
She must be called of God to do this the greatest work to which a woman is called. . . . It should not be entered upon as other professions are, for salary, for while the laborer is worthy of her hire (and a matron earns all she can get), yet, if this is the motive which prompts her, she will be a failure.

Fourteen Years Work with Street Girls

“This greatest work” was the rescue of fallen women by the National Florence Crittenton Mission. The Mission’s founder, Charles Crittenton, thus shared the goals of other maternity homes, and Crittenton matrons were chosen because they were “called of God,” not because they had acquired secular social work skills. Through the 1910s and 1920s, professional social workers shared Crittenton’s strategies. By the early 1940s, however, changing social work principles eroded that agreement, and in the post–World War II years, pious matrons and volunteers were partially replaced by caseworkers, and redemptive maternity by adoption. In 1970 pressure from social work professionals changed the Cleveland Crittenton Home’s historic mission as well.

In response to pressures from the Cleveland federated charity organization, the Cleveland Florence Crittenton Home professionalized its staff. But the Crittenton Home, and the other maternity homes, changed slowly and reluctantly, clinging to traditions derived from decades of re-claiming fallen women. Changed policies such as the endorsement of adoption, intended to modernize maternity homes, instead made them more peripheral to the care of unwed mothers.
The Professionalization of Social Work

The professionalization of social work began as a late-nineteenth-century response to problems of urban poverty, but social work’s early principles and practices developed in the child-saving decades of the early twentieth century.

The specific antecedents of social work were attempts to make charity more “scientific.” The earliest was the founding in 1874 of the National Conference on Charities and Corrections, at whose annual conferences representatives from both private and public agencies exchanged ideas and data about how to improve and coordinate social services. It became the National Conference on Social Work in 1917 and in 1956 the National Conference on Social Welfare.

The charity organization societies, which arose in the 1880s in large cities, also endorsed scientific charity: a more efficient distribution of outdoor relief by private nonsectarian agencies—themselves, for example. The societies distrusted public relief such that as distributed by the Cleveland Infirmary because it encouraged corruption in the givers, who used it as political patronage, and fostered pauperism in the recipients, who relied on it so that they would not have to earn a living. The charity organization societies distrusted equally the haphazardness and proselytizing of sectarian private agencies. The Retreat might have been an example.1 The societies, therefore, attempted systematic analyses of the causes of poverty in order to determine which of the poor were responsible for their own poverty (and were therefore responsible for its solution) and which should be relieved by others.2 A poor relief system based upon such scientific analysis and collection of data and better coordination of agencies would also prevent the expensive duplication of private fund-raising efforts and the waste of charitable monies on the unworthy poor.

The desire for efficient and systematic relief was accompanied by the desire to professionalize those who distributed it, specifically by supplementing, if not replacing, volunteer “friendly visitors” to the poor with men and women who had specific skills and clear-cut guidelines for their work.3 To provide this, social work education programs were established, beginning with a summer training program organized in 1898 by the New York Charity Organization Society that developed into the Columbia School of Social Work. By 1919 there were fifteen schools of social work in the United States.4

Most of the new social workers were women. The nineteenth-century ideology that described women as caring and nurturing, and which had encouraged them to join the Women’s Christian Association and the mul-
titude of other benevolent and evangelical activities, encouraged them to become friendly visitors for the charity organization societies or other relief organizations. Early social work combined this older gender-based tradition with scientific expertise now available at social work schools. The new profession had not developed the exclusive criteria for membership—long, expensive years of education or overtly sex-discriminatory policies—that barred women from entering law, medicine, the clergy, and to a lesser extent, academic life. Not least important, because it was in the nonprofit sector, social work did not pay well, making it less attractive to men and therefore more open to women. A growing number of college-educated middle-class women found social work an attractive career in which they could at first share leadership positions with men.  

The feminization of the social work profession during the early twentieth century took place simultaneously, and not coincidentally, with the development of the child-saving movement. Progressive child-savers fought for a wide variety of reforms, including child labor laws, juvenile courts, playgrounds, better schools, and public health measures such as free milk dispensaries. Child-saving was a major impetus for establishing settlement houses and for improving child-care institutions and child-placement agencies.

During the 1910s child-saving and professional social work became closely connected. The 1910 Western Reserve Conference on the Care of Neglected and Dependent Children not only reiterated the central message of the 1909 White House Conference on Dependent Children—that children should be raised by families, not institutions—but endorsed “socially trained workers . . . both in institutional and placement agencies.” Child welfare, therefore, became an early social work specialty.

