In memory of their parents, the two youngest daughters, Clotilde Irvine Moles and Olivia Irvine Dodge donated the house to the State of Minnesota on August 31, 1965. As the State had never had an official Governor’s Residence, the house was given specifically for that purpose, and was formally called the “State Ceremonial Building.” As Senator Gordon Rosenmeier described, the house was intended as a place where the governor could have a little “dignity, pomp if you will,” which are “important to the proper function of government.” Previously, formal hosting by Governors had occurred at the Governor’s Reception Room in the State Capitol, in hotels, and in the private homes of governors.

The Residence is the official home for the First Family and a state ceremonial building. The house was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in December of 1974 and on St. Paul's Historic Sites Register in July of 1978. In 1980, the State Legislature established the Governor’s Residence Council (GRC) which is responsible for the renovation and maintenance of the Governor’s Residence.

The Governor’s Residence serves two important functions for the State: it houses the governor and first family, and it hosts ceremonial functions for the state. The Governor’s Residence hosted its first public open house on July 4, 1973, and approximately 11,000 people walked through the doors.

**Vestibule and Front Hall**

The vestibule is a pragmatic space in Minnesota. The outside double doors are decorated with wrought iron grillwork. The inside glass doors contain 36 panels, 6 of which have a faintly colored flower and leaf design in the Art Nouveau style. There are wooden built-in benches for boot storage.
The front hall sets the stage for what is seen throughout the Residence and includes many Tudor details. Each room highlights a different species of wood. The paneling in the front hall is oak. Some of the Tudor features are: the two interior balconies; the elegant staircase with carved balusters and newel posts, which was a Tudor invention (previously, stairs circled around a central pillar); the wood paneling, and decorative ceiling elements.

During the Irvine era, this centrally located room was where the entire family gathered to greet important guests who came to visit. Olivia Irvine Dodge remembered sitting on the stairs and peeking through the railings as her parents entertained. This is also the space where Santa arrived each Christmas for the Irvine children.

Today, this room is used by the Governor in much the same way. In fact, First Lady Iantha LeVander learned a very important hosting lesson right here. She and Governor Harold LeVander decided to host a party for local news staff. They did not know the address of a station manager at a local TV station, so she asked a volunteer to look it up. The night of the party, a couple showed up, holding hands and clearly alone in the chummy crowd. They were complete strangers – who happened to have the same name as the station manager. The LeVanders and others took turns talking to them since they didn’t know anyone. Later, it was learned that the couple was new to the area, and when they had received an invitation to the Governor’s Residence, they thought it was a nice gesture of welcome.

As the first public room open to guests, this front hall was built to impress. While status was important, elements of pragmatism are also evident. The home was originally wired for electricity and plumbed for gas light fixtures. Observant visitors will also notice a metal socket which was used for a central vacuum system. This is located near the base of the stairs.
Another nod to practicality is seen on the stairs. Visitors can note the Plexiglas installed in the gaps between the banisters. The Ivines had screening installed in the gaps to prevent children from falling through. Later, the Andersons installed Plexiglas for the same purpose, and Governor Dayton is using it to protect the dogs.

THE LIVING ROOM

The Living room is the most formal room in the Residence. It was used for large parties and receptions by the Ivines. Olivia Irvine Dodge remembers her parents having costume parties and balls in this room. Additionally, all three of the Irvine daughters held their wedding receptions in this room. The room has also hosted wedding receptions for the children of Governors LeVander, Perpich, and Carlson.
One month after this house was donated to the State of Minnesota in 1965, and three days after Governor Karl and Florence Rolvaag moved in, Crown Prince Harald of Norway was scheduled to pay an official visit. The Rolvaags were faced with furnishing the mostly empty 15,000 square foot home in 30 days. The Governor was quoted as saying “we must beg, borrow or steal enough furniture to make the house look presentable.” Minnesota residents loaned enough pieces so that the house looked lived in by the time the Crown Prince arrived. At the conclusion of the prince’s visit, the furniture was returned to the original owners, and work began in earnest to update the residence. After four months, a new kitchen, new carpeting, lighting fixtures, bath fixtures, and tiles were installed.

