

celebration

100

The
CRadle® **100**th

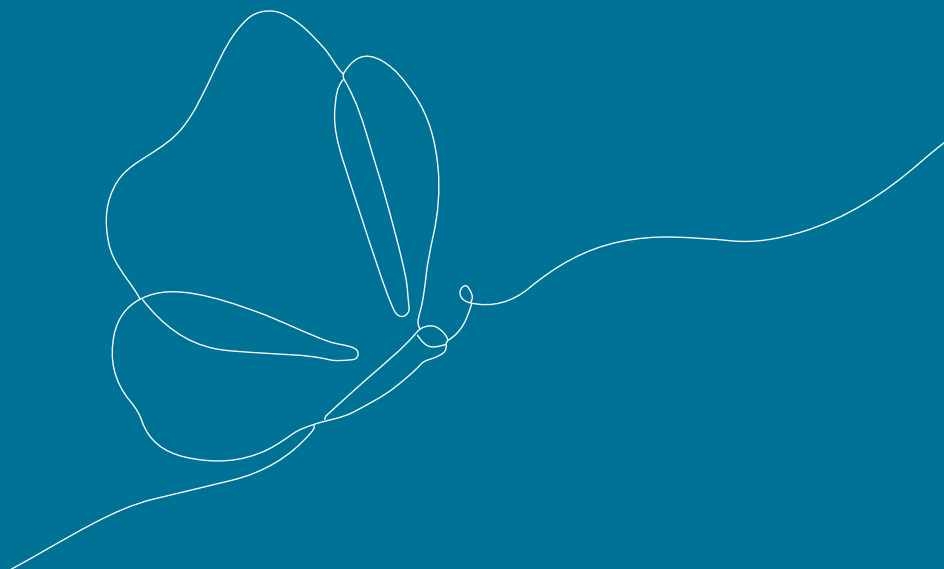
**100 YEARS OF
THE CRADLE:**

A Historical Narrative



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A NOTE OF ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The Cradle is a beloved and storied organization, having helped so many families form over the past 100 years. We are so proud of our legacy. Since opening in 1923, The Cradle has facilitated more than 16,000 domestic and international adoptions and has been at the forefront of African American infant adoption and placements with LGBTQ+ families. There is much to celebrate in the pages that follow. We hope you enjoy learning about The Cradle's history, evolution and impact.

Building a family through adoption can be beautiful, complex and hard. Just as adoption is complicated, we would be remiss to not acknowledge that The Cradle's history in adoption services is also complicated. Our staff and our predecessors have made changes over the years to grow into the ethical, inclusive organization that we are today. Here are a few examples, though you will see many more throughout this narrative:

Child Centered: The work of the first four infant adoption agencies in the U.S. (including The Cradle) focused on finding babies for hopeful adoptive families. This placed the needs of the adoptive parents at the center of the adoption, instead of the needs of the child. By the middle of the 20th century, The Cradle's social workers made clear we were not in the practice of finding babies for families, but in finding adoptive homes for babies. The needs of the child are at the forefront. Our vision is a world in which every child thrives in a safe and loving family.



Race: In its early years, The Cradle only placed white babies — a reflection of adoption practices across the United States in the early 20th century. Amid an increase in transracial adoptions in the early 1950s, The Cradle began placing African American babies in adoptive families as early as 1953. Today, The Cradle works with families of all races and ethnicities and this transformation is detailed throughout this historical narrative. We have placed more than 1,000 African American and biracial babies in adoptive families. Our Ardythe and Gale Sayers Center for African American Adoption is one of the only programs in the country that promotes adoption awareness in the African American community (learn more on pages 26-28).



Special Needs: Early Cradle staff would not place babies who were deemed unhealthy (learn more on page 16). The Cradle did work with doctors to have some conditions addressed before placement (such as cleft palates), but babies with congenital diseases or disabilities were referred to long-term institutions. Today, we place babies of all backgrounds and abilities, including placing a few babies with special needs each year.

Open Adoption: Our founder was a strong advocate of closed adoption. In her words, “When our babies passed into the hands of the adopting parents, all relationship with their physical ancestors must be completely and irrevocably severed.” As attitudes across the country began to change, The Cradle studied the benefits of open adoption, which include reduced stigma and less grief for birth parents, greater certainty about the well-being of the birth family and adopted individual, a larger support network for the adopted individual, and greater access to information including ancestral and medical information, among other advantages. Today, The Cradle believes in the philosophy of open adoption, in which adoptive families and birth families have some form of a relationship. We have provided search and reunion services to hundreds of individuals and families over the years. Additionally, The Cradle provides post adoption services and adoption-competent counseling to support adoptees, adoptive parents and birth parents through their journey (see page 29 to learn more about this transformation).

LGBTQ+ Adoption: Until a June 2017 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that legalized adoption by LGBTQ+ individuals and families nationwide, each state could govern whether LGBTQ+ families could legally adopt children. To this day, 13 states allow state-licensed child welfare agencies to refuse to place children with LGBTQ+ families if doing so conflicts with their religious beliefs. The Cradle, a non-sectarian child welfare agency, was an early supporter of LGBTQ+ adoption, having passed a board resolution in 2001 stating that LGBTQ+ couples and individuals should have equal opportunity to apply for adoption through The Cradle. Since then, The Cradle has helped build nearly 200 LGBTQ+ families through adoption (learn more on page 33).

Impact: Adoption itself can be complicated. A book called *Seven Core Issues in Adoption and Permanency*, co-authored by Sharon Kaplan Roszia and Allison Davis Maxon, outlines seven lifelong issues experienced by all members of the adoption circle: adoptees, birth parents and adoptive parents. The seven core issues are loss, rejection, guilt/shame, grief, identity, intimacy and mastery/control. Adoption is created through loss. Without loss, there would be no adoption. Having placed 16,000 babies over the course of 100 years and having witnessed adoptions up close since the early days of modern infant adoption, we at The Cradle are acutely aware of how complex this decision can be for expectant parents and of the lifelong effects on adopted individuals. For birth parents and adoptive families who seek this route, we believe adoption to be a powerful decision rooted in love. Yet we acknowledge the undoubted impact on adoptees and seek to provide meaningful support through counseling and connection.

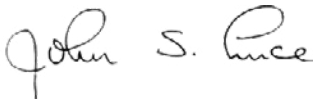
A NOTE OF ACKNOWLEDGMENT

One of our tasks in a milestone year is to own these truths while also honoring the good work that our predecessors completed in their time at this agency. Cradle leaders are committed to continuous transformation that ensures the organization always remains healthy, diverse, inclusive and sustainable.

In 1963, a Cradle Society board member wrote, "The past 40 years are but prologue."

In 2023, we eye the future with the same mentality. The past 100 years are but prologue. We look forward to continuing to evolve the organization to ensure we remain relevant, with even greater impact for children and families in our second century.

Sincerely,



John Luce, Board Chair



Jason Friedman, President and CEO



MISSION

Building families through adoption.
Supporting families through life's challenges.
Strengthening communities through education.

VISION

A world where every child thrives
in a safe and loving family.



PART I: THE EARLY YEARS

Origins

In the late 19th century, children who were no longer in the care of their biological parents were most commonly cared for in orphanages — or living on the streets. The first orphanage in Chicago, The Chicago Orphan Asylum, opened in 1849.

By the late 1800s, New York City orphanages were so full that one man, Charles Loring Brace of the Children’s Aid Society and the New York Foundling Hospital, decided the best way to get children off the streets would be to place them with families who had recently moved west and needed help. Thus the orphan train was born. Trains took children (many unsuspecting) to the western United States from 1854-1929. Some families saw themselves as loving (if informal) foster parents while others put the children to work as farmhands. According to the Chicago Historical Society, until 1875, children could be legally indentured as servants.

Adoptions of children of any age were not legally recognized in the state of Illinois until 1867. The Illinois Children’s Home & Aid Society formed in 1883 and was among the first child welfare agencies in the country. Social work became a profession at the turn of the last century, and soon after the Children’s Home & Aid Society began professionalizing its work and incorporating new social work standards.

A decade or so later, the first infant adoption agencies began to appear.

These included:

- The Cradle Society founded by Florence Walrath in Evanston, Illinois
- New York City-based agencies:
 - The Spence Alumni Society founded by Clara Spence
 - The Alice Chapin Nursery founded by Alice Chapin
 - The Free Synagogue Child Adoption Committee founded by Louise Waterman Wise

Eventually the three New York City-based agencies would merge to become Spence-Chapin which, along with The Cradle, continues to help build families today.

All four founders of the first adoption agencies were female volunteers, who sought to protect children and help their friends build families. Thus begins the story of The Cradle.



Jane Hurlbut Foster was The Cradle's first baby placed with an adoptive family.

The Founding

Florence Adele Dahl was born on October 18, 1877, in Chicago, to Norwegian immigrants Hans and Louisa “Betsey” Dahl.

In 1897, Florence Dahl married William Bradley Walrath, a geometry teacher who would later become a lawyer and realtor. They moved to 1918 Orrington Avenue in Evanston, Illinois, and had four children: Hester, Helen, Bill and Margaret Louise (“Gretchen”).

In 1914, Walrath’s sister Ida-Marie Hurlbut experienced a miscarriage. Knowing her sister’s desire to be a mother, Walrath networked with doctors throughout the community to let them know that she knew a family that wanted to adopt. One day a physician called: One of his patients wanted to place her baby girl for adoption. This baby became Walrath’s niece (and her first placement), Jane Hurlbut Foster.

