

# Council Bluffs Creche and Its Work



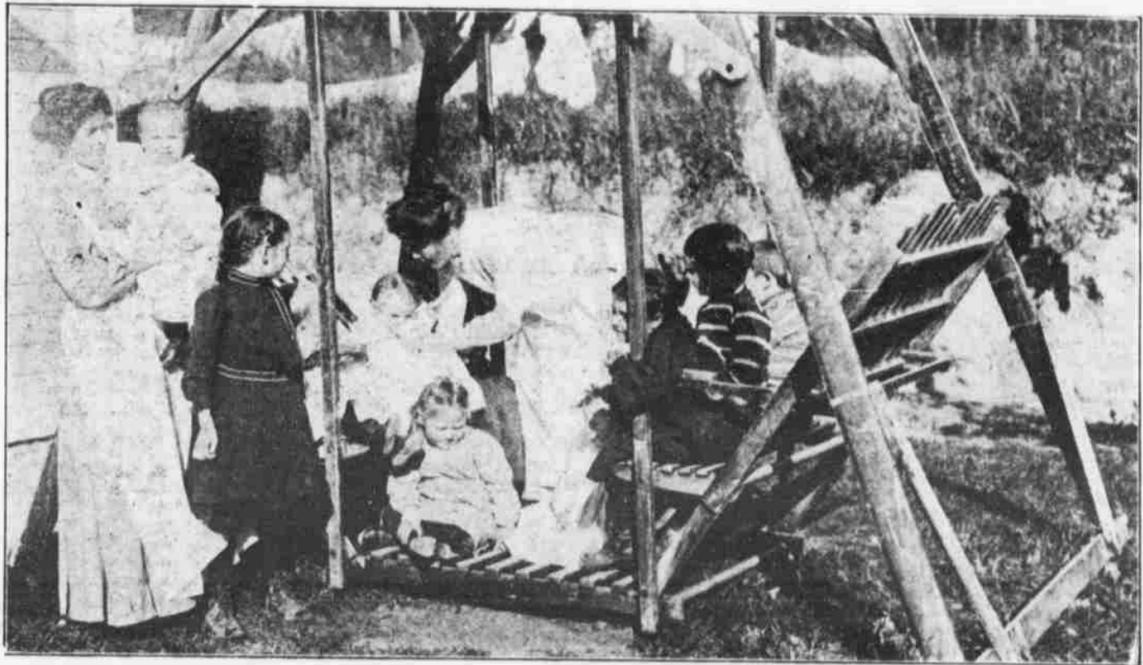
ONE OF THE DAY NURSERY ROOMS WHERE THE LITTLE TOTS ARE MADE COMFORTABLE WHILE MOTHER IS AT WORK.—Photo by a Staff Artist.

**S**TANDING in a beautiful glen nestling at the foot of one of the tall bluffs of Fairmount park can be seen a commodious two-story frame house, once the home of a well known family. Externally there is nothing to distinguish it from any ordinary family dwelling, save for a large sign across the front of it, which reads "Associated Charities' Creche." Here it is that one of the most deserving, but probably least known of the charitable institutions of Council Bluffs has its home.

This handsome building on Ninth avenue, just east of Third street, in which the creche is located, is the result of three year's hard work and perseverance on the part of the members of the Associated Charities. Three years ago the need of a day nursery or creche in Council Bluffs was forcibly impressed upon the minds of several of the women who were more or less actively engaged in charitable work of one kind or another. The result was the organization of the Associated Charities in December, 1900, with Mrs. Anna B. Phelps as its first president. Starting with practically nothing, the association rented a house on Avenue D and Tenth street and started a day nursery. Mrs. Caroline Johnson was installed as superintendent, which position she has retained ever since. Here also, under the direction of Miss Aylesworth, now Mrs. Beals of New York, and Miss Ellen Dodge, now Mrs. Edgar Scott, was started a "kitchen" garden and sewing circle by means of which young girls were instructed in the art of household duties.

The association had much to overcome at the outset of its career. To equip and furnish the home on Avenue D and Tenth street was a serious problem. Donations came in but slowly and Mrs. Johnson, the superintendent, recalls the time when the children had to be fed in relays, as there were not sufficient chairs to seat them all at the same time at the table. The creche had its home on Avenue D and Tenth street for one year, when the needs of larger premises necessitated the association to seek a bigger house. The Beck home on Glen avenue was secured, and here the creche remained for another year. Last May the association, having overcome all difficulties and obstacles for two years, decided to secure a home of its own. The incoming of the Great Western necessitated the removal of many houses along its right of way. One of the houses that had to be moved was the old Hanthorn family home. Through the assistance of County Treasurer Arnd the Associated Charities became the purchaser of the house and it was removed to its present beautiful location on Ninth avenue.

The house contains fourteen rooms, with laundry and furnace room in the basement. On the ground floor is the office, superintendent's apartments, receiving room, boys' dormitory, children's dining room and kitchen. On the second floor is the "creche" proper. Here are two large bright rooms, in which twenty or more little white iron cots can be seen, each with its little occupant. Here the babies have their home. On this floor are also the nurses' sleeping room, a dormitory for the elder children, and the diet kitchen. The work of caring for twenty or more babies can be better understood



WHERE MANY HAPPY MOMENTS ARE SPENT.—Photo by a Staff Artist

when it is stated that every day 200 bottles, from which the little ones are fed, have to be washed. In the diet kitchen is where all the milk used is sterilized.

In the creche at present are thirty children, ranging in age from the 2-weeks-old babe to girls and boys of 12 years. Of these children six are orphans who are being cared for until suitable homes can be found for them. The mothers of the little babies belong mostly to the working class, many of them being employed as domestics. The children are cared for at the creche, that is fed and clothed and given medical attendance if sick for the small sum of \$2 a week. While this is the stipulated charge, many times the mother is unable to even pay this, but her child receives the same care.

The work of the Associated Charities is not limited to the caring for children at the creche. It reaches far out. A helping hand is extended at all times to young girls and women who are leading a wayward life and they are given a refuge and every assistance to reform. At present there are four young women in the home who have been rescued through the efforts of Mrs. Johnson, the superintendent. They will be cared for until suitable employment can be found for them.

The association supplies many a poor family during the year with provisions, fuel, clothing and other necessities of life, furnishes medicine to the sick and provides transportation to their homes to many a destitute person. In connection with its work among the sick poor, the association feels the need greatly of a trained visiting nurse. The lack of funds alone prevents the association from keeping such a nurse, but



HOME OF THE COUNCIL BLUFFS CRECHE AT NINTH AVENUE AND THIRD STREET.—Photo by a Staff Artist.

is in hope that before long it will be able to do so. Mrs. Johnson is frequently called upon at all hours of the day and night by some sick poor person, but is unable to leave the home.

Outside of the small sum received for the care of the babies in the creche the Associated Charities depends upon voluntary contributions to carry on its work. Visitors are always welcome at the creche and Mrs.

Johnson, the superintendent, is always ready to show them through the building. The present officers of the Associated Charities are: President, Mrs. Jacob Sims; vice president, Mrs. George T. Phelps; secretary, Miss Beebe; treasurer, Mrs. P. J. Montgomery; corresponding secretary, Miss Elizabeth Squire; counsellor, Miss Dodge; auditors, Mrs. Ray Bixby and Mrs. George Keelina.