

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name St. John's High School and Seminary

Other names/site number N/A

Name of related Multiple Property Listing N/A

## 2. Location

Street & number 2015-2131 East 72<sup>nd</sup> Street

N/A

not for publication

City or town Kansas City

N/A

vicinity

State Missouri Code MO County Jackson

Code 095

Zip code 64132

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria: A B X C D

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register

determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other (explain):

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action



St. John's High School and Seminary  
Name of Property

Jackson County, Missouri  
County and State

## 5. Classification

### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

### Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
3	1	buildings
1	1	sites
	4	structures
	1	objects
4	7	<b>Total</b>

### Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

## 6. Function or Use

### Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION: Church School

EDUCATION: Education-related

RECREATION AND CULTURE: sports facility

LANDSCAPE: Parking Lot

### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Vacant/Not in Use

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Late Victorian: Romanesque Revival

### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Concrete

walls: Brick

aluminum

roof: Clay tile; asphalt

other:

☒

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION ON CONTINUATION PAGES

St. John's High School and Seminary

Name of Property

Jackson County, Missouri

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☐ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☒ A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

### Areas of Significance

ARCHITECTURE

### Period of Significance

1931-1958

### Significant Dates

1931, 1942, 1948, 1958

### Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

Carroll, Maurice and O'Meara & Hills (1931 arch.)

Shaughnessy, Joseph B. (1942, 1946-48 architect)

Shaughnessy, Bower, & Grimaldi (1958 architect)

Matthew Rauen (1931 builder)

J.E. Dunn (1942 builder)

☒ X

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE ON CONTINUATION PAGES



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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

☒ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)  
☐ previously listed in the National Register  
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register  
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark  
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

☒ State Historic Preservation Office  
☐ Other State agency  
☐ Federal agency  
☐ Local government  
☐ University  
☐ Other  
Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_ N/A

## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** 10.9

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1	38.996377	-94.561672	3	38.994759	-94.564553
	Latitude:	Longitude:		Latitude:	Longitude:
2	38.994651	-94.561787	4	38.996495	-94.564423
	Latitude:	Longitude:		Latitude:	Longitude:

**Verbal Boundary Description** (On continuation sheet)

**Boundary Justification** (On continuation sheet)

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Emily Lenhausen, Historic Preservation Specialist & Amanda K. Loughlin, National Register manager  
organization Rosin Preservation, LLC. date March 2021  
street & number 1712 Holmes telephone 816.472.4950  
city or town Kansas City state Missouri zip code 64108  
e-mail amanda@rosinpreservation.com

## Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:**
  - A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
  - A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Photographs**
- **Owner Name and Contact Information**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

**St. John's High School and Seminary**  
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## Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

## Photo Log:

Name of Property: **St. John's High School and Seminary**

City or Vicinity: **Kansas City**

County: **Jackson County** State: **Missouri**

Photographer: **Brad Finch, f-stop Photography.**

Date  
Photographed: **July 10, 2020**

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 14. High School and Seminary Building, view SE.
- 2 of 14. High School and Seminary Building, view NW.
- 3 of 14. High School and Seminary Building, view SW.
- 4 of 14. High School and Seminary Building, courtyard, view W.
- 5 of 14. Gethsemane Retreat House, view SE.
- 6 of 14. Gethsemane Retreat House, primary elevation detail, view SE.
- 7 of 14. Gethsemane Retreat House, view NW.
- 8 of 14. Sisters' House, view SW.
- 9 of 14. Sisters' House, view NE.
- 10 of 14. Gymnasium, view SW.
- 11 of 14. Gymnasium, view SE.
- 12 of 14. Grotto, view S.
- 13 of 14. Athletic field, view NE.
- 14 of 14. Visitor parking lot, view S.

## Figure Log:

Include figures on continuation pages at the end of the nomination.

Figure 1. Location Map. Source: Google Earth, 2020.

Figure 2. Contextual map, boundary outlined in red. Source: Google Maps, 2020.

Figure 3. District Map. Contributing (C) and non-contributing (NC) resources identified. Source: Google Earth.

Figure 4. Site map, showing historic lot lines. Source: Base map from the Jackson County, Missouri Parcel Viewer.

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- Figure 5. Snippet of the 1951 Sanborn, showing St. John's campus as the immediate environs. The dashed line depicts the nominated boundary. Source: Insurance Maps of Kansas City, Missouri, 1909-1951, Vol. 9 (New York: Sanborn Map Company 1930, republished May 1950), sheet 1111.
- Figure 6. High School and Seminary Plan, first floor, 1930. Source: *Carroll, Maurice and O'Meara & Hills Saint John's Seminary, original plans. March 1930.*
- Figure 7. High School and Seminary Plan, second floor, 1930. Source: *Carroll, Maurice and O'Meara & Hills Saint John's Seminary, original plans. March 1930.*
- Figure 8. High School and Seminary Site Plan. Completed in association with addition, 1946. Source: *Shaughnessy, Joseph B. Addition to St. John's Seminary, original plans. 1946. On file, State Historical Society of Missouri.*
- Figure 9. Sisters' House plans, first floor, 1957. The chapel noted on the plan was never constructed. Source: *Shaughnessy, Bower, and Grimaldi. Sisters House, original plans. June 1957. On file, State Historical Society of Missouri.*
- Figure 10. High School and Seminary, 1930. Source: *Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.*
- Figure 11. High School and Seminary and Gethsemane Retreat House, c. 1965. Source: *St. John's Seminary Yearbook, 1965.*
- Figure 12. Gymnasium, c. 1966. Source: *St. John's Seminary Yearbook, 1966.*
- Figure 13. Chapel and gymnasium/auditorium, High School and Seminary Building.
- Figure 14. Typical High School and Seminary Building finishes.
- Figure 15. High School and Seminary primary entrances.
- Figure 16. Typical Gethsemane Retreat House finishes.
- Figure 17. Typical Sisters' House finishes.
- Figure 18. 1965 Gymnasium playing court.
- Figure 19. Union Passenger Depot, Providence, Rhode Island, undated. Source: Wikimedia Commons.
- Figure 20. Woodland School (top) and Willard School (bottom). Source: Brad Finch, 2011.
- Figure 21. The former St. Francis Seraph Catholic Church, looking NE. Source: Google Streetview, 2014.
- Figure 22. Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church at the southwest corner of Bellefontaine Avenue and 39th Street in 1993. Source: Historic Kansas City Churches Survey, JA-AH-032-034.
- Figure 23. Benedictine Sanctuary of Perpetual Adoration in 1993, looking south from Meyer Blvd (top); aerial image below shows the building within its landscape. Sources: *Historic Kansas City Churches Survey, JA-AH-032-094 & Google Earth, 2020.*
- Figure 24. St. George Church & Rectory, St. Louis County, Missouri. O'Meara & Hills Architects. Source: *O'Meara & Hills, Catholic Churches and Institutions, 20-21.*

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St. John's High School and Seminary

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N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

### Summary Description

St. John's High School and Seminary is located at 2015 East 72<sup>nd</sup> Street, Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri. The nominated district includes 10.9 acres within the Marlborough Heights plat several miles south of the central business district. The St. John's High School and Seminary includes eleven resources completed over a roughly eighty-two-year between 1931 and circa 2012. Of these resources, four are buildings and include the St. John's High School and Seminary Building (1931, 1946-1948, alt. 1957), Gethsemane Retreat House (1942), Sisters' House (1958), and a gymnasium (1965). The remaining resources are a combination of sites, structures, and objects including parking lots, playgrounds, and a grotto. Four resources—the campus grounds, high school and seminary building, Gethsemane Retreat House, and Sisters' House—are contributing. The nominated property is currently vacant, but it retains its historic integrity and continues to convey its associations with the area (architecture) and period of significance for which it is nominated. The period of significance begins in 1931 with the opening of the seminary building, and ends in 1958, the year the Sisters' House was constructed.

