

Wheaton College Faces the Millennium: The Decade of the 1890s

Treasures of Wheaton, 2 October 1998. Presented by David Malone



The decade of the 1890s was a pivotal decade. As the world, according to the western calendar, moved into another century, change and anticipation abounded. The 1890s was one that birthed Reinhold Niebuhr, Norman Rockwell, J. Edgar Hoover, James Oliver Buswell, Babe Ruth, George Burns, Al Capone, and Ernest Hemingway. Though experiencing a change in time ourselves, we are only two-to-three generations from our topic.

Wheaton College Presidents

Wheaton College is never fully viewed in and through its presidents, but when a father-son team occupy that office for 65 years, one must pay close attention. Jonathan Blanchard not only bridged the transition from the Illinois Institute to Wheaton College, but also served as President from 1860 to 1882.

A PERFECT STATE OF SOCIETY
*Truth beams upon us with resistless strength,
Points out the change which righteousness requires,
And errors perish in her altar fires.
Let not the sluggish then the swift upbraid,
Each thus onward, upward, hold our certain way
Till earth is bright with sweet millennial day.*

Jonathan Blanchard saw Wheaton College "as an 'arsenal' and 'drill camp' for the hosts of righteousness in the moral warfare of the world...a means of training social activists...training in removing obstacles to the coming millennium." In a September 19, 1884 letter to his wife Mary, Jonathan wrote: "Our Knox and Wheaton graduates today are filling this land with our ideas, which they would have gotten nowhere else. And though but a mere sprinkling, still we have done some little and that little is done right."

When Jonathan Blanchard used "sweet millennial day" and "the coming millennium," he was not referring to a chronological date, but that *kairos* of divine intervention which would usher in the thousand-year reign of Christ. When the College's motto was chosen, "Kingdom" was closely tied to that reign of Christ here on earth.

In his final baccalaureate sermon, Jonathan Blanchard chose our motto as his theme –



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"For Christ and His Kingdom." He conceded that while "present prospects for Christ's reign here are discouraging...that mighty millennial movement, the fall of slavery showed that God still reigned. Finally, the child of God has but one thing to do, that is, to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." (Taylor 21)

Jonathan's son, Charles Albert Blanchard, named after the Duke of Sardinia, was born in 1848. He was ten years old when his father left the Galesburg, Illinois area to assume the presidency of the Illinois Institute, which was soon to become Wheaton College. Wheaton was to become Charles' residence until his death. During his youth Charles saw close hand the efforts of his father and his tenure as president. Those 22 years were formative, giving son, Charles Albert Blanchard a solid foundation upon which to add his 43 years of administration.



Photo File: Blanchard, Charles

What did Wheaton College look like one hundred years ago? How did Wheaton College face the opening of the twentieth century?

A couple of general observations:

- The Blanchards and Congregationalists of their day tended not to give preference to any particular day, other than the Christian Sabbath. They did not observe December 25 as Christmas. New Year's Day 1900 may have been just another gift of a gracious God.
- In not giving preference to any day, they elevated the opportunity of every day. Each day was a God-given opportunity for prayerful work; any day could be the Day of His Coming. This may be illustrated by the story told of D. L. Moody. While crossing the Atlantic his ship ran into a severe storm. Someone asked Moody why he was not praying for the safety of the ship. Moody's curt reply was "I'm all prayed up." New Year's Day bore no greater danger, nor distance from the Heavenly Father than any other.
- Charles Blanchard has a sermon entitled "A 20th-Century Christian" based on two texts: Luke 3:1-22, the ministry of John the Baptist, and II Peter 1:12 - "I plan to keep on reminding you of these things even though you already know them." He prefaces his sermon with this statement - "A Christian is always a blood-bought, Spirit-taught man, but his temptations, privileges, and duties vary with the age in which he lives. The 20th-century Christian should be a better man than any one of his predecessors."