The room is 19’ by 39’ and is the largest room in the house. The walls and folding doors are paneled in mahogany. There is a series of panels along the top of the walls, decoratively carved with an arch and pilaster design. That pattern is repeated above the fireplace in a more elaborate form. The dark green marble fireplace has a Tudor arch along with a hand-carved mantel and pilasters decorated with Ionic capitals. The surround has a carved Tudor rose motif. The ceiling has curved symmetrical plaster moldings and cornice.

In 2005, the furnishings in the Drawing Room were updated through the generosity of the 1006 Summit Avenue Society. The Society donated new drapery, furniture, and accessories to lighten the ambiance and create a more functional space for entertaining. The piano in the Living Room belongs to the Residence and is often played by a hired musician during event gatherings. The Irwins had a piano, too, which was sometimes in the sunroom, and sometime in this room, and the grandchildren often sang carols at Christmas time. Granddaughter Clover Fobes Earl recalls her favorite hors d’oeuvre was served here: crumbled bacon on top of peanut butter and toast.

The Sun Room

The only significant structural change made to the home was this room. It was doubled in size in 1922 at a cost of $7,000. The fireplace and the five French doors with fanlight arches were added at that time. It was in this sunroom that Olivia Dodge met with Eleanor Roosevelt. Olivia was an avid collector of F.D.R. memorabilia as a child. When Mrs. Roosevelt was visiting St. Paul, she was told of Olivia’s collection and asked to see it. They had tea here and discussed Olivia’s hobby for hours.

The sunroom was also used by the Irwins for over-flow seating for sit-down meals. At Christmastime, the adults were usually seated in the dining room, and the children sat in the sun room. Granddaughter Patty Fobes Scott recalled her
humiliation when she was 19 – the first year she was married. Her husband, who was four years older, was seated in the dining room, while she was seated in the sunroom. Grandmother Clotilde was “very stubborn, and her seating arrangement was not to be budged.”

Granddaughter Patty Fobes Scott also recalled the favored status of Clotilde’s poodle, which had a favorite spot in a chair in this room. When Patty came to visit, no one dared moved the dog, so people sat three across on the couch.

This space also seems to get the most use for public gatherings. The wicker furniture is removed and large round tables are used to entertain up to 40 guests for a luncheon or dinner party. During summer events, the French doors are opened to give guests access to the terrace and gardens.

The walls are made of white ashlar stone (ashlar means the masons cut the stones to this precise rectangular shape and smooth finish). The walls were steam cleaned in 2006, restoring them to their original color. The ceiling is paneled and beamed. The light fixtures are original to the addition in 1922. The wrought iron work in the wall openings were added in the 1980s and echo the original wrought iron that was there.

Dining Room

The Irvine’s actively participated in St. Paul social life, and hosted many dinner parties at their home. Olivia Dodge Irvine said that her “father [Horace] was a staunch Republican and her mother [Clotilde] was a dyed-in-the-wool Democrat... no matter which party happens to occupy their former home, one of them at least will be content.” Daughter-in-law Sally Irvine recalled that the political arguments were “extremely violent and neither would give an inch.”
Though Olivia Irvine Dodge described a secret panel in the dining room, the original architectural plans do not show one. The only significant alteration of this room is the shift from glazed doors to paneled, accordion doors between the dining room and hall. The room walls were also lightened and darkened at the same time as the front hall.

Hosting dinner and impressing visitors is a central part of this ceremonial home. Mary Anderson described how she and Wendell were asked to pose with their turkey for a Thanksgiving story in the St. Paul Pioneer Press. She didn’t want to cook her turkey a day early, so the photo shoot went ahead, anyway. The picture taken that day shows a smiling Governor pretending to carve a raw turkey.

One of the challenges of the home is the relatively small dining space. The table can accommodate just 16-18 guests. As Wendell Anderson’s wife Mary said, “If you’ve got a governor with just 16 friends, he isn’t going to be re-elected.” In order to accommodate larger parties, tables are set up in the sunroom and front hallway.

The Irvine’s hired a live-in staff of seven to maintain the home and cater to their needs. The staff included a cook, butler, waitress, upstairs maid, laundress, nursemaid, gardener and chauffeur. The chauffeur and his wife lived in the apartment over the carriage house while some of the other servants lived on the third floor.

