

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
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A group of smiling youngsters at the Thomas-Dale Child Care Center, part of the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation's Child Care Services Program. Child care issues are one of the many concerns of the Saint Paul Foundation. See article beginning on page 4.

RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY

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On the cover: Children at the Thomas-Dale Child Care Center attend one of the many needed child care centers operated by the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation in the East Metro area of St. Paul and Ramsey County.

Acknowledgements: The photographs on pages 4-19, page 28 and on the front cover are from the archives of The Saint Paul Foundation and used with the Foundation's permission. All other photographs in this issue of *Ramsey County History* are from the audio-visual collections of the Minnesota Historical Society.

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A Message from the Editorial Board

Ramsey County History welcomes the submission of manuscripts dealing with the history of St. Paul, Ramsey County, and their environs. In particular, the Editorial Board encourages writers to contact the editor with proposals for neighborhood histories, stories about local leaders and their families, accounts of prominent institutions, businesses or organizations and articles on the racial and ethnic diversity of Ramsey County.

The intent of the Editorial Board is to encourage and support writing about urban and local history relating to St. Paul and Ramsey County. Our quarterly magazine needs a continuing flow of well researched and thoughtfully written articles that reflect the richness of the people, places, and institutions of the county. The members of our society are enthusiastic about history. They deserve the best historical writing we can provide to them.

—John L. Lindley, chairman, Editorial Board

What's Historic About This Site?

Macalester's Old Main And Its First Century

Editor's Note: This is the third in a series of articles on Ramsey County's historic sites.

Part of the birthplace of Macalester College, one of the oldest private colleges in Minnesota, still stands and is in regular use on its campus. Old Main, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is the surviving partner of two buildings, once known as the East and West Wings, that were built in the 1880s to house the new college.

Thomas McCurdy, an early president, described the setting. Old Main, he wrote, "stood on a Prairie quite remote from any human habitation . . . surrounded by cornstalks and gophers." This, however, was not its original location. The college was established first, in 1871, in Minneapolis in the Winslow House, but it grew out of the Baldwin School, a preparatory school founded in 1853 by the Reverend Edward D. Neill in downtown St. Paul. It stood on the present site of Landmark Center.

The college drew its name from Charles Macalester, a wealthy Philadelphia merchant and banker, who owned the Winslow House, a once-fashionable resort-hotel near the Falls of St. Anthony. Upon his death, he left the property to the college.

In 1885 the college moved to its present location and operated out of what would later be the East Wing. Built in 1884 by architects Wilcox and Smith for \$30,000, the building was brick, three-and-a-half stories high, with a slate roof. It contained classrooms, dormitories and laundry and eating facilities.

Six students (George W. Achord, Joseph W. Cochran, Benjamin W. Irwin, Samuel M. Kirkwood, William P. Lee and Paul E. McCurdy) and six professors (William R. Kirkwood, Nathaniel S.



Macalester College's Old Main in 1895. The West Wing, on the right, has been restored but the East Wing, the earliest section, could not be saved. It has been replaced by a new library.

McFetridge, Charles Forbes, Frank B. Pearson and Daniel Rice) were present for Macalester's first year.

The original plan called for a middle and a west wing to be added to the East Wing but for financial reasons only the central section, soon called the West Wing, was completed in 1889 at a cost of (depending upon the source) between \$62,000 and \$70,000. The new building added "10 more classrooms, a museum, a reading room and a gymnasium to Macalester's physical plant," according to *Macalester and Beyond*, an in-house history.

The West Wing had, to quote the Historic Sites Survey of St. Paul and Ramsey County by the Ramsey County Historical Society, "a three bay facade facing north, with intersecting gable-roofed limestone porte cochere (now an entrance) and three story round tower with a conical roof near center of facade."