Word spread to other couples who wished to adopt. Evanston Hospital knew of patients who wished to place their babies for adoption, so Walrath and her friends covered the cost of care and eight beds at the hospital until they could find the infants adoptive homes. Evanston Hospital became a temporary “port of call.”

With more than 80 babies placed in those early years, and demand continuing to rise, Walrath sought to find a standalone space to continue her work. In 1923, Walrath secured the support of five business leaders who met at the home of her friends, adoptive parents John and Katherine Slade of 1210 Forest Avenue in Evanston:

- Frank Cunningham of Butler Bros.
- Sewell Avery of Montgomery Ward and U.S. Gypsum
- Henry M. Dawes of Pure Oil, brother of former U.S. Vice President Charles Dawes
- Frederick Scott of Carson Pirie Scott
- Rollin Keyes of Franklin MacVeagh & Company

The five men each donated \$1,000, which gave Walrath the down payment she needed to purchase a house at the corner of Ridge and Simpson in Evanston (2039 Ridge). Helen Towne donated the remainder of the \$15,500 mortgage.



Cradle founder Florence Walrath and Eleanor Garrigue Gallagher are shown in this early 1920s photograph holding a Cradle baby.



The first Cradle building, a house then located at 2039 Ridge Avenue in Evanston, Illinois.

THE WOODEN CALENDAR

The Cradle still displays a wooden calendar that was carved by artist and actor Anton Lang of Oberammergan, Germany, and donated by a friend of The Cradle in the 1920s. In the early years of The Cradle, donors' names were added to the board if they donated at least a \$100 annual gift, on the month of their annual draw.

Walrath's dear friends, former United States Vice President Charles Dawes and his wife Caro Dawes, were adoptive parents and became early supporters of her work; their names are listed on the calendar. The Cradle's 1920s donor calendar is still displayed in its headquarters today, a beautiful piece of its early history. Other Cradle memorabilia can be found at The Evanston History Center, located at the Dawes House, 225 Greenwood Street in Evanston.



Friend and supporter Eleanor Garrigue Gallagher suggested the name "The Cradle Society" for the new organization.

Walrath agreed on the name and on March 12, 1923, The Cradle Society officially opened its doors. Volunteer staff included Walrath as managing director, with Gallagher and Katherine Slade as almost full-time help (the three women became known as "the triumvirate of The Cradle"). A single registered nurse was on hand, Constance Bull, and Clara Smith soon joined the staff as nursery superintendent.

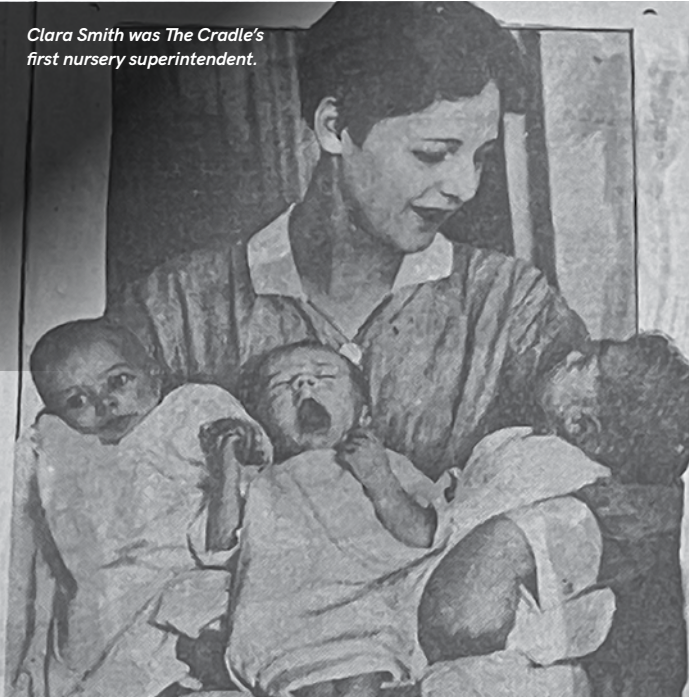
The original Cradle Board officers were:

- Frank Cunningham, President
- Sewell Avery, Vice President
- Florence Walrath, Managing Director
- Katherine Slade, Treasurer
- Eleanor Gallagher, Secretary

More than 20 people joined the board in the years that followed, including Hazel Ferguson, who would succeed Walrath as managing director decades later. Frank Cunningham remained in his role as board president until 1941, when he died. Sewell Avery served as board president from 1941-1947, and John Slade took office afterward.



Clara Smith was The Cradle's first nursery superintendent.



The Cradle expanded in 1926, when a neighbor named Clara Alice Stout donated the house next door (2045 Ridge) to the organization. Another donor purchased the house on the other side (2049 Ridge) and donated it to The Cradle. Famed Chicago architect and designer of the 1883 World's Fair Daniel Burnham adapted these houses for The Cradle's use. By this time in his career he was looking for smaller projects and spent time ordering proper plumbing and carpentry materials for the new spaces.

In its first three years, The Cradle Society placed 242 babies with adoptive families — but it wasn't easy. Those early years required the expertise of the country's leading scientific and medical researchers to keep The Cradle's infant population safe.



By 1926, The Cradle owned three properties on Ridge Avenue in Evanston, Illinois. The three properties would eventually be replaced by a single stone building in 1939.

Early Nursery Discoveries and Techniques

Alternative methods for feeding infants (with something other than breast milk) were still emerging at the turn of the 20th century. In the 1800s, if a mother could not nurse her baby, she might hire a wet nurse or feed the baby cow's milk through a baby feeder, an early version of a bottle. The rubber nipple was invented in 1845 and by the 1900s, most people had moved away from wet nurses and towards early versions of bottles with formulas made of cow's milk, powdered milk or other ingredients such as orange juice mixed with cod-liver oil.

However, these changes in infant feeding habits also brought on tragedies. In 1927, babies across the country died from gastroenteritis — including 27 babies at The Cradle (a monument to the 27 babies can be found in Memorial Park Cemetery in Skokie, Illinois). Walrath jumped into action, contacting Gladys Dick and George Dick, inventors of the scarlet fever vaccine, to help. Together, the Dicks researched the gastroenteritis epidemic and discovered that the infection impacting babies across the country came from powdered milk. Because the formula was not boilable, it was not sterile. Within a few weeks, companies began to reformulate their powdered products so that once it was added to water, the liquid formula could then be boiled and sterilized. By 1929, the American Medical Association approved formula as an acceptable method for infant feeding. Walrath's intervention and recruitment of experts to address the gastroenteritis outbreak was instrumental in the creation of modern-day formula.



Bottles and food were sterilized by Cradle nurses following the findings of Gladys and George Dick.



This is one of the earliest known pictures of The Cradle Nursery.



THE CRADLE SHOPS

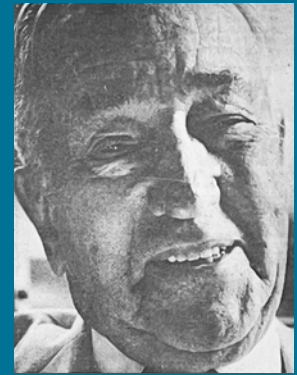
In the late 1920s, The Cradle set up a shop in the basement of one of the original houses, where families could purchase infant clothing and the public could purchase gifts. When The Cradle built the stone building at 2049 Ridge in 1938, the Layette Shop was moved onto the main floor of the building.

For a brief period between 1928 and 1929, The Cradle ran a small tea house called Cradle Maisonette at 636 Church Street, inside the Marshall Field department store in Evanston. It became a popular lunch stop for local society. All proceeds from sales at both shops benefited Cradle services.

DR. LOUIS W. SAUER

Infant medicine was in its infancy in the 1920s. The American Pediatric Society formed in 1888 and the first pediatric nursing textbook was published in 1923 (the same year The Cradle was founded).

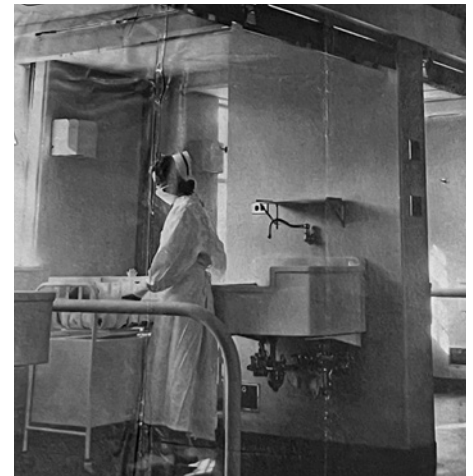
Dr. Louis W. Sauer established one of Chicago's first pediatric practices in Winnetka, Illinois. Walrath had approached Sauer in the late 1910s to help her develop an alternative diet for her daughter, Gretchen. Upon establishment of The Cradle Society, Walrath enlisted Sauer as the organization's first medical director. While advising how to care for the babies in The Cradle Nursery, Sauer also maintained his pediatric practice through Evanston Hospital. He also researched and developed the whooping cough vaccine, which he personally administered to babies at The Cradle.