Today, the Governor’s Residence has a team of five professionals who pour their time and energy into every aspect of maintaining this beautiful home. The staff includes a Residence Manager, a Residence Assistant, a chef, a housekeeper and a grounds keeper. In 2011, the Residence hosted over 175 events.

The current dining room table can seat 16 people for a formal dinner. The china most often used is the “State Seal” pattern by Pickard, which incorporates the official Minnesota state seal. The Residence has four different sets of china, purchased with the help of the 1006 Summit Avenue Society. The silverware used is Tiffany’s English King Pattern and the crystal is the Lenox Citation Gold pattern.

The Residence is capable of hosting events for up to 150 people on the lawn and terrace or 75 people within the Residence.

The ceiling is slightly rounded. The walls and folding doors are paneled in Circassian walnut (an English walnut used in veneers or paneling because of its rich swirls and curves). The white stone fireplace with carved shields has a Tudor arch opening framed by a carved wooden mantle and supported by decorative matching columns. The brass fireplace andirons with lion heads display the craftsmanship of the period. The wall sconces are original to the home while the chandelier is of the period but not original to the Residence.
Kitchen

Health Department regulations do not permit visitors in food preparation areas. As you can imagine, food safety is important to the governor. During the Carlson administration, a breakfast was held for approximately 60 Independent-Republican legislators. Within two days, about 20 legislators and two gubernatorial aids were struck with food poisoning. A shipment of 96 cases of pineapples from Costa Rica had been tainted with a bad microbe. The tainted shipment made up just one half of one percent of the pineapples sold in the Twin Cities.

The Kitchen is separated from the Dining Room by a Butler’s pantry. Both the Kitchen and the Butler’s pantry have been renovated for more efficient food service for the many functions at the Residence. The design of the cabinets was copied from the original. The counters are made from Minnesota Cold Spring Granite; the floor is hexagonal white ceramic tile with a gray and white checked border.

Clotilde Irvine kept the kitchen stocked with cookies and the pantry had bottles of coca cola for the grandkids. She served popcorn in silver bowls, and was known for her killer brownies. The pantry was also a favorite spot for cocktails after SPA dances for son Tom Irvine and his friends.

The Residence has a full-time chef and part-time assistant who prepare meals for state events. The governor gets to choose the chef, but some chefs have stayed for more than one administration. Chef Ruth Knutson cooked for the Andersons, Quies, and Perpiches. When Governor Rudy Perpich lived here, Ruth often left for the evening before he returned. They developed a code. When she left a smiley face near a tray of cookies, he could eat as many as he wished. When she left a scowling face, it meant he would have to refrain- the treats were for a special event.

There have been three books published by the 1006 Summit Avenue Society that include stories about the Residence and recipes from the kitchen. The books are *The Governor’s Table*, (1981) *Wild Rice, Star of the North* (1985), and *Minnesota Times & Tastes* (1993). In 2011, the Society published its first children’s book, *The Governor’s Mouse*, which takes the reader on a delightful romp through the home. *The Governor’s Mouse* is available for purchase at the Residence or on the Minnesota Bookstore website.
Library/Den

According to Olivia Irvine Dodge, the Library was the room most used by her family. The Irvine’s loved to read, and the room was filled with the latest books and periodicals. There was also a radio that the kids were allowed to listen to after their homework was done.

Later, Clotilde Irvine would welcome her granddaughter Patty Fobes Scott home from school in this room, and never failed to notice when Patty’s make-up was applied more heavily than it had been before. “The lectures generally ensued before I could even cross the threshold.”

One of our goals at the Governor’s Residence is to retain the historic integrity of the home while making it a comfortable place for a modern family to live. A great example of how we achieve that goal is the trunk in the corner of the room. The trunk was built to hide a full size television that rises up when a remote button is pushed.

During different eras, the use of this room has shifted between private space and ceremonial use. Some governors have used this space as a home office. Governor Carlson hosted press conferences here. Other governors have used it for quiet reading or TV watching.