### Narrative Description

#### Setting & Site

St. John's High School and Seminary (St. John's) is located approximately seven miles south of the central business district in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri and roughly one-third of a mile west of US Highway 71 (*Figures 1 & 2*). The surrounding area is predominantly residential and features a mixture of primarily single-family residences constructed in a variety of styles during the early twentieth century. Two north-south commercial corridors, Prospect Avenue and Troost Avenue, are located one-third and two-thirds of a mile east and west of the district, respectively. The 155-acre Forest Hill & Calvary Cemetery is located one block northwest while the Blenheim Square Research Hospital complex sits approximately one mile north of the nominated property.

The nominated district occupies the east two-thirds of an irregular block bound by East 72<sup>nd</sup> Street to the north; Brooklyn Avenue to east; East 73<sup>rd</sup> Street to the south; and The Paseo to the west. The former Memorial Christian Church, an early twentieth century stone building, and several early twentieth century single-family residences fill the west-third of the block. Typical landscaping throughout the area includes grassy lawns and mature trees and shrubs.

East 72<sup>nd</sup> Street, Brooklyn Avenue, and East 73<sup>rd</sup> Street define the north, east, and south boundaries of the rectangular 10.9-acre St. John's district (*Boundary Map & Figure 3*). A large

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non-historic parking lot abuts the west parcel boundary that defines the west district boundary (*Figure 3*). Mature deciduous trees and shrubs are interspersed throughout the nominated district while formal landscape beds are present near most buildings. A large, grassy athletic field (#8 below) defines the east half of the nominated district.

Individual Resource Descriptions (*Figure 3*)

**1. St. John's High School and Seminary Site**

**Contributing Site**

Photos 1 to 14; Figures 3 to 5

1931, 1950s

The 10.9-acre St. John's site today incorporates a number of adjacent parcels and a vacated street located between East 72<sup>nd</sup> and East 73<sup>rd</sup> streets.<sup>1</sup> The diocese acquired the center four-and-a-half acres in 1927 (*Figure 4*).<sup>2</sup> Most of the district resources are located within this portion of the property, including the main seminary building (#2), the Gethsemane Retreat House (#3), the Sisters' House (#4), the Gymnasium (#5), the Grotto (#6), and one playground (#11). The seminary building occupies the north half of this area. The Gethsemane Retreat House sits to the southeast of the main building; the gymnasium is due south of the building, parallel with East 73<sup>rd</sup> Street, and the Grotto sits between these two buildings. The Sisters' House is located just south of the west wing of the seminary building. A non-historic paved circle drive abuts the southeast side of the seminary building and the north side of the retreat house. A courtyard with cloister occupies the southwest corner of the seminary building; a playground extends from the east side of the Sisters' House and south of the seminary building.

The land to the east of the seminary buildings contains few built resources. Until the early- to mid-1950s, single-family dwellings occupied the individual lots within this portion of St. John's campus (*Figure 5*). A driveway from East 72<sup>nd</sup> Street separates the main seminary building from the Staff Parking Lot (#7). The driveway continues south to connect with the circle drive. A small playground structure (#10) abuts the east edge of the staff lot. A grassy athletic field (#8) occupies the south half of this east portion of the site.

The Visitor Parking Lot (#9) fills most of the land area to the west of the campus buildings, lining the west boundary of the district. Two driveways access this parking lot from the north and south; there is no access onto the property from the west.

<sup>1</sup> According to a 1958 deed (corrected in 1962) on file with Jackson County, all but a small tract in the northeast corner of the current campus was part of St. John's property by 1958; the remainder of the site was deeded to the school in 1959, according to a deed on file with the county. See Figure 3.

<sup>2</sup> "Catholics Plan New Schools," *Kansas City Star* (December 18, 1927): 60.

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N/A

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Additional site features include concrete sidewalks that connect the district resources. A historic iron fence encloses a small portion of the district beginning approximately at the northeast corner of the staff parking lot and continuing west in an irregular path to the northeast corner of the seminary building then west from the northwest corner of the building to the approximate center of the north edge of the visitor parking lot.

**2. St. John's High School and Seminary Building**

**Contributing Building**

Photos 1 to 4, Figures 3 to 8 & 10 to 15.

1931; add. 1946-1948; alt. 1957, 1965, 1984

The focal point of the property is the St. John's High School and Seminary Building. This is a two-story-plus-basement Romanesque Revival institutional building with a complex plan composed of multiple wings (*Photo 1*). The irregular plan consists of a 1931 block with four distinct wings and a two-story addition constructed between 1946-1948 (*Figures 3 to 8*) on the west side of the building. Each wing of the building had a specific function. The large west wing is oriented east-west and contains classrooms and student dormitories arranged along double-loaded corridors. The 1940s addition extends from the south end of this wing and contains classrooms arranged along a double-loaded corridor. The deep rear wing extends south from the center of the building and historically contained a gymnasium and auditorium. The north wing contains a three-story square tower and rounded apse. This wing is the primary focal point of the building. Although the building rises two stories, a small third-floor level consisting of two rooms is located within the squared tower of the north wing. The east wing is the smallest component and contained the priests' quarters arranged along a double-loaded, north-south corridor.

Red tapestry brick clads the exterior and regularly punched fenestration characterizes each elevation. Historic wood windows remain in the window bays and historic wood doors remain in most entrances. Windows are predominately paired 4/4 units (*Photo 1*). Some are single or arranged in groups of three at the secondary elevations (*Photo 4*). Several windows in the addition are historic glass block (*Photo 4*). Windows located in the south wing and associated with the gymnasium/auditorium are twenty-four lite with wide mullions. Windows present in the east wing are predominately 6/6 double-hung or six-lite casement windows (*Photo 3*). Small, narrow three-light windows pierce the north half of the building in several locations. Rounded arch art-glass windows with a diamond motif are associated with the chapel and apse (*Photos 1 and 3*); these two-story window bays are slightly inset within the apse wall.

The primary entrance, located on the north elevation and recessed under an arched porch, contains a pair of historic paneled wood doors with fixed glazing (*Figure 15*). Hexagonal panels recessed within a square frame decorate the bottom of the door. A narrow, carved chevron panel tops the hexagonal panel and a fixed single pane window occupies the top of each door. The exterior entrance to the chapel, located on the east side of the chapel, contains a historic paneled

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wood door with glazing (*Figure 15*). Four recessed panels form the lower portion of the door and a four-lite window tops the panels. A historic wood door fills the entrance to an attached garage behind the gymnasium/auditorium. A four-lite window tops two narrow, horizontal panels.

The interior retains its historic plan and most historic materials. Character-defining spaces, including the chapel and gymnasium/auditorium, retain their open plans and volume, as well as most historic material (*Figure 13*). The chapel has historic terrazzo flooring and ornate confessional booths; the gymnasium/auditorium has historic wood flooring and tile wainscot. Classrooms line double-loaded corridors and this arrangement is character-defining. Typical historic materials within the 1931 building include plaster walls, terrazzo floors, paneled wood doors with multi-light transoms, and trim (*Figure 14*). A small office in the main lobby was renovated in 1984; however, these renovations were minor and included the widening of doors within the office and the minor shifting of some partitions to improve ADA access. The 1948 addition retains historic finishes including terrazzo, wood, and linoleum flooring, plaster partitions, wood trim, and wood doors. The addition was minorly altered in 1957. Alterations included the addition of wardrobes in dormitory rooms and modifications to the first-floor bathroom to include additional showers. The St. John's High School and Seminary Building retains its historic plan and most historic materials. It is a contributing building.