In 1912 child-saving got another boost from the federal government with the establishment of the U.S. Children’s Bureau in the Department of Labor. The bureau did invaluable investigations on child welfare, and through its vast correspondence with mothers all over the country, it became a leader in the movement for “scientific motherhood.” The bureau also tried to establish professional social work standards for child care for both public and private agencies.

THE NATIONAL FLORENCE CRITTENTON MISSION AND REDEMPTIVE MATERNITY

Although the founding of the National Florence Crittenton Mission (NFCM) was almost contemporaneous with the beginnings of scientific charity, the Mission was the product of the evangelical tradition that had
produced the Retreat. Like the Retreat, the goal of the Crittenton homes was saving women, not children; their best-known strategy was redemptive maternity.

NFCM co-founder Charles Crittenton was a successful businessman whose religious conversion impelled him to become a street preacher and rescue worker among the brothels and saloons of New York City, in the manner of YMCA and YWCA missionaries. According to his account, he realized that it was futile to tell a prostitute to “go and sin no more” if there was nowhere for her to go. In 1883 he opened the Florence Crittenton Night Mission (named after his deceased daughter) to offer prostitutes food, shelter, and the gospel.8 A subsequent trip around the world convinced Crittenton that rescue work was imperative everywhere, and he opened several homes on the West Coast in the early 1890s. A temperance advocate and a one-time Prohibition Party candidate for mayor of New York, Crittenton attended an 1892 national WCTU convention and met the organization’s charismatic leader, Frances Willard. Crittenton pledged five thousand dollars to open five new WCTU rescue homes, and some WCTU homes later joined the Crittenton chain.9

Brochures for Crittenton homes bore the motto “Go and Sin No More.” To Crittenton, religious conversion was the most important component of the fallen woman’s rescue. He believed in a literal heaven and hell and in the “direct interposition of God and of Satan in human affairs” so that conversion (or damnation) was a likely and logical occurrence.10 Like the founders of the Retreat, Crittenton deplored the double standard that permitted an erring man to escape his sins and left the woman to pay for them. He pointed out that if Christ enjoined human beings to be their brothers’ keepers, so ought they to be their sisters’. He preferred the nickname Willard gave him, “the brother of girls,” to the more commonly used “millionaire evangelist.”11

In 1893 Crittenton was joined by Dr. Kate Waller Barrett, whose ideas about the reclamation of fallen women were to dominate Crittenton work until the 1950s. Barrett, the wife of an Episcopal minister and the mother of six children, had attempted rescue work in Atlanta, Georgia. The obstacles she encountered encouraged her to get a medical degree so that she could better serve women and to attend a lecture by Crittenton that persuaded her to combine her efforts with his.12 In 1895 they founded the NFCM, which received a national charter from Congress in 1898. Crittenton was NFCM president and Barrett was vice president. After Crittenton’s death in 1909, Barrett was president of the national organization until her death in 1925.

The NFCM was a loose federation in which the homes remained fairly autonomous. Some were rescue missions, others served delinquent
Social Workers to the Rescue

girls referred by juvenile courts, and some were maternity homes. The NFCM provided advice, direction, and sometimes funds. Homes referred to each other within the network, a valuable service to unwed mothers who did not want to give birth in their hometowns. In 1897 there were fifty-one homes affiliated with the NFCM; by 1918 there were sixty, and they cared for 8,679 women and 2,309 babies.\(^{13}\)

A prominent public figure, a suffragist, and a member of the International Council of Women, Dr. Barrett was best known for her leadership in rescue work, which by the 1910s had become directed less at prostitutes than at unwed mothers. Although she was devoutly religious, like her mentor Crittenton, her most popular publication was entitled *Some Practical Suggestions on the Conduct of a Rescue Home* (1903). The rescue home she envisioned sounded much like the Retreat, with the same emphasis on religious conversion, domesticity, and discipline within a familial setting. The home’s goal must be the “spiritual regeneration and industrial independence” of fallen women, Barrett believed. It should be first and foremost a home, not an institution: “A true home—God’s home—where [a girl] will experience safety and love.” The home’s inmates should be a family, in which shared domestic tasks would teach the girls useful skills: “We believe that every lady should know how to cook, wash, and iron, if she does not know anything else, and as we expect our girls to be ladies in the highest and truest sense, they must all learn to do these things, and do them well,” Barrett wrote. When one inmate’s mother protested that her daughter should not have to do housework, Dr. Barrett is said to have responded: “My dear woman, if I had been so unfortunate in training my daughter that when she was eighteen years old I had to bring her to a rescue home for the cause you have brought your daughter to us, I would be very glad if someone else would try a different method in dealing with her from what I had tried.” There were strict rules about visitors and mail and daily schedules for work and recreation.\(^ {14}\) The home, Dr. Barrett wrote, should be “a big, old-fashioned roomy house in a quiet part of the city, with large sunny bright rooms, . . . with books and magazines on hygiene, child study, and self culture” and an especially pretty room for the nursery, “for no home is complete without a baby.”\(^ {15}\)

