerpt Tape #1 - 35:44 – 37:18

By the mid 60's the enrollments in parish schools had risen six times faster than those taking holy orders. Filling the roster for teaching sisters became more difficult, and as a result, Catholic primary schools began to close. Emphasis shifted to providing Catholic education in the junior high and high school, which in Butte was under the supervision of the Christian Brothers.

In response, Sister Kathleen decided to follow her passions for peace and justice into support for the Butte Community Union, a local non-profit organized to help low income citizens most affected by the Anaconda Company mine closures in 1982.

Excerpt Tape # 1 – 42:12-43:25;

Helping Butte's poor and underrepresented became Sister Kathleen's calling. She worked tirelessly on behalf of people in need of the basics - heat and food.

Excerpt tape #1 – 44:00-44:30;45:40-46:02

Sister Kathleen considered her work personally transformational. Through her efforts in Butte, she had come to understand the overwhelming struggles of the poor in contrast to her own life as a member of a religious community which always provided. MUSIC FROM THE BENEDICTINES -<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QDJW8jQ-1Zo&list=RDtMF04ErFVaE&index=9>

Excerpt tape #1- 48:57-49:41

While the Butte Community Union brought its work to a close in the late 90's, Sister Kathleen remained in the city and continued to fight

injustice. As late as 2013, at age 83, she was writing editorials in support of

sensible immigration reform.

Sister Kathleen died in 2018, having lived and served 72 years as a Sister of Charity.

Excerpt tape #2 - 17:22-28: "Jesus identified with the poor and that's where it's at"... 17:47-50: "that's where real life is."

VESPERS - MUSIC FROM BENEDICTINES - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_QdQSd8vCVo&list=RDtMF04ErFVaE&index=3

11 excerpts – 6:09 min Narrative -