The fledgling college rode out turbulent times. It nearly closed in 1893 and 1897 but by 1901 it had eliminated its

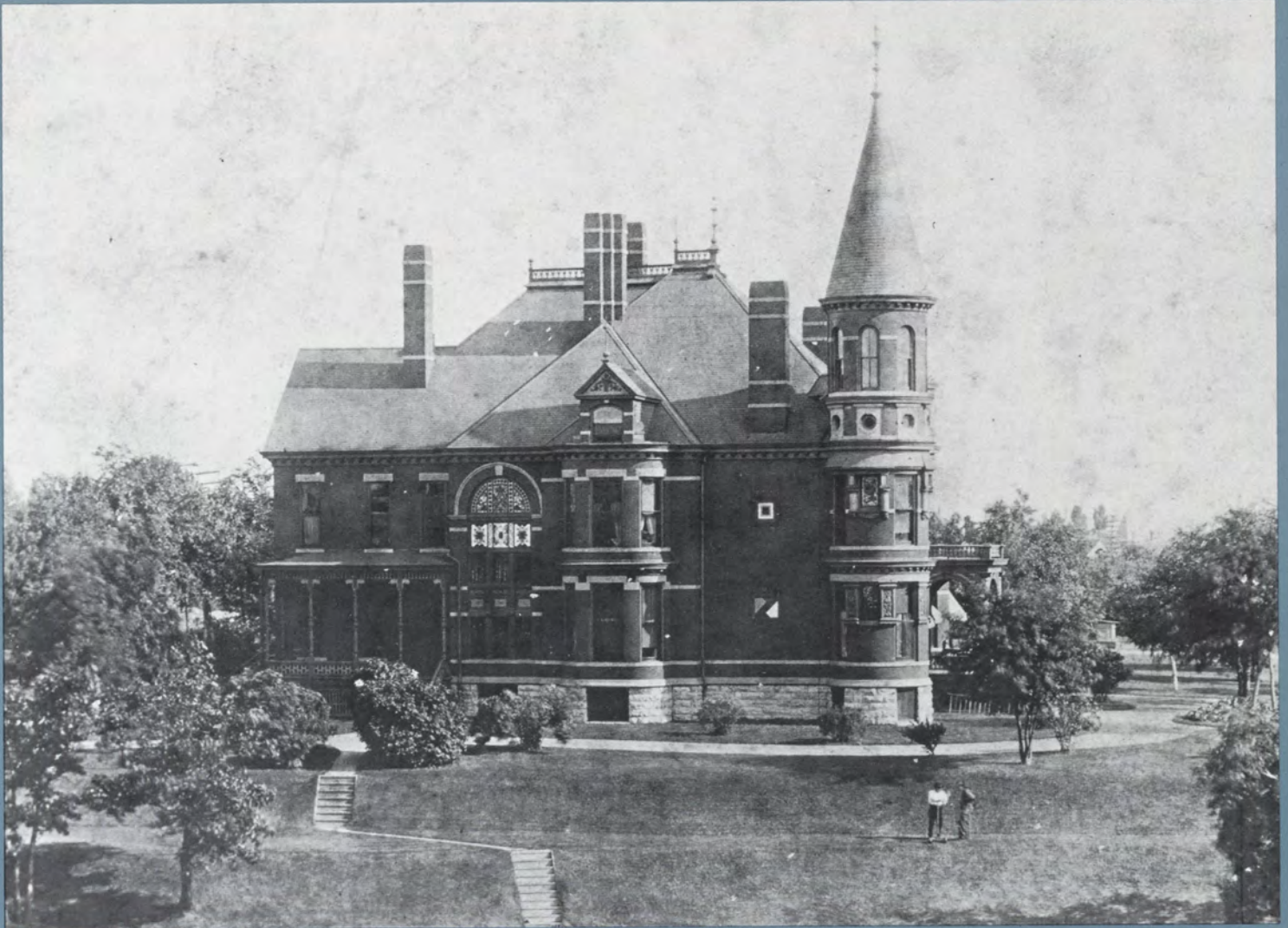
debt and by 1908 had secured a permanent endowment. Soon, other buildings dotted the farmland surrounding Old Main: a new women's dormitory in 1906 (Wallace Hall), a science building in 1910 (Carnegie Science Hall) and a gymnasium in 1924.

Neill had founded Macalester as a men's college but its fourth president, the Reverend Adam Weir Ringland, opened it to women. Its first woman student was Winifred Viola Moore in 1897.

Old Main served the Macalester community well, but age took its toll and the old buildings fell into disrepair. Old Main's West Wing was salvageable, but the East Wing could not be restored. It was torn down in 1986 to make room for a new library to replace the outgrown Weyerhaeuser Memorial Library.

After extensive restoration, the West Wing now houses the Anthropology, Linguistics, Sociology, Religious Studies, Journalism, Philosophy and History departments and many classrooms.

—Steve Haebig



The Theodore Hamm mansion at 671 Greenbrier Avenue, as it looked around 1900. See page 3.

R.C.H.S.
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