President Blanchard then lays out the particular areas of concern:

- He should have more faith in the present and future victory of truth.
- He should be less worldly and more generous. He has more testimony to the folly of earthliness and the rewards of Christlikeness.
- He should fear men less and God more, and should be a brave witness for the precious truth
 - a) regarding the Sabbath
 - b) regarding the dram shop
 - c) regarding the theater, dance hall and card table

- d) regarding modern idolatry, i.e., lodgism
- e) regarding the right of God in school and home and nation.

Reacting against the U.S. intervention in the Philippines, President Charles Blanchard wrote in the *Record*, Dec. 1898, "Only when vice is controlled at home, can virtue be extended abroad."

On the verso of the above sermon notes is one entitled "Exceeding Great and Precious Promises," based on II Peter 1:4. "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." This message forms the basis of our hope as we move into the new millennium. It had the following five points:

- The end of sin - I John 1:9
- The welcome of a backslider - Jer. 3:22; 24:7
- The inner cleansing; one heart, one way - Jer. 32:38-41
- Christ's at His coming - I Thess. 4:15-6
- Sit with me in my throne - Rev. 3:21



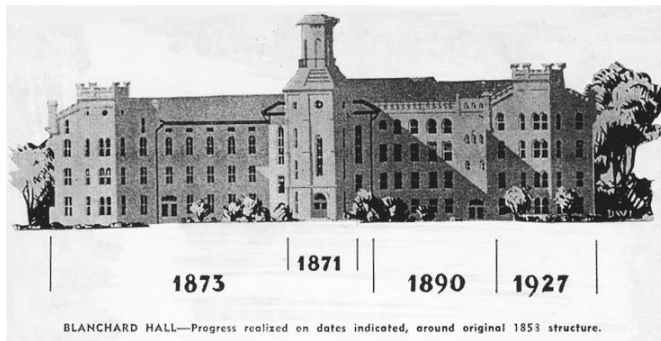
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Blanchard Family

Though President Charles Blanchard's diary for 1899 ends with November 26, his entries, to that point, speak of facing the new century with a balanced equanimity. For a president who, in addition to his administrative work (chief-executive, dean of the faculty, & dean of students), still taught classes, did a major share of the fund raising, wrote regularly for the *Record* (the student newspaper), preached almost every Sunday, he still had time for his family of six children, tennis, and the mid-week campus prayer meeting.

Campus Buildings & Spaces

What did the campus look like in 1900? There were three buildings in close proximity - Main Hall, Ladies Hall, and the Gymnasium. "Off campus" was a large house serving as the Industrial Building, and Lawson Field.

Main Hall (Blanchard Hall)

