

# ***Mining Childhood, the Butte Florence Crittenton Circle, and Mrs. C. H. Bucher***

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## **Introduction: My Grandparents, Children in Butte**

My grandparents grew up in Butte in the era of trolley cars and copper barons.<sup>1</sup> My grandfather arrived in Montana after losing his father to Black Lung disease in the Black Hills of South Dakota when he was ten years old. While his widowed mother established herself in Butte, he spent several weeks in a Helena orphanage hoeing beets and observing the construction of the dome of Montana's new Capitol.<sup>2</sup> He disliked the work, never ate beets again, and was happy to finally join his mother in Butte, where the city's people and vitality made a lasting impression. He told me of horse-drawn fire engines racing the streets, of baseball games and brawls between boys of different nationalities, and with tears in his eyes, he told of Carry A. Nation's saloon-smashing hatchet and sense of destiny to "carry the nation" to sobriety.<sup>3</sup> She was quite a contrast to his little brother who was not a teetotaler.

Though she never spoke of it, my grandmother's early life in Butte was even more amazing. After she passed away, we learned of her life in a carnival, the death of her mother while they were traveling in Pocatello, Idaho, and her dancing in vaudeville in Butte. As a vulnerable 13-year-old orphan

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Miles Little (1890-1978) and Selma Pearl (Ostrander) Little (1891-1964).

<sup>2</sup> He is listed on the census in Lead, South Dakota in 1900; the Capitol was under construction from 1896 to 1902.

<sup>3</sup> Mrs. Nation visited Butte in 1910. My grandfather bought one of her hatchet-pins.

who was traveling with a performer who was not her father, she came to the attention of Mrs. C. H. Bucher, a Butte activist who rescued wayward girls.<sup>4</sup>

When I read of efforts to save and protect Butte children in Janet L. Finn's *Mining Childhood*, I was pleased to see that she included an advertisement placed by Mrs. C. H. Bucher, one of the "good ladies" of the "Florence Crittenton Circle," who had a baby boy "in charge" and who sought a home for him by New Year's.<sup>5</sup> The very same Hattie Bucher and her husband, Charles Henry, welcomed the orphaned 13-year-old dancer into their family. Their foster-daughter, my grandmother, came of age and was married in their living room. She married the clean-living baseball player who hated beets and became a spirited mother of three.<sup>6</sup>

The book also mentioned Helena's St. Joseph's Orphanage, most likely my grandfather's temporary home, the Helena Crittenton Home for wayward girls and unwed mothers, and Florence Crittenton Circles, which were networks of support for the home and its clients.

For many years, Mrs. C. H. Bucher was the Superintendent of Rescue work for Butte's Florence Crittenton Circle and was involved in many of the Progressive Era efforts to save Butte's children that were described in *Mining Childhood*. The Circle grew out of Evangelist Charles Crittenton's revivals and exhortation to provide safe homes where women and girls could escape lives of shame. The Circle was closely associated with Helena's Crittenton Home, as well as many of the individuals, causes, and other institutions mentioned in *Mining Childhood*.<sup>7</sup> The Circle's officers were well-known to the national Crittenton Mission and to leaders in city, county, and state government.

The Circle and Mrs. Bucher were also involved in events and issues not mentioned in *Mining Childhood*. They agitated for a Jail Matron and opposed hiring girls to replace striking messenger-delivery boys. Mrs. Bucher also took a stand regarding Montana's election for women's suffrage in 1914, and about the same time, opened the Butte Maternity Home at her residence, where she showed hospitality to many and found homes for hundreds of babies.

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<sup>4</sup> Tom S. Brown, "A Cedar Rapids Saloon Family and Iowa Prohibition (1882-1894) - Liquor Laws, Laudanum, Emigration, and Separation," *Hawkeye Heritage* 48 (2014): 17-28.

<sup>5</sup> Janet L. Finn, *Mining Childhood – Growing Up in Butte, Montana, 1900-1960*, Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 2012, 118.

<sup>6</sup> Charles H. Bucher was machinist at the Butte Electric Railway Company.

<sup>7</sup> Finn, "Chapter 3 - Saving Children," 111-134.

## The Circle in *Mining Childhood*

### Two Homes and Two Circles

A flurry of activity followed evangelist Charles N. Crittenton's first call to save wayward girls in 1896, but it took several years to establish a home in Montana and the networks to support it.