While boilable formula reduced infant mortality rates at The Cradle, it did not eliminate all issues. Infants were also contracting airborne illnesses including tuberculosis, gripe and bronchopneumonia. The Cradle pulled together an advisory council in the early 1930s comprising the best researchers on airborne illnesses in the country:

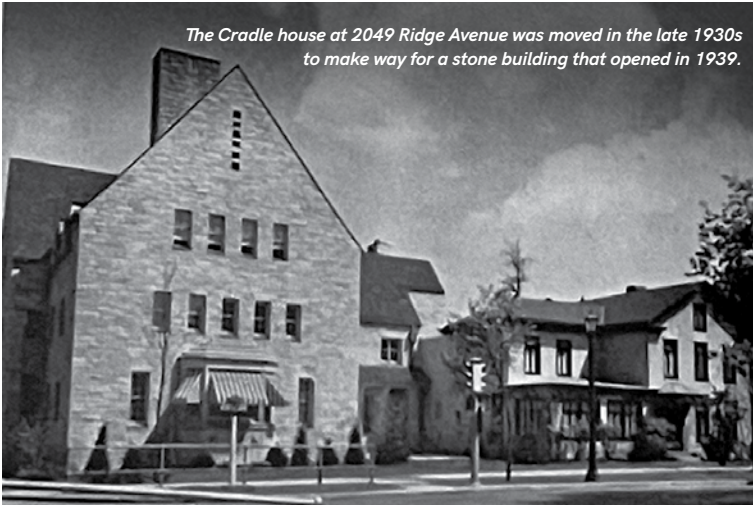
- Aforementioned Gladys Dick
- Col. Esmond Long, MD, professor of pathology at the University of Chicago and University of Pennsylvania, who wrote an estimated 300 articles and 12 books on infectious diseases, and conducted extensive research on tuberculosis
- Stuart Mudd, chairman of microbiology at the University of Pennsylvania
- James Arthur Reyniers, research professor of bacteriology at the University of Notre Dame and founder of the university's Germ-Free lab
- William F. Wells, bacteriologist and researcher who conducted groundbreaking work on airborne illnesses and was the first to propose that tuberculosis could be transmitted through the air

The team pioneered infant health and safety standards including early use of antibacterial ultraviolet-light technology to destroy airborne germs, use of HVAC systems to better ventilate the Nursery, introduction of aseptic handwashing techniques, creation of color-coded gowns for babies and nurses to enhance security, and the "Dick Technique" (named for Gladys and George Dick) which includes separation of each child in a glass cubicle, the use of prescribed and sterilized food, and the use of masks and gowns by all nurses. The supervisor of The Cradle Nursery and The Cradle's attending physicians compiled these techniques in a 1941 book, *Aseptic Nursery Technique as Used at The Cradle*.



Early Cradle advisers pioneered the use of antibacterial ultraviolet-light technology (top) to destroy airborne germs as well as the separation of individual children in glass cubicles (bottom).

The research exposed the inadequacies of The Cradle's facilities, which did not allow for easy introduction of the new techniques. Thus in the late 1930s, the house at 2049 Ridge Avenue was moved to make way for a modern stone building. The advisory council was directly involved, incorporating their groundbreaking techniques into the new space. Three different types of nurseries were built on the second floor of the building: the first with Gladys Dick's aseptic isolation, the second with Dr. Wells' plan for cubicles isolating babies by barriers of UV light, and the third adding J. Arthur Reyniers' glass cubicle within a cubicle, where the inner cubicle had higher air pressure. Walrath hosted a groundbreaking for the new stone building on June 11, 1938, and a dedication took place on March 12, 1939.



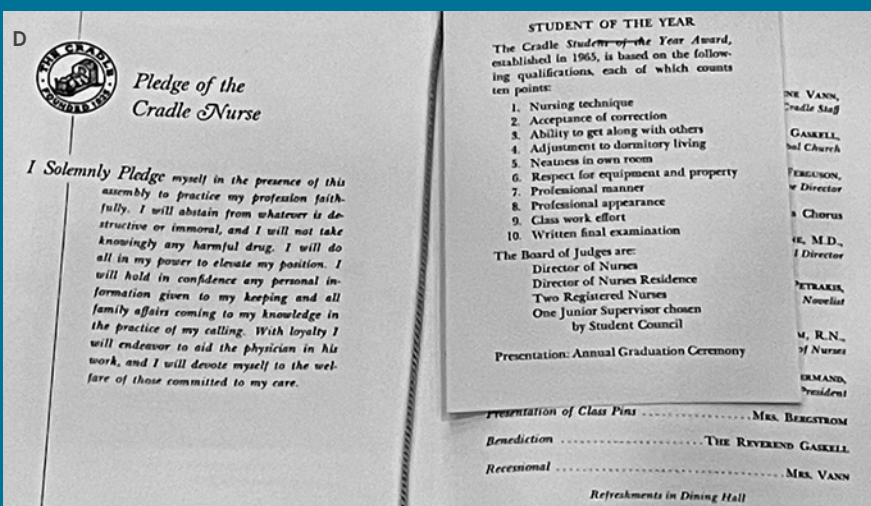
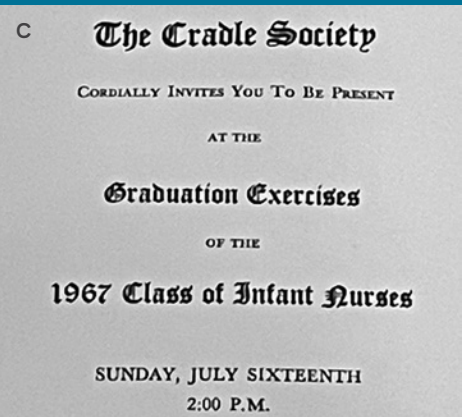
As a result of the changes, The Cradle was able to care for as many as 60 babies at once. Infant mortality rates at The Cradle fell from 5% of admissions to less than 1%, far below the national infant mortality rate of 4-5%. Doctors from all over the world visited The Cradle to see the innovations.

Research continued into the 1940s when The Cradle hired pediatrician and renowned researcher Dr. Iwan Rosenstern as medical director and Margaret Dalton as nursing supervisor.



INFANT NURSING TRAINING

Between 1923 and 1978, The Cradle trained infant nurses annually and graduated anywhere from 1-25 nurses through an onsite ceremony. While the training program ended in 1978, today The Cradle continues to employ, on average, 15 nurses and 15 aides in its 24-hour Nursery. The Cradle hosted a reunion for Cradle nurses in 1999, during which many former nurses and nursing school graduates returned to the building to see the renovations.



The Cradle began training infant nurses in 1923 (a) and graduated its first class of infant nurses in 1926 (b). Each graduating class enjoyed a formal graduation ceremony (c, d, e). The Cradle held a reunion for the graduates in 1999 (f).

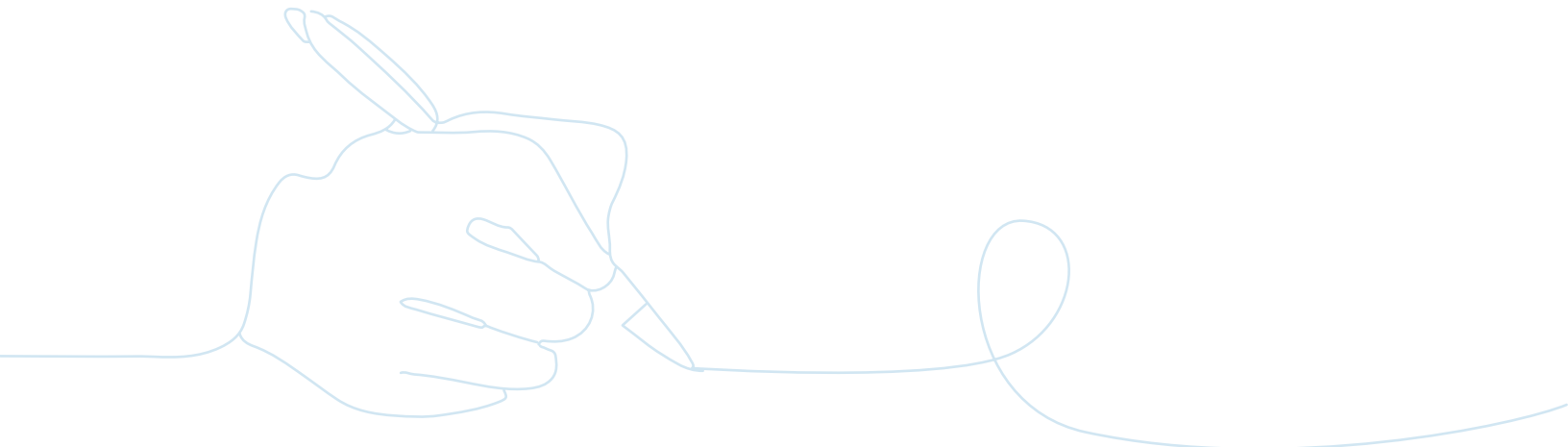
Critics and Controversy

By the 1930s, The Cradle had placed 2,000 babies, and by its 25th anniversary in 1948, that number was up to 5,000 babies placed across multiple states. It is possible that The Cradle would not have been able to place as many infants without Walrath's careful watch and the recommendations on infant care from leading clinicians Dr. Sauer, Hubert Lussky, Dr. Rosenstern, Louis Minsk and new consultant Frederick Merrifield, one of the founders of the American Association of Oral Surgeons.

