Thomas Hooke McCallie was just 3 years old when he arrived by flat-bottomed boat at Ross’ Landing in March of 1841 with his father, Thomas McCallie, and mother, Mary Hooke McCallie. His father, a prosperous man, continued his previous work in the mercantile business after their arrival, and the family promptly moved to their new home on what is now McCallie Avenue on the corner of Lindsay Street.

McCallie eventually went on to receive theological training at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. He returned to Chattanooga after the death of his father in 1859 and immediately took charge of his family. In January of 1862, right after the American Civil War had broken out, he married Ellen Douglas Jarnagin, daughter of former United States Senator Spencer Jarnagin, and accepted a call to the Presbyterian Church (now First Presbyterian Church) in Chattanooga. He continued as a pastor and spiritual leader in Chattanooga until his death in 1912.

Described as a “commanding figure in religious and civic life, interested and active in all that contributed to the welfare of the city and state,” McCallie recognized Chattanooga’s proximity to river and rail made it not only a strategic location in the war, but also a location from which institutions that would affect the South could be built. He and his wife had 16 children, with eight living into adulthood. These talented and devoted children included the founders of McCallie School, the founder of Girls Preparatory School, a City of Chattanooga chaplain, a longtime teacher at Bright School, and more than one businessman.

“My great-grandfather’s values were faith, family, and service with an emphasis on education,” says Thomas H. McCallie III. “As I see it, his progeny have carried those values well.”

McCallie School was founded in 1906 by Spencer and James Park McCallie, who were born the ninth and eleventh children of Thomas and Ellen McCallie respectively. In order to help them pursue their idea of starting a “first class University school,” their father had offered them $2,500 and the family’s 40-acre parcel of land on Missionary Ridge. McCallie School today has 246 boarding students in grades 9-12 and 669 day students in grades 6-12.

Girls Preparatory School was founded in 1906 by Thomas and Ellen’s second daughter, Grace McCallie, along with Tommie Payne Duffy and Eula Lea Jarnagin. What started out as three teachers in a four-room schoolhouse on Oak Street (the former home of Grace McCallie) is now one of the largest secondary girls’ day schools in the United States with over 700 students.