



*Pillsbury Hall, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1889* (MHS COLLECTIONS)

## Pillsbury Hall, Minneapolis

 SINCE OPENING ITS DOORS in 1889, Pillsbury Hall has been home to a variety of University of Minnesota departments. It seems fitting that mineralogy and geology were among those disciplines, because the hall resembles a large, multifaceted specimen of rock wrested from the earth and awaiting scientific study. The building was, in fact, constructed from locally quarried Minnesota stone, much of which retains a rough-hewn character. But the facades also reveal the artistry of the craftsmen who skillfully transformed the hard material into delicate carvings, gargoyles, and polychromatic patterns.

Designed by LeRoy Buffington and Harvey Ellis in the Richardso-

nian Romanesque style, Pillsbury Hall also offers lessons in the forces of nature. The large rusticated stones on the lower portion of the building are undeniably anchored by the earth's gravitational pull, and the squat columns of the arcade appear to have narrowly escaped being drawn by that force into the ground. The massive arches of the entrances compress and narrow as they recede, exerting a visual magnetic pull on anyone who ascends the stairways.

The structure, one of the university's oldest extant buildings, stands in the National Register-listed Old Campus Historic District, once the heart of the land-grant school. Today, the district is only a small sector of the sprawling campus, which boasts

stunning new buildings by many of the stars of the contemporary architectural firmament. Although they may be newer and shinier, this crop of recent buildings has done little to diminish the aesthetic and textural charm of the historic hall; in fact, they only serve to counterpoint its beauty. More than 100 years old, Pillsbury Hall remains a head-turner of a building and an expressive reminder that they certainly don't build them like they used to.

—JANE KING HESSION

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