Mr. Crittenton arrived in Butte for ten days of revival in February 1896.<sup>8</sup> He preached at the Auditorium daily, and at Grace Methodist Church on Sunday, March 1<sup>st</sup>, where Mr. and Mrs. Charles Bucher were members. Before the end of the first week of the revival, Butte citizens pledged nearly \$3,000 to purchase and furnish a home in Butte. Plans were announced to hire a matron and form a board of trustees. Articles of Incorporation cemented the weeks of planning on Monday, March 16<sup>th</sup> when the Butte Crittenton Mission filed with the county recorder. Its purpose was the "establishment and maintenance of a home for the purpose of caring for and reclaiming fallen girls and women."<sup>9</sup>

Two months after the mission incorporated, the Butte Home opened at 317 S. Montana Street in May, 1896. Mrs. Clara Hall was Matron.<sup>10</sup> A year later, it was clear that the home was not living up to the expectations of its supporters, especially when it became known that the drug habit of one of its many elderly residents was paid for with contributor's funds. Generosity waned as perceptions of mismanagement grew. The home's income dwindled to \$50 a month and its debt grew to \$325. A new superintendent from the East arrived the summer of 1897. Dr. H. A. Hampton was clear of purpose and observed that in housing "broken down, drunken, old women" the home had drifted from its mission of helping "erring girls back to the path of rectitude." Rather unsympathetically, he concluded that the home had become "a dry dock for moral wrecks" who would be better served at the poor farm. Dr. and Mrs.

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<sup>8</sup> "Christian Workers, The Florence Crittenton Rescue Mission in Butte," *The Anaconda Standard*, February 29, 1896, 6.

<sup>9</sup> "Crittenton Mission, Articles of Incorporation Filed," *Butte Weekly Miner* (Butte, Montana), March 19, 1896, 5. Trustees included: A.H. Barret, George Stevenson, H. M. Patterson, E. J. Groeneveld, James H. Spencer, James Davidson and Octavius Hight.

<sup>10</sup> Ellen Baumler, "The Making of a Good Woman, Montana and the National Florence Crittenton Mission," *Montana, The Magazine of Western History* 53 (2003): 54.

Hampton closed Montana's first Crittenton Home on Saturday night, September 25, 1897, and returned to Philadelphia.<sup>11</sup>

Mr. Crittenton seemed better prepared to support his mission in Montana on his second trip to the Northwest in the spring of 1899. He conducted revivals in Spokane, Butte, Anaconda, Helena, and Missoula. Mrs. Emma Moffatt, a former theatrical performer from San Francisco, traveled with Mr. Crittenton inspiring congregations with her vocal talent. During the revivals in each town, she also organized committed women into Circles, which were structured networks of financial and moral support for the future clients of a new Crittenton Home in Montana.<sup>12</sup>

Butte's first Florence Crittenton Circle organized on Friday, May 5, 1899.<sup>13</sup> Two widows who had contributed towards Butte's Home in 1896 became officers: president E. Frakes, and treasurer L. J. Hensley. Thirty-two women became members and gathered for their first meeting in the Baptist Church. There was no discussion of reestablishing another home in Butte. Instead, the home should be in a small city unlike Butte, without "unlimited attractions," and "where the fragrance of flowers and the grandeur of healthy vegetable life are continually to be seen."<sup>14</sup>

The Circle's first president, Mrs. Frakes, also worked with Associated Charities and the Paul Clark Home for orphans.<sup>15</sup> She was acquainted with the younger Mrs. Bucher, who would become president of Butte's second Circle. Both women were officers of the Women's Relief Corp in 1897.<sup>16</sup> Mrs. Bucher had five living children at that time. She also held office in the Methodist Ladies Aid society, the female auxiliary of the A. O. U. W., and the W.C.T.U.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> M. G. O'Malley, "Echoes from the Distant Past," *Butte Montana Standard* (Butte, Montana), November 11, 1940, 8. This article republished a September 1897 article from an unnamed newspaper; "There Are Others and Worse," and "Closing of the Mission," *Butte Weekly Miner*, September 30, 1897, 4

<sup>12</sup> "Crittenton Circle, Twenty-Two Members Organize Themselves into a Working Band," *The Anaconda Standard* (Anaconda, Montana), May 16, 1899, 5.

