



Donaldina Cameron

Donaldina Cameron was the daughter of a Scottish farmer who settled in the San Joaquin Valley in California. In 1895, she was invited by Maggie Culbertson to be a sewing teacher at her home for Asian women and children in San Francisco. Shortly after Donaldina arrived, Miss Culbertson became ill and died. This left Donaldina as the new director of the mission at the age of twenty-five. She retained this position for forty-seven years, until her retirement in 1942.

The mission's main goal was to rescue the influx of Asian girls and women brought to California as slaves. They were usually kidnapped or sold, often by their families in China, and forced to work as domestics and prostitutes in the United States. Some of them were as young as six, and their lives were filled with degradation and abuse. Donaldina is credited with saving over 3,000 women and children during her time at the mission. To those she rescued, she was known as White Angel and "Lo Mo," which means Beloved Mother. But to the slave dealers and brothel owners she was the White Devil. The rescues often consisted of Donaldina and a companion walking right past the Chinese guards and escorting the girls back to the mission. The guards were usually so confused and surprised at the sight of a white woman in the Chinese ghetto, that many times the guards turned and ran! Once safely brought to the mission home, Donaldina and the other missionaries helped to give the girls a better life. They were given an education and eventually helped to find appropriate marriages.

The mission home is now called The Cameron House, and is located in San Francisco's Chinatown. It has evolved into a center that helps low income immigrants and families.

Donaldina died in 1968.