Dr. Barrett believed that babies and maternity played the most crucial role in an unwed mother’s reclamation.\(^ {16}\) In 1897 she delivered a much-reprinted speech to Crittenton workers in which she stated the cardinal principle of the Crittenton homes: that motherhood itself was a “means of regeneration.” The implications of redemptive maternity were practical: the unwed mother should remain in the maternity home for at least six months with her child and if at all possible keep the child with
her when she left. Ideally, the father and mother should marry, but if this was not possible, the mother should raise the child alone for her own sake: "There is that God-implanted instinct of motherhood that needs only to be aroused to be one of the strongest incentives to right living."17 Barrett's ideas rested not only upon her optimistic faith in woman's innate maternal capabilities but upon her realistic assessment of male nonsupport.

Dr. Barrett was a transitional figure in rescue and maternity home work, partially—although not completely—bridging the gap between the evangelical Charles Crittenton and the professional social workers of the twentieth century. Her principle of redemptive maternity became an article of faith for both rescue workers and child-care professionals for the next three decades.18

THE CLEVELAND FLORENCE CRITTENTON HOME, 1912–1937

The Cleveland Florence Crittenton Home began service in 1912, almost simultaneously with the Cleveland Federation for Charity and Philanthropy, which sought to professionalize the city's private social welfare agencies. The policies of the Crittenton Home and the other maternity homes were endorsed by the Federation.

The Crittenton Home differed from the Retreat in some significant respects. There were no wealthy philanthropists or their daughters and wives on the early Crittenton boards. The first board of trustees included three Protestant ministers and a school superintendent.19 Unlike the Retreat board of managers, who received donations and social recognition for their work with fallen women, the Crittenton board had continual financial woes as well as difficulty finding a neighborhood that would accept the home. A site was located on Cleveland's northeast side, but the home was much smaller than the Retreat, with a capacity of about fifteen women. Photographs show a spacious, comfortable-looking home with no enclosing walls, much like the ideal home Barrett had proposed. The Cleveland facility's small size is probably explained by the presence of three established homes—the Retreat, St. Ann's, and the Salvation Army Rescue—but that may in turn explain its inmates' loyalties to it, evidenced in their frequent return visits to the home and continued correspondence with its matrons.20

The home began to specialize almost immediately in unwed mothers, but because its founder, Mrs. Isabelle Alexander, was a social worker attached to the juvenile court, its first inmates were girls judged delinquent or predelinquent by the court. Statistics collected by the home for
1916–17 indicate the inmates’ working-class backgrounds. Twenty-five of the fifty-eight girls listed housework or factory work as their occupation; most had finished sixth grade but only one had three years of high school. They were almost overwhelmingly Protestant.21

Despite its twentieth-century beginning in Cleveland, the Crittenton Home shared the nineteenth-century evangelical goal and strategies of its founders and of other Cleveland maternity homes: spiritual reclamation through religious conversion and redemptive maternity. Its first annual report boasted of success in saving many a girl who had “fallen from the pathway of virtue and purity. . . . Impressing that girl with the glorious gift and responsibility of Motherhood as well as with the very highest and strict principles of morality and right, has in many cases been clearly rewarded by a complete transformation of the girl’s character.”22 That sought-for transformation meant that women were required to stay with their infants for six months after confinement, which became the policy of the NFCM as well as of the Retreat and the other homes.

Crittenton work was unmistakably women’s work. The homes had a volunteer medical staff to care for women who were pregnant or ill. The 1907 Crittenton guidelines on physicians advised that the doctor should be female, if possible: “This is pre-eminently woman’s work to care for and succor her unfortunate sisters.” A male doctor might offend “whatever of modesty” the unwed mother still possessed. The guidelines also warned against allowing a home to become a clinic for medical students.23 The first doctor at the Cleveland home was male, but the home usually had women doctors on the volunteer staff as well.

