

ation, although volunteers occasionally took children outside for short periods. The windows were barred and the plaster was peeling. The house had no play space, little instruction, and poor night supervision. Racial segregation forced assignment of some children to the House of Refuge, now called the St. Louis Industrial School.¹⁴¹

In 1918, St. Louis moved the house of detention into the new Children's Building, which also housed the city's juvenile courtroom and probation offices. The improved facility quickly suffered from overcrowding and inadequate supervision. A 1924 National Probation Association survey found that because of a lack of beds, three or four boys sometimes slept crosswise on two cots. Boys and girls slept on different floors and white and black children in different dormitories, but detained children were not otherwise separated by age or severity of offense. The survey reported inadequate provisions against escapes, six of which had occurred in the week before the survey. One boy had recently died jumping from the third floor.¹⁴²

By 1910, the St. Louis City juvenile court had removed dependent children from the Industrial School and placed them in other institutions or family homes. In 1926, St. Louis accepted the National Probation Association's recommendation to place detained children in temporary boarding homes provided by the Board of Children's Guardians. Before long, about 30% of the children in these homes were alleged delinquents awaiting hearing.¹⁴³

At the other end of the state, Jackson County by the mid-1930s generally left alleged delinquents in their own homes before hearings, without bond, unless they were a danger to themselves or the community, had no home, or might benefit from the shock of brief pre-hearing detention. In 1936, the County completed the Parental Guidance Building, a new house of detention with capacity for forty children. The building did not suffer from overcrowding because it housed an average of only twenty-four children at a time, and usually not more than twelve. The home included both delinquent and dependent children, separated by age, gender and color. The boys evidently were a rowdy bunch because a year after the building's completion, an observer noted that "[a]ll the hangers have been torn off the walls, the towel racks were early destroyed and the window sills are scratched and marked with the names and initials of former occupants of the ward."¹⁴⁴

Most children detained in Jackson County's house of detention remained less than a week, though a few remained as long as two months. Because most stays were brief, the house made no provision for education and the children had hours of free time on their hands. According to one observer in 1938, the house had no equipment or provisions for supervised recreation, and only a few books. "Occasionally the boys will take their stockings, roll

them together in a ball, and using their hands as bats, have a game of baseball. When several older girls are confined together, they will sometimes dance together, singing their own music."¹⁴⁵

Foundling Hospitals

Beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century, dependent Missouri infants and children under about three often found care at "foundling hospitals," including three in St. Louis, the St. Ann's Foundling Asylum operated under Catholic auspices by the Sisters of Charity, the Bethesda Foundling Home operated under Protestant auspices, and the Colored Orphans' Home. In 1894, three social workers called the nation's foundling hospitals "places where infants die." In the great majority of cases," they wrote, "it can matter but little to the individual infant whether it is murdered outright or is placed in a foundling hospital—death comes only a little sooner in one case than in the other."¹⁴⁶

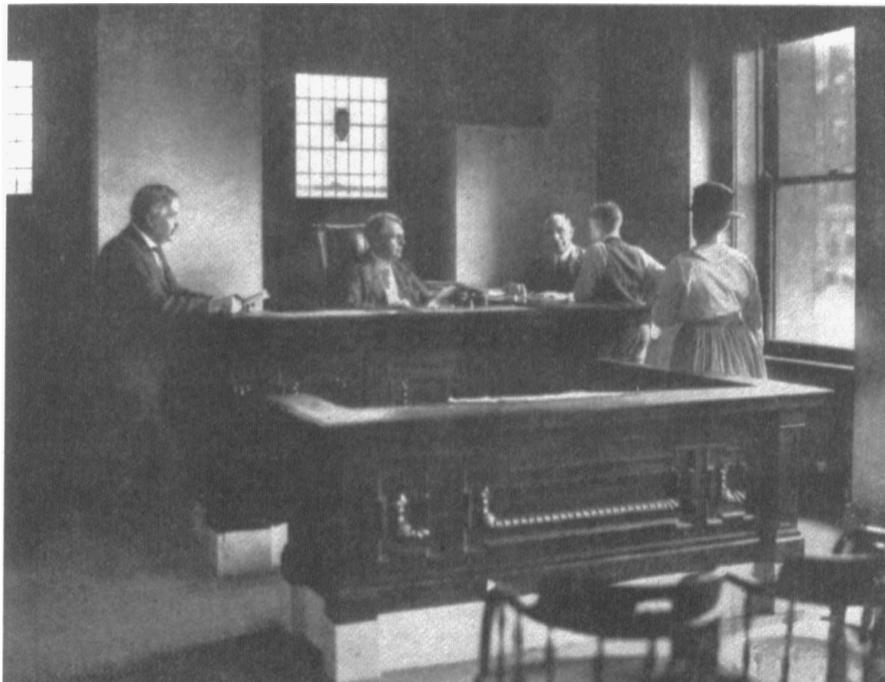
Death rates nationwide among orphaned and abandoned infants in foundling hospitals were indeed shockingly high, sometimes reaching 97% per year. Between 1905 and 1910, death rates at the three St. Louis institutions were 74.5% at St. Ann's (91 of 122 children), 13.6% at Bethesda (18 of 132 children), and 58.8% at the Colored Orphans' Home (20 of 34 children).¹⁴⁷ Children who survived would typically be placed in foster care or placed for adoption.

