

MISS MC CLURE was identified with the hospital licensing program of the Minnesota department of health from 1942 to 1959. Since her retirement she has done research on the history of homes for the aged in Minnesota.

The Protestant Home of St. Paul

A PIONEER VENTURE in Caring for the Aged

ETHEL MCCLURE

ON MAY 4, 1867, twelve women met in the vestry of the First Presbyterian Church of St. Paul and laid the foundations of what is now the Protestant Home, the oldest home for the aged in Minnesota. The minutes were taken by Harriet E. Bishop, St. Paul's first schoolteacher. "Twelve women from the Evangelical Churches of St. Paul (as by appointment at a preliminary meeting)," she wrote, "met . . . to consider the need of, and measures requisite for a 'home for the homeless'; for which work God had seemingly opened up the way. The command 'Go Forward!' could not be mistaken or misunderstood. Facts developed the need, and His children 'have a mind to work.'"¹

The need was plain, for the "homeless" were to be found everywhere—in the boardinghouses along Fourth Street; at the doors of the churches seeking help; or on the levees by the river. In 1867 the homeless were not mainly the aged, as might be supposed, but immigrants. St. Paul at that time had an estimated population of about sixteen thousand persons, and was growing rapidly. Newcomers poured into the city by every stagecoach and river steamer. Those arriving from foreign shores appeared, to some observers, to be a "stout and hearty lot of settlers."² But to the trained eye of at least one physician, the immigrants brought with them, in many cases, "constitutions

broken by the hardships and privations of peasant life abroad." Many bore the "marks of malnutrition, the flush of fevers, the deep pits of small pox."³ American-born citizens, too, suffering from pulmonary disease, often sought relief in Minnesota's much vaunted salubrious climate.

The first boat that spring arrived in St. Paul on April 21, and many of its passengers were stranded. On April 26, 1867, the city council, at the request of the Chamber of Commerce and the Board of Trade, opened a "Home for Emigrants" in the Irvine warehouse on the upper levee. "All of them need cheap accommodations for a few days," observed the *St. Paul Pioneer* of May 18, 1867, "a thing they could not get at a crowded hotel or boarding house, whose rates are exorbitant. These poor immigrants are generally badly imposed on and swindled by parties who prey on the ignorant." It did not mention the ninety-two saloons listed in the city directory, but no doubt they, too, received a share of the immigrants' meager hoard.⁴

¹ Ladies Christian Union of the City of St. Paul, "Minute Book," May 4, 1867, owned by the Minnesota Historical Society. Hereafter referred to as "Minutes."

² *St. Paul Pioneer*, May 18, 1867.

³ Philip D. Jordan, *The People's Health*, 38 (St. Paul, 1953).

⁴ Henry A. Castle, *History of St. Paul and Vicinity*, 1:101 (Chicago, 1912).

At the new "Emigrants Home" a family could rent, for fifteen cents a person per day, an apartment furnished with bunks and straw, and have the use of stoves and fuel with which to cook. But this was temporary housing, a place to stay until work and a permanent abode could be found. With the arrival of each boatload of newcomers that year the number of jobless immigrants increased, and it was clear that by the end of the summer the situation would be almost intolerable.⁵

The urgency of the problem is reflected in the speed with which the women of St. Paul's churches organized and set to work. Most of the city's Protestant congregations were represented at the May 4 meeting. There were women from the three Presbyterian churches (First, Central, and House of Hope); the four Methodist churches (Jackson Street, German, Scandinavian, and Market Street); the two Episcopal churches (Christ and St. Paul's); the First Baptist Church; the Trinity Lutheran Church; and Plymouth Congregational. They appointed a constitution committee comprised of Mrs. Albert G. Ruliffson, Mrs. Frederick A. Noble, Mrs. William I. Smith, Mrs. William Wakefield, and Mrs. Charles D. Strong. One week later the committee reported that it had held three meetings, each member had "manifested a proper sense of the responsibility of her position," and they were "convinced that there is a wide field for Christian effort not at present occupied in this city and vicinity." They asked for more time to gather information, and on May 26 presented a constitution, which was adopted by the church representatives. The new organization was named the "Ladies Christian Union of the City of St. Paul."⁶

Each associated church was to be represented on the organization's board of managers by three members. "The objects and purposes," stated article 2, "shall be to re-