More important than doctors were the Crittenton female volunteers. The Cleveland home, like those elsewhere, relied heavily on Crittenton “Circles” of women from church guilds, the Kings’ Daughters, WCTU chapters, and the Order of the Eastern Star. The circles performed a wide variety of services for homes’ inmates, both mothers and children. In 1916, for example, the Bible class of a local Methodist church presented each girl with a Christmas present of a Bible, to be used at Sunday devotions.24

Even after the home joined the Federation, the circles raised crucial funds with monthly luncheons at the home and an annual June Day festival where fancywork and baked goods were sold. A male board of trustees handled the money, but the female board of managers oversaw daily operation of the home, ordering food, arranging for repairs, admitting inmates, and making arrangements for them and their infants when they left. The board also hired and fired the staff. The only full-time staff person was a matron, chosen for piety and strength of character. The matron must be a Christian, Dr. Barrett had advised, “for unless she is a child of
God, she can never have [the] gift of forgetfulness” of the fallen woman’s sin. The Cleveland home’s second matron, Mrs. Ella Jewell, was apparently such a woman. She remained at her post from 1914 until her death in 1928.

Like the Retreat, the home was a charter member of the Cleveland Federation. The Federation itself was in the vanguard of the federated charity movement, which, in the spirit of scientific charity, tried to rationalize both the fund-raising and the operations of the city’s myriad social welfare agencies. The Federation’s power over its member agencies derived from its ability to distribute or withhold the funds it raised from the community. With the encouragement of the president of the Federation, Martin A. Marks, the School of Applied Social Sciences at Western Reserve University was opened in 1916. The school fostered close organizational and intellectual ties between professional social workers and the Federation.

One of the Federation’s first actions was to organize the Conference on Illegitimacy, composed of agencies that dealt with unwed mothers and their children. As the conference’s name indicated, its primary interest was the children, not the mothers. The conference, like the Federation itself, was intended to make the delivery of services more efficient and professional. The Cleveland Conference soon joined the national Inter-City Conference on Illegitimacy, which was established in 1918 by a group of social workers and which until its demise in the mid-1930s held its annual meetings with the National Conference on Social Welfare. Cleveland Conference members included the city’s official child-placing agency, the Cleveland Humane Society; several hospitals; the juvenile court; the Babies’ Dispensary; and the Retreat, St. Ann’s Maternity and Infant Asylum, the Florence Crittenton Home, and the Salvation Army Rescue.

Through the Conference on Illegitimacy and the Children’s Council, which superseded it in 1935, the Federation tried to impose professional social work standards on the maternity homes. In 1922, for example, the conference endorsed the position that “the principles of good social case work should be applied to every phase of [maternity home] work. The Executive head of each maternity home should have thorough social case work training.” However, it was easier to state a preference for professionals than to compel agencies to hire them, and in 1922 there simply were not many professionals available. The only delegates to the conference who were social work professionals in the early 1920s worked for large agencies such as the Cleveland Humane Society, the city Child Welfare Division, or Cleveland’s Associated Charities. Maternity homes were represented at the conference by volunteer board members such as Mrs.
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Beatty from the Retreat, by matrons such as Mrs. Jewell, or by women religious, officers of the Salvation Army, and nuns from St. Ann’s.

Even those agencies that employed caseworkers provided few services for unwed mothers that required professional training. A good example is a Humane Society caseworker’s description in 1921 of her own handling of a sixteen-year-old unmarried mother, which had extended over a four-year period. The society’s involvement was prompted by a call from the “telephone operator at ——— Hospital” because the girl was ready to be discharged with her four-week-old baby and had no place to go. The caseworker’s initial investigation revealed the client to be “an American girl; orphaned; . . . she and her brother had lived with stepmother. . . . Woman anxious to give child for adoption.” The caseworker placed the girl temporarily in a maternity home, persuaded her to keep the baby, got her a job at domestic service, took her and her baby to the hospital on several occasions, tracked down the putative father and initiated court proceedings—only partially successful—against him for child support, took the girl into her own home when she lost her first job, found her another one, discouraged an inappropriate suitor, encouraged an appropriate one, and finally got her a third job. Final disposition: “W and Mr. W—married. . . . Both anxious to make home for child.” 30 A heroic odyssey, surely, but one requiring more perseverance and strength of character and body than classroom hours or textbook technique. 31

During the 1910s and 1920s professional social workers occasionally criticized Crittenton homes specifically and maternity homes in general. The professionals referred to the homes’ practices and rationales as “backward” or “unimaginative and unprogressive” because the homes did not employ trained caseworkers. 32 Such rhetoric to the contrary, caseworkers probably would have made little practical difference in the ways that the homes operated. Lacking both trained staff and clearly defined professional policies, the Conference on Illegitimacy simply endorsed the historic practices of the maternity homes—specifically, Barrett’s policy that an unwed mother and her child should remain together in the home so that the mother might be reclaimed. In 1914, the conference recommended that “in every possible case the mother be expected to nurse her child” because “maternity has no reforming impulse unless the mother has the care of the child for some time . . . [I]f a woman does have the responsibility of motherhood, she is much sobered thereby.” 33