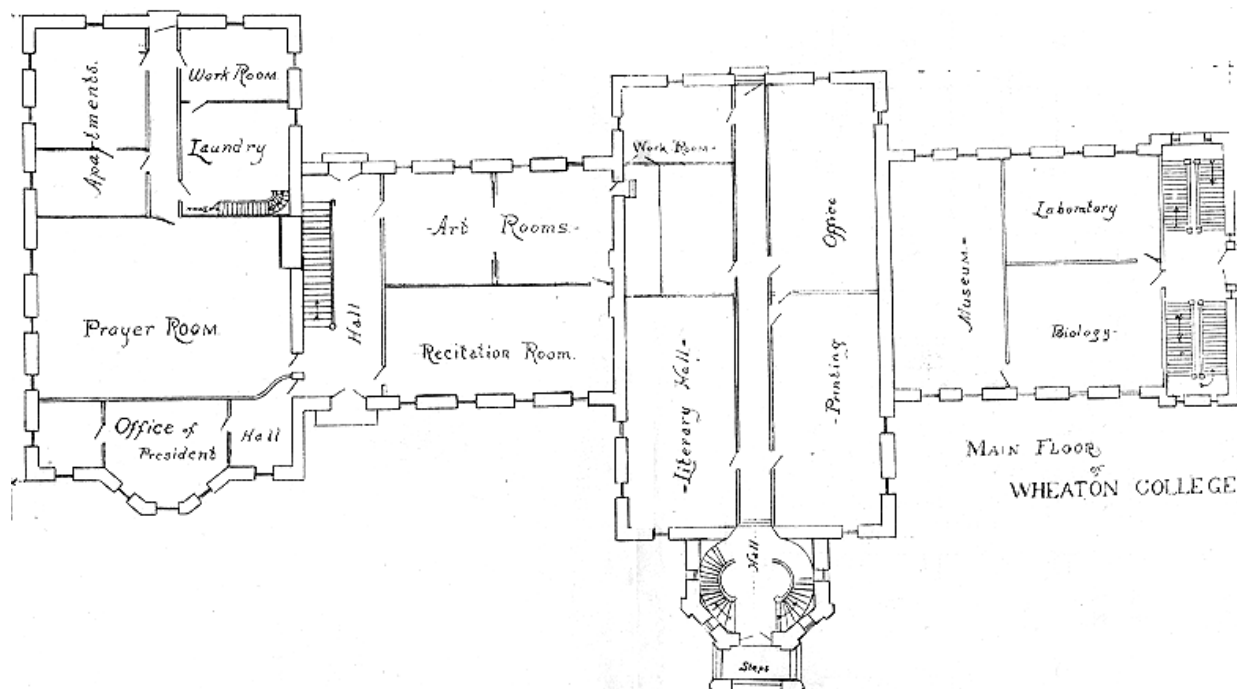


Main Hall did not become Blanchard until the death of President Charles Blanchard in 1825. Main/Blanchard has long been the epicenter of this campus, and through the turn of the century contained all the college classrooms.



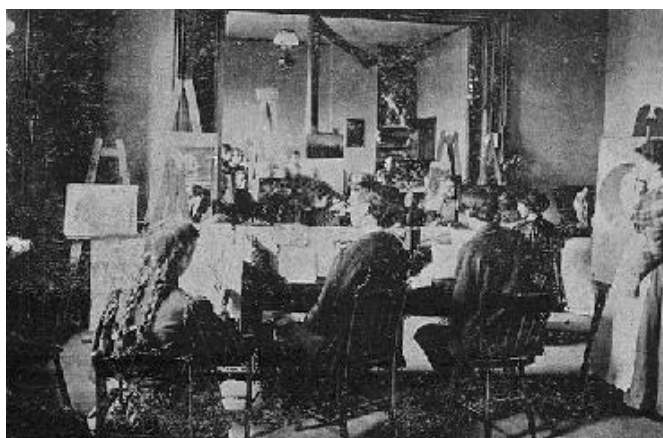
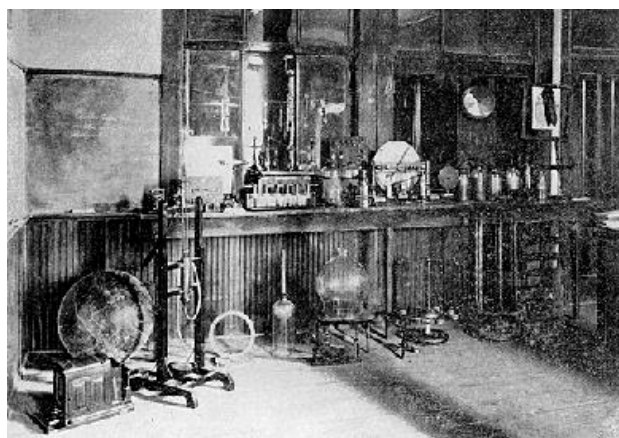
Photo File: Blanchard Hall