HARRIET Bishop

lieve, aid, and provide *Homes* for the homeless, the destitute and unfriended, especially women and children also to visit the fatherless and widow in their affliction; to instruct, and assist those in prison; to afford protection to young persons exposed to contagion from the moral evils that are rife in society, and to surround all who may become objects of attention with kindly and saving influences."⁷

IT WAS a big order, and the Reverend Frederick T. Brown, who was present, ventured to suggest that "the house was too large for the occupants, that we were attempting too much." However, the members of the group were not to be discouraged, for behind them stood the women of their churches. "Convinced of the advantages of associated effort," they immediately proceeded to solicit funds, organize auxiliary societies, and set up in each church a committee whose duty it was "to visit among the poor, the sick, and the destitute assigned to them by their pastors." Other committees were formed to give attention to homes and employment, finances, and devotional exercises. The ladies elected officers and devised strict rules for the conduct of their meetings — no whispering in groups, no one to be seated during

⁵ *Pioneer*, May 18, 1867.

⁶ "Minutes," May 4, 11, 26, 31, 1867.

⁷ "Minutes," May 31, 1867.

opening exercises, and no one to withdraw without permission of the president.⁸

On July 5 they voted to keep open the lecture room of the First Presbyterian Church each Thursday, when one or more of the home and employment committee was to be present to interview strangers. Almost anyone who needed help of any kind received it. They found a boarding place for Mrs. W____; helped Mrs. C____ on Tenth Street obtain employment; and assisted widows and children. They furnished "necessaries and comforts" for the sick and destitute at the emigrants home, and left word with the superintendent that "application might be made for future supplies . . . during the period before the close of navigation."⁹

By the end of the first summer the ladies had employed as "Bible Reader and City Missionary" a Miss McNair, who had been doing similar work in St. Louis, and early in October, 1867, she took up her duties. Her first request was for tracts, and there is some evidence that Bible reading was of greater interest to her than finding homes for the homeless. She remained only until the following July when, despite the offer of an additional five dollars a month for the use of a carriage in her work, she returned to St. Louis.¹⁰

After her departure — and, indeed, even before — there was a letdown in interest. For three months it was impossible for the group to obtain a quorum. The women analyzed the situation and "decided that two things were indispensably necessary to be done: one, reorganization with more clearly defined rules of responsibility and power; the other, the immediate establishment of a home for destitute and friendless women and children, which was one of the primary objects of the Association, and the failure to effect which had been assigned by various persons as the cause of their loss of interest." On October 14, 1868, a committee was appointed to revise the constitution and another group, "having knowledge of a suitable house, was empowered to act absolutely

in the establishment of a Home." This committee rented a house at 47 Walnut Street, and on December 17, 1868, opened it as a temporary home, while the organization continued its efforts to acquire a permanent site.¹¹

This determined course of action helped to revive interest, and the annual meeting on January 27, 1869, was well attended although not entirely harmonious. Members of the nominating committee had failed to agree, and there were differences of opinion on the constitution. A reporter from the *Pioneer* who was present observed: "For the quick transaction of business the ladies have a very decided advantage over men. They have no long, tedious speeches to inflict upon a patient, long-suffering public. When they do talk, though, they are wont to talk together. The confusion caused by this proceeding, however, is amply compensated for by the fact that the talking is all done at once, and thus the sooner got through with."¹²

The group agreed upon a new name, "The Ladies Relief Association of the City of St. Paul," and adopted a new constitution. Under it membership was open to women belonging to the Protestant churches on payment of dues, and there was a "Board of Managers, consisting of twelve ladies, being one from each church represented." Some of the purposes set forth in the earlier constitution were deleted. The group would continue to surround "with kindly and saving influences" all who became objects of attention, but they would no longer attempt to visit

⁸ "Minutes," May 31, June 7, 1867. Officers elected at the meeting on May 31 were: president, Mrs. Daniel W. Ingersoll; vice presidents, Mrs. Frederick A. Noble, Mrs. George W. Hamilton, Mrs. Daniel Cobb; corresponding secretary, Mrs. Charles D. Strong; and treasurer, Mrs. William Wakefield.

⁹ "Minutes," July 5, August 10, September 11, 1867.

¹⁰ "Minutes," June 10, 1868.

¹¹ "Minutes," October 14, 1868; *St. Paul Pioneer*, January 28, 1869.