Thus maternity homes continued to keep women and children together for weeks or even months after confinement. The long-range goal of maternity home care, as stated by Dr. Barrett and others, was to prepare women to take care of their children permanently. If a woman was
unable to take her child with her into domestic service, for example, the homes sometimes boarded the child, with the mother remaining financially responsible for it. If she was unable to pay, the Cleveland Humane Society might help. The arrangement may not fit the definition of "together," but the unwed mother at least did not officially give up custody of the child, and she might eventually be able to maintain it in her own home. A Salvation Army officer described just such a happy outcome to conference members: "A most ignorant and inexperienced girl, an orphan who had not hardly any advantage in life, became a mother at 16 years of age. Hard to handle before the baby was born, she afterward became exceedingly tractable. She was very fond of her child. After the usual stay in the . . . Home, she secured a position with her baby in a private family where she remained until the baby was more than a year old. After that she boarded the baby at the home. The child is now six years old. The mother is making $6 a week as a domestic and has a bank account. . . . She . . . has visited the child twice a week. She has improved wonderfully and is soon to marry and take her child with her." 34

In a 1924 publication the U.S. Children's Bureau also endorsed the homes' practices: "The policy of keeping mother and child together, at least during the nursing period, has for a long time been advocated and followed successfully by many maternity homes and some child-caring agencies." 35 But the bureau was not primarily concerned with the spiritual reclamation of the mother because the staff explained pregnancy out-of-wedlock in environmental as well as moral terms: the "background of illegitimacy" was bad home conditions and "poor character." 36 Bureau investigations showed that infant mortality was higher for illegitimate than for legitimate children, and the bureau reasoned that this was because unwed mothers abandoned their children or left them in unhealthy foundling homes or "baby farms" instead of nursing and caring for the infants themselves. True to its mission, the bureau was concerned with the physical well-being of children: illegitimacy was not about fallen women but about child welfare. 37

The bureau encouraged efforts to establish paternity and to enforce the father's financial responsibility, but because these usually failed, the bureau recognized that the mother must shoulder the parenthood alone. Well-run maternity homes, therefore, were commended for providing care for both mother and child for prolonged periods of time and encouraging the mother to be responsible for the child after she left the home. 38 Following the bureau's lead, the Cleveland Conference on Illegitimacy in 1926 noted: "There seemed to be general agreement among all agencies doing creditable work throughout the country . . . that the unmarried mother should keep her child, if at all possible, . . . instead of
separating mother and child and giving child for adoption, as was formerly done by many agencies. ... That adoption should be the last resort."  

**Women’s Work and Social Work, 1938–1970**

The financial crisis of the Depression created greater divergence between the policies of the social work profession and the traditions of the maternity homes. The Cleveland Crittenton Home partially professionalized its staff in the post–World War II years, but other policies remained unchanged.

In 1938, Maud Morlock of the U.S. Children’s Bureau expressed the growing professional concern with the prohibitive expense of institutionalization. She urged the annual convention of the NFCM to be more flexible in its approach to unwed mothers and to consider, for example, the use of foster home care, which was becoming more widely used for dependent children. By the early 1940s, social workers became convinced that adoption was preferable to keeping mother and child together, for the Depression also underscored the financial difficulty a woman supporting a child singlehandedly had. A Salvation Army officer, writing to Morlock in 1944, described this changed thinking: “The child was always discharged [from the maternity home] with the mother in the hope that its influence would better her life. ... There was an equally sincere conviction a little later that an unwed mother, if she kept her child, had not the slightest chance and that the child so kept was over-poweringly stigmatised.”

Demographic changes also challenged the traditional belief that motherhood was woman’s best and most useful role. Birth rates fell during the Depression, and the number of mothers in the paid labor force escalated during the early years of World War II. Recorded illegitimate births increasingly were to teenagers. Social workers like Morlock doubted that an adolescent, who “herself may feel unloved and unwanted,” could make a fit parent. Rejecting the idea that all women who had borne children were suitable mothers, social workers maintained that they must individualize each case, as Morlock suggested, and decide which women should or should not put their infants up for adoption.