**3. Gethsemane Retreat House**

Photos 5 to 7, Figures 3 to 5, 11, & 16

**Contributing Building**

1941-1942

The Gethsemane Retreat House is a two-story dormitory residence started in 1941 and completed in 1942. The narrow brick building is rectangular in plan and features restrained decorative elements which reference the main educational building (*Photo 5*). A shallow hipped, clay tile roof tops the building while a two-story gabled portico is centered on the primary (west) elevation (*Photo 6*). An arcade of three brick arches characterizes the lower half of this elevation, providing access to a shallow porch and the primary entrance. The upper half of the portico is enclosed. Paired historic 4/4 wood windows and decorative brickwork emphasize the upper story and a "GETHSEMANE" name plate executed in brick is centered above the arcade. Two wings extend north and south of the portico. Regularly punched fenestration characterizes all elevations and corresponds to the guestrooms, common spaces, and stairwells within the interior. Historic wood windows fill all window bays. Most are 4/4, however window bays at the end of the south wing contain narrow eight-light casement windows arranged in groups of two and three (*Photo 7*). On the interior, guestrooms, bathrooms, and common rooms line a north-south double-loaded corridor on floors one and two (*Figure 16*). The double-loaded corridor arrangement is character-defining. Each bathroom separates two guestrooms, which share the facility; all retain historic finishes including tile and fixtures.

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The first and second floors are mostly intact and retain historic finishes including plaster walls, paneled wood doors, radiators, window and door trim and casings, and plaster ceilings (*Figure 16*). Non-historic carpet is present in most rooms and dropped acoustical tile covers the historic plaster ceiling in the second-floor corridor; missing tiles reveal the historic ceiling surface above. Two simple historic staircases divide the east corridor wall into three roughly even sections and extend from the second floor to the basement level. Laundry, kitchen, chapel, and meeting room facilities occupy the basement. Most historic finishes remain in the basement and match those found on the upper floors. The Gethsemane Retreat House retains its historic plan and most historic materials and is a contributing building.

**4. Sisters' House**

**Contributing Building**

Photos 8 & 9, Figures 3, 9, & 17.

1958

The Sisters' House is a simple two-story brick dormitory with a flat roof and rectangular plan (*Photo 8*). Although simple, this building features elements common to the Modern Movement (simple massing, flat canopies, asymmetry) rather than the Romanesque Revival style used on the seminary building and retreat house. However, the building does quietly reference the architecture of the earlier buildings. These references include the simple massing, red tapestry brick exterior, and two-story inset window bays reminiscent of the two-story inset window bays on the apse of the seminary building. The decorative brick crosses on the exterior provide simple ornamentation which complement the older buildings.

Three bays organize the primary (north) elevation. A shallow one-story brick bump-out contains the east and center bays. A five-part, historic metal window defines the east bay while the primary entrance defines the center bay. The entrance bay contains a hollow wood door and features a historic two-part sidelight. A historic four-part metal window defines the west bay. Seven window bays organize the second story and contain a mixture of historic four- and two-part metal casement windows. Recessed brick panels top each window bay. Similar fenestration characterizes the rear (south) elevation (*Photo 9*). A two-story brick bump-out is centered on the elevation and corresponds to the interior stairwell. A field of small brick cross motifs ornaments the bump-out. A secondary entrance pierces the east wall of the bump-out, and a historic metal canopy extends to shelter a small concrete stoop. The east and west elevations lack fenestration. Concentric rings of brick crosses ornament these elevations. The east elevation contains a third entrance, located within the one-story bump-out on the north elevation. This entrance contains a hollow wood door.

The interior of the Sisters' House features common rooms and dormitory rooms arranged along a central double-loaded corridor on the first and second floors (*Figure 9*). This arrangement is character-defining. The corridors and rooms retain historic finishes including concrete block walls,



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acoustical ceiling tile and drywall ceilings, and simple wood doors (*Figure 17*). Dormitory rooms share bathrooms that retain historic tile and fixtures. The historic metal and wood stair remains intact, and historic skylights pierce the second floor ceiling above the stairwell and along the corridor (*Figure 17*). The basement is divided into two large utilitarian spaces which flank a central storage room. The basement retains historic finishes similar to those on the first and second floors. The Sisters' House retains its historic plan and the majority of historic materials. It was constructed during the period of significance and is associated with the context for which the district is nominated. It is a contributing building.

**5. Gymnasium**

**Non-Contributing Building**

Photos 10-11, Figures 3, 12, & 18.

1965

The gymnasium is a one-and-one-half story building with a rectangular plan and low gabled roof. Brick covers the east and north elevations; aluminum clads the rear (south) elevation, and painted concrete block comprises the west elevation. The utilitarian building has few decorative features. A one-story brick vestibule with a flat roof extends from the east end of the gymnasium and contains the primary entrance (*Photo 10*). A historic, flat metal canopy shelters the primary entrance, and the west wall of the vestibule features brick laid in a stacked bond. A secondary entrance is located at the far west end of the primary (north) elevation and contains a pair of hollow metal doors. Regularly punched clerestory windows line the primary (north) and rear (south) elevations. Historic three-part steel hopper windows fill the bays. A T-shaped concrete block and brick racquetball court extends from the west elevation (*Photo 11*). The primary entrance opens to a vestibule and restrooms. Doors in the west end of the vestibule enter the gymnasium space. An office, mechanical room, and additional restrooms span the west end of the gymnasium while the playing court occupies the remainder of the plan. The court retains its historic open plan, volume, and historic finishes including wood floor, concrete block walls, and exposed ceiling elements (*Figure 18*). Regularly positioned tapered web beams span the width of the court and regularly punched skylights illuminate the court from above. The gymnasium does not appear significantly altered and retains its interior volume and open plan. Built after the period of significance, the gymnasium is a non-contributing building as its utilitarian design does not contribute to the architectural significance of the district.

**6. Grotto**

**Non-Contributing Object**

Photo 12, Figure 3

c. 1965

The grotto is a small limestone object positioned directly east of the gymnasium (*Photo 12*). A heavy arch constructed in rough-faced limestone faces north. A recessed channel within the arch traditionally contained statuary, but no statuary is present at this time. A low, limestone retaining wall extends northeast from the east margin of the grotto roughly eight feet and then continues

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north approximately fifty feet. The exact date of construction is unknown; however, historic aerials and the proximity to the gymnasium building suggest the grotto dates to c. 1965. The grotto is a non-contributing object as it was constructed outside the period of significance and does not contribute to the architectural significance of the district.

**7. Staff Parking Lot**

**Non-Contributing Structure**

Figure 3

c. 1962-1969

The staff parking lot is a narrow asphalt surface parking lot located adjacent to the east wing of the seminary building. It is accessed from East 72<sup>nd</sup> Street to the north and contains approximately forty unmarked spaces. A narrow island extends most of the length beginning at the north end. A circular drive extends from the southwest corner of the lot. Historic aerials suggest the parking lot was constructed between 1962 and 1969. The staff parking lot is a non-contributing structure as it was constructed outside the period of significance and does not contribute to the architectural significance of the district.

**8. Athletic Field**

**Non-Contributing Site**

Photo 13, Figure 3

c. 1962

A large, grassy athletic field occupies the approximately east third of the property. A chain link backstop associated with a former baseball diamond centered on the east perimeter of the field. Historic aerials indicate a baseball diamond was present by 1962; however, the baseball diamond is absent, and the backstop does not appear to date to the period of significance. No other representations of athletic activities or recreation on the site remain. The athletic field is a non-contributing site due to its lack of physical integrity and its construction outside the period of significance, and it does not contribute to the architectural significance of the district.