Today it is perhaps difficult to imagine Americans frightened about rampant infant mortality, but the early 1900s were different times. To be fair to Missouri's foundling hospitals, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated that between 1900 and 1910, at least 300,000 infants (in or out of foundling hospitals) died each year before their first birthday. Concern about infant mortality was so great that it spurred a nationwide "baby-saving" campaign in 1913. Public schools in Kansas City and other American cities created "Little Mother Leagues" and held "Little Mother Classes" to teach infant hygiene to schoolgirls, particularly ones already caring for younger siblings at home.¹⁴⁸

Cities in Missouri and throughout the nation held "Baby Weeks" in 1916 to arouse public support for measures to combat infant mortality. The events were part public education campaign and part celebration, complete with parades and parties, generally planned to coincide with a major national holiday, such as Father's Day or Flag Day. The University of Missouri at Columbia played a major statewide role with programs, lectures and exhibits, and the Kansas City Health Department contributed the "Children's Declaration of Rights," which included the right "to be protected from disease . . . and to have a fair chance in life." With the War over and the influenza epidemic about to strike in 1919, the

U.S. Children's Bureau announced a campaign to save 100,000 children through establishment of city and rural children's health centers.¹⁴⁹

Missourians remained concerned about infant mortality in foundling hospitals. When the General Assembly in 1921 required most private child care facilities to secure a license from the State Board of Charities and Corrections, the requirement extended to maternity homes, hospitals and boarding houses for infants under three. Within a few years, licensure, improved medical care, and federal funding under the Social Security Act of 1935 would combine to improve the lives of Missouri's youngest orphans.¹⁵⁰



The St. Louis City juvenile court in session, circa. 1920.



St. Louis child saver Susan Elizabeth Blow (1843-1916) is sometimes called the founder of the American public kindergarten movement. This mural of her graces the Governor's office at the Capitol in Jefferson City. (Massie, Missouri Resources Division, Courtesy State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia)

WANTED HOMES for CHILDREN

A company of homeless children from the East will arrive at
TROY, MO., ON FRIDAY, FEB. 25th, 1910

These children are of various ages and of both sexes, having been thrown friendless upon the world. They come under the auspices of the Children's Aid Society of New York. They are well disciplined, having come from the various orphanages. The citizens of this community are asked to assist the agent in finding good homes for them. Persons taking these children must be recommended by the local committee. They must treat the children in every way as a member of the family, sending them to school, church, Sabbath school and properly clothe them until they are 17 years old. The following well-known citizens have agreed to act as local committee to aid the agents in securing homes:

**O. H. AVERY E. B. WOOLFOLK H. F. CHILDERS
WM. YOUNG G. W. COLBERT**

Applications must be made to, and endorsed by, the local committee.

An address will be made by the agent. Come and see the children and hear the address. Distribution will take place at the

Opera House, Friday,

Feb. 25, at 1:30 p. m.

**B. W. TICE and MISS A. L. HILL, Agents, 105 E.
22nd St., New York City. Rev. J. W. SWAN,
University Place, Nebraska, Western Agent.**

The New York Children's Aid Society posted notices such as this to publicize upcoming stops of the orphan trains in Missouri. (Used by permission, State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia)



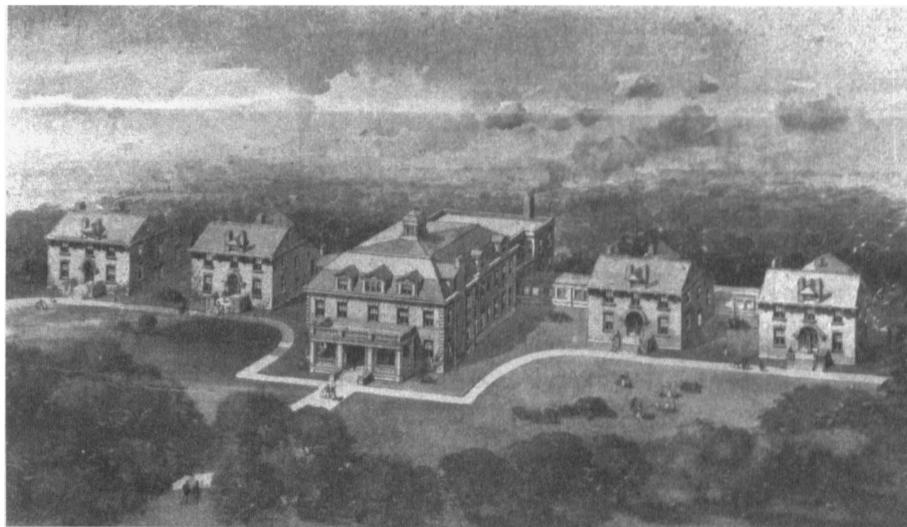
These young children, with their two New York Children's Aid Society agents, arrived on an orphan train in Lebanon, Missouri in 1909.