¹² *Pioneer*, January 28, 1869; "Minutes," January 27, 1869.

everyone who was afflicted, in prison, or exposed to the moral evils then "rife in society." Henceforth, their aim would be simply to "provide a 'Home for the Homeless' destitute and friendless women and children and engage in such works of Christian Charity as may be appropriate and incident to the aforesaid general purpose and plan."¹³

THE RENTED house on Walnut Street was not satisfactory as a permanent home, and the reorganized group renewed its efforts to find a suitable property. On May 4, 1869, the organization bought for \$3,300 a house with approximately an acre of land on Collins Street, near DeSoto and Lafayette (then Herkimer). The "Home for the Friendless," as it was almost immediately known, now became the reason for the association's existence and the focus of all its endeavors.

There is little information about this building, which was to serve the organization for nearly fifteen years. It was thoroughly renovated on order of the city physician, and a few years later was described as "very old, very small, and almost insufferably cold." These defects must not have been evident at the time of purchase for after the building was repaired and cleaned, the women "were gratified at the appearance of comfort."¹⁴

Certainly they lost no time in filling the home. Later they developed intake policies, made investigations, and as new

agencies became established, considered alternative solutions to an applicant's problems. During these early years, however, the simple need for care and shelter was the deciding factor, and action was prompt. For instance: "Mrs. [John B.] Sanborn brought up the case of a newly arrived destitute Virginian family and it was voted to receive the Mother and daughters for a time. . . . Mrs. Sanborn at once sent her sleigh for them and they arrived before the close of the meeting."¹⁵

Many of the first persons admitted were ill as well as penniless. St. Paul had only one hospital in 1869, and its few beds could not accommodate all who needed care. Some of the illnesses were contagious, although their potential danger was not always recognized at the time. One destitute woman with typhoid fever had been recommended, and "Mrs. Fairchild was appointed to consult with Dr. Smith as to the propriety of taking the woman to the Home, as her case is not a very serious one and it is supposed will yield to cleanliness and good care." In 1870 the association voted as a matter of policy to accept some patients and charge six dollars a week for ordinary cases. There was pressure to do more. The physicians of St. Paul wanted the group to open a women's hospital and it was even suggested that they build an addition and take in sick mariners. But the women kept their eyes on the main purpose—to operate a home, not a hospital. Although they continued to accept some sick persons, the latter were usually homeless and destitute as well. In October, 1871, the board considered "an urgent request that the Home should receive . . . an aged Methodist minister and wife, poor, homeless and sick." These were perhaps the first persons received for permanent care.¹⁶

WITH THE opening of a home, it was necessary for the organization to tap new financial resources. There was little in the way of fund raising that these women did

¹³ "Minutes," January 27, 1869; Board of Managers of the Home for the Friendless Association, *Annual Report*, 1877, p. 4. The officers elected at this meeting were: president, Mrs. John V. Nicols; vice president, Mrs. Joseph A. Wheelock; secretary, Mrs. William B. Herriott; treasurer, Mrs. William Wakefield; board of managers, Mrs. Henry L. Carver, Mrs. Henry S. Fairchild, Mrs. Amos W. Hall, Mrs. Samuel S. Taylor, Mrs. Charles M. McGrath, Mrs. A. F. Parker, Mrs. William B. Shaw, and Mrs. Daniel H. Valentine.

¹⁴ Home for the Friendless, *Annual Report*, 1877, p. 7; "Minutes," November 2, 1869.

¹⁵ "Minutes," February 1, 1870.

¹⁶ "Minutes," December 7, 1869; April 5, 1870; August 1, October 3, 1871; August 6, 1872.

not try. A "programme of musical gems" was among their first projects. "Ladies who seldom sing in public," said the announcement, "will, on this occasion, devote to the worthy cause, the talents with which they delight friends at home." They promised that the selections would be varied and "not too numerous, and no more enjoyable concert will be offered this season."¹⁷

Lectures were in vogue then, and persons in the public eye often agreed to deliver one for the benefit of an organization which would share in the proceeds. It was not possible to accept all offers from would-be speakers. There was Mrs. C____, for instance, whose "proposition to lecture for the benefit of the Home was informally but decisively vetoed." Even at this distance, one wonders what the society missed by such "decisive" action.¹⁸

There were two regular events for which the home became famous: an annual strawberry festival in the summer and a donation party, held each fall. Items received at the latter included everything from carpet rags to pieplant or a cord of wood. The only failure occurred on October 10, 1871, and was decried in a terse comment: "Small attendance at Donation Party. Cause Chicago Fire." The strawberry festivals held at the home must have added greatly to the gaiety and sparkle of life in old St. Paul. For these occasions the spacious grounds of the home were illuminated with Chinese lanterns, and "arbor, flower tables, candy stand, & lemonade fountain beautified the front yard." Freezers of ice cream, cakes, and strawberries were donated in abundance. These festivals resembled the ice cream socials of a later day, but the task of bringing refreshments, dishes, flowers, and other items to the home was a somewhat larger one. For this purpose St. Paul livery stables sometimes donated the use of their carriages and band wagons.¹⁹