The adoption of illegitimate children was not without its own dangers. Although state laws had tightened procedures, legal adoptions tripled between 1934 and 1944 because of the low birthrate during the Depression. The demand for white adoptive infants also created a black
market on which maternity homes and unwed mothers sold infants.\textsuperscript{44} Warning that “[i]nfan ts of unmarried mothers are especially in danger of being exploited,” the U.S. Children’s Bureau advised adoptions only through a licensed agency using professional caseworkers to do thorough investigations of adoptive families and children. This position was also endorsed by the Federation.\textsuperscript{45}

In this context, professionals now faulted maternity homes for long confinements of mothers and children. Homes kept the women and children together solely for the convenience of the institutions, argued one critic: “Back of [that practice] is the agency’s need for the services of the mother, not the baby’s need for the mother. The demand . . . here is for continuing penance beyond ordinary requirements, as well as an exploitation of her love for the baby.”\textsuperscript{46} Long confinements made adoption emotionally difficult: “Many maternity homes refuse to face realistically the mother’s wish to place her child in adoption.” Not surprisingly, the speaker concluded that skilled casework service should be available to help the mother “make this decision of major importance to her and to the baby.”\textsuperscript{47}

In response to such criticisms, the NFCM adopted some of the vocabulary of professional social work.\textsuperscript{48} However, the organization remained extremely reluctant to endorse the use of secular social workers who might object to the homes’ religious mission, especially because the NFCM had begun to train its own personnel in the 1920s. Neither of Dr. Barrett’s successors, her children Reba Barrett Smith and Robert Smith Barrett, had secular social work training. (When the NFCM did begin to meet with the National Conference on Social Work in 1946, it was over the objections of Robert Smith Barrett.)\textsuperscript{49} An NCFM committee on standards in 1934 maintained that every home should employ a caseworker but that the matron should be “an intelligent, Christian woman” and that the “superintendent should be a Protestant.”\textsuperscript{50}

By 1943 pressure from outside organizations such as federated charities and from within the NFCM itself compelled the organization to modify grudgingly and halfheartedly its opposition to adoption and secular workers. Its board of trustees urged that “the basic Crittenton principle of keeping mother and child together always be held a sacred responsibility”; however, if adoption were imperative, it should “be handled in full accordance with State laws . . . and only with legally recognized child-placing agencies,” which did employ caseworkers.\textsuperscript{51} The probable adoption of children also meant shorter confinements for the mothers and less expense for the homes, a practical advantage that may have somewhat offset the emotional and political difficulties of changing historic tradition. In addition, many states, including Ohio, required that
mothers and infants stay together until arrangements could be made for the children, and this requirement could mean a lengthy confinement even if the home's policies had been modified.

The tradition of local autonomy allowed Crittenton homes to regard or disregard NCFM's pronouncements, and practices varied widely from one home to another. In Cleveland, the volunteer board of managers still ran the Crittenton Home, as it had in the 1910s, controlling its domestic routines, the admission and discharge of clients, and the hiring of staff. In 1947 Children’s Services, a child-placing agency, complained that Crittenton board members, rather than caseworkers, also did the follow-up on women after they left the home.\textsuperscript{52}

Worse, the chairman of the Crittenton board arranged “gray market” adoptions. Although legal, these were condemned by professionals as well as the NCFM because they bypassed investigation of adoptive homes by caseworkers. A Federation study of such independent placements in 1942–43 revealed that six of the sixty-two children were placed by the Crittenton Home, although it was the smallest of the maternity homes.\textsuperscript{53} According to the Cleveland Press, by the end of the decade, the Crittenton Home had “a widespread reputation” as a source for gray market babies.\textsuperscript{54} As the scandal became public, the home in 1949 hired its first full-time professional social worker, Lois Bielfelt, as home superintendent. In 1950 the board of managers was disbanded and the board of trustees, which now included women, took charge of the home's daily operation. The facility then affiliated with the newly organized Florence Crittenton Homes Association (later the Florence Crittenton Association of America). The association, formed as the result of dissatisfaction with traditional NCFM policies, endorsed professional social work standards for the care of unwed mothers, a position then reiterated by the Cleveland home’s board of trustees in 1952.\textsuperscript{55}

The Crittenton caseworker’s careful records reveal how the agency, which had originally gone to great lengths and expense to compel a woman to keep her child, now applied great psychological pressure upon a mother to place her child for adoption: “[_______], age 24. . . . While with us, she fluctuated constantly in her feelings about the baby, who is now in temporary board. Her life experience has been such that we feel she needs psychiatric help, but she is not ready to accept it. Ultimate plans for the baby are uncertain. . . . [_______], age 40. . . . While with us, [she] was able to gain a more optimistic attitude toward life and is looking forward to her future plans. The baby has been placed for adoption. . . . [_______], age 34. . . . [S]he kept her baby on the basis that she is too old to expect to have another. The baby is in a temporary
boarding home where [the mother] hopes to keep her indefinitely. We have been unable to get her to accept psychiatric help and her approach to her situation is most unreal. Her caseworker will continue seeing her in an effort to protect the baby."  