Governor Alexander M. Dockery signed legislation creating Missouri's first juvenile court on March 23, 1903.



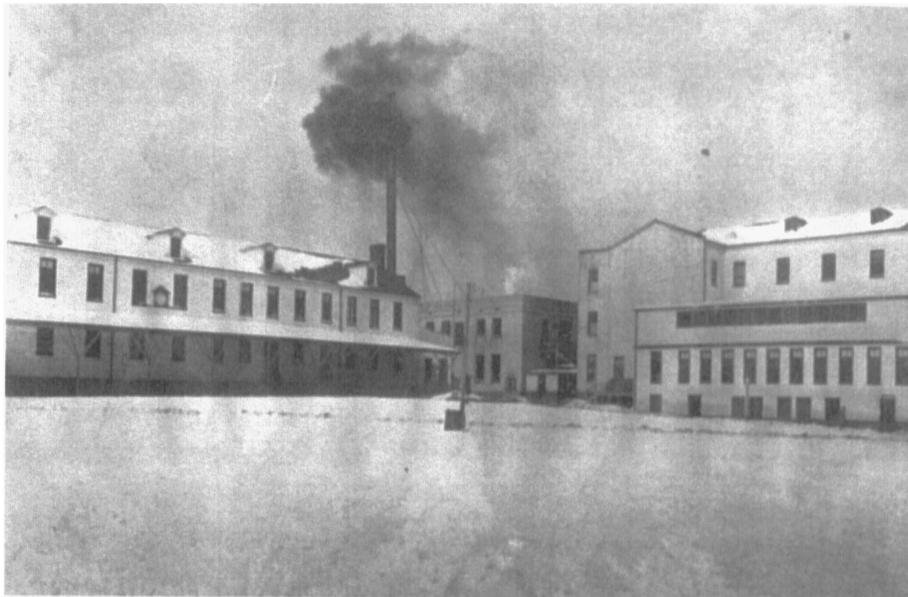
Young women at work in a St. Louis shoe manufacturing plant in 1905. Thousands of working women and girls in Missouri earned no more than \$4.50 to \$5.00 a week, not enough to feed and clothe dependent children if the family had no male breadwinner. (Used by permission, State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia)



This aerial view of the Missouri Baptist Orphans' Home, located in St. Louis County, appeared in the *St. Louis Central Baptist* in February of 1907. (Used by permission, State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia)



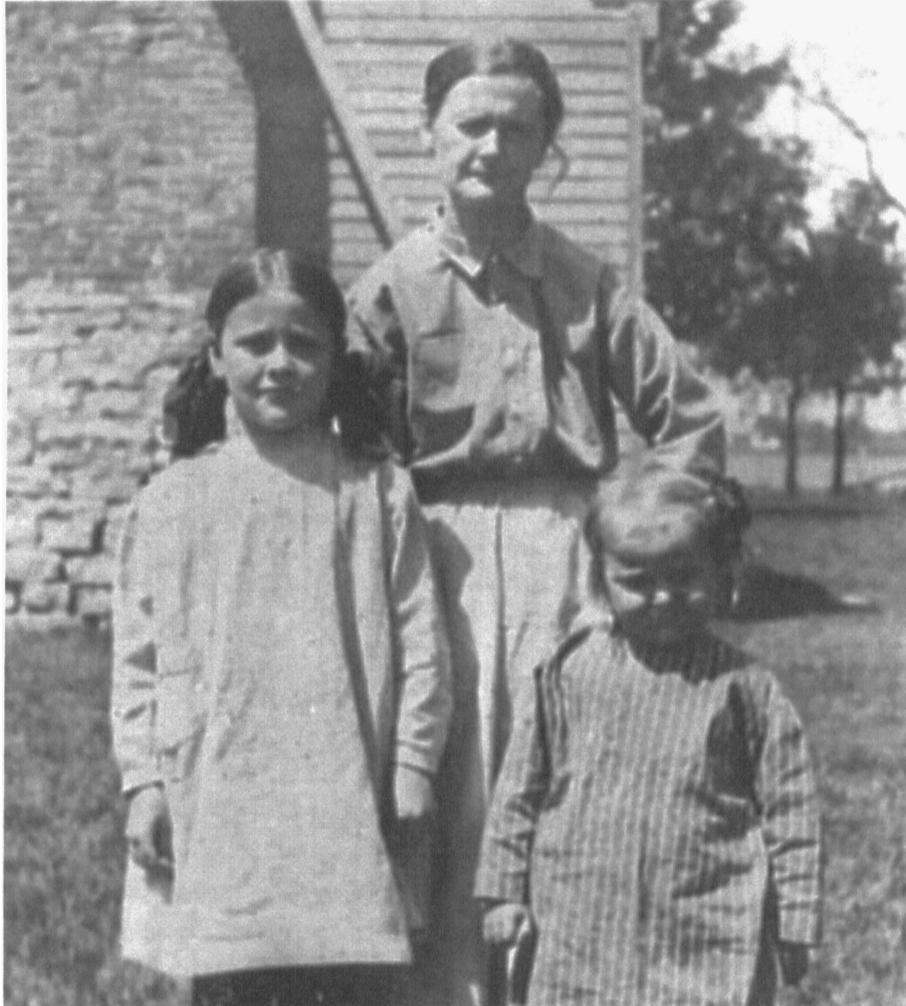
Children had a difficult life in St. Louis city tenements, including this one on Eighth Street in 1908. (Used by permission, State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia)