<sup>13</sup> "An Impressive Service, Religiously Beautiful Was the Final Meeting, Evangelist Crittenton Implored All to Live Upright Lives," *The Anaconda Standard* (Anaconda, Montana), May 7, 1899, 8.

<sup>14</sup> "Beginning Good Work, First Meeting of Crittenton Rescue Circle, Home Under Discussion, Some Small City in the State Will Be Selected as a Location, Organization of the Circle Completed," *The Anaconda Standard*, May 9, 1899, 8.

<sup>15</sup> "Their Flower Mission, Close of the Floral Season for the Associated Charities," *Anaconda Standard*, September 30, 1900, 18; "All Ready for the Ball, It is Intended That All Previous Efforts Shall Be Eclipsed, The Paul Clark Home," *Anaconda Standard*, November 11, 1900, 20.

<sup>16</sup> "Officers Elected," *Anaconda Standard*, December 15, 1897, 7.

<sup>17</sup> "Officers Elected," *Anaconda Standard*, January 4, 1898, 5; "Later Society Events of the Week," *Anaconda Standard*, January 6, 1901, 4; "W.C.T.U. Elected Officers," *Butte Inter Mountain*, October 3, 1903, 5.

Butte's second Circle organized on August 8, 1902.<sup>18</sup> Mrs. Bucher was elected president, and like other early officers, namely, Mrs. Charles Passmore, Mrs. Edgar M. Tower, and Mrs. Alex McCullough, she held an office in the Circle for more than 15 years.<sup>19</sup> Mrs. Bucher garnered the respect of her colleagues as she worked with young women; she was elected Superintendent of Rescue Work in 1904, the same year that organization's telephone was installed in her home.<sup>20</sup> She held that office through 1917, at least, when she became better known as the Matron of the Butte Maternity Home.<sup>21</sup>

## Campaign for First Female Police Officer

J. M. Kennedy of the State Bureau of Child and Animal Protection took aim at dance halls in his Fourth Biennial Report.<sup>22</sup> Dance halls were also a concern of the Circle.

The Circle, the Ministerial Association, and Prosecuting Attorney Sielaff unsuccessfully attempted to close Renshaw Hall in 1904. The proprietor who hosted Sunday evening dancing was taken to court for breaking Sabbath laws. A dozen of the Circle's members, together with nine ministers, made up the bulk of the audience in Justice Colligan's Walkerville Courtroom.<sup>23</sup> The arguments of the prosecuting attorney and his supporters did not sway the jury, which returned with a not guilty verdict after 10 minutes of deliberation.<sup>24</sup>

Less than ten years after the unsuccessful attempt to close a dance hall, the Circle advocated securing a slum worker and campaigned for Butte's first female police officer. In 1910, Mrs. Bucher explained:

It will be the duty of this officer to look after young girls who frequent wine rooms, dance halls and to otherwise assist in giving the city a moral clean up... It will be her wish to do the

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<sup>18</sup> "Work Done by The Crittenton Charity," *Butte Inter Mountain*, October 24, 1903, 6.

<sup>19</sup> "Crittenton Home Circle Election, Mrs. C. H. Bucher Unanimously Chosen President – Is Her Third Term," *Butte Inter Mountain*, October 20, 1903, 6.

<sup>20</sup> "Turning Point of Year, Florence Crittenton Circle Holds Important Meeting, The Election of Officers," *Anaconda Standard*, April 19, 1904, 7.

<sup>21</sup> The Butte Maternity Home was listed in the 1916 City Directory. Mrs. Bucher was still listed as the Superintendent of Rescue Work for the Florence Crittenton Circle in 1917.

<sup>22</sup> Finn, 124-125.

<sup>23</sup> "Turning Point of Year," *Anaconda Standard*, April 19, 1904, 7.