Perhaps the most spectacular single fund-raising project was the "Union Spy Entertainment" of 1871. This "thrilling

drama of the late war," was sweeping the country. It combined home talent and professional production in a program that included tableaux, numerous musical numbers, and military drills presented by the members of Company A of the First Minnesota Regiment of state militia. It had been brought to St. Paul in March by the Acker Post, Grand Army of the Republic, and was repeated in November. On November 7, the board held a special meeting at the home of Mrs. John Nicols "to consider the proposition of Henry A. Castle, chairman of the committee of arrangements for Acker Post, to devote one fifth of the proceeds of the 'Union Spy' entertainment to be held next week to the benefit of the Home for the Friendless voted that we gratefully accept it." Newspapers announced the important event, and special trains brought spectators from many towns, including Stillwater, Willmar, and Rochester.²⁰

Another successful money-raising venture was the "Grand Entertainment" of 1878, held at the Music Hall, complete with a New England dinner, a "Lilliput Levee . . . to please the little folks, (admission 10¢)," and an "Evening Entertainment at 7 1/2 P.M., consisting of Drama, Recitations, and Jarley's Wax Works (admission 25¢)." Theatricals and charity balls were sponsored, but in 1878, the Central Presbyterian Church expressed its disapproval "of balls, and theatricals for the support of institutions managed by the churches."²¹

DURING the 1870s, as new agencies took over some of the activities formerly handled by the Ladies Relief Association, it was no longer necessary for the home to attempt to care for all of the sick, needy,

¹⁷ *Pioneer*, January 10, 1869.

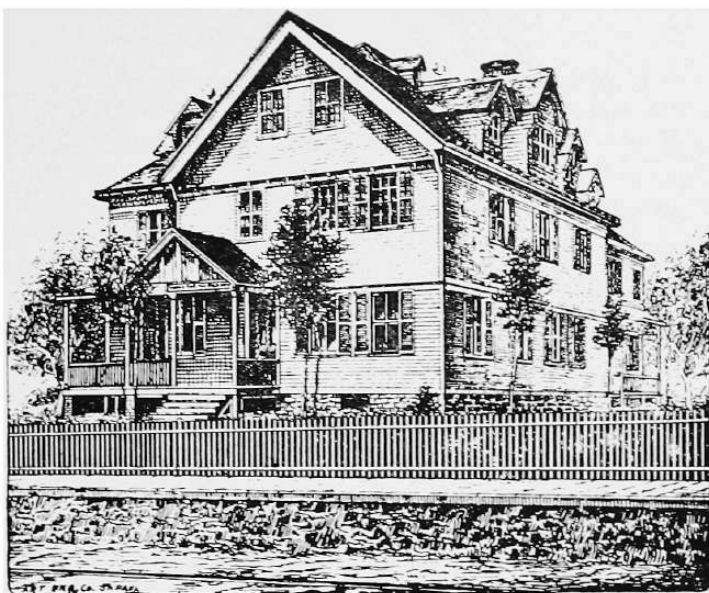
¹⁸ "Minutes," February 7, 1871.

¹⁹ "Minutes," October 10, 1871; July 2, 1872.

²⁰ "Minutes," November 7, 1871; *Pioneer*, March 10, 17, November 19, 21, 1871.

²¹ *St. Paul and Minneapolis Pioneer Press*, January 19, 1878; "Minutes," May 7, 1878.

THE Protestant Home on
Collins Street as
it appeared in the 1890s



or erring of St. Paul. Its work with immigrants was shared by the Scandinavian Ladies Emigrant Society; the Episcopal Church Hospital (now St. Luke's) was established in 1873 and it helped care for the sick. On November 1 of the same year, the Magdalen Society, founded for the "promotion of moral purity," opened the Women's Christian Home and from then on, erring women were referred there. In 1876 a group of prominent men organized the St. Paul Society for Improving the Condition of the Poor, later named the St. Paul Society for the Relief of the Poor, and henceforth the Ladies Relief Association was able to refer many of its applicants to this organization.²²