Nevertheless, the belief in redemptive maternity died hard at the Crittenton Home. Not until 1962, and only after the repeated urging of Children's Services and the Ohio Department of Health, did the home close its nursery and allow infants to be placed for adoption directly from the hospital. In the tradition of Kate Waller Barrett, the Crittenton board continued to maintain that mothers should see their babies "to impress upon them a sense of responsibility."  

Through the 1950s the home was able to employ a half- or full-time caseworker, although much of the casework was still done by children's agencies and concerned the child's welfare, not the mother's. With the help of Cleveland Foundation monies from the Retreat bequest, the Crittenton Home employed a part-time group worker, a practice soon followed by the other homes. Although all the maternity homes consistently requested Federation funds to hire professional staff, they often were turned down.  

The Crittenton Home often ran a deficit, and its efforts to explain its clientele and financial picture to the Federation repeated the familiar stereotypes and realities of unwed motherhood: "Girl is 15 years old. Alleged father has left town. Mother of girl is a widow earning $280 a month to raise two children. . . . Girl is 22; works in factory. Stepfather refuses to have her in the house. Alleged father denies paternity. . . . Girl is 23 and sole support of aged parents. . . . Alleged father has disappeared." The Federation's response was to recommend better collection procedures from a clientele that was increasingly middle-class and, in the Federation's estimation, more able to pay its own way.  

Perennially strapped for money, the home continued to rely on volunteers to provide services and funds in the tradition hallowed by custom. In addition to the volunteers from church groups, the home had become a training site for Cleveland Junior League provisional members. In 1970 the Cleveland Crittenton Home claimed the services of seventy volunteers.  

The professionalization of the Cleveland home's staff, therefore, remained only partial, and caseworkers often differed only slightly from volunteers in their care of unwed mothers. When Superintendent Bielfelt came to the Crittenton home in 1949, she discovered that Bible study classes were "actually the only formal program functioning." Although she was a secularly trained social worker, she did not halt the class but
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instead taught it herself for a year and a half. The homes’ other programs included classes in “knitting, sewing, shell-jewelry making,” which volunteers taught but which Bielfelt supervised. Bielfelt left the home in 1956.

Conclusion

In 1970 the Crittenton Home changed its mission, partly because of its continued financial difficulties. Equally important, the social activism and political ferment of the 1960s directed the attention of the Federation and the professional social work community to the problems of the inner city and black Americans and away from the private agencies that had been the Federation’s original concern.

In the early 1960s, the future of the Cleveland home had looked bright. Nationwide, sixty-nine hundred women entered the forty-five Crittenton homes in 1962. Most homes were filled to capacity; many had long waiting lists or had turned away clients. Because the Cleveland facility had received its first large bequest in 1962, the board planned to expand its home, a former mansion on once-elegant Euclid Avenue in the Hough area. As late as 1965, the home was filled to capacity. The neighborhood, however, had become a black ghetto that in 1966 was torn by the city’s worst race riot. The home was frequently broken into (once while the board of trustees was meeting there), and the staff, the clients, and their visiting families were harassed and sometimes even attacked on the street. This occasioned additional expenses for security and, most important, frightened away potential clients. After buying adjoining properties and paying an architect twenty-two thousand dollars to design an expanded facility, the board decided to move to a safer suburban location.

The proposed move was a last-ditch attempt to retain the home’s changing clientele, which, like that of the national organization, was predominantly white and middle-class. As occupancy fell and deficits climbed, the Cleveland home took fewer nonpaying women. The Federation, having already warned the home that taking fewer indigent clients would have serious repercussions, in 1967 cut its subsidy severely.

The cut was a response not only to the Crittenton Home’s dwindling clientele but to another disagreement between the maternity homes and the social work profession. In the wake of the Hough riots, Cleveland mayor Carl B. Stokes appointed a panel headed by Dr. Herman D. Stein of the Western Reserve University School of Applied Social Science to investigate the city’s welfare system. The panel concluded that much of
the blame for the "crisis in welfare" lay with the public sector, especially the inadequacy of state funding for Aid to Families of Dependent Children. The panel also urged that the private agencies of the Federation increase their involvement in "the problems of public welfare" and expand programs for the poor.66

This was not the direction that the Crittenton and other maternity homes had been going during the previous two decades. In 1968, 66.8 percent of the Crittenton Home's clientele lived outside the county, 18.2 percent were suburban residents and only 15 percent were residents of Cleveland. When the home admitted a few black women, fights broke out between them and the white clients.67 In March 1970 the Federation informed the Crittenton Home that it would no longer fund its program for unwed mothers. The official explanation was the "declining need for traditional maternity home services." The maternity homes were in fact about half empty.68