The walls are done in an oak wainscoting that was lightened to match the front hall and then returned to the current shade in 1996. The rough plaster walls are painted in a method called Padding. Three shades of paint are applied and blended to make the parchment colored walls have greater depth and texture. This style was popular in the 1920s. The bookcases and fireplace are original as is the ceiling with oak beams and plaster panels. The fireplace opening is fashioned with a Tudor arch and made of white stone. The wall sconces and chandelier are original to the home.
Side Hallway

Careful observers will note many ways that the house has been altered for practical use in this area. A central vacuum socket is visible in the southeast wall, and the elevator was added during the Carlson administration. Behind the doors, the servant’s kitchen was transformed into a security office, and a bathroom was eliminated to create a new pathway to the office.

The telephone and call panel outside the Library door are part of the original communications system that was installed shortly after the home was built. The Ackerman-Boland intercom was cutting-edge technology day. One could call any other station in the home, over to the Carriage House or to place and receive outside calls. While these phones are no longer operational, they provide a great view into what was the most advanced technology of its day.

The paintings on the west wall are of the original owners, Horace Hills Irvine and Clotilde McCullough Irvine. On the north wall there is a painting of Elizabeth, their oldest daughter, when she was seven years old.
Lower Level

Foyer

This space was renovated in 1989. The leaking and crumbling foundation wall was repaired, wainscoting replaced, new hardwood floors laid, a coatroom and wheelchair accessible bathrooms added and improvements were made to the lighting and ventilation system. Updates to the conference room and family room were also made during the Carlson administration. The majority of furniture in the foyer is original to the home.

Family Room

The Family Room, with its large-screen television, is a popular place for the family and guests to watch favorite programs. The breakfront holds memorabilia of former governors, as well as items that are representative of the current administration. While many mementos of governors are visible here, one family really left its mark: the Rolvaag’s beagle Leo left his paw prints in the newly-poured concrete slab in the basement. The workmen liked the dog so much, they let the prints stay. But when the LeVanders moved in in 1966, they were not informed of this, and thought that a dog had been buried under the concrete slab. The Irvines used the space as a party room, and the children hosted dances with live bands.

The pool table was a gift to the Residence after Mrs. Ventura beat Tipper Gore in a game of pool. During the Ventura administration, Mrs. Ventura also invited the producers of the HGTV show Decorating Cents to give the family room a makeover for $500. You can see pictures of their changes on their website.
Conference Room

The Conference Room provides seating for 20 people and is used frequently. On the north wall is a collection of photographs of Minnesota’s First Ladies started by Gretchen Quie. All but two photos of the former First Ladies are represented here.

The 1006 Summit Avenue Society was instrumental in providing funds to refurbish the Conference Room and now holds its monthly board meetings here.

Tunnel

A tunnel connects the residence to the carriage house. The Irvine grandchildren recall the annual Christmas game of creeping through the tunnel with the lights off. Wendell Anderson’s children used the tunnel to reach the nanny who lived in the carriage house.

There are additional storage areas and service rooms on this level. They have had different uses including sauna and darkroom.

The Carriage House

In 1912, transportation was shifting from horse and buggy to automobile. After guests dismounted from their carriage under the porte-cochere, their carriage was driven to the Carriage House where the dust was washed off, the horse cared for and it was then turned around in preparation for departure. Recent repair work (2011) uncovered remnants of a large turn-table apparatus in the floor of the carriage house that was used to spin cars or carriages around.

Car in backyard, 1912. [Photo from MHS Archives.]
The Carriage House was built of the same materials as the main house. Originally, the second floor was an apartment for the cook and the chauffeur, who were married. During the Anderson years, a nanny lived there. During the Quie years, a refugee family from Vietnam lived here: Yen and Dong Trinh and their baby daughter Uyen. This area has now been remodeled as office space for the Residence staff.

The first floor remains as a garage and storage area. The basement houses the natural gas and hot water heating systems for both buildings.

The large lot to the west of the Residence was donated in September 1965 by the Alice O’Brien Foundation to use for additional parking spaces. The grounds now total 1 2/3 acres.

**Terrace and Entertaining**

In 1922, when the sunroom was enlarged, a simple stone terrace was added. A concrete terrace off the sunroom was constructed around 1966, and a matching sidewalk looped around the yard. In 1980s, the terrace was built to its present appearance, and a brick walkway constructed.