St. Paul's population doubled in the decade of the 1870s, and there was a corresponding increase in the number of persons requiring care. The annual report of the association for 1876-77 notes a trend toward long-term dependency. "The de-

sign of the Home," states the report, "is to provide temporary shelter for destitute women and children. . . . To some, however, the Home becomes a permanent shelter. Aged, infirm, without friends or relatives able to assist, there is nowhere else for them to go, and their declining years are passed in all the comforts that a good home can give."²³

In 1877, the group's name was changed. The annual report notes: "On account of the confusion arising from the fact that the name by which we are known is not the real name of our society, an amendment was offered early in this year (1877) to change the name from the Ladies' Relief Association, to the Home of the Friendless Association of the city of St. Paul. On consulting a lawyer, Mr. C[ushman] K. Davis, it was found that the simplest way to effect the change was to have it done by a special act of the Legislature. By the kindness of Mr. Davis an act was drawn up and passed during the present session."²⁴

²² Christopher C. Andrews, *History of St. Paul*, 1:94 (Chicago and New York, 1912); Castle, *St. Paul and Vicinity*, 583; State Board of Corrections and Charities, *Biennial Report*, 1886, p. 241; *Pioneer*, January 12, 1869.

²³ Home for the Friendless, *Annual Report*, 1877, p. 6.

²⁴ Home for the Friendless, *Annual Report*, 1877, p. 5; Minnesota, *Special Laws*, 1877, p. 231.

FROM the time the society purchased the Collins Street property with its inadequate building, the women hoped for a new location. "We are working for the future," wrote Kate Nicols in her secretary's report for January, 1871. "When St. Paul shall

have rounded out the circle of its growth, a stately edifice will stand where we to-day in weariness and perplexity lay humble but firm foundations.”²⁵

Although St. Paul had not “rounded out the circle of its growth,” by 1878, the association voted to establish a building fund and later that year appointed a building committee. On June 3, 1879, this group reported that the premises had been examined by an architect, who thought it “not advisable to do any thing toward repairing the house, but better to put a new building on the rear of the lot.” Plans prepared by Clarence H. Johnston and Knox Taylor, Jr., architects, were finally adopted in 1881.²⁶

The building was completed late in November, 1883, and just after Thanksgiving it was opened. “Between the hours of 10 A.M. and 5 P.M. today,” reported the *St. Paul and Minneapolis Pioneer Press* of December 6, 1883, “the new and handsome building on Collins street, known as the Home for the Friendless, will be the scene of a donation party.” The new structure attracted considerable attention. With the Hennepin County poorhouse, it was one of the earliest buildings in Minnesota to be designed expressly for the purpose of caring

for aged and destitute persons. Visitors, of whom there were many, were “profuse in their exclamations expressive of their appreciation of our comfortable rooms.”²⁷

It is not necessary to draw on the imagination to picture that “new and handsome building.” It still stands at 469 Collins Street, occupied in 1962 by the Crispus Attucks Home for the Aged. There have been some changes, including the addition of a stucco exterior. The original floors have been covered except in the old infirmary, and the gas fixtures were long ago removed. Gone, too, are the stoves which an old lady might have had in her room in the 1880s for the price of a cord of wood.

In many respects, however, the building is much as it appeared on that December day nearly eighty years ago. The ceilings are some twelve feet high, and a stairway leads from the front hall to the second floor where there are about fourteen bedrooms. When the attic was finished several years later, it was used to accommodate working women. What really challenges the imagination is where the ladies of the

²⁵ *Pioneer*, January 26, 1871.

²⁶ *Minutes*, April 2, 1878; June 3, 1879; October 15, 1881.

²⁷ *St. Paul Globe*, February 5, 1885.



THE building at
469 Collins Street
in April, 1962

association found space for all the persons received. In some years they cared for more than two hundred women and children, and the average number of occupants was frequently reported at from forty to fifty.

THE 1880s were busy years for the ladies of the board of managers. Each woman took her turn as visiting manager, serving for a month. At the next board meeting she submitted a report and presented problems for the deliberation of the entire group. One member or a committee was usually assigned to follow through on these and any other matters that required attention.