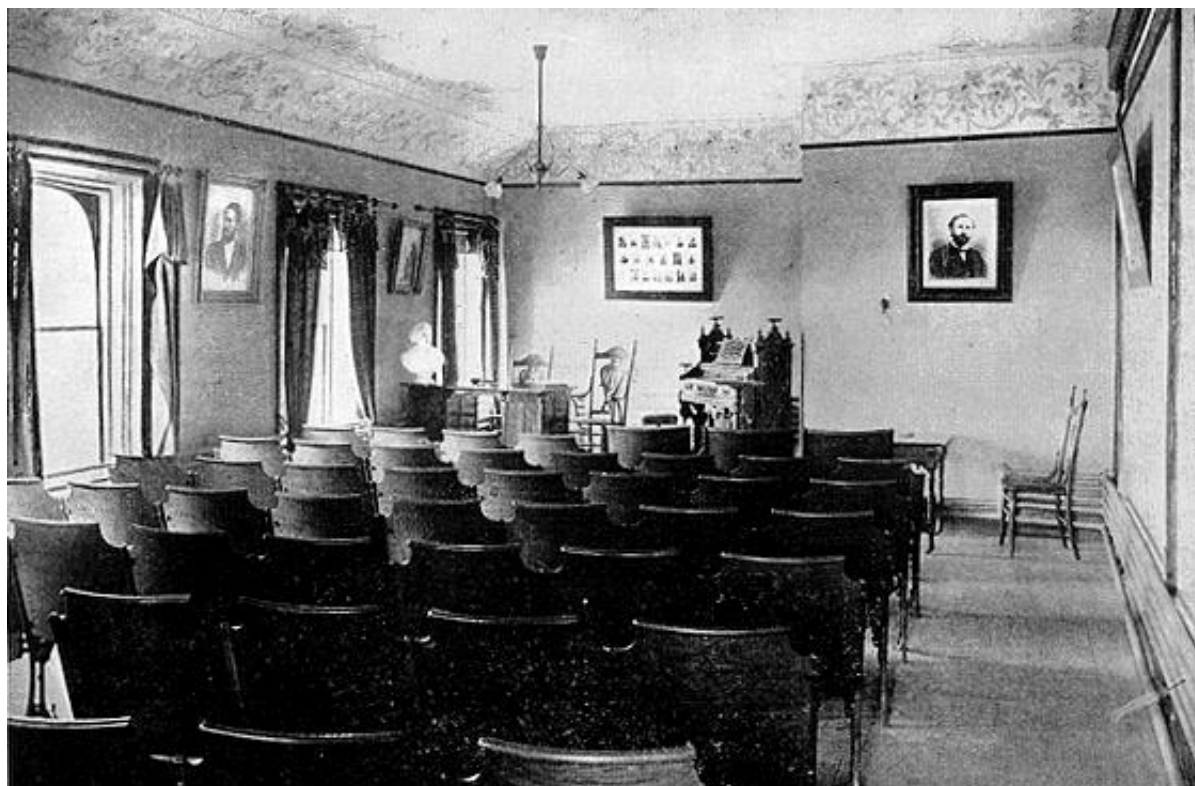
Below is the first-floor plan of Main Hall, as of 1890.



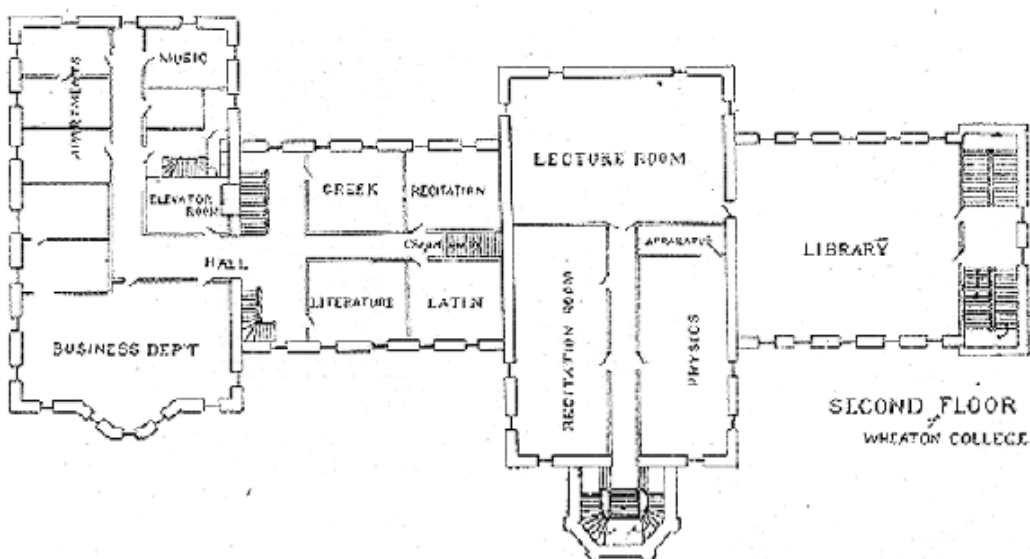
To the east of the center (tower section) on the first floor of Main, were located the Biology lecture room and the laboratory.