The Irvines threw fancy parties in their back yard, and set up canopies and Japanese lanterns. They also constructed temporary platform for the orchestra. One dance party went on late into the night. When a neighbor sent the police over, Clotilde came down the stairs in her robe and invited the officer in for coffee. She charmed him, and the party continued. During a small outdoor dinner party, Tom Irvine hid the sprinkler underneath the dining table, and surreptitiously turned the water on while everyone was seated.

Governors use the terrace to host large parties. The wedding receptions for Governors Perpich and Carlson’s children were hosted here.
A large tent is used to shade the terrace during the warmer months. The tent over the patio was built for the Residence by Olympic Tent in Washington. It is 30’ by 40’ and was donated by the 1006 Summit Avenue Society. The 1006 Society also purchased the chandeliers for the tent and the patio furniture.
Formal Gardens

Like the interior spaces on this property, the gardens and landscaping have undergone many changes over the past century. The tension between functionality and formality has played out here, too, with the balance shifting between governors. These changes speak to what the governor’s family’s personal needs and desires are, as well as to the popularity of certain values in our state.

Initially, architect William Channing Whitney also developed a design for the grounds. His proposed garden was formal in style and contained a rose garden, pergola, gazebo, statuary, seats, sundial, and annual/perennial flowerbeds. The Irvines chose not to implement his plan but they were influenced by his ideas.

They constructed a formal garden in the center of the yard and an arbor across the back of the property with a small, sunken reflecting pool and concrete column pergola located at the center of the back edge of the property. There was a sundial and benches. There was a vegetable garden for a brief period, and clothesline. The lawn was very flat. The plants were typical of the era; shaped evergreens, iris, an edging hedge, cosmos around the sundial, rose garden, and fanciful weeping trees.
The current garden plan, installed in 1980, was designed as a formal axial garden. The terrace, brick walkways and fountain were added at that time. In the center of the fountain are two cupids, called “putti”. They were fabricated in France in 1850, possibly from the same foundry as the Statue of Liberty. They have a bronze lead finish, weigh 100 pounds each and are 3 feet tall.
The yard and gardens continue to change. In 2011, a new kitchen garden was created that features heirloom varieties of fruits, vegetables and herbs. All plant material was donated by the Crow River Chapter of the Sustainable Farming Association, Nature’s Nest Farm and Riverbend Organic Farm. The raised beds were installed by Boy Scout troop 358 as a member’s Eagle Scout project.
Flower Garden and Children’s Garden

A perennial garden and water feature are located in the northeast corner of the backyard. A fern glen and water pond was installed during the 1970s, and has been integrated into the present design.

Our groundskeeper is working with local horticulture societies to enhance the gardens with Minnesota grown lilies, peonies, roses, and hostas. Throughout the grounds are flowers donated by the North Star Lily Society, Bailey Nurseries and Minnesota Peony Society. In honor of the two sisters who donated the home, the 1006 Society donated two plants named after them. The Clothilde Rose is located in the Rose Garden and the Olivia Peony is located in the perennial garden.
The Children’s Garden was created by Susan Carlson in 1993, inspired by the Children’s Garden at the White House. The garden of plants and flowers surrounds a lily pond, stocked with koi, and a path that follows the south and east perimeter of the garden. Placed along the path are ornamental stones with plaques commemorating all the children who have lived at the Residence, starting with the Irvines through the current day. Minnesota artist Doug Forsberg created “Carl”, a bronze of a small boy on a bicycle, which sits alongside the Children’s Garden.

**Yard**

Throughout the years, the yard and gardens have been altered to better suit the inhabitants’ needs.
The Irvines used the back yard for family games such as croquet. Croquet was still a fairly new back-yard activity at the turn of the century, having roots in Victorian England. Croquet was one of the first outdoor sports to have men and women play together, and were particularly popular on the east coast and with the upper class.
When the house was transferred to the state, the yard continued to be used for both private and official events. The Andersons had a tire swing and the children rode their bikes and go-carts on the paths. The Carlsons enjoyed hosting casual get-togethers in the back yard, especially barbeques.

Governor Dayton has three dogs that enjoy running in the open spaces. For a brief time, the Andersons had goats that were seen cavorting in the gardens.