On one occasion the board fretted at the injustice of not having water supplied by the city free of expense, and "Mrs. [Henry S.] Fairchild and Mrs. [Henry M.] Smyth were appointed to interview officers of the water board and make the best terms possible." At another time "Mrs. [William H.] Pritz was asked to attend to getting a hitching post for the home," and a few months later "Three screen doors were thought . . . necessary. . . . Funds being low Mrs. [John W.] McClung was asked to solicit them from Corlis, Chapman, & Drake." At the same meeting the ladies were urged to do more money raising.²⁸

There was much to-do about cows. On January 19, 1884, Mrs. Pascal Smith told the group she had bought a cow for the home, and "It was voted that we build a small barn on the lot." Two weeks later the president reported "progress in the building of the new barn," and Mrs. Fairchild

commented on "the kindness and generosity of those who were called upon to give material." On October 6, 1885, it was "moved and carried that we sell the white cow soon as she gives no milk." A sad note appears in November, 1887, when "Mrs. Smith reported the death of the best cow belonging to the Home." It was voted that the group buy a new one.²⁹

The home was now moving slowly but surely toward its eventual destiny: a residence for older persons. As early as January 8, 1884, little more than a month after the new building was opened, the board discussed the "new work of an Old Ladies Home," and appointed a committee to prepare rules for the residents. The committee met the following day at the home of Mrs. Alexander Ramsey, but the task of formulating and agreeing on the rules proved difficult. It was not until nearly a year later—and after Mrs. Ramsey's death—that the rules were finally printed.³⁰

On February 1, 1887, the board admitted the first resident with the understanding that she might remain for the rest of her life. Some weeks later, on May 3, it approved "the application of Mrs. B._____ of Owatonna for permanent admission to the Home, on payment of \$300." At the same meeting the board also received a request from a resident that the managers assign a room to be hers for life. After considerable discussion, it was voted "not advisable for the Managers to bind themselves by such an agreement." However, the women did assure the resident that they had no wish to disturb her, "and they saw no probable necessity to do so."³¹

In addition to developing intake policies, the women were sharpening their investigative procedures. The group had a close personal relationship with the men who directed the St. Paul Society for the Relief of the Poor; it now developed a professional one as well. "The work of the home is yearly becoming more closely connected with that of the relief society," stated the annual report of January 28, 1886. "By con-

²⁸ "Minutes," January 8, 1884; August 5, 1884.

²⁹ "Minutes," January 19, February 5, 1884; October 6, 1885; November 1, 1887.

³⁰ "Minutes," January 8, 1884; *Quarter Century Report of the Board of Managers of the Home for the Friendless Association*, 12 (St. Paul, 1892).

³¹ "Minutes," February 1, May 3, 1887. Some time later the board adopted a policy under which a lifetime resident who withdrew from the home would receive the balance of the money paid in after deduction of a nominal amount per month for the time she was there.

sulting with the secretary of that organization desirable information is obtained concerning persons applying for aid.”³²

The ladies also found St. Paul men helpful in another connection. For some time, the association had been acquiring property and funds through bequests and subscriptions. In February, 1887, the board voted that “an advisory committee of gentlemen be chosen, with whom the Managers may consult as to the best investment of any funds now or at any time in the Treasurer’s hands.” John D. Ludden was selected as chairman, assisted by Henry S. Fairchild and Alexander Ramsey.³³

THE COMMUNITY was now in its decade of greatest growth. The population of St. Paul tripled: from 41,473 in 1880 to 133,156 in 1890, but there were still very few facilities for the care of homeless persons, particularly women. When the Home for the Friendless opened its new Collins Street building in December, 1883, Minnesota had only one other private home for the infirm aged. Operated by the St. Paul Little Sisters of the Poor, it opened just two months earlier. Twenty-three counties had poorhouses, but for the most part these were inadequate farm homes, and three-fourths of their “inmates” (commonly called paupers) were men. In 1885 the new Ramsey County Almshouse and Poor Farm opened, adding a new resource in St. Paul, especially for homeless men. Then, in 1886, the Home for Children and Aged Women in Minneapolis completed its new building and began to receive friendless women. The next few years saw the opening of the Minnesota Soldiers Home, the Jones Harrison Home, and the Little Sisters of the Poor Home, all in Minneapolis. With the creation of these institutions, the Home for the Friendless began referring to them applicants who were considered “proper subjects” for other facilities.³⁴

Although more and more emphasis was being placed on work with the aged, the home continued to receive children, and

the accompanying problems were particularly time consuming. Some were placed in foster homes, but this meant finding suitable places and visiting them afterward. Even when this work was turned over to the Children’s Aid Society after 1889 the board felt it should have some supervision over the homes in which children were placed.³⁵