Despite its early successes and contributions to pediatrics and infant care, The Cradle was not without its faults and controversies. Walrath and early staff did not have social work experience, while other adoption agencies were implementing social work norms like investigating prospective parents' suitability before adoption decrees were granted; licensure for individuals and organizations working in adoption; record-keeping protocols; and supervision of new families after placement and before finalization. At the very year of our founding in 1923, Chicago-area social workers got together to ask Cook County to form a committee of social workers to investigate adoption practices. Among their concerns was a focus by some agencies on "adoptability," which The Cradle emphasized at the time. A *TIME* magazine article from May 1935 quoted Walrath as saying she would not place babies for adoption unless they were healthy and "normal." Babies with congenital diseases, "feeblemindedness," disabilities or other special needs were sent to institutions after a brief nursery stay. Walrath refused to work with non-white clients or place non-white babies.



Cradle Founder Florence Walrath



In 1927, the Juvenile Court of Illinois argued that The Cradle should be looking deeper into the history of adoptive parents, in accordance with the move toward formal home studies. Walrath pushed back on her critics, suggesting they were simply out to attack and malign her new organization.

Demand for babies to adopt ran high in the 1930s and 1940s, even amid The Great Depression and World War II. An article in a December 1932 issue of Chicago American stated that 2,000 families had applied to adopt one of 24 babies available at The Cradle at that time. The circumstances led critics to accuse multiple agencies, including The Cradle, of trafficking babies to meet the demand. A September 1939 article in Colliers about the black market for babies quoted a source saying, "One prominent social worker told me babies go from a large New York City hospital out to The Cradle in Evanston at such a rate that it practically amounts to an underground passage." Unfounded rumors of an underground tunnel from Northwestern University to The Cradle also abounded.

In 1940, Walrath invited out-of-state agencies to conduct a review of The Cradle's social work practices to put the criticism to rest. Ultimately this led to the adoption of social work standards. By 1946, The Cradle began complying with state requirements to conduct home studies for all hopeful adoptive families and began hiring counselors with social work degrees.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

On February 4, 1944, U.S. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt wrote about The Cradle in her syndicated column "My Day." She praised Walrath and the agency for its work on airborne illnesses. The Cradle's critics were quick to respond, sending letters to Mrs. Roosevelt to share their concerns.

Roosevelt then contacted the U.S. Children's Bureau to inquire about the practices of The Cradle, to which the bureau chief Katharine F. Lenroot responded, "The picture is a somewhat mixed one."



PART II: MID-CENTURY SURGE

The Cradle in Hollywood

Amid the Hollywood Golden Age, when films like *Casablanca* and *The Wizard of Oz* enthralled audiences, stars' personal lives dominated newspaper headlines — including many stars' decision to adopt. National and local press paid particular attention to two Hollywood families' adoption stories: George Burns and Gracie Allen adopted two children at The Cradle in 1934 and 1935. Actor Bob Hope and his wife, singer Dolores Hope, adopted their four children at The Cradle between 1939 and 1946.



Media portrayed The Cradle as the main adoption agency of choice for glamorous stars, highlighting other famous Cradle adoptive parents, including:

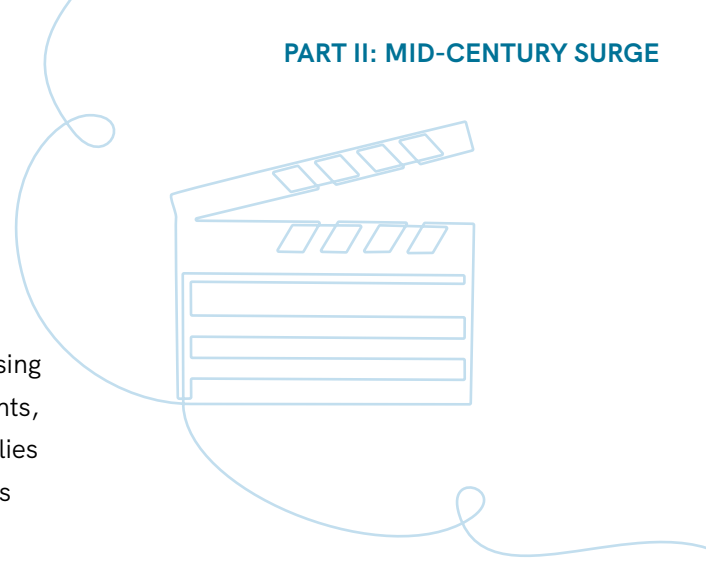
- Victor Borge, comedian and pianist
- Pearl Buck, Pulitzer and Nobel Prize-winning author of *The Good Earth*
- Jack Benny, Academy Award-winning actor
- Miriam Hopkins, Academy Award-winning actor
- Joe Brown, actor in *Some Like It Hot*
- Pat O'Brien, actor in *Some Like It Hot* and *Angels with Dirty Faces*
- Harry Kipke, 1930s Michigan State football coach
- Glenn Miller, American big band leader and trombonist
- Donna Reed, actor who portrayed "Mary" in *It's a Wonderful Life*

The Hope family developed an ongoing relationship with Walrath (with Dolores even attending Walrath's funeral in 1958). The Cradle's 25th anniversary broadcast, which played nationally on CBS on March 13, 1948, featured Walrath and Bob Hope, along with Walrath's niece (the first baby adopted at The Cradle) and others.

Even though it was celebrated by the media for the ways in which it raised awareness of adoption, Walrath's work with Hollywood families was not as well received among her critics in social work. The Illinois Department of Welfare



Actor Bob Hope and his wife Dolores Hope adopted four children at The Cradle. Hope is pictured here with Cradle nurses (top) and Cradle Founder Florence Walrath (bottom).



investigated The Cradle in 1946 for allegedly “playing favorites,” choosing Hollywood actors over Illinois families. Walrath defended the placements, noting that The Cradle had only placed 10 babies with Hollywood families at that point and that those families were given the same opportunity as anyone else.

WARNER BROS. SCREENPLAY

In 1938, Jim Warner of Warner Bros. was trying to persuade Florence to come to Hollywood to work on a screenplay for a story based on her work at The Cradle, which he wanted to call “Give Me a Baby.” The film never came to fruition, despite heaps of national press and public anticipation.

A VISIT FROM ROYALTY

In May 1939, the Norwegian Crown Prince Olav and Princess Martha visited the United States. Princess Martha, who had an interest in child welfare, requested to visit The Cradle during her time in Chicago. This was undoubtedly an honor for Florence Walrath, who was the daughter of Norwegian parents who had immigrated to the United States.



THE EASTERN AUXILIARY

In the 1940s The Cradle started an Eastern Auxiliary Board of supporters and donors who would encourage further support of their networks to The Cradle. The board included:

- L.J. Dillon of Newsweek and J. Dillon Publishing Company
- Jack Glenn of *March of Time* magazine, an offshoot of Time Inc.
- John L. McCormick, a New York City lawyer
- Bill Stern of NBC, actor and sportscaster who announced the nation’s first telecast of a baseball game
- Edward J. Churchill of RKO Rockefeller
- Bernard Duffy, a New York City lawyer
- Thomas Ward of *TIME* Magazine

By the 1950s The Cradle had seven auxiliary boards across Illinois and the country, and there were nine by the 1990s.

Leadership Transition



*A nurse's bedroom in
The Cradle dormitory.*

By the time Florence Walrath retired in October 1950, she had placed 6,000 babies in adoptive homes.

Walrath was succeeded by Hazel Ferguson, who had volunteered with The Cradle since the 1920s. With social work standards in place and Walrath in an emeritus position, Ferguson's team began placing African American babies in addition to white children. Board minutes from May 1953 state that The Cradle placed two African American babies in Spring 1953. In 1955, there were five placements of African American babies. The Cradle's early years placing African American infants occurred just a few years after the first recorded, legal adoption of an African American child by a white family, in 1948 in Minnesota.

Ferguson then turned her attention to the nurses, who had been training and working at The Cradle since the very beginning. Rumor has it that Ferguson felt the nurses were absent too often and sought to control their productivity by having them live onsite. In Spring 1957, construction began on an annex to The Cradle building at 2049 Ridge Avenue, to house a dormitory and classrooms for Cradle nurses and nurses in training. This southern construction on the building was designed by Burnham Brothers and Hammond (the architecture firm of Daniel Burnham's brother, John).

The new nurses' residence was dedicated on March 9, 1958. Florence Walrath died later that year, on November 7, 1958. She is buried at Rosehill Cemetery in Chicago.

THIRTY FOUR YEARS . . .

The coming and going of thirty-four years have enhanced The Cradle—service has expanded, understanding of what needs to be done has deepened, and assurance of how to do it has increased.

More than 7,500 babies have been cradled in our nursery while awaiting adoption by carefully chosen parents.

To the warm hearted, generous and foresighted contributors who have made this accomplishment possible, our directors and staff are profoundly grateful. You have helped not only in the skilled social and physical services, but spiritually as well.

C. H. Shaver

President

1923-1963

*A Report from Cradle Babies
to Our Friends:*

THE CORNERSTONE of The Cradle was that there were better ways than had been known for caring for babies to whom homes were denied for any one of a number of reasons, and placing them in homes which are theirs as though they had been born to their adoptive parents.

On this truth Mrs. William B. Walrath founded The Cradle in 1923. With the help of many devoted friends of babies—and a continuing and ever-enlarging corps of friends—The Cradle grew. It grew from eight snowy-white bassinets to sixty, and expanded its services.

Over the past forty years, more than 9,000 of us, from all religious faiths and all walks of life, have come through The Cradle's ever-open door and have been cradled here with tenderness.