Located on the first floor of Main Hall was the Art Studio. Sarah H. Nutting was Principal of Art School, and Ruth Nutting was Special Instructor in Figure and Portrait Work.

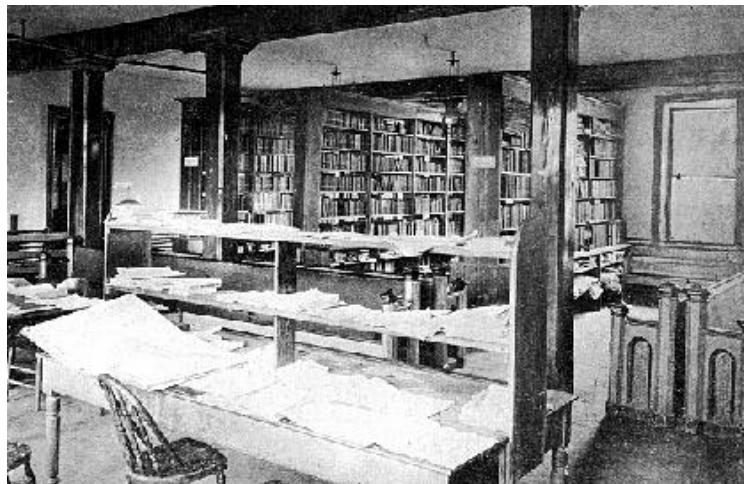




The leading literary society of the Illinois Institute had been the Philomathians. Later Wheaton College students wanted "something better," hence the Greek word "beltion" and the rise of the Beltionians. Together with Philaletheans, Kreitonians, Excelsiors, and Aeolionians, they discussed great questions of state and international importance. Literary societies provided for the intellectual and social needs of the student body. The social calendar of the school revolved around their open meetings and socials.



The second floor of Wheaton's main hall served numerous academic functions as can be seen from the layout above.



Portions of the space was allocated for music instruction. Nora L. Olin served as instructor in Voice Culture, Chorus, Harmony and Orchestra, Herbert J. Wrightson, was instructor in Piano, Pipe Organ, Theory and Musical History, and Perry P. Weid was instructor on Violin.

Though the library of Wheaton College now numbers in the hundreds of thousands of volumes, such was not the case a century ago. For many years there was no centralized library at Wheaton. The literary societies had begun with their own libraries, and these served as the core of the main library when it was begun. Elliot Whipple served as librarian in 1900.

The third floor of Main Hall housed Wheaton College's chapel. Not as mammoth as Edman Chapel, this facility served the needs of faculty and students alike. It seated 450 and was equipped with pipe organ, steam heat, and electric lights.



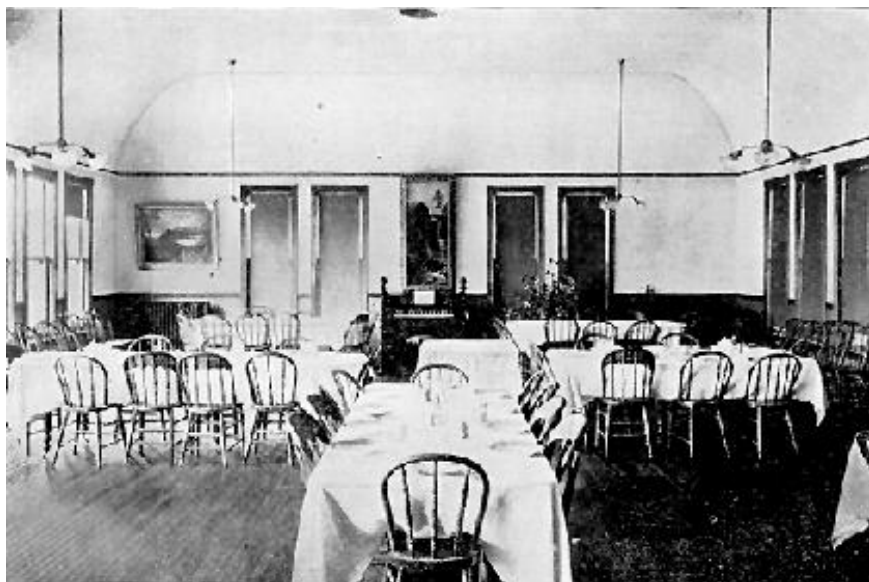
Ladies' Hall (Williston Hall)