Not all of the dependent and neglected children in St. Paul were from Minnesota. For years, agencies in New York had been shipping children by the carload lot to distribution points in the Midwest for placement in family homes, although unfortunately many of the children found their way in the end to county poorhouses. The Minnesota Children’s Aid Society, which had been founded in 1889 by the Reverend Edward P. Savage, also imported children for placement in adoptive homes. At Savage’s request, the Home for the Friendless received many children for temporary care while permanent homes were being found. It soon became apparent that the older ones did not always adjust well, and at its meeting of September 6, 1892, the board of managers voted not to receive any boy more than ten years old. Less than two months later the board declared that the home would no longer receive any children, boys or girls, older than seven years, nor would it keep any child for an indefinite period of time. It was also suggested to Savage that he provide an assistant to care for the children. The suggestion was not heeded, and on May 1, 1894, the board voted to ask that Savage

³² *St. Paul and Minneapolis Pioneer Press*, January 28, 1886.

³³ “Minutes,” February 1, 1887.

³⁴ *United States Census*, 1890, *Population*, 370; State Board of Corrections and Charities, *Biennial Report*, 1884, p. 175; 1886, p. 203, 231; 1888, p. 21; 1890, p. 25, 231, 234; Little Sisters of the Poor, “Histoire de notre Maison de St. Paul,” 1, 20, microfilm copy in the Minnesota Historical Society. See also Ethel McClure, *Homes for Aged and Chronically Ill Persons in Minnesota: Their Development and Licensure*, 3–6, 11–13 (Minneapolis, 1959).

³⁵ “Minutes,” April 7, 1885.

pay ten dollars a month toward the wages of a woman to care for the children.³⁶

Money was not plentiful then, and difficult years for the home followed the financial panic of 1893. The board was forced to scrutinize expenditures closely. In publishing the association's annual report on January 28, 1897, the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* called attention to "this pioneer charity" and commented on the "effective work going on so quietly day by day." The report stated: "It will be noticed . . . that in spite of most vigilant economy the expenditures have outrun the receipts entailing an encroachment on the investment fund, which is being carefully hoarded with a view to future independence and self support."

The financial picture eventually brightened and board meetings turned to discussions of wages, bills, support for "inmates," donations, and day-to-day problems of the building and residents. As the home received "fewer transients and fewer children but more feeble and helpless old women," there was considerable objection to the name "Home for the Friendless." Although the constitution was amended in 1907, the name was allowed to stand. In 1910, apparently for the first time, the home had a waiting list. Some time later, sixty-five years became the age of eligibility for admission. At last, in 1914, the annual report states that "our rooms are filled with those who will probably be with us until the summons comes to go up higher."³⁷

³⁶ State Board of Corrections and Charities, *Biennial Reports*, 1890 to 1900; Minnesota Division of Social Welfare, *Historical Summary of Services to Children under Minnesota Child Caring and Child Placing Laws*, 80 (1940); "Minutes," September 6, November 1, 1892; May 1, 1894. The Children's Aid Society is now the Children's Home Society of Minnesota.

³⁷ "Minutes," February 4, 1908; April 5, 1910; Home for the Friendless, *Annual Report*, 1915, p. 3.

³⁸ "Minutes," November 5, 1907.

³⁹ "Minutes," November 2, 8, 1915. The letter from the state board of control has not been located.

⁴⁰ "Minutes," February 1, 1916.

THE WOMEN had long looked forward to the day when endowment funds would make appeals to the public unnecessary. Now they were dreaming of the time when they would have a new and larger building. In 1907 Joseph Elsinger had offered land on which to build a new fireproof home. They were not ready to build at that time, and "after much discussion of the subject a motion was carried authorizing Mrs. Fairchild to thank Mr. Elsinger for his generosity but to say that we did not feel able to undertake such a move at present."³⁸ After that, however, references to a new building became more frequent.

The matter came abruptly to a head on November 2, 1915, when a notice was received from the state board of control condemning the building as a firetrap. On November 8 a meeting was "hurriedly called . . . by Mrs. Cyrus Brown at her home following a suggestion of Mr. Brown of the absolute necessity of removing our family immediately to a place of safety." After an excited discussion "Mrs. [Rudolph M.] Weyerhaeuser telephoned to Chippewa Falls to the Hannah Rutledge Home asking if they would come to our rescue, which they kindly did saying they would take our family on terms such as we might make. Some lady made a motion to the effect that we accept the offer. . . . A committee was appointed to visit the Home the next day and tell the old ladies of this calamity & our decision."³⁹