**9. Visitor Parking Lot**

**Non-Contributing Structure**

Photo 14, Figure 3

c. 1991

The visitor parking lot is an asphalt surface parking lot located at the west-third of the district. It has an irregular, curvilinear plan. Access is from East 72<sup>nd</sup> Street to the north and East 73<sup>rd</sup> Street from the south via gently curving asphalt drives. The parking lot contains approximately one hundred parking spaces arranged along the perimeter and within two center clusters bracketed by irregular islands. The visitor parking lot was constructed c. 1991 and replaced an athletic field and track. It was constructed outside the period of significance and is a non-contributing structure.

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**10. Playground (east)**

**Non-Contributing Structure**

Figure 3

c. 2012

The east playground is a non-historic children's playground constructed c. 2012 and located roughly seventy-five feet east of the high school and seminary building and adjacent to the east of the staff parking lot. It is irregular in plan and features a non-historic metal and plastic climbing structure and a non-historic swing set. A pea gravel play surface surrounds the climbing structure and swing set, and a non-historic chain-link fence encloses the area. The east playground is a non-historic structure built outside the period of significance and without association with the context for which this district is nominated. It is non-contributing.

**11. Playground (center)**

**Non-Contributing Structure**

Figure 3

c.2012

The center playground is a non-historic children's playground constructed c. 2012. It is located at the center of the district, directly behind (south of) the high school and seminary building. It is irregular in plan and contains two non-historic metal and plastic climb structures and one non-historic swing set. A pea gravel play surface surrounds the climbing structures and swing set while a non-historic chain link fence encloses the play area. The center playground is a non-historic structure built outside the period of significance and lacks association with the context for which this district is nominated. It is non-contributing.

**Integrity**

The St. John's High School and Seminary retains historic integrity. Its integrity of setting and location is intact, as it remains nestled within a residential neighborhood south of downtown Kansas City, Missouri. The district as a whole and all contributing resources individually retain integrity of materials, workmanship, and design. Each building retains historic materials and design features which represent their respective eras of construction. The earliest two buildings—St. John's High School and Seminary Building and Gethsemane Retreat House—incorporate similar design elements of the Romanesque Revival. The extensive use of terrazzo flooring and wood millwork within the main seminary building communicate historic workmanship while the simple interiors of the Gethsemane Retreat House reflect the building's purpose as a location for reflection. Similarly, the Sisters' House is modest in design and material, fitting the era in which it was constructed, but also referring back to the main building through its brick exterior and ornamentation. The primary educational facility, St. John's High School and Seminary Building, retains its historic classrooms, double-loaded corridors, gymnasium, auditorium, and chapel associated with the educational activities within the district while the Gethsemane Retreat House and Sisters' House represent the expansion of the campus while stylistically deferring to the main building, which is the focal point of the property. Together, these resources convey the

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architectural significance of this district. The non-contributing resources were constructed outside the period of significance but have minimal impact on the integrity of the district as a whole. The St. John's High School and Seminary has integrity of feeling, as it continues to communicate its historic architectural significance.

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**Summary Paragraph**

Opened in 1931, St. John's High School and Seminary (St. John's) is locally significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as an example of the Romanesque Revival (Lombard) style in Kansas City, Missouri. The seminary meets the requirements for Criteria Consideration A as its significance is derived from its architecture rather than from its religious affiliations. The Diocese of Kansas City established St. John's to train priests to teach within its Catholic school system and to provide secondary education to young men. The diocese acquired the core of the property on East 72<sup>nd</sup> Street in 1927 and began the building planning process. The noted ecclesiastical architectural firm of O'Meara & Hills joined Kansas City-based J. Maurice Carroll to design a single building to house both the seminary and high school functions. The two-story Romanesque Revival exhibits design details recalling the medieval architecture of the Lombardy region of Europe. Unlike most other examples in Kansas City, St. John's utilizes its landscape to emphasize its prominence. The building sits near the north end of its site. The asymmetrical plan includes the primary east-west block with four north-south-oriented wings. The north (chapel) wing has a rounded apse and central three-story square tower with arcaded corbel table, style-defining features of the building. Additional stylistic features include red tapestry brick exterior, low-slope roofs with red clay tile, rounded arch masonry openings, brick arcades, and patterned brick ornamentation. Between 1941 and 1958, the campus expanded both its acreage and its built square footage. The diocese hired local architect Joseph Shaughnessy to design a retreat house (1941), a large addition to the seminary building (1948), and a dormitory for nuns who worked at the facility (1958). The design of each new building complemented the architecture of the seminary building, allowing it to remain the focal point of the property. The period of significance, 1931 through 1958, begins the year St. John's opened and ends with the construction of the Sisters' House, the last contributing resource.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance**

**Design of St. John's High School and Seminary**

St. John's High School and Seminary (St. John's) is an excellent example of the Romanesque Revival (Lombard) in Kansas City. This style fits within the historical eclecticism of American architecture from 1785 to 1890, an era of academic revivalism that conformed to established dictates of previous styles such as Classical, Gothic, Renaissance, and Romanesque.<sup>3</sup> Historian Leland Roth observes that even up to 1930, this era of architecture "adapted historic styles to create associations in the mind of the user or observer which would strengthen and enhance the

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<sup>3</sup> Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1992), 147.

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functional purpose of the building.”<sup>4</sup> Architects designing buildings in the later years of historical eclecticism creatively combined the historic revival styles to modern building programs in public, religious, and residential properties. In the United States, public buildings and religious facilities more frequently exhibited the Romanesque Revival style than did residences.

Popularized in the mid-nineteenth century, Romanesque Revival references the medieval European architecture of northern Italy and southern France and Germany that preceded the more commonly recognized Gothic. Other appellations conferred on the revival style during the years of its use included Lombard, directly referencing the Lombardy region in northern Italy. Clay tiled low-slope roofs, stucco or masonry walls, simple massing, and rounded arches generally characterize the medieval Romanesque architecture of this region.

As in its historical precedent, round arches prevail in the Romanesque Revival and are commonly found in a series as arcades or window openings. This ornament nearly always repeats in miniature form in the arcaded corbel table found under string courses and eaves. Architectural historian Marcus Whiffen notes that the arcaded corbel is the character-defining feature that distinguishes the Romanesque from other revival styles utilizing round arches such as Renaissance.<sup>5</sup>

Besides the distinctive round arch, stylistic characteristics of the Romanesque Revival occur in form and ornament. Asymmetrical plans feature collections of simple geometric masses, including cubes, octagons, and cylinders. Buttresses have slighter projections than those seen in Gothic Revival structures. Wall surfaces are broad and smooth masonry of stone or brick with thin mortar joints to emphasize the monolithic nature of the building. Towers or spires are most often square, and where they are paired, one is often shorter than the other. Tower roofs are flat with parapets or pyramidal. Other roofs on the building have low slopes; red clay tile is commonly employed. Decorative features can include wheel windows and patterned brick.<sup>6</sup>

The Romanesque Revival, like its Gothic Revival cousin, naturally aligned with the Picturesque mode, that is buildings (or ruins) intentionally set within rugged landscapes.<sup>7</sup> Asymmetrical forms, varying wall textures, and historical stylistic embellishments characterize the buildings

<sup>4</sup> Leland M. Roth, *A Concise History of American Architecture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 54.

<sup>5</sup> Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780*, 61.

<sup>6</sup> Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780*, 61.

<sup>7</sup> Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780*, 61.

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themselves.<sup>8</sup> The landscape within which a Romanesque Revival building was constructed often accentuated the style.

The first two American architects to employ the Romanesque Revival style were Richard Upjohn and James Renwick, both of whom also excelled at Gothic Revival designs. Upjohn's Church of the Pilgrims in Brooklyn and Renwick's Church of the Pilgrims in New York City both opened in 1846, as did the first portion of Renwick's Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC. The latter building, constructed within the open landscape of Pierre L'Enfant's Mall, highlighted the picturesque qualities of the style.<sup>9</sup> The 1848 Providence, Rhode Island, Union Passenger Depot also typified the style, with its arcaded corbel tables, asymmetrical form, and collection of simple massing (*Figure 19*).<sup>10</sup> Although popularized in the mid-nineteenth century, architects continued to apply the Romanesque Revival to buildings well into the mid-twentieth century.