The St. Louis Industrial School (originally known as the St. Louis House of Refuge) housed delinquent and dependent children beginning in the 1850s. This photograph of the yard and buildings was probably taken in about 1905, fifteen years before the city closed the institution.



Domestic science class at the St. Louis Industrial School in 1906. (Used by permission, State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia)



In 1913, these two little girls had been living in a Missouri almshouse with their mother ever since their father deserted the family. A Missouri State Nurses' Association report described the mother as "feeble minded," but the two girls as "bright, intelligent-looking."



Missouri Children's Code Number

PUBLIC WELFARE



THE WELFARE OF THE PEOPLE IS THE SUPREME LAW

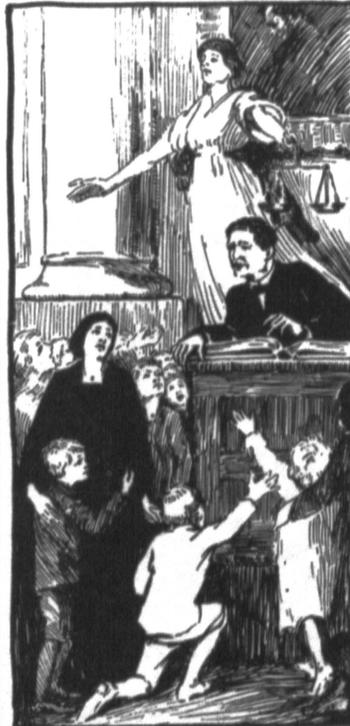
AN EXPONENT OF GOVERNMENTAL ACTION FOR SOCIAL WELFARE

VOL. I.

KANSAS CITY, U. S. A., JANUARY 1919.

NO. 10

A Plea For The Children's Code.



Pause ye law-makers of Missouri,
Hark to a cry that will not down,
It follows like a phantom,
In city, hamlet and town,
'Tis the voice of the children calling
For help that you can give,
For Justice and Legal Protection—
Simply a chance to live,
A right our Saviour ne'er denied
E'en to the ones for sin decried,
But on Calvary's Cross He bled and died
That all might live.

On our Statute Book is written
Of a code a minor part,
Listen to the children's pleadings
And the promptings of your heart,
And, its righteousness appealing,
Write, I pray, the major part,
That shall save these little children
Just like yours with their hopes and fears,
Save the boys, God bless them ever,
Save young womanhood from tears
And remorse and shame unending,
With the passing of the years.

And to those who walk in darkness,
Those whose minds are but attuned
To the harp with strings asunder,
To the one at birth's dawn doomed
Grant, O men, this boon most human,
And with brief stroke of the pen
Merit through the coming ages,
One loud chorus of Amen!

War has left its blight on nations,
Other children of today
Bear the wrong and reap the sorrow
Of a cruel yesterday,
Thus our duty is the greater,
Prayer and effort must not cease,
Would you leave to generations
Heavier burdens born of Peace?

Nay, up from misery, crime and woe,
Away from sin's turmoil
To a higher, nobler plane of life
You can lift these boys and girls
Of the grand old State of Missouri,
Untarnished in its fame,
By enacting the laws for which we plead
While the world sounds her acclaim.

—Mrs. Randolph Nichols,
Kansas City, Mo.

Illustrated by Miss Floy Campbell,
Kansas City, Mo.

The second Children's Code Commission made a major effort to marshal public support behind its reform efforts. This plea appeared in *Kansas City Public Welfare* in late 1918, shortly after the Commission made its recommendations. (Used by permission, State Historical Society of Missouri. Columbia)