A hall, that began with the generic name Ladies' Hall, was to be named later after a major benefactor, J. P. Williston



Dining Hall

The dining hall, kitchen, and laundry for the campus were located in the annex to the Ladies' Hall.



Industrial Building 1

Formerly the Rufus Smith home, the property was purchased by trustee, R. J. Bennet. This house became the College print shop, barber shop and home of the Wayside Inn with room for 25 men.

Industrial Building 2

On the same site the new Industrial Building was constructed in 1902. It also became home to the Academy, and later the Graduate School (now Schell Hall).



Faculty & Academics

1898 Faculty List

Charles A. Blanchard, A.M., D.D. (WC 1870)

President, Professor of Moral and Intellectual Philosophy



Elliot Whipple, A.M.

Professor of Political and Social Science



Herman A. Fischer, Sr., A.M. (WC 1870)

Professor of Mathematics and Astronomy; Instructor in German



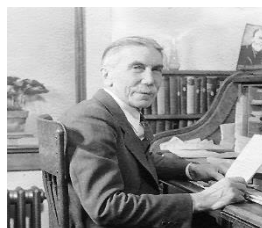
Rebecca Woodridge

Principle of Women's Department (1899)



Darien Straw, M.S. (WC 1881)

Professor of Logic and Rhetoric, Principal of Preparatory School, Secretary of the Faculty



Elsie S. Dow, A.M. (WC 1881)

Professor of English Literature, Principal of Ladies' Department



Rollin C. Mullenix (WC 1895)

Professor of Natural Science



George H. Smith (DD 1923)

Professor of Latin Language and Literature



E. E. Guitner, A.M.

Professor of Greek Languages and Literature
Together they were the pillars of the Classical Course, the backbone of Wheaton College's coursework.

Frances Carothers Blanchard, M.D. (WC 1880)

Professor of Physiology

Edward F. Williams

Lecturer in History of Philosophy

Together they were the pillars of the Classical Course, the backbone of Wheaton College's coursework.

Sarah H. Nutting

Principal of Art School

Degrees Offered

"Students completing the courses of study as announced in the Catalog of 1899-1900, will receive the degrees offered in that catalog, viz., for the Classical course, A. B.; Scientific, B. S.; Literary, B. L. " (1900-1901 Annual Catalog, p. 24)

The Academy

"The Academic Department is housed in the same buildings as the College. The instruction is given in large part by the College Professors. The students have the same privileges in the library, laboratories, gymnasium and general exercises as those of the College, in so far as is appropriate to their work. The academic work includes four Preparatory Courses leading to the corresponding College Courses." (1900-1901 Annual Catalog, p. 45)

THE ACADEMY

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Curricula

The academic work includes four Preparatory Courses leading to the corresponding College Courses; a Teacher's Course designed to prepare for First Grade Teacher's Certificate; and in so far as the demand may exist, classes in common English branches; but no promise is made to conduct classes in these branches for fewer than eight persons.

Normal School (after *F. école normale*, a school offering a professional course for the training of persons, usually secondary-school graduates to become teachers). It was a two-year Teachers Course designed to prepare for First Grade Teacher's Certificate.

NORMAL COURSE.

FIRST YEAR.