*Romanesque Revival in Kansas City*

Although not as ubiquitous as other historical revival styles in Kansas City, the Romanesque Revival enjoyed popularity in the city during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially in commercial buildings, schools, and religious facilities. Eight of the schools built in this period for the Kansas City public school system exhibited elements of the style. Woodland School (711 Woodland Avenue) and Willard School (5015 Garfield Avenue), both designed by Charles A. Smith, are two examples (*Figure 20*).<sup>11</sup> Constructed in 1921 and 1923 respectively, they featured brick facades, asymmetrical forms with simple geometric massing, arched masonry openings, clay tile roofs, and arcaded corbel tables.

When it opened in 1931, St. John's High School and Seminary was one of a handful of religious facilities in Kansas City designed in the Romanesque Revival style. The 1993 *Historic Churches of Kansas City* survey identified four buildings exhibiting this style constructed between 1924 and 1927, all for the Catholic Diocese of Kansas City. The earliest example, St. Francis Seraph Church (807 North Agnes Avenue, not extant), opened in 1924. The Emporia, Kansas, firm Brinkman & Steele designed the red brick church. The west façade featured a gabled parapet with cross at

<sup>8</sup> John Fleming, Hugh Honour, & Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Penguin Dictionary of Architecture*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 334.

<sup>9</sup> Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780*, 61, 63. Although, as Roth notes, the placement of this building interrupted the expansiveness of the landscape originally designed by L'Enfant.

<sup>10</sup> Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780*, 63. The depot suffered significant damage in a fire in 1896 and was replaced two years later.

<sup>11</sup> Rachel Nugent, "Marlborough School," National Register Nomination, draft I (April 2017): 8-12 – 8-13. Woodland School, 711 Woodland Avenue, is extant; Willard School, 5015 Garfield Avenue, no longer stands.

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the apex; simplified corbeled arcade tables lined the roof eaves. A round-arch window dominated the upper façade. Hexagonal masses flanked the primary west elevation, and front-gable bays on the north and south corresponded to the transept; clay tile covered the roof (*Figure 21*).<sup>12</sup>

Designed by local architects Archer & Gloyd, Blessed Sacrament Church opened in 1927 (3901 Bellefontaine Avenue, extant). A rusticated ashlar stone foundation supports the smooth ashlar stone building, and a low-slope gable roof covers the basilica plan. One-story projections flank the symmetrical façade. A prominent wheel window pierces the upper east façade above three round-arch portals at the first story. Round-arches cover faux masonry openings, and the characteristic arcaded corbel table decorates the square tower on the north elevation (*Figure 22*).<sup>13</sup>

The religious Romanesque Revival examples in Kansas City most commonly occupy parcels surrounded by dense residential development. Thus, the landscapes associated with these buildings were not necessarily part of the overall design of the facility. One exception to this trend is the Benedictine Sanctuary of Perpetual Adoration, a former convent built between 1947-1949 and designed by local architect Joseph B. Shaughnessy. The sprawling asymmetrical building sits atop a prominent hill at the intersection of The Paseo and Meyer Boulevard (*Figure 23*). The three story brick building includes simple geometric masses housing living/working quarters and a chapel that generally form an E-shaped plan. The prominent chapel wing is oriented north-south on the east end of the building, and a five-story square tower (campanile) with low-slope pyramidal roof rises above the building to the west of the chapel. The chapel is a basilica plan with rounded south apse and a short transept; a square tower rises from the junction of the nave and transept. Ornamentation adorning the chapel wing and campanile includes arcaded corbel tables, wheel windows, and carved portals.

*St. John's High School and Seminary*

St. John's predates the Benedictine convent by almost two decades. Although smaller in scale, the building program and architectural style of the two facilities are similar. Local architect J. Maurice Carroll teamed with O'Meara & Hills to design St. John's with Matthew Rauen of Chicago

<sup>12</sup> Missouri Inventory #JA-AS-032-033. This building was demolished circa 2018, according to both Google Earth and Streetview historical images.

<sup>13</sup> Missouri Inventory #JA-AS-032-034. As of 2020, this building still stands.



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as the builder. The architects completed the plans in early March 1930, and a building permit was issued roughly one month later.<sup>14</sup>

An April 13, 1930 article in the *Kansas City Star* detailed the design of St. John's. The article noted the two story, 231' by 264' building as being in the style of "historic, romantic, Lombardy."<sup>15</sup> This appellation no doubt referenced the building's red tapestry brick exterior, low-slope roofs with red clay tile, rounded arch masonry openings, arcaded corbel tables, and patterned brick ornamentation, as well as its simple geometric massing. The asymmetrical plan includes the primary east-west block with four north-south-oriented wings. The chapel occupies a prominent location, extending from the primary (north) elevation to serve as the focal point of the building. This chapel wing has a rounded apse and central three-story square tower. The large west wing contains classrooms and student dormitories while a deep rear wing originally housed a gymnasium, auditorium, kitchen, and dining room. The small east wing contained the priests' quarters. The modern building program of the seminary and high school was creatively combined with the historic style.

The way in which the building relates to its landscape also highlighted its Lombard style. When constructed, the facility enjoyed the benefit of an open landscape, occupying the north half of its original four-acre site (*Figures 4 & 5*). The same April 13 article noted that the irregular plan of the seminary would "reach out over the ample site...leaving partially enclosed turf areas for gardens and cloistered walks, creating an appropriate setting for this edifice."<sup>16</sup> Thus, at St. John's, the historical style strengthened the purpose of the building, as Roth observed.

Two new building campaigns occurred in the 1940s. In 1941, local architect Joseph B. Shaughnessy designed a retreat house to occupy the southeast corner of the property. Local firm J.E. Dunn began construction of the two-story brick building in the fall of 1941.<sup>17</sup> Shaughnessy designed the Gethsemane Retreat House to harmonize with the 1931 building through coordinating brick cladding and decorative motifs such as patterned brickwork, round arches, and red clay tile roof. Brick quoining at the building corners, larger windows on the first story, and a raised first story all hint at more Italian Renaissance stylistic features than the Romanesque used on the original building. This subtle detail recalls the natural architectural stylistic progression, as

<sup>14</sup> *Saint John's Seminary*, original plans, O'Meara & Hills and Maurice Carroll, March 1930. On file, State Historical Society of Missouri. Building Permit 15560, issued April 11, 1930. On file, City Hall, Kansas City, Missouri.

<sup>15</sup> "St. John's Seminary Will Bring a New Point of Architectural Interest to the Southeast Section," *Kansas City Star* (April 13, 1930): 47; plans and permits give the dimensions. Although the building rises two stories, the interior arrangement produces three floors and a basement

<sup>16</sup> "St. John's Seminary Will Bring a New Point...", 47.

<sup>17</sup> Building Permit 11545A, issued September 30, 1941. On file, City Hall, Kansas City, Missouri.