<sup>24</sup> "Ministers Lose Again, The Dance Hall Case Goes Against Them," *Anaconda Standard*, April 20, 1904, 8.

slumming in co-operation with the humane officers and the city officers, as it is done in other cities.<sup>25</sup>

The press gave the Circle credit for its successful two-year campaign to secure Butte's first female police officer. Miss A. Pfeiffer of Pittsburg, Pennsylvania was introduced to Mayor Duncan and the city and county police officers on October 14, 1913. Mrs. Bucher praised Miss Pfeiffer's experience in other cities and said that "she hoped that Miss Pfeiffer would be deputized by the city and county officials as a police officer, that they would work in harmony with her and support her in what arrests she would make."<sup>26</sup>

### Judge Donlan and Officer Schoenfeld

Mrs. Bucher worked closely with the President of the State Bureau of Child and Animal Protection, Mr. Otto Schoenfeld, and was present in the courtroom of Judge Donlan who oversaw cases involving many needy children.<sup>27</sup>

In 1903, the Circle handed over two cases to County Attorney Peter Breen and President Schoenfeld. Mrs. Bucher received the promise of these officers "to see that justice would be done as far as possible."<sup>28</sup>

In 1914, Judge Donlan presided in the case of Lottie Sodan, an orphan whose foster-guardian parents divorced, remarried, and vied for guardianship. Judge Donlan granted guardianship, and Mrs. Bucher followed up in her role of Superintendent of Rescue Work to ensure that the girl attended school.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> "Crittenton Circle Meets," *The Anaconda Standard*, November 22, 1910, 7.

<sup>26</sup> "Police Woman Here Will Ask for Start, Florence Crittenton Circle Secured Pittsburg Worker, Will Probe Dance Halls, Wine rooms and rooming house questions," *The Anaconda Standard*, October 14, 1913, 9.

<sup>27</sup> Finn, 118-121.

<sup>28</sup> "Work Done by The Crittenton Charity," *Butte Inter Mountain*, October 24, 1903, 6.

<sup>29</sup> "Her Future is Fixed She'll Be Cared for, Lottie Sodan is Placed in Good Hands and Provided For, Foster Father Guardian, Superintendent Bucher of rescue work will look after her," *The Anaconda Standard*, June 7, 1914, 7.

## The Helena Home

The Circle sent Butte girls to the Helena Home that was established in July 1899, just months after Mr. Crittenton's second trip to Montana.<sup>30</sup> It incorporated as part of the national Florence Crittenton Mission a year after its start, on June 12, 1900.<sup>31</sup>

As girls from the home began to return to Butte, the Circle established a new role to ensure that the girls complete their reformation. Mrs. Bucher and Mrs. McCullough were elected guardians. Among other responsibilities, they helped the women returning to Butte find suitable employment.<sup>32</sup>

About the same time, Mrs. N. Wolfe, one of the national organizers of Crittenton Circles, visited Montana. She organized classes at the Helena Home: sewing, laundry, nursing, and cooking, and proposed a plan for better communication between the home and the Montana Circles. Mrs. Wolfe directed that each Circle in Montana would elect a member to the Helena Home's board of managers. This plan put each circle in direct touch with Matron Mary Watts.<sup>33</sup>

One of the Helena Home's most successful matrons, Mrs. Lena Cullum, was recruited by the Butte Circle. Mrs. Cullum became Matron in 1907 and she ran the Helena Home for 38 years.<sup>34</sup> During her first year at the Home, the Circle was pleased to learn that Mrs. Collum was "much beloved by the girls and admired by the board of managers... The report was very inspiring to the Butte board, as it was instrumental in securing the services of Mrs. Cullom [sic]."<sup>35</sup>

## Twin Bridges

In addition to sending girls to the Helena Home, the Butte Circle referred children to the Montana Children's Home in Twin Bridges. Mrs. Bucher gave a glowing report after taking a child there in 1904:

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<sup>30</sup> "Circle is Flourishing, What the Crittenton Work Has Accomplished, Interest Still Continues, Local Society, Though Only a Little Over a Year Old, Has Done a Good Deal – Something About the Home," *Anaconda Standard*, October 12, 1900, 12.

<sup>31</sup> Baumler, "Good Woman," 55.

<sup>32</sup> "Heart and Soul in It, Members of Florence Crittenton Circle Do Much Good, Broaden Field Of Endeavor, New Officers Are Created to Embrace New Duties," *The Anaconda Standard*, August 18, 1903, 11.

<sup>33</sup> "Rescue Women Extending Work, At Meeting in Butte Florence Crittenton Circle Decides on Forward Step, Will Reach Still Further, Plans Are Perfected to Throw Strong Guard Around Weaker Sisters," *Butte Inter Mountain*, July 29, 1903.

<sup>34</sup> Baumler, "Good Woman," 60.