The Crittenton board did not deny the declining use of maternity homes by the "moderate-to-upper-income women" who could pay for service. Nor did it deny that changing sexual norms had apparently removed "the stigma formerly attached to unwed motherhood." But there was still a need for maternity home service, the board argued, and it was the dangerous and deteriorated Hough neighborhood, not the home itself, that was responsible for its lower occupancy. In conclusion, the Crittenton board angrily charged the Federation with capitulating to "the militant and aggressive demands for services made by the inner-city residents": the home had stayed the course, but the Federation had "changed direction."69 These were legitimate accusations. But maternity home services to a white, middle-class clientele, which the Federation itself had funded for at least two decades, no longer seemed relevant when black ghettos were going up in flames.

After some months of indecision, during which the Crittenton board asked the Federation for direction, the home acted on its own. It briefly provided temporary shelter for referrals from juvenile court, assuring itself of payment for services. The home site on Euclid Avenue was then sold, and services were transferred to two suburban sites, where in 1971 the agency opened group homes for nonpregnant delinquent girls, the Cleveland home's original clientele. Occupancy rates in all Crittenton homes fell in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and the changed nature of service had already become the practice elsewhere.70 The Cleveland agency also changed its name to Florence Crittenton Services. In 1976 the Florence Crittenton Association of America became the Florence Crittenton Division of the Child Welfare League of America, a broad-ranging child-advocacy agency.
The professionalization of social work constitutes an important chapter in social welfare history. The substitution of trained, efficient, secular caseworkers for devout and earnest amateurs is usually dated from the Progressive period, particularly the first decades of this century, when the first schools of social work were established and reformers experimented with traditional means of relieving poverty.

This is not what happened at the Cleveland Florence Crittenton Home or other maternity homes in Cleveland and elsewhere. Because the homes depended upon federated charities for funding, and, probably more important, because they survived into the late twentieth century, they did change some policies to conform to social work standards. But the slowness with which they capitulated is significant. Their employment of professional caseworkers began decades after schools of social work started to turn out graduates and decades after reformers had ostensibly changed institutional policies and practices. As in the case of their religious mission, maternity homes clung to their past, to customs of child care and volunteer participation initiated by the agencies' founders, sanctioned by decades of practice, and ultimately derived from the rescue of fallen women. In 1965 a national survey of maternity homes indicated that only 33 percent had professional, full-time caseworkers on their primary staffs.

Within the maternity homes the conflict between two gender-based approaches to social policy was played out: the nineteenth-century tradition of the pious philanthropist and Christian matron dedicated to the rescue of women versus the twentieth-century, professionally trained expert interested in child welfare. The names of the major public assistance programs for women are symbolic of these divergent strategies. The state mothers' pensions, although dating from the 1910s and 1920s, had nineteenth-century roots and promised aid to women; the 1935 federal Social Security Act program was called Aid to Dependent Children.

On the other hand, the conflict between women's work and social work should not be overstated. As the story of the Cleveland Crittenton Home shows, there were often few practical differences between them. The social worker and the rescue worker may have had different priorities, but both were more interested in changing unwed mothers than in changing the men who impregnated them or the economic and social conditions that permitted and then punished unwed motherhood.

The reluctance of homes to employ professionals was probably matched by the reluctance of professionals to be employed there and the reluctance of the Cleveland Federation to fund the social workers it mandated. Given a choice, secularly trained caseworkers logically chose to save children rather than redeem mothers because child welfare was at
least sometimes publicly funded. The slow professionalization of maternity homes is further evidence of the low status of the clientele, a status confirmed by the lack of public subsidy and dwindling interest on the part of the Federation during the 1960s.

The Federation's halfhearted efforts to compel maternity homes into the social work mainstream had unintended and ironic consequences. Professional staff, even if female, was more expensive than volunteer staff, and the requirement that homes hire caseworkers necessitated higher fees and a middle-class clientele that could afford to pay them. When the professionals urged that illegitimate children be placed for adoption, the maternity homes, whose raison d'être in the early twentieth century had been to keep mother and child together, became used almost exclusively by women who wanted to put their children up for adoption or who were persuaded to do so by staff at the homes. Maternity homes became shelters for women whose children were adoptable—white children. Black women were excluded by the shortage of adoptive homes for black infants and most maternity homes' written or unwritten policies of segregation. By the mid-1960s, the social work profession was no longer interested in the homes whose white, middle-class clientele the Federation's own policies had encouraged.

The professionalization of maternity home staff may have meant better services, but it also meant services for fewer women. The medical profession and the medicalization of childbirth would take maternity homes even further in the same direction.