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the Renaissance post-dates the Romanesque. The retreat house opened in 1942.<sup>18</sup> Shaughnessy also designed an addition to the 1931 seminary building in 1946, around the same time he began the design of the Benedictine Sanctuary of Perpetual Adoration. The three-story west addition extended to the south of the building, allowing the original north façade to remain unobstructed. The addition was designed to expertly harmonize with the existing west wing through its similar cladding, scale, and ornamental brickwork, including brick quoining, which also referenced the retreat house. A doorway in the north wall connected the addition to the existing school stairwell on all floors. The first floor housed student amenities including two recreation rooms and a new infirmary. Two dormitory rooms, a combined restroom and locker room, office, and priest room occupied the second floor. The addition opened in 1948.<sup>19</sup>

In the 1950s, the campus added another building and expanded its acreage. The new building, also designed by Joseph Shaughnessy, housed nuns who assisted in school operations. Plans were drafted in June 1957 and a building permit issued the following month.<sup>20</sup> The roughly sixty by forty-foot, two-story, brick and concrete block building had a full basement.<sup>21</sup> Unlike the retreat house, stylistic references of the Sisters' House were modern rather than historical. However, decorative brickwork in the form of small brick crosses referenced the more formal seminary building and retreat house, allowing the Sisters' House to be a cohesive element to the campus while also standing out as a new building. Double-loaded corridors on the first and second floors organized common spaces and bedrooms while the basement housed utilitarian spaces. The house opened in 1958.<sup>22</sup> Deeds of record on file with the county indicate that by 1959 the current eleven acres associated with St. John's was in place. By this time, most if not all of the houses formerly occupying the expanded acreage were gone, and Euclid Avenue was vacated and incorporated into the landscape to the west of the seminary. Parking lots and athletic fields replaced the former residences.

The final building on the campus, the gymnasium, was constructed after the acreage expansion. The one-story building sits at the south edge of the campus, parallel with East 73<sup>rd</sup> Street. Although utilitarian in nature, the brick walls of the north and east elevations help the building to blend with the earlier structures.

*The Architects of St. John's High School and Seminary*

<sup>18</sup> "New Retreat House Completed at St. John Seminary," *Kansas City Star* (May 17, 1942): 64.

<sup>19</sup> "To Helm of Seminary," *Kansas City Star* (September 11, 1948): 4.

<sup>20</sup> Sisters House, original plans, Shaughnessy, Bower, and Grimaldi, June 1957. On file, State Historical Society of Missouri; Building permit 18826, issued June 30, 1958. On file, City Hall, Kansas City, Missouri.

<sup>21</sup> Although the plans depict a chapel at the east end of the Sisters' House it was never constructed.

<sup>22</sup> Equivalent to approximately \$892,000 in 2020 USD.

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Three architects contributed to the design of St. John's. The primary building on the campus, the seminary, is the result of the collaboration between Kansas City architect J. Maurice Carroll and the St. Louis-Minneapolis firm of O'Meara & Hills. Kansas City architect Joseph B. Shaughnessy, Sr., designed the 1948 west wing to the seminary, as well as the 1942 retreat house and the 1958 Sisters' House. The portfolios of all three architects featured buildings for the Catholic Church that relied on traditional European revival styles such as Gothic Revival, Tudor Revival, and the Romanesque Revival, as was used for St. John's.

J. Maurice Carroll (1897-1990) was born in Kansas City, Missouri at the turn of the twentieth century. He received his Bachelor of Architecture from the University of Notre Dame in 1919, returning to Kansas City where he worked as a draftsman for Charles A. Smith until 1921. From 1921 to 1948, Carroll partnered with Chester Dean. As Carroll & Dean, the firm designed a number of properties for the Catholic Diocese of Kansas City, including buildings at Rockhurst College (1920s) and St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church (1924) at 3106 Flora (extant). The latter Gothic Revival building received an award from the Kansas City Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA). Carroll relocated to St. Louis in 1948 where he established Maurice Carroll Architects. He retired in 1965. Carroll died on New Year's Eve 1990.<sup>23</sup>

The architecture firm of O'Meara & Hills (1919-1939) was the twenty-year partnership of Patrick M. O'Meara and James B. Hills. Born in West Bend, Wisconsin, O'Meara (1890-1945) attended the University of Notre Dame, receiving his Bachelor of Architecture in 1910. After working in various midwestern cities upon graduation, O'Meara formed a partnership with James Hills in Fort Dodge, Iowa, in 1919. Hills (1888-1979) was born in upstate New York and received his Bachelor of Architecture from Cornell University in 1912. Upon graduation, Hills relocated to Minneapolis, but worked for various firms in Minnesota, South Dakota, and Ohio before joining O'Meara in Fort Dodge, Iowa. In 1920, O'Meara & Hills had three offices in the Midwest, including St. Louis (where O'Meara was based) and St. Paul, Minnesota (where Hills lived). During their twenty-year partnership, O'Meara & Hills became nationally recognized specialists in Catholic religious facilities. The firm self-published a promotional portfolio in 1928, highlighting their work around the country. *Catholic Churches and Institutions* showcased cathedrals, seminaries, convents, hospitals, and parochial schools designed for dioceses throughout the Midwest.<sup>24</sup> Preferred styles utilized by the firm focused on academic historical eclecticism. Gothic, Tudor, Classical, Romanesque revivals featured prominently in their works (*Figure 24*). In 1939, the partnership

<sup>23</sup> "J. Maurice Carroll," Obituary, *Kansas City Star* (1 January 1991): n.p.; George S. Koyl, ed., *American Architects Directory* (New York: R.R. Bowker Company, 1955), 85.

<sup>24</sup> O'Meara & Hills, Architects, *Catholic Churches and Institutions* (St. Louis, MO: Self-published, 1928).

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dissolved; Hills remained in Minnesota, forming a new partnership of Hills, Gilbertson & Hayes, and O'Meara remained in St. Louis as P.M. O'Meara & Associates. When O'Meara died in 1945, his obituary was published in papers from New York to Chicago to St. Louis, emphasizing his national reputation.<sup>25</sup>

Born in Kansas City, Kansas, Joseph B. Shaughnessy, Sr. (1898-1992), also received his Bachelor of Architecture from the University of Notre Dame in 1922. Upon graduation he worked in the Kansas City, Kansas firm of Rose & Peterson as a draftsman and for Carroll & Dean before forming his own architecture firm, Shaughnessy & Bower, in 1928. Shaughnessy was a prolific architect in Kansas City, designing several churches and schools, many for the local Catholic Diocese. In 1950, the firm expanded to Shaughnessy, Bower & Grimaldi and he designed one of his principal works, St. Francis Xavier Church (extant). From 1950 to 1952 Shaughnessy served as the president of the Kansas City Chapter of the AIA, and from 1952 to 1955, as national director of the AIA. He retired in 1967.<sup>26</sup>

### History of St. John's High School and Seminary

The Diocese of Kansas City opened St. John's High School and Seminary (St. John's) in 1931 to fill two roles. First, the diocese hoped to train graduates of the high school to become priests to teach within their school system. Second, the facility would be one of the first secondary schools in the city's parochial educational system. The combined high school and seminary was the only such place established in the Diocese of Kansas City.

A brief context regarding Catholic education in Kansas City, Missouri is necessary to help understand the establishment of St. John's. The first Catholic priest associated with the Kansas City diocese arrived in 1828.<sup>27</sup> Individual parishes continued to form throughout the Kansas City area during the following decades as the city steadily grew from its associations with westward travel. The 1869 opening of the Hannibal Bridge over the Missouri River transformed Kansas City into a livestock and transportation hub, initiating a substantial population boom. By 1880 the Kansas City population totaled approximately 56,000 residents. Of these, roughly 19,000 (34

<sup>25</sup> "Patrick M. O'Meara Dies; Architect of 450 Buildings in the Midwest," *St. Louis Star and Times* (27 October 1945): 3; "Patrick M. O'Meara," Obituary, *Chicago Tribune* (28 October 1945): 40; *New York Daily News* (28 October 1945): 51; Henry F. Withey & Elsie Rathburn Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (deceased)* (Los Angeles, CA: New Age Publishing Co., ca 1956), 449; Koyl, ed., *American Architects Directory*, 249

<sup>26</sup> Koyl, ed., *American Architects Directory*, 500; "Joseph B Shaughnessy," Obituary *The Kansas City Star* (23 April 1992): C-4.