We have been nurtured and watched over by dedicated doctors and nurses, while an equally dedicated social service staff carefully chose our loving parents who had long been waiting for us.

Through the same open door that you and many other friends have helped to hold open, we have been carried on

Continued on page four



In 1957, The Cradle sent a pamphlet called "The Miracle of Adoption" to its supporters. The board president's introduction suggests The Cradle was booming, and proud to have "skilled social and physical services" in place.

In 1963, five years following the death of Florence Walrath, The Cradle mailed a report about its 40th year. The report notes that by this time, more than 9,000 babies had been placed with adoptive families.



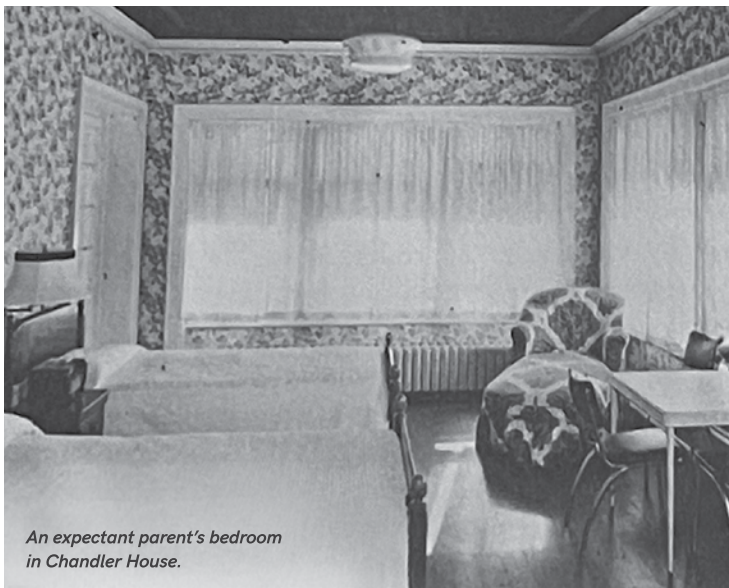
Founder Florence Walrath returned to The Cradle for the dedication of the building's annex. The cornerstone is said to contain a time capsule.

A Home for Expectant Mothers

During the “baby boom” after World War II, pregnancy and birth rates across the country increased — and so did the social stigma against pregnancy outside of marriage. Expectant mothers across society were largely encouraged to hide away during their pregnancies and place the baby for adoption. Ann Fessler’s *The Girls Who Went Away* is a must-read about this era.

Maternity homes increased across the United States and Canada at this time. The Cradle partnered with maternity programs at the Salvation Army Booth Memorial Hospital and The STAFFE/R (St. Therese Alternative Finds Friendly Employment/Residence) Program, among others, to house expectant parents.

In 1949, The Cradle opened Chandler House, a nonsectarian boarding home for unmarried, pregnant women. Located at 6100 N. Sheridan Road in Chicago, The Cradle advertised Chandler House as a supportive, communal living arrangement and “sanctuary.” Women who needed a place to stay during their pregnancy could reside at Chandler House for a small fee and in exchange for some light housework to maintain the building. The home was licensed by the state of Illinois and staffed by a professionally trained house mother, nurse and various household employees. It was equipped to accommodate 22 residents who were each assigned a caseworker and aided in “making a plan for returning to her life.”



An expectant parent's bedroom in Chandler House.

The entrance to Chandler House, The Cradle's former boarding house for expectant parents.



Brochures from Chandler House stated that the mother was always given the choice to choose either adoption or another plan for the baby, and full cooperation would be given to make arrangements for the baby either way. Some of the expectant parents and descendants of the women who lived at Chandler House paint a different picture, however, one of shame and coercion. Chandler House was open for 21 years, closing its doors in 1970.

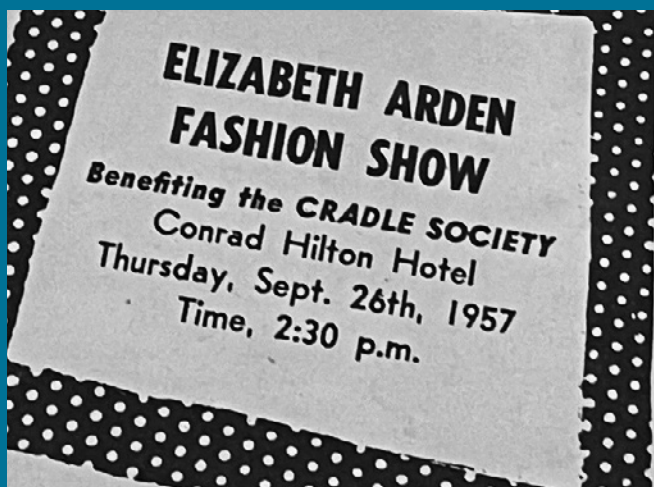
As an alternative to Chandler House, The Cradle also presented the option of living in a wage home. The pregnant women who chose this option then lived with a local family who provided room and board and a small wage, in exchange for domestic labor.

THE FASHION SHOW

The Cradle in the 1950s was known as much for high fashion as for its nursery and adoption services. Following World War II, the fashion industry began hosting public fashion shows to gain publicity. Charity fashion shows were still a newer concept.

The Cradle held an annual charity fashion show and luncheon, sponsored by cosmetics magnate Elizabeth Arden from 1949 until her death in 1966. As many as 80 women modeled Arden's fall collection at the Conrad Hilton in Chicago each year. The event was a must for Chicago's high society. In 1958, 1,200 women attended the show, looking to The Cradle's event to help them set their shopping list for the coming season.

Following Arden's death, the fashion show began exhibiting the designs of Chas. A. Stevens, who had a department store in Chicago. The show lived on until 1993, when The Cradle transitioned to an annual Cradle Ball. An annual benefit — fashion show or otherwise — was held in perpetuity, from 1923 through 2019 when the annual event was paused due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Cradle revived its annual benefit in 2023 to celebrate its 100th year with a Centennial Gala.



PART III: TRANSFORMATION

Changes in Birth Rates

In so many ways, the 1960s and 1970s were a turning point, both in America and at The Cradle. Hazel Ferguson resigned as executive director in November 1970. Elizabeth A. Meek succeeded her in the role.

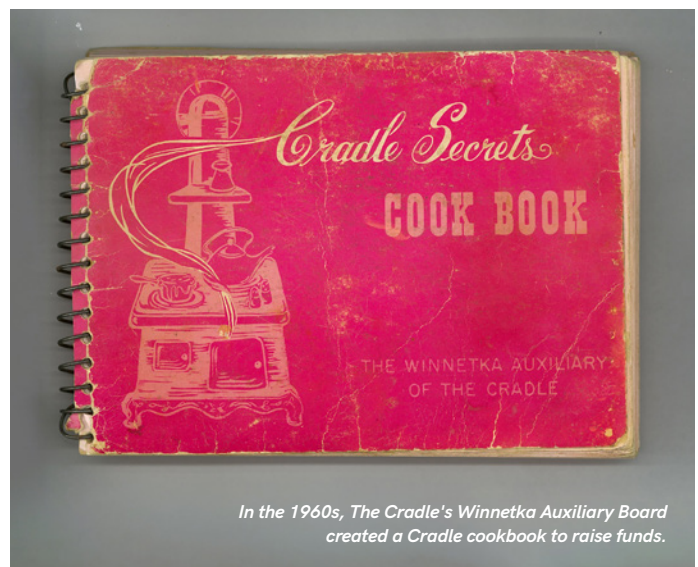
Meek focused on The Cradle's role in counseling expectant parents and providing nursery services as they worked to find the best path forward. At the same time, she and Cradle leaders began debating how the availability of birth control, the legalization of abortion and the reduced stigma of single parenting might impact the future of adoption. After record highs in the Nursery in the 1960s, adoptions began to decline sharply across the country at the turn of the following decade. In 1971, the Chicago Welfare Council reported there had been a 45% decrease in adoptions since the previous year.

Despite the national decline in adoption rates, The Cradle had placed more than 10,500 children for adoption and the nurses in the Nursery had cared for more than 11,500 babies by 1977.



Hazel Ferguson (left) and Elizabeth A. Meek (right) greeted guests together at a Cradle holiday reception in 1970, with Ferguson retiring and Meek joining the agency.

In 1975, Rosemarie Trager Lee ("Lee") Stein, a former Cradle Board member, became executive director. Stein is credited with building a large endowment for The Cradle in the 1980s, mainly from the bequest of Adelaide L. Van Langingham. However, her efforts could not stop the rapid decline in adoption rates across the country nor the rising costs of providing services and maintaining an aging building. The Cradle had seen as many as 300 placements in a year in the 1960s; in 1990, the agency placed only 40 babies.



In the 1960s, The Cradle's Winnetka Auxiliary Board created a Cradle cookbook to raise funds.



KEEPERS OF THE CRADLE

The Cradle's facilities and vehicles have been lovingly maintained over the years by a core line of maintenance and operations staff, including:

- Roy Erickson from 1949 through the 1970s (above left, with his wife)
- Carl Brown in the 1950s and 1960s (not pictured)
- Hubert Moore in the 1950s and 1960s (top right with basket)
- Curtis Jackson from 1958 to 1998 (bottom right, standing next to Hubert Moore)
- George Mitchell from 1992 to the present (bottom left)

These individuals have cared for a finicky boiler and 90-year-old elevator, transported babies to and from hospitals, removed snow and ice, and even fixed staff members' vehicles. They mentored one another in succession, passing down invaluable information about every inch of the building. Some of the staff (like Hubert Moore) lived onsite, though, at the time, the men were never allowed above the first floor. Roy Erickson met his wife Marcella at The Cradle; she had become a Cradle Nurse after World War II. They married in 1950 and lived in a Cradle property adjacent to the building for the first three years of their marriage.