<sup>35</sup> "Matters of Interest at Crittenton Circle, Doings of The Regular Monthly Meeting," *The Anaconda Standard*, April 22, 1908, 3.

Mrs. C. H. Bucher... is loud in her praise of this state institution. A record just made at the home speaks volumes... There are 135 inmates there now... and yet the reports show that it has been six months since a physician was called. Mr. and Mrs. William Montjoy are in charge and have been for the last seven years. They are highly thought of in the little city of Twin Bridges and have proved such wise and loving superintendents of the welfare of the many little ones brought under their care that the home is looked upon as one big, happy family.<sup>36</sup>

## Miles City

Montana Circles, with the support of the national Crittenton President Kate Barrett, lobbied the legislature in 1913. Mrs. Bucher advocated that Montana, like Washington state, appropriate \$3,000 annually for the Helena Home, and that the state law forbidding appropriations to sectarian or charitable organizations be set aside.<sup>37</sup>

Also, a major change at the State Reform School in Miles City was discussed. Some legislators proposed that the school only house boys, and that Florence Crittenton Circles around the state take over the care of the girls committed to the reformatory by juvenile courts. Mrs. Bucher reported: “the plans contemplated giving the circle complete jurisdiction over the girls committed to the home and that the state’s interest would be in paying the expenses of the institution.”<sup>38</sup>

## Work of the Circle apart from *Mining Childhood*

The Butte Florence Crittenton Circle and Mrs. Charles H. Bucher were involved in a number of significant political and Progressive Era social issues that were not mentioned in *Mining Childhood*.

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<sup>36</sup> “No Business for Physician, More Than a Hundred Children and No Doctor Bills in Six Months, Record at Orphans’ Home,” *Anaconda Standard*, May 22, 1904, 8.

<sup>37</sup> “Babies Are Wanted for Homes in Butte,” *The Anaconda Standard*, January 15, 1913, 12.

<sup>38</sup> “Wayward Girls to Have a New Home, State May Change Reformatory System, Girls Cared for at Helena, and boys will remain in Miles City quarters,” *The Anaconda Standard*, June 19, 1913, 4.

## Campaign for Jail Matron

Montana legislated a juvenile court system in 1907 and required that juveniles be housed separately from adults.<sup>39</sup> Before these laws were enacted, citizens in Butte had a vigorous debate about conditions in the jails and their suitability for women and juveniles. The Circle chronicled deplorable jail conditions, especially for women, and agitated for a female Jail Matron.

The Circle wrote letters, interviewed Mayor Mullins, secured the support of Labor, churches, and clubs, and finally, presented petitions to the City Council.<sup>40</sup> The support of the Silver Bow Trades & Labor Assembly, which represented every union in the city, was notable. Mrs. Bucher published the letter from Gus Frankle, secretary of the organization:

Your plan of establishing the office of police matron at our city jail received the unqualified indorsement [sic] of our organization. There is no question in the minds of the working people that a reform in the affairs of our city jail, like the one your organization proposes, is very much needed, indeed, especially in view of the facts cited in your letter. Anything that is being done toward uplifting these unfortunate women will likewise tend to improve society at large.<sup>41</sup>

Before the presenting their petitions to the Council, members of the Silver Bow Trades & Labor Assembly, Ministerial Association, Women's Club, Homer club, Grace Methodist Church, A.O.U.W., Modern Woodmen, Machinists' Union, Knights of Pythias, Teamsters' Union, Stationary Engineers, Masons, and the Circle finalized their presentations in Mrs. Bucher's living room.<sup>42</sup>

When the City Council gathered in their special session on the last Saturday evening before Christmas, they postponed hearing the petition to discuss an urgent matter – the impeachment of Mayor Mullins. The petitioners did not speak until late that night. But before adjourning, the Council appointed a committee to consult with County Commissioners regarding a matron for the jails.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Finn, 121-122.

<sup>40</sup> "Conditions Deplorable, No Fit Accommodations for Female Prisoners at Jail, Police Matron Is Wanted, Florence Crittenton Circle is Agitating Question for Better Treatment of Women at Both Jails," *The Anaconda Standard*, November 17, 1903, 10.

<sup>41</sup> "Matron for Jail to Be Advocated, Florence Crittenton Circle Circulates Petition to The City Councilmen, Assembly in Favor Of It, Believes Matron Will Benefit Conditions in Bastiles," *Butte Inter Mountain*, November 30, 1903, 9.