<sup>27</sup> The current Catholic Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph was historically part of the Dioceses of St. Louis, established by the Vatican in 1826. The Vatican formed the Dioceses of Kansas City in 1880; in 1956, the Diocese of St. Joseph combined with the Kansas City dioceses during a state-wide reorganization. The Catholic Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph, "Our History," accessed July 8, 2020. <http://www.diocese-kcsj.org/content/diocese/history/>.

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percent) were Catholic.<sup>28</sup> The Kansas City population continued to grow with substantial increases brought through waves of immigration during late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Most immigrants during this period were European, and of these, many were Catholic. Between 1890 and 1900, the Catholic population nearly doubled from 24,616 to 45,000.<sup>29</sup> An additional ten thousand Catholics were recorded in 1910.<sup>30</sup>

The increase in the Catholic population triggered an increase in the number of parochial schools in Kansas City. Between 1880 and 1912, nineteen Catholic educational institutions were constructed. Following the death of the first bishop of the diocese, John J. Hogan in 1913, the Vatican appointed Father Thomas Lillis bishop over the approximately 60,000 parishioners.<sup>31</sup> Bishop Lillis, a champion of Catholic parochial education, oversaw the construction of twenty-one new educational facilities in his twenty-five-year administration (1913-1938), including the first two secondary-education schools in the diocese. Both Rockhurst High School (1923) and St. John's High School and Seminary (1931) offered high school curricula, and graduates of each were expected to attend either Rockhurst College or St. John's Seminary.<sup>32</sup> The increase in student numbers necessitated the need for additional teachers, and St. John's was intended to provide training for students who wanted to continue on into the priesthood.

Prior to 1904, individual parish priests oversaw the education and training of aspiring priests within the diocese.<sup>33</sup> In an effort to formalize priesthood education, the St. John's Seminary Association incorporated in 1904. Although no dedicated building for the purpose existed, St. Patrick's parochial school at 8<sup>th</sup> and Cherry streets (not extant) provided the first seminary training courses

<sup>28</sup> Thomas Hornbeck, "Historical Geography of the Catholic Church in Kansas City, Missouri: 1822-1930" (master's thesis, University of Kansas, 2008), 29; Albert de Zutter, "Bishop Hogan counted 600 families in first diocese," *The Catholic Key* (September 5, 1999): n.p.

<sup>29</sup> Charles M. Coleman, *This Far by Faith: A popular history of the Catholic people of west and northwest Missouri*, (Kansas City: Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph, 1992), 107.

<sup>30</sup> Coleman, "This Far by Faith," 107. The total population of the city ranged from 132,716 (1890) to 163,752 (1900) to 248,381 (1910).

<sup>31</sup> "Bishop Thomas Francis Lillis," *Catholic Hierarchy*, accessed August 28, 2020, <http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/blillis.html>; Hornbeck, "Historical Geography...", 83.

<sup>32</sup> Although originally founded as the Academy of Rockhurst College, a Jesuit college, the former transitioned to Rockhurst High School in 1923. Sedgwick Hall on the current college campus formerly housed the high school until 1923; the building is currently undergoing alterations. Rockhurst High School, "The History of Rockhurst High School," accessed September 1, 2020, <http://www.rockhursths.edu/s/538/subpage.aspx?sid=538&gid=1&pgid=872>

<sup>33</sup> Training for Catholic priests began as early as 1883 when Bishop Hogan began Latin classes for boys who may be interested in joining the priesthood. "St. John's Has Served 25 Years Preparing Youths for Priesthood," *Kansas City Star* (August 14, 1956): 28.

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in 1908.<sup>34</sup> Two years later, in 1910, seminary classes were moved to De La Salle Academy at 16<sup>th</sup> and The Paseo (extant).<sup>35</sup>

In 1920, the diocese began formal efforts to establish a dedicated seminary facility. Although the St. John's Seminary Association counted twenty-five students in their training program, the number was far below the demand for teachers within the Catholic school system.<sup>36</sup> The *Kansas City Star* reported in January 1920 that the St. John's Seminary Association purchased eighty acres of farmland southeast of downtown Kansas City.<sup>37</sup> With the purchase of land, Bishop Lillis hoped to construct a seminary to house one hundred students in a bid to increase future priest numbers, especially to meet the growing demand for teachers within the parochial school system. The St. John's Seminary Association held an estimated \$150,000 in a fund for such a purpose; however, seven years passed before additional action was taken to construct the building.<sup>38</sup> By 1927, the diocese repurposed the original eighty-acre purchase, necessitating the purchase of additional property.<sup>39</sup>

In mid-December 1927, Bishop Lillis purchased a four-and-one-half-acre site at 72<sup>nd</sup> Street and Euclid Avenue (*Figure 4*).<sup>40</sup> Formerly the Joseph F. Jones property, the site was purchased in the name of St. John's Seminary for \$30,000 to construct a preparatory school for young men.<sup>41</sup> The school would offer both a high school education and post-secondary instruction. Within a year of purchase, eighteen students occupied the former Jones residence while awaiting construction of a new facility on the site.<sup>42</sup> The new St. John's Seminary was expected to accommodate over one

<sup>34</sup> "St. John's Has Served 25 Years...", 28; St. Patrick's Church still stands. The school was located on the north side of 8<sup>th</sup> Street where the 1973 AT&T district headquarters building sits.

<sup>35</sup> Loretta Shea Kline, "St. John's Minor Seminary Remembered," *Catholic Key* [published online] (July 11, 1999). De La Salle Academy is now a charter school associated with the Guadalupe Centers.

<sup>36</sup> "Buys Land for Seminary," *Kansas City Star* (January 27, 1920): 8.

<sup>37</sup> "Buys Land for Seminary," 8.

<sup>38</sup> \$150,000 is equivalent to roughly \$1.92 million in 2020. A lack of suitable seminary teachers, the pressing need for more parochial schools, and obligations to the poor were cited as causes for delay. "Buys Land for Seminary," 8; "A Bishop's See 50 Years," *Kansas City Times* (September 11, 1930): 13.

<sup>39</sup> This became the south half of what is now Mt. Olivet Catholic Cemetery at 7601 Blue Ridge Blvd.

<sup>40</sup> "Catholics Plan New Schools," 60.

<sup>41</sup> Purchase price equivalent to roughly \$442,000 in 2020 USD.

<sup>42</sup> "Catholics Plan New Schools," 60; Coleman, *This Far by Faith*, 105. Brothers from the Vincentian Order of St. Louis taught the students.

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hundred students who, upon graduation, would fill need for parochial schoolteachers or would continue their education elsewhere.<sup>43</sup>

The diocese soon launched a fundraising campaign for the seminary-high school. Estimates given in 1920 cited a proposed building cost of only \$150,000, but by 1927 estimates called for more than double the initial amount and reached \$400,000.<sup>44</sup> Although the estimated costs had risen dramatically, the campaign proved successful. In November 1928, only one-quarter of the building fund remained to be raised. Local Catholic churches provided approximately \$300,000 while the remaining \$100,000 was sought from other cities, towns, and rural districts within the diocese.<sup>45</sup>

Maurice Carroll and O'Meara & Hills completed the building plans in early March 1930. Construction began a little over one month later and neared completion in mid-February 1931.<sup>46</sup> Formal dedication of St. John's occurred on August 15, 1931.<sup>47</sup> Following the dedication festivities, local news sources described the seminary as "one of the most modern buildings in this section."<sup>48</sup> The building contained classrooms, dormitories for priests and students, a gymnasium, an auditorium, a chapel, a library, and dining facilities. The first classes of a combined five-year high school and junior college curriculum commenced later that fall.<sup>49</sup>

While St. John's was initially conceived as an educational center for potential priests, by the time of its completion it served an additional purpose. Although the curriculum included two years of junior college, the primary function of the school was parochial secondary education. In the decades prior to its construction, parochial education in Kanas City, following national trends, placed a primary focus on elementary education. Some parochial schools within the city offered curriculum past the elementary level, but elementary-level courses remained the most prominent in existing schools and no new schools were built specifically for secondary education. However,

<sup>43</sup> St. John's was considered a junior seminary, which prepares students to enter the priesthood, yet lacks the final courses needed for ordination. Upon leaving a junior seminary, students must complete additional work elsewhere before joining the clergy. Graduates also can attend other post-secondary schools for non-religious advanced degrees.