Resurgence I

Michael Phenner served as vice chair of the Cradle Board of Directors in the late 1980s. Seeing the writing on the wall, he persuaded the board to hire a strategic consultant to help them determine the best path forward for an organization that was, at this point, dwindling.

In 1991, The Cradle commissioned a study by John Fairfield. Fairfield's report pulled no punches: He noted the situation was dire and that the board should consider closure, merger or resurgence through total restructuring. "To restore The Cradle to a leadership position among adoption agencies is the greatest challenge of all," Fairfield wrote.

The board leaned into the idea of resurgence and took seriously his recommendations including:

- Increasing outreach to expectant parents to discuss their options
- Opening satellite offices to facilitate outreach
- Considering open adoption, as other agencies were at this time
- Electing new board members with skill sets most beneficial to The Cradle
- Hiring (and paying) a full-time president and CEO who would be an employee of the board
- Hiring a full-time development manager to increase fundraising
- Increasing spending on advertising and public relations

The board subsequently hired Julie Tye in 1992 as the agency's first-ever president and CEO. Under Tye's leadership, the organization made swift changes including:

- Introducing a 24-hour Helpline to ensure expectant parents could reach The Cradle anytime
- Opening satellite offices in Lombard, Palatine, Orland Park, Chicago and Peoria
- Forming a Development department that would immediately begin intensive donor cultivation and replacing the annual fashion show with an annual Cradle Ball in 1995
- Forming a Communications and Outreach department in 1994 that oversaw outreach to more than 125 schools (with a team of 100 volunteers, the Volunteers for Adoption Education); national press efforts; and the creation of Cradle.org in 1996 (The Cradle was one of the first adoption agencies to feature profiles of prospective adoptive parents on the internet)
- Introducing an intercountry adoption program in 1994; the first international baby was placed on July 4, 1996, from China
- Launching an African American infant adoption program in 1994, with a focus on adoptive parent recruitment in the African American community
- Launching multiple annual events for adoptive parents, including homecoming and holiday gatherings and support groups



In attendance at The Cradle Ball in 1997 were (from left to right) Gale Sayers, Julie Tye, Muhammad Ali and Michael Phenner.

Resurgence efforts effectively increased the rate of adoption at The Cradle. By 1995, 76 children were placed in adoptive homes; the number increased to 146 in 1999 (97 domestic and 49 international placements) and was up to 178 per year in 2000 (99 domestic and 79 international). Volunteerism increased as The Cradle sought more people to become Cuddlers, assisting staff in the Nursery by holding, singing, rocking, feeding and cuddling the babies; by the end of the decade more than 400 people were volunteering as Cuddlers each year.

Celebrities returned to The Cradle at the end of the 20th century. Chicago Bears Hall of Famer Gale Sayers (who had adopted a child from The Cradle) joined the Cradle Board of Directors in 1995. Muhammad Ali, an adoptive parent, attended the 1997 Cradle Ball. WLS-TV's Janet Davies emceed the 1998 Cradle Ball, during the agency's 75th anniversary, and Jamie Lee Curtis, an adoptive parent, was the guest of honor. Along with speaking at the event, she also previewed an excerpt from her children's book about adoption, *Tell Me Again About the Night I Was Born*.



ADOPTION STAMP

On May 11, 2000, The Cradle hosted a gathering to launch a commemorative stamp celebrating adoption, which was sold at 40,000 post offices nationwide. The Dave Thomas Foundation initiated the effort, and the launch event was attended by Dave Thomas of Wendy's, Gale Sayers and Muhammad Ali.

In 1998, The Cradle began its *Campaign for The Cradle*, which raised \$19 million in one year toward enhancing services and supporting the first renovation of the building and Nursery in 60 years. Upon reopening in 1999, The Cradle hosted an open house featuring a Nurses' Reunion, tours of the building and introduction of a new brick walkway featuring an initial 880 bricks purchased by donors in honor and memory of loved ones. The open house also included the dedication and official renaming of the African American infant adoption program as the Gale and Ardythe Sayers Center for African American Adoption.



Gale Sayers (center in cream suit coat with blue shirt) attended the 1999 dedication of the Gale and Ardythe Sayers Center for African American Adoption.



The Philosophy of Open Adoption

The Cradle had long been a strong advocate of closed adoption, as had agencies across the country in the first half of the 20th century. In a closed adoption, neither the birth parents nor the adoptive parents have any identifying information about the other. This is in contrast to modern-day open adoptions, in which both parties exchange (or allow the exchange of) identifying information, whether or not they meet or remain in contact. Open adoption also usually includes an element of communicative openness, meaning adoptive parents share the adoption story and all known information with the child, talk about the birth parents, and convey that they hold the birth parents in high regard.

Walrath was a strong advocate of closed adoption, believing that once adopted, all relationships with the child's birth relatives must be completely severed. The Cradle's stance became more widely known when co-founding staff member Eleanor Gallagher published a book called *The Adopted Child*, in which she wrote that children were better off not knowing anything about their background. She additionally advocated for not sharing any information with the adoptive family so that they could honestly answer that they did not have any information if asked by their children.

When some states began debating the possible opening of adoption records, Walrath's daughter Gretchen Oehl picked up where Walrath left off and continued to advocate against open adoption. In a letter to *Reader's Digest*, Oehl argued, "Young unmarried girls, denied confidentiality, would in countless numbers choose abortion as their best option." As a result of this stance, early Cradle staff maintained only minimal records. And though there is evidence that, as early as the 1930s, birth parents and adopted individuals were contacting The Cradle to inquire about their biological family members, Cradle staff continued to advise them to allow closed doors to remain closed.

Requests for information became more frequent as time passed. In the 1970s, volunteers Ruth McGee and Sister Margaret Burke regularly responded to requests for information with some details about the birth family and assurances to birth families that the babies had been placed in good homes. Individuals were still discouraged from seeking out birth relatives.



BUILDING DEDICATIONS

THE NURSERY

The Nursery was dedicated to Mary Hardwick Wood in 1976. Wood (wife of Sears CEO Robert E. Wood) became a Cradle Board member in 1926 and went on to volunteer for The Cradle for 45 years.

In 1999, upon rededication of the building, the revised areas of the Nursery were called the Schoellhorn Infant Care Pavilion. The late Jacquelyn Schoellhorn was an adoptive parent, supporter and honorary Cradle Board member.

The revised areas of the Nursery included two “belonging rooms” where babies were officially placed with their new adoptive families; both rooms were dedicated to Melville H. Ireland, an adopted individual, supporter and former Cradle Board member.

ENTRANCE

The entryway of The Cradle was dedicated to Donald and Jo Anne Petersen, adoptive parents whose family foundation continues to support The Cradle. Donald is a former CEO of Ford Motors.

FIREPLACE RECEPTION ROOM

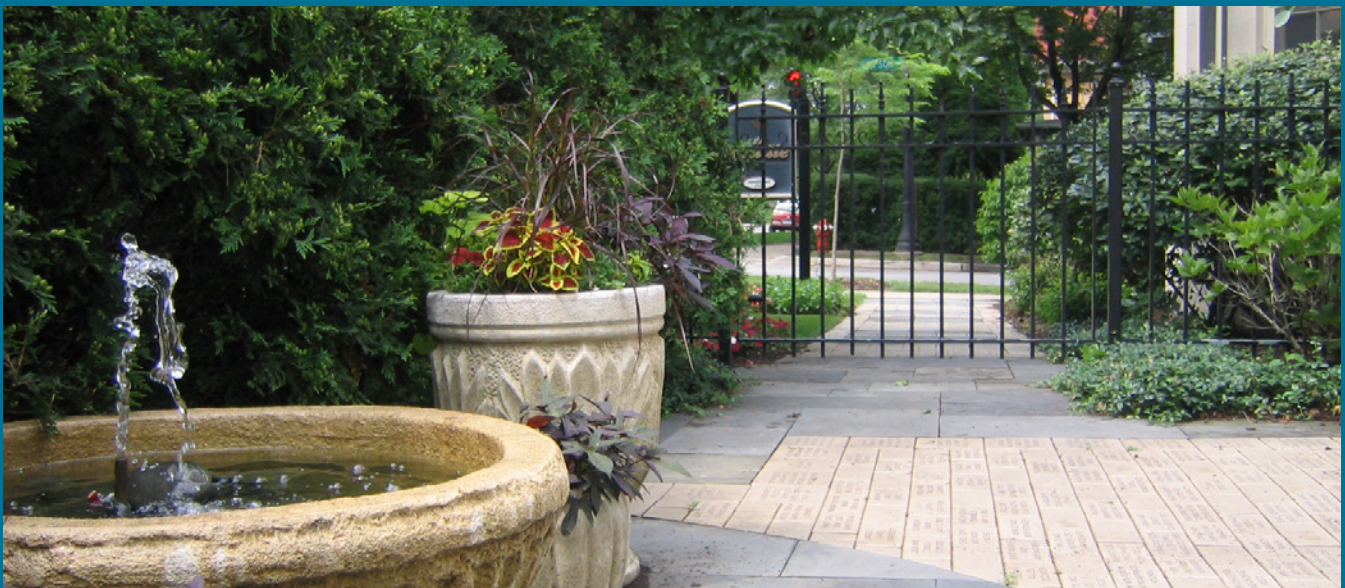
The fireplace room at 2049 Ridge Avenue was originally dedicated to Eleanor Gallagher at the 1938 building dedication. It was later rededicated to Inez and Joseph Eichenbaum. The Joseph K. and Inez Eichenbaum Foundation is an ongoing funder of The Cradle. Joseph created the first shopping mall in California. He and Inez adopted their daughter Joni in the 1930s; Joni Eichenbaum Berry became a professional dancer who danced with Gene Kelly and Sammy Davis, Jr., among other stars.

