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The Open Parlor, also called The Blue Parlor and The Victorian Parlor

A large Oriental needlework dominates this room. It is of Japanese origin, the gift in 1928 of Mr. Eugene McCahill who had received it from the Ambassador of Japan to the U.S. when Mr. McCahill was a Commandant in the U.S. Navy during World War I. It depicts in color embroidery white wisteria blossoms hanging from bamboo poles. Amid the vines and blossoms, a careful inspection of the upper part shows bees, dragon flies, and butterflies. In the lower section of the needlework one sees a sumptuous garden with lilies, white irises, nine white herons, butterflies and many colorful chrysanthemums. Small gold-threaded circles throughout give a brilliant background for this exquisite embroidery.

For many years this needlework, unframed, hung in the Common Rooms of Mendel Hall. It was one of the main decorations in the newly opened social room in Mendel. In the 1950's Sister Antonine O'Brien, then president of the College, ^{ordered} had the embroidery mounted on a walnut frame ^{later Sister M.W.M. had it} and centrally located in this parlor, covering the middle of three stained glass windows.

On the north wall of the Blue Parlor is a recent acquisition from the home of Mr. and Mrs. Harold W. Greenwood Sr. of Minneapolis. It is a Chinese embroidery on silk showing a colorful cock and chickens frightened by a threatening hawk above them in the branches of a Chinese evergreen tree. It is matted in a walnut frame.

On the wall opposite hangs a panel-shaped Chinese embroidery. The needlework shows a bird on a carved branch of a tree. The entire piece is worked in gold threads on a black background. It is matted in a walnut frame. This embroidery was purchased in London by Sister Mary Davida Wood when she was on a tour with the St. Catherine choral group. She sent it to Sister Mary William who was then president of the College.

Two blue Chinese rugs cover the central floor of this parlor. These rugs, the horse-hair sofa, and some of the horse-hair chairs were purchased by Mother Antonia at a Cudahy Estate Auction in Chicago about 1925. The two chairs upholstered in brocaded velvet--with a deep rose background and a figure design in beige and mottled brown--are reportedly from the family estate of Sister St. Helene Guthrie.

The Chinese rugs deserve further description. One rug has a navy blue field with beige and light blue floral design and butterflies. This rug has borders of light blue, gray, royal blue and navy blue. The other rug has a royal blue field on which are beige, light blue, and tangerine vases, floral patterns and butterflies. The borders of this rug have lines of light blue, burnt orange, medium and dark blue.

Under the Chinese embroidery of the frightened cock and chickens, is a large imposing sofa. For a back it has three oval panels enclosed in walnut wood. Each panel has daisy-carved crests. Its attractive frame has open padded arms, carved arm supports, shell-carved serpentine apron, carved legs. It is upholstered in blue-beige material with a small white figure. Perhaps ^{it is} English origin around 1850-60.

Two occasional tables fill the opposite corners of the Open Parlor. The one near the window is a tilt top mahogany piecrust table with a scalloped edge. It has a tripod base with snake feet. It probably belongs to the late Victorian period-1900. Near the hallway is the other table, very ornate, with carved circles glued on the apron and legs. Above this table hangs a framed print of the Madonna and Child, by a painter of the Italian school of Duccio, early 14th century.