

A Special Thanksgiving Turkey

Posted on [November 24, 2010](#) by [Karen Keehr](#)



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As the Curator of the Visual and Audio Collection, I look at hundreds of amazing photographs of Nebraska history every day. Some photos, like the ones featured in this blog, touch my heart in unexpected ways. When I first saw these two images, I was immediately drawn to the sweet excitement on the children's faces as they help prepare the Thanksgiving turkey. As is often the case, the story behind the photographs is just as phenomenal as the images themselves.

Omaha photographer Nathaniel Dewell captured these special Thanksgiving moments on November 28, 1928 at the Hattie B. Munroe House for Convalescing Crippled Children. At the time of the photograph, the home was located at 2824 North 66th Street, Omaha. Unfortunately, the names of the children and Munroe House worker are unknown.

The story of the Hattie B. Munroe House began in 1919 when a group of Omaha doctors recognized the need for corrective orthopedics and many local women were interested in charitable work. The group created the Society for the Relief of the Disabled "to make it

possible for all disabled and crippled people in Omaha and vicinity to receive the benefit of orthopedic treatments.” They partnered with the Visiting Nurses Association and began providing weekly clinics. In 1922 they held a summer camp for 24 children.

At the end of the summer camp, John Munroe and his sister-in-law, Clara E. Elder, offered an amazing gift to the Society. They had purchased a 10-room house with 2 acres from a private owner. The home was given in the name of Hattie B. Munroe, Mr. Munroe’s wife and Miss Elder’s sister. Before passing away in 1921, Mrs. Munroe had been unwell for some time. According to her sister, helping care for handicapped children was a cause close to Hattie’s heart.



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The Hattie B. Munroe House opened on September 1, 1922 for twelve children. Donations from the Omaha community generously furnished the home as well as filled the pantry with food and the cellar with coal. Two additions to the building quickly brought the homes normal capacity to forty children, with cases mostly of rheumatic fever, post poliomyelitis, cerebral palsy, congenital heart disease, and osteomyelitis. During the 1950s the patient population reached in all time high with the increase of polio.

In 1956 the home accepted a 99-year lease at 4420 Dewey Avenue on the University of Nebraska Medical Center campus, and a new, larger home was built four years later. In 1968 the Munroe House entered into an operating contract with the University of Nebraska Board of Regents and the home was renamed the Hattie B. Munroe Pavillion. Today, the Hattie B. Munroe Foundation continues its work to provide service and support for people with genetic disorders and developmental disabilities. To learn more about the Munroe-Meyer Institute, please visit their website at:

<http://www.unmc.edu/mmi/index.htm>.

Karen Keehr, Curator of the Visual and Audio Collections



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One Response to *A Special Thanksgiving Turkey*

1. *Edie Dewell Postiglione* says:

[July 13, 2012 at 2:01 pm](#)

I did SO enjoy your article with those pictures! I discovered it this morning while researching my family for our tree in “Ancestry.com”. Nat Dewell was my grandfather. When he died, his two sons donated most of his work to... ?? (I was too young at the time to remember).

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