<sup>42</sup> "All Interested in The Matter Are to Meet, Urge Appointment of Female Police Official on City Council," *Butte Inter Mountain*, December 17, 1903, 6.

<sup>43</sup> "Lexow Committee Makes a Report, Malfeasance and Misconduct in Office and Violation of Oath of Office Are Charged Against Mayor, and It Is Recommended That Impeachment Proceedings Be Brought," *The Anaconda Standard*, December 20, 1903, 3.

The committee had not made a decision by the end of January when Mrs. Bucher was in the awkward position of publically defending the cause. A Butte nurse, Miss Schenkelberger, thought that the idea of hiring a Matron was good, but woefully incomplete. She secured the support of County Physician Donnelly, and urged the creation of an emergency hospital, especially for women and children who were drunkards or drug fiends.<sup>44</sup>

## Messenger Girls

When delivery boys went on strike in 1903, Western Union and other delivery services began to hire girls to replace the boys. Girls were delivering messages to the Red Light District during the night and the Circle protested. The Circle demanded that the delivery services stop hiring girls, and that parents not allow their daughters to be hired.<sup>45</sup>

## 1914 Montana Suffrage

Women's suffrage was on the ballot in Montana in 1914 and Butte citizens were curious about the opinion of its prominent church and benevolence worker, the mother of eleven children, Mrs. Bucher. The *Anaconda Standard* placed a large portrait of Mrs. Bucher next to her lengthy editorial entitled, "Why I am not a suffragist." When anti-suffragists published the names of their supporters, they prominently placed Mrs. Bucher's name at the top of each list.

Mrs. Bucher argued that taking the time to understand the issues and vote in elections would be an infringement on running homes and rearing children for women. Women, she believed, could best contribute to society through their families. She asserted that women were more educated and knowledgeable of public issues than ever before, and they would therefore be better able to raise daughters, whose homes would be the strength of the nation, and sons, whose honesty and clean-living would influence good government.

Mrs. Bucher disagreed with temperance suffragists, including her friends in the W.C.T.U., who believed that voting women could more swiftly bring about the national prohibition of liquor. She noted

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<sup>44</sup> "Society Makes Protest, Crittenton Circle Objects to Request of Woman, She is Not Even a Member," *Anaconda Standard*, January 20, 1904, 11.

<sup>45</sup> "Crittenton Rescue Circle Against It, Protests Against Hiring Girls to Do Messenger Work," *Butte Inter Mountain*, April 3, 1903, 3; "The Price of Innocence," *The Kalispell Bee* (Kalispell, Montana), April 7, 1903.

that Butte had a good number of drinking women and that women “are as wide apart on moral questions as are the men.”

She was aware that some female property owners, unmarried women, and the childless wanted the vote. However, she argued that they were in the minority and that women without children could be of most use to society by assisting families in need. She believed, that in the struggle for suffrage, “we are apt to lose more that we could possibly gain, and overlook greater opportunities for bettering humanity and thereby government, that lie close at hand.”<sup>46</sup>

Mrs. Bucher became one of six vice-chairmen of the Butte Anti-Suffrage Association. Men narrowly approved Montana’s constitutional amendment for women’s suffrage. However, it failed in Silver Bow County by 34 votes.<sup>47</sup>

### Nickel Annie and Mrs. Bucher

Nickel Annie was a well-known Butte beggar during the Great Depression. She had once been a housekeeper for copper baron Senator W. A. Clark, long before moving in with the Bucher family.

Some 20 years ago “Nickel Annie,” whose real name was Margaret English, went to live with Mrs. C. H. Bucher, 903 Nevada avenue, to “help with the house work”... She gradually drifted away from the Bucher home, friends said... It is believed that during this time, despite the fact she was adequately provided with clothing and food, she took up the dirge, “five cents please.”<sup>48</sup>

### The Butte Maternity Home

After a decade of confident leadership in the Butte Florence Crittenton Circle, Mrs. Bucher undertook a new endeavor. With her three youngest daughters still at home, she established the Butte Maternity Home in her residence at 903 Nevada Avenue. She purposed “to care for and nurse women patients” of the class of persons reached by the Helena Home, and “to accommodate married women or

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<sup>46</sup> Mrs. C. H. Bucher, “Why I Am Not a Suffragist,” *The Anaconda Standard*, January 25, 1914, 25; “Ballot Not Wanted Many Women State, Organization of Anti-Suffragists Will endeavor to offset teachings of ‘Votes for Women’ workers, More than sixty names signed to the pledge,” *The Anaconda Standard*, May 16, 1914, 9; “List Of Noted Names Among Anti-Suffragists,” *The Anaconda Standard*, May 25, 1914, 8.