GARDEN

The garden outside 2049 Ridge Avenue was dedicated to the late Charles A. Meyer, former United States Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, Sears executive and a Cradle donor.

COURTYARD

The courtyard was dedicated to Joyce Ryan Hartle. Unfortunately, Cradle records do not contain information about Ms. Hartle.



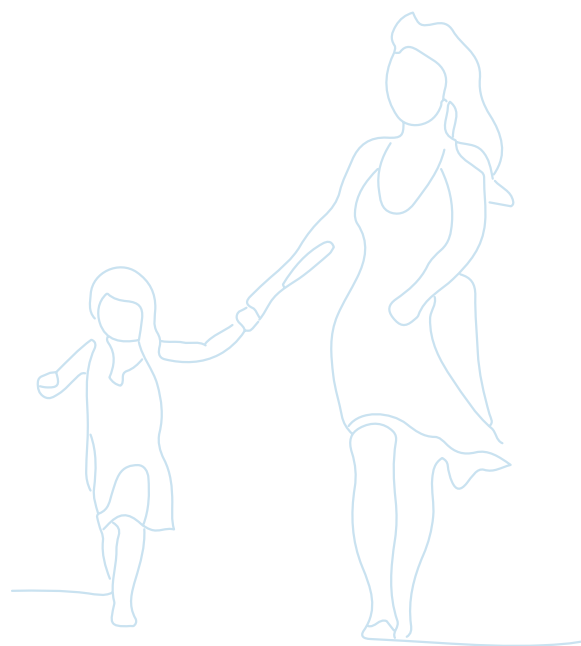
Then in 1984, the Illinois Legislature passed a law establishing the Illinois Adoption Registry and Medical Information Exchange. This allowed registrants to connect with birth relatives through mutual consent and share medical (and other) information. That same year, The Cradle launched a Post Adoption Services department and instituted its own Mutual Consent Registry so that Cradle clients could be reunited through The Cradle, rather than through the state's registry.

Later in the decade, The Cradle began facilitating reunions through its registry for the first time. In some situations, letters were exchanged through the agency until both parties felt ready for direct contact. Reunions often occurred onsite at The Cradle.

A 1988 *Los Angeles Times* article noted that "although most adoption agencies in the country are beginning to offer open adoption, generally in the form of a single meeting...very few will assist in setting up an adoption involving continuing contact." That began to change in the 1990s as adoption attorneys and facilitators in other states began connecting adopted individuals to background information or facilitating private, open adoptions. The 1990s also saw an increased public understanding of genetics and the effects of DNA on one's health, with more people seeking their medical history than ever before. The Cradle, too, began to share more detailed information, including the name of the hospital where the birth occurred and a copy of the Nursery record.

Cradle staff then began studying, with intention, the benefits of open adoption and contacted experts who were researching the outcomes of open adoption (including Dr. Ruth McRoy, Jerome Smith, James Gritter, the National Center on Adoption and Permanency's Donaldson Adoption Institute, and others). These researchers concluded the benefits of openness far outweighed any negatives. Open adoption became the official adoption philosophy and practice of The Cradle on March 12, 1998 (the exact date of The Cradle's 75th anniversary), upon board approval. The Cradle subsequently enhanced and systematized its Post Adoption Services, including creating a database that would track clients to link all members of the adoption circle (birth family, adoptee and adoptive family).

In addition to these services, The Cradle has also been offering therapeutic services since the early 2000s. In 2013, The Cradle formalized and expanded those services with the creation of The Center for Lifelong Adoption Support (CLAS), which included Post Adoption Services that helped individuals connect with birth relatives and Adoption Competent Counseling.



KEY PARTNERSHIPS

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

In 1998, The Cradle began a one-year partnership with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in which The Cradle prepared families for adoption of older children from foster care, by doing their home study and parent preparation process.

The agency entered into new DCFS partnerships in the 2000s, including the Family Placement and Support Services program from 2006-2011. DCFS sought assistance with casework around previously adopted children whose adoptive parents had died. The Cradle helped place these children in new adoptive homes. DCFS grants also funded initial content development for The Cradle's online educational platform, Adoption Learning Partners.

PLANNED PARENTHOOD/CHICAGO AREA

The Cradle launched an outreach partnership with Planned Parenthood in 2000 that provided Planned Parenthood/Chicago Area (PPCA) with a full-time Cradle counselor who spent half their time training PPCA staff on how to incorporate adoption into options counseling and providing counseling to patients interested in adoption. Their remaining time was dedicated to client work outside of the clinic. Today, The Cradle still provides training to new PPCA staff on The Cradle and incorporating adoption into options counseling, as well as referring clients to PPCA for reproductive health care needs. In turn, PPCA refers their patients considering adoption to The Cradle.

ADVOCATING FOR REFORMS

The Cradle has a history of advocating for reforms. The Cradle worked closely with lawmakers to help ensure the passage of legislation aimed at significantly improving adoption practices in the state and strengthening protections for birth and adoptive families. On August 14, 2005, Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich signed the Illinois Adoption Reform Act into law.

On May 21, 2010, Illinois Governor Pat Quinn signed a bill into law providing adopted adults greater access to their birth certificates — without having to get a court order. The Cradle advocated strongly for passage of the law and staff assisted with the writing of the legislation.

The Cradle has also been involved with legislative issues such as Safe Haven and the Illinois Adoption Registry as well as continued updating of the Illinois Adoption Act. Today we hold a seat on the Illinois Adoption Registry and Confidential Intermediary Counsel.



Resurgence II

Also in 2000, The Cradle asked Fairfield to craft a second set of recommendations, Resurgence II, which outlined a five-year roadmap toward ensuring The Cradle's role as a national leader in adoption. The report recommended upgrading technology, charging fees for services, expanding national advocacy and leaning further into intercountry adoption services.

Just a year later, in April 2001, the Cradle Board of Directors also unanimously agreed that LGBTQ+ couples and individuals should have equal opportunity to apply for adoption through The Cradle and a board resolution was adopted. A board committee had consulted with Northwestern University Law School's Center for Child and Family Justice and reviewed research to demonstrate that a) using sexual orientation as a screening criterion for prospective adoptive parents is prohibited by law and b) the sexual orientation of parents does not pose any harm to the welfare of the children they are raising. The board resolution stated, "It shall be the policy of The Cradle that all applicants should have an equal opportunity to apply for the adoption of children and should receive fair and equal treatment and consideration of their qualifications as adoptive parents, consistent with state and federal laws."

A task force of Cradle staff met before and after passage of the resolution to ensure staff were ready with information, education and training to support LGBTQ+ families. They examined everything from paperwork to databases to communications to ensure inclusive language and practices. Staff also developed an in-service training for partnering hospitals to help educate hospital staff about adoption by LGBTQ+ families. The Cradle has placed almost 200 children with LGBTQ+ families since 2001.

Cradle adoption placements were at their highest at the turn of the 21st century, notably due to international placements. Initially the Intercountry Infant Adoption Program included partnerships with China, Russia, Vietnam, India and Guatemala. By 2003, The Cradle was working with 22 countries including Ethiopia, Haiti, Kazakhstan and Romania. The Russia program was the largest of The Cradle's intercountry programs, and for nearly a decade The Cradle even had an office in Moscow and staff in other regions of the country. In 2005, more than 200 babies were placed in adoptive homes, and more than half of those were international placements.



Former Director of International Adoption for Russia Judy Stigger (left) with then-Vice President of Human Resources Merrilee Hepler (right) in Moscow.



However, that same year, international adoptions began to decline for United States agencies and families. One of the drivers of the decline was The Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption that concluded in 1993. It resulted in an international agreement to safeguard intercountry adoptions, aiming to prevent the abduction, sale or trafficking of children, and set standards for intercountry adoption practices to ensure legal and ethical protections for children, birth families and adoptive families. The Hague requires that every opportunity is given for children to be adopted domestically before seeking international options. The United States signed onto the Convention in 1994 but did not have to be in full compliance until 2008. This, along with other contributors — such as China’s changes to the one-child policy and countries improving their economic conditions — resulted in the boom in international adoptions slowing as domestic adoptions in other countries became more favorable. More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic and travel restrictions exacerbated the decline in intercountry adoptions.

Russia was not party to The Hague. Over time, the referrals of children from the Russia program came with longer wait times, higher costs and increasingly complex backgrounds. With these uncertain outcomes for families and uncertainty over the deteriorating relationship between the United States and Russia, The Cradle eventually discontinued its Russia program. Shortly following, in 2012, Russia banned all adoptions from Russia to the United States.