FIRST TERM.—*Latin*: (E.) Stories; Simple Composition; Substantive and Verbal Forms.

{ *Physiology*: With Hygiene (4 hours).

{ *Bible* (1 hour).

Essays and Letters: Different styles; Composition; Delivery; Criticism and Correction.

Lessons in English (E.)

Blackboard Drawing: Free-hand Outlines, Shading, and Perspective

SECOND TERM.—*Latin*: (E.) Stories continued; Composition; Syntax.

Elementary Rhetoric.

{ *Ancient History* (E.) (4 hours).

{ *Bible* (1 hour).

American Literature.

THIRD TERM.—*Latin*: (E.) Selections from the Classics; Composition; Moods and Tenses.

{ *Elocution* (4 hours).

{ *Bible* (1 hour).

Zoology: Descriptive and Comparative; Classification and Description of Animals.

Commercial Law: (E.) With Exercises in writing Business Papers.

Student Life

Gymnasium

Built in 1898 and dedicated in the spring of 1899, it later took the name Adams, after John Q. Adams, donor also of the early Adams Library now the DuPage County Historical Museum. Physical Culture Classes, basketball, indoor baseball, and bowling constituted the sports, all played as intramural teams.



Lawson Field

Nearly 5 acres a short distance north of the campus. The November 24, 1900, program, for the opening football game on Lawson Field, states "The field lies a few squares north of the college, is 330 x 575 ft., furnishing ample space for base-ball, foot-ball, and tracks."



Darien Straw at Bat - This game between faculty and the local ministerial association brought out a good crowd.

Two members of the graduating class of 1899 will give us a little insight into the students. Frank Earl Herrick, later to become a county Judge and Poet Laureate of Wheaton/DuPage County, has given the College Archives two scrapbooks of his poetry. In them are countless poems memorializing Wheaton College and those associated with her. Below is one poem reflecting on Charles Blanchard:

Charles A. Blanchard

He was a splendid God-built man,
Fine proportioned, fair and good, -
Serene and beautiful he stood, -
A temple drawn to Heaven's plan!

As a shy rose by a great pine
Long I studied at his feet
And felt his power strong and sweet
And heard his spirit speak to mine!

In Mem'ry's gentle forest land
I behold that deathless tree
And hear its wind-swept melody
Come from the Past divinely grand!

O, Teacher of majestic form
O star in the cloud-cast night.
O, "man of sweetness and light," -
My hero of both sun and storm - !

Another student, Sarah Katherine Smith, daughter of Greek professor George Smith, went from Wheaton College to the Art Institute of Chicago. Sarah K. Smith was an excellent artist with a wide range of interests and ability. Below are two examples of her paintings.



August 18, 1958

Sarah eventually left Illinois to teach at Gulf Park College in Mississippi where she met Vachel Lindsay. The Wheaton College Special Collections holds numerous copies of Lindsay's works that have been inscribed to Sarah K. Smith.

Lindsay moved to Chicago in 1900 to study art at the Art Institute of Chicago, where he met Smith. Lindsay was an American poet who wrote in such a way that the common person could understand and enjoy poetry. Often seen as a vagabond, he travelled extensively lecturing for the YMCA and the Anti-Saloon League, he also wandered for several summers throughout the country reciting his poems in return for food and shelter.

This has been a brief glimpse of some of the elements of Wheaton College at the turn of the twentieth century. As we face the 21st century, may we go with these thoughts from President Charles Blanchard in the December 1899 *Record* - the last issue of the College newspaper edited by the faculty.

"Perhaps the most grievous mistake made by Christian people respecting Christian life is the thought that God wishes to receive from them, while the fact is that he wishes to give to them. It is true that he requires us to do certain things, but in no case because he needs our help; always because we need the work, he sets us to do. 'Open thy mouth wide, He says, and I will fill it. Ask and ye shall receive. Seek and ye shall find. Knock and it shall be opened to you.... Let us each one pause a moment to desire from our Heavenly Father the highest and best, and to assure ourselves of His disposition and power to bestow them upon us.'