<sup>47</sup> “Anti-Suffragists Are Campaigning,” *The Daily Missoulian* (Missoula, Montana), July 12, 1914, 15; 1914 Suffrage Vote, <http://ceic.maps.arcgis.com>., Accessed: January 28, 2016.

<sup>48</sup> “‘Five Cents Please,’ Familiar Plea, Is Silenced in Death,” *The Montana Standard*, April 29, 1936, 1; My mother remembered Nickel Annie’s tiny room under the living room staircase.

any who need care and attention and skillful nursing.” The most gratifying part of her job involved finding homes for the babies of patients who chose to give them away:

I used to think that some time I would have supplied all the wants and to fear that I could not always be fortunate enough to find a home – a good home – for some poor little helpless thing, but I do not have to fear now. I have confidence that the time will never come when there is not some door open to welcome a baby boy or girl. It is a source of gratification to me to know that I have been the means of connecting the home that wanted a baby and the baby that wanted a home many times in Butte.<sup>49</sup>

In 1917, national reforms during World War I pressured Montana to crack down on prostitution, and overnight, Butte’s city fathers closed the Red Light district.<sup>50</sup> Mrs. Bucher decried the injustice of the expulsion of the district’s girls without warning, noting that the district’s saloon proprietors were given two years to vacate.<sup>51</sup> The Circle and Mrs. Bucher helped the displaced:

In addition to the usual work of caring for children and mothers, who have been abandoned by their husbands... the Florence Crittenton circle of this city, of which Mrs. C. H. Bucher of 903 Nevada avenue is the local superintendent, is busy at the present time in active work for the care and succor of unfortunate girls in Butte who have been suddenly left without a place of residence or means of livelihood as a result of the closing of the restricted district.<sup>52</sup>

Mrs. Bucher expressed empathy towards those who remained in the district, though her values dictated that girls experience faith, marriage, and then motherhood. At the time of the district’s closure, two young women from the East arrived in Butte penniless, homesick, and desperate. Mrs. Bucher and the Circle gave them shelter and helped them find work. “What a great thing it is to prevent girls from going wrong,” Mrs. Bucher said.<sup>53</sup>

A few weeks after Mr. Charles Nelson Crittenton’s first Butte revival in 1896, Mrs. Bucher gave birth to a son and named him after the evangelist. The boy grew up and became a dentist. Her youngest daughters, Elizabeth, Almeda, and Gladys came of age at 903 Nevada in the Maternity Home; all three

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<sup>49</sup> “Noble Work Makes Many Lives Happy, Incidents of Fifteen Years’ Rescue Work in Butte,” *Mower County Transcript* (Lansing, Minnesota), March 3, 1915, 1.

<sup>50</sup> Ellen Baumler, “Devil’s Perch: Prostitution from Suite to Cellar in Butte, Montana,” *Montana The Magazine of Western History* 48 (1998): 17.

<sup>51</sup> “Desire to Befriend and Safeguard Girls, Say instant closing was injustice to red light inmates,” *The Butte Daily Post* (Butte, Montana), January 24, 1917, 14.

<sup>52</sup> “True Charity is Willing to Help,” *The Butte Daily Post*, January 24, 1917, 14.

<sup>53</sup> “Society Aids Girls at Critical Moment,” *The Ronan Pioneer* (Ronan, Montana), February 16, 1917, 2.

became nurses, and her youngest, Gladys, had the distinction of becoming one of Butte's first public school nurses.<sup>54</sup>

Mrs. Bucher ran the Butte Maternity Home until her death on July 18, 1936. Reporters who had placed her advertisements and observed her enthusiasm for decades called her "the mother of 500 babies."<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> "Parent-Teacher of Madison Hold Meet," *Montana Butte Standard*, September 26, 1931.

<sup>55</sup> "Funeral Rites for 'Mother' Of More Than 500 Babies Will Be Held On Monday," *Montana Standard*, July 18, 1936.