There were eighteen ladies in the home. One was taken in by relatives. Four others were considered too feeble to be moved and, with the approval of the state board of control, they were allowed to remain on the first floor, with the matron immediately at hand.⁴⁰ On November 15, only two weeks after the fateful letter had been received, the remainder of the group, accompanied by several board members and the matron, took the train for Chippewa Falls. Their departure was described by the *St. Paul Dispatch* of November 16, 1915. The article painted a doleful picture. Each



INMATES leaving the home
on November 15, 1915,
sketched from a photograph
in the St. Paul Dispatch

elderly lady was allowed one small suitcase, and the writer said that the women had to discard "old photographs . . . 'comfy' old slippers and the favorite cap" as they sat on their bulging suitcases to make them close. "'When I come back' was the phrase which kept all the departing ones from feeling too badly as they donned their bonnets and capes and put the last of their belongings in grips. . . . Whether they do come back," continued the article, "depends on St. Paul raising \$15,000 to complete the \$35,000 fund necessary to erect a new building which will meet the approval of the building inspectors and insure comfort and safety to the aged inmates."

It seems unlikely that the board condemned the building in the sense of ordering it vacated. At that time it had no authority to license institutions or to close those which did not have governmental sanction, and there were no regulations governing the construction and operation of homes for the aged. Little question existed about the fire hazard, however, and the ladies were apparently thrown into

panic by the warning from the board of control. That their action was criticised is indicated by a public statement from the association's secretary defending the sudden closing of the home.⁴¹

The uprooting of the old ladies tugged at St. Paul's heartstrings, but it was soon apparent that more than \$35,000 would be needed for a suitable building. The *St. Paul Pioneer Press* of December 2, 1915, stated that the "Association of Commerce, through a committee of ten members will co-operate with the women who are seeking to raise \$75,000 for a new Home for the Friendless." Letters mailed to citizens of St. Paul by the Association of Commerce stated that the crisis "puts the city in the light of being either unwilling or unable to care for its aged people and some provision must be made at once for a new home." St. Paul responded and the necessary funds were raised.⁴²

⁴¹ *St. Paul Dispatch*, November 17, 1915; Minnesota, *General Laws*, 1883, p. 171. The building now has an automatic sprinkler system.

⁴² *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, November 28, December 6, 1915.

In January, 1916, Miss Ada L. Mayall offered her large homestead at the corner of East Seventh and Maple streets as the site of the new home—a gift which was promptly accepted. An architect speedily completed plans for a three-story, fire-resistant, Tudor style building, providing thirty-nine single rooms, six double rooms, and five servants' rooms. On April 25, 1916, the cornerstone was laid. The new structure was completed and furnished at a total cost of \$99,469.14. The old ladies were brought back from Chippewa Falls, and on November 28, 1916, a reunited family moved into the new building on East Seventh Street. On January 3, 1917, the new "Home for the Friendless," as it was still called, was formally opened to the public with a golden jubilee celebration.⁴³

OF THE YEARS since the opening of the new home, little need be said. In 1935, the

⁴³ "Minutes," March 7, 1916; Home for the Friendless, *Annual Report*, 1917, p. 3.

⁴⁴ *Articles of Amendment to the Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws of Protestant Home*, 1, 18 (1960); A. E. Horn, Attorney for Protestant Home, to Dr. Albert J. Chesley, November 6, 1951, in files of the Minnesota Department of Health, Minneapolis.

THE SKETCH opposite is by Celine Charpentier, and the photographs are by Eugene Becker.

name was changed to the Protestant Home of St. Paul. The term "inmate" has given way to that of "resident," although now, as earlier, the term more commonly used is simply "our family." There has been a change in admission policies. The fee for life membership was raised to \$1,000, then to \$2,000, and finally abolished altogether in line with the more realistic system of monthly rates. In 1960 the articles of incorporation were amended, and at that time the board of managers became the board of directors.⁴⁴ To be eligible for election to the board a person must still be a member of a Protestant congregation. Many directors are daughters, daughters-in-law, or granddaughters of the women who served in earlier years. No longer do they sally forth in hoop skirts and bonnets to visit the home of a child they have placed, or travel from office to office to solicit the materials for a cow barn. They still, however, take turns as visiting directors, calling on the residents and helping to solve some of the problems that arise. And, as at that first meeting in the vestry of the old First Presbyterian Church some ninety-five years ago, they are trying to determine what further need St. Paul may have, so that when the time comes they can work to meet it.

A view of the Protestant Home at 753 East Seventh Street, April, 1962





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