To address other Resurgence II recommendations to become a national leader in adoption, The Cradle initially focused on increasing its number of locations and licenses across the United States. Called "New Ventures," the exploratory program was led by former Cradle Board chair Michael Phenner. The Cradle opened an office in Wichita, Kansas, and was licensed to provide expectant parent services throughout the state.

Due to uncertainty about the economic conditions of the times, New Ventures was ended and the agency instead focused on launching a national online educational platform, Adoption Learning Partners (ALP), that went live in 2002. Early content was designed to raise awareness of adoption and adoption-related issues. By 2007, ALP hosted a variety of content particularly focused on intercountry adoption. Adoption agencies across the country began partnering with The Cradle, requiring their clients to complete ALP educational courses as part of the process toward becoming adoptive parents. (See pages 36-37 for more information about ALP.)

To address Resurgence II recommendations related to financial sustainability, The Cradle began charging fees for domestic home studies and other adoptive parent services in 2001; for the first 78 years of operation, The Cradle relied entirely on voluntary contributions, particularly from adoptive parents.

In addition to introducing a fee structure, the Cradle Board of Directors created The Cradle Foundation in 2003. The Foundation's aim is to raise and manage funds in support of The Cradle's services. Gifts made through The Cradle Foundation directly support The Cradle. The Foundation was later folded into the larger Cradle organization, rather than operating with a separate staff and board; however, funds raised on behalf of The Cradle are still managed through The Cradle Foundation accounting.

In 2011, The Cradle became licensed to provide expectant parent services in Indiana and continues to provide these services in Indiana today.

Along with increasing its geographic footprint, The Cradle also expanded its educational offerings by launching *Our Children: An Education and Empowerment Series* in 2016. *Our Children* aims to help parents, especially those parenting children of color, and transracial families better understand and prepare for the realities and injustices their children may experience. Through a series of live programs and webinars, *Our Children* gives parents tools and resources that can help them successfully navigate challenging dynamics in positive and productive ways. In its first seven years, the program hosted 15 roundtables and webinars, and had more than 4,000 participants. On-demand recordings of many of these events can be accessed through ALP's website, AdoptionLearningPartners.org.

Following an incredible 23-year run, Julie Tye left The Cradle in 2016.

THE OPRAH WINFREY SHOW

In 2002, the Hallmark Channel featured a series called *Adoption. Real Families, Real Stories* and included the stories of three Sayers moms. Oprah featured the show and invited the three Cradle moms to be in the audience with their babies.



PART IV: THE NEXT 100 YEARS

Full-Circle, Lifelong Support

Since opening in 1923, The Cradle has facilitated more than 16,000 domestic and international adoptions and has been at the forefront of African American infant adoption and placements with LGBTQ+ families. The Cradle's team of social workers, counselors, and education and outreach staff continue to offer ethical, inclusive and lifelong support to tens of thousands of people touched by adoption, including birth parents, adopted persons and adoptive parents.



The Cradle launched its Our Children series in 2016. A popular live offering, now available as a webinar, is "Raising Black Boys" (panelists pictured here).

To increase people's understanding of the joys and challenges of adoption, The Cradle offers a variety of education including more than 75 e-learning courses and on-demand webinars available on its online learning platform, AdoptionLearningPartners.org (ALP). More than 300 agencies send their clients to ALP for web-based training and education. ALP also provides continuing education credits to social work and adoption professionals. It has had half a million enrollments since the platform's launch. The Cradle also conducts professional outreach to hospital professionals who work with expectant parents and build relationships and awareness through engagement with community organizations, schools, universities and corporations.

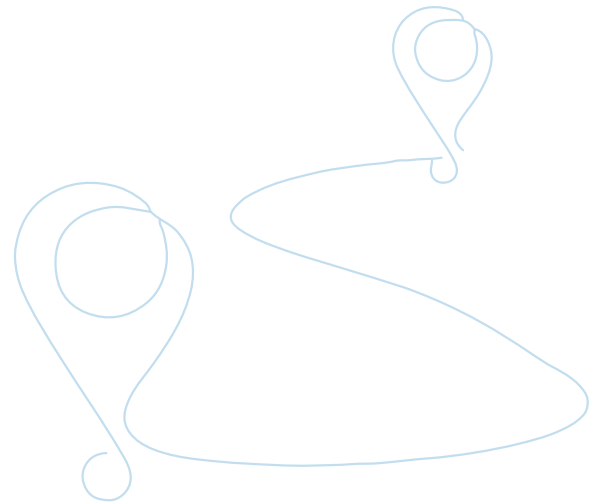


Cradle families and staff members marched in the 2022 Buffalo Grove Pride Parade.



Cradle staff at the 2022 Cradle Family Picnic.

The Cradle is also one of the few adoption agencies in the country with a dedicated department for post-adoption services and a free adoption registry that allows for the exchange of identifying information between adopted people and birth parents or other eligible relatives. The Cradle's skilled social workers offer guidance and support for the adoptee alongside providing background information, search services and connection or reconnection to birth relatives. They provide assistance to anyone touched by adoption — not just Cradle clients. The Cradle has provided search and reunion services to hundreds of individuals and families over the years.



The Cradle believes openness is vital for adopted individuals to form healthy identities and a healthy sense of self. To ensure relationships are smooth and anyone touched by adoption has access to resources and information to address the Seven Core Issues that typically affect members of the adoption circle (see page 5), The Cradle also offers a variety of support groups and adoption-competent clinical therapy. The Cradle's therapists can work with all members of birth or adoptive families at any stage of life.

Impact and Sustainability

Today, under the leadership of President and CEO, and Cradle adoptive father, Jason Friedman, The Cradle is readying for its second century of even greater impact for children and families. The organization is building upon a solid foundation of:

- More than 16,000 infants placed into loving, permanent homes
- A legacy of leadership in open adoption, intercountry adoption, placements with LGBTQ+ families and African American infant adoption
- A one-of-a-kind on-site nursery, which serves as a safe, neutral place for infants to stay while their parents take the time they need to decide if adoption is the right plan for their child
- A deeply committed and experienced staff who provide countless hours of counseling, education and support to expectant and birth parents, hopeful and adoptive families and adopted children and adults

Rooted in this experience and animated by a vision of a world where every child thrives in a safe and loving home, The Cradle embarks on its future. The Cradle is uniquely positioned to help strengthen families at pivotal times and will take bold steps to meet people where they are, including:

- **Expanding Therapeutic Services:** The Cradle is excited to extend its therapeutic program to provide services to all families touched by adoption — not just Cradle families. The Cradle is bolstering its staff and welcoming therapists with expertise in adoption-competent mental health. Building on this capacity, The Cradle will grow its therapeutic services to reach children and families beyond the adoption community.
- **Increasing Access Through Partnerships:** The Cradle strives to forge partnerships that will give greater access to economically and racially diverse individuals and families in need of services. To this end, The Cradle is establishing and deepening partnerships with local and state government, peer organizations and others.

By focusing on the needs and voices of its clients and community, The Cradle will emerge an organization transformed — more valuable to children and families, more present in communities and, ultimately, much stronger.

The past 100 years are but prologue.

AWARDS & ACCREDITATIONS

The Cradle is a secular, not-for-profit [501(c)(3)] adoption agency organized under the laws of Illinois, licensed as a Child Welfare Agency in the State of Illinois (No. 005064) and licensed as a Child Placing Agency in the State of Indiana (No.53866).

Our organization and Nursery comply with annual monitoring reviews by the Illinois Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS) and Indiana DCFS and received a 100% compliance grade in Fall 2021.

The Cradle is fully accredited to provide adoption services for Hague Convention Countries for the U.S. State Department by the Intercountry Adoption Accreditation and Maintenance Entity.

We also maintain our National Association of Social Work certification to provide adoption training through our Adoption Learning Partners subbrand.

The Cradle has received a GuideStar Platinum Seal indicating nonprofit transparency, and we maintain membership in the National Council for Adoption.



APPENDIX: OUR TEAM

Cradle Executive Directors

Florence Walrath
1923 - 1950

Hazel Ferguson
1950 - 1970

Elizabeth Meek
1970 - 1975

Lee Stein
1975 - 1992

Julie Tye
1992 - 2016

Kim Perez
2016 - 2021

Jason Friedman
2021 - present

2023 Cradle Board of Directors

The Cradle Society

John S. Luce, *Chair*

Kimberly A. Simonton,
Vice Chair

Sarah Van Steenburg,
Secretary

Jeffrey Brown, *Treasurer*

Jerry H. Biederman

Penelope Boardman

J'ai Brown

James G. Connelly III

Jane Cummins

Danielle Davis

Jeanne E. Enright

Margarita E. Kellen

Heather A. Kelley

Julia Paster

Lawrence H. Rubly

Stephen M. Whisdosh

Ryan Whitacre

George S. Wilkins

The Cradle Foundation

The Cradle Foundation is a 501c(3) nonprofit organization created in 2003 to raise and manage funds in support of The Cradle's programs and services.

Joel Solomon, *Chair & Treasurer*

Phyllis S. Thomas, *Secretary*

Jeffrey Brown, *Treasurer*

Corry Connelly

Therese Fauerbach



Cradle Staff *As of September 2023*
Leadership

Jason Friedman, *President and CEO*
 Damika Hayden, *CFO*
 Jorina Fontelera, *Vice President of Marketing*
 Kristina Lederer, *Vice President of Development*
 Pamela C. Tancredi, *LCSW, Vice President of Adoption and Family Support*
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