<sup>44</sup> "Seek Boys' School Fund," *Kansas City Star* (November 27, 1928): 14. This cost is equivalent to roughly 6.1 million dollars in 2020 USD.

<sup>45</sup> "Seek Boys' School Fund," 14.

<sup>46</sup> "St. John's Seminary and Its Statue of St. Thomas Which Will Be Dedicated in the Spring," *Kansas City Star* (February 12, 1931): 3.

<sup>47</sup> "In the Master's Steps, Bishop Lillis Tells of the Aims of St. John's Seminary," *Kansas City Star* (August 15, 1931):1.

<sup>48</sup> "In the Master's Steps, 1.

<sup>49</sup> "A 3-Day Catholic Meet," 3.

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as the public school system embraced secondary education so did the Kansas City parochial system. In 1923, the Academy of Rockhurst College, which had been opened as a Jesuit college in 1914, became Rockhurst High School. Although the school remained in a corporation with the college, this name change reflected a transition in focus as secondary education became the primary component of the school.<sup>50</sup> When St. John's opened eight years later, it became only the second parochial school in Kansas City with a focus on secondary education.

The Diocese of Kansas City expanded facilities on the property ten years after the completion of the high school and seminary building. While parochial and seminary education continued to be the primary function of the property, the diocese sought to expand services at the site. In 1941, local architect Joseph B. Shaughnessy designed a retreat house that would offer a location within their own diocese for western Missouri clergy who were at that time required to travel to Atchison, Kansas for their annual five-day retreats.<sup>51</sup> A building permit was issued September 20, 1941 in the amount of \$75,000; final costs of the building equaled approximately \$90,000.<sup>52</sup> The building contained dormitory rooms for fifty to sixty people, a recreation room, and conference room with an altar.<sup>53</sup> The Gethsemane Retreat House was completed in May 1942.<sup>54</sup> Although primarily reserved for the Diocese of Kansas City clergy, the building also hosted women's groups and retreats for local Catholic school students.<sup>55</sup>

Although the high school and seminary building had been built to house up to one hundred forty students, by the mid-1940s additional space was required. The school once again partnered with local architect Joseph B. Shaughnessy, this time to construct a large addition to the existing building that would harmonize with the existing buildings on the property. The three-story addition contained student amenities including two recreation rooms and a new infirmary. When completed in 1948, the addition more than doubled the boarding capacity of the school.<sup>56</sup>

In 1957, St. John's terminated its seminary function and became solely a high school. At the end of the 1957 school year, eight students graduated from the two-year college at St. while fourteen

<sup>50</sup> Rockhurst High School, "The History of Rockhurst High School."

<sup>51</sup> "A House for Retreats," *Kansas City Star* (October 2, 1941): 8.

<sup>52</sup> Building Permit 11545A, issued September 30, 1941. On file, City Hall, Kansas City, Missouri. Equivalent to approximately \$1.58 million dollars in 2020 USD. Final actual cost is currently unknown.

<sup>53</sup> "A House for Retreats," 8.

<sup>54</sup> "New Retreat House Completed at St. John Seminary," *Kansas City Star* (May 17, 1942): 64.

<sup>55</sup> "Could'st Thou Not Watch One Hour with Me?" *Kansas City Star* (October 18, 1942): 53.

<sup>56</sup> "To Helm of Seminary," *Kansas City Star* (September 11, 1948): 4.



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completed the high school program.<sup>57</sup> While delivering the commencement address, Bishop John Patrick Cody announced the end of the college program at the school. In addition, the bishop stated that all future high school seniors would be required to live on the campus. Soon after the 1957 commencement, the campus added another building and expanded its acreage. The new building, also designed by Joseph Shaughnessy, was constructed to house nuns who assisted in school operations.<sup>58</sup> The building permit listed a cost of \$100,000, and construction was completed in 1958.<sup>59</sup>

The programmatic changes to St. John's stem from rising enrollment numbers and the need for additional space as the student body grew. In 1961, four years after ending the college program and relocating high school seniors to the dormitories, the diocese announced a campaign to raise funds for improvement to schools, parishes, and other institutions within the diocese.<sup>60</sup> Among the stated goals was the additional expansion of St. John's.<sup>61</sup> Steadily increasing enrollment at St. John's over several preceding years had stretched its resources thin and more facilities were needed to accommodate continually rising numbers.<sup>62</sup> Multiple phases of expansion were planned. The first phase of this development was the conversion of the Gethsemane Retreat House into a dormitory.<sup>63</sup>

The second phase included the construction of a new gymnasium on school grounds. Following the completion of the gymnasium, the original gymnasium within the high school and seminary building were converted into a library, and the original library converted into two additional classrooms.<sup>64</sup> While the first phase of the expansion occurred soon after the fundraising campaign, the second phase was not completed until 1965. That March, a building permit was issued to R.D.M. Construction in the amount for \$120,000 for the construction of a gymnasium on the property.<sup>65</sup> The gymnasium was the final building constructed at the school complex.

<sup>57</sup> "A Change Announced for St. John's Seminary," *Kansas City Star* (June 6, 1957): 23.

<sup>58</sup> Sisters House, original plans, Shaughnessy, Bower, and Grimaldi, June 1957. On file, State Historical Society of Missouri; Building permit 18826, issued June 30, 1958. On file, City Hall, Kansas City, Missouri.

<sup>59</sup> Equivalent to approximately \$892,000 in 2020 USD.

<sup>60</sup> "Announce Diocesan Fund Campaign," *Cameron Sun* (September 14, 1961): 1.

<sup>61</sup> "Announce Diocesan Fund Campaign," 1.

<sup>62</sup> "Announce Diocesan Fund Campaign," 1.

<sup>63</sup> "Announce Diocesan Fund Campaign," 1.

<sup>64</sup> "Announce Diocesan Fund Campaign," 1.

<sup>65</sup> Building permit 15962, issued March 10, 1965. On file, City Hall, Kansas City, Missouri.

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St. John's High School and Seminary continued to operate into the late twentieth century. The four-year high school program remained in place until 1983, at which time classes were discontinued and the school closed. The diocese retained ownership of the property, and it was used for meetings and clergy retreats over the following sixteen years. In 1999, the diocese sold the property, and it was converted into a secular educational institution. The Academy of Kansas City Charter School leased the property from 1999 to 2009. The Pathway Academy charter school was the subsequent occupant until it vacated the property in 2019. The property has since remained vacant.

**Conclusion**

The St. John's High School and Seminary is locally significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. The 1931 building is an excellent example of the Romanesque Revival in Kansas City. Specifically, St. John's exhibits stylistic influences from the Lombardy region of Europe. The seminary utilizes the surrounding landscape to highlight its design. The building occupies the north half of its original four-acre site and features character-defining features of the style, including round arches, arcaded corbel tables, simple massing, asymmetrical plan, red brick exterior, and red clay tile roof. The Diocese of Kansas City constructed St. John's in 1931 as a dedicated building in which to conduct seminary training as well as parochial secondary education to area students. This latter function continued throughout the school's fifty-two years, as the seminary function ceased in 1957. St. John's High School and Seminary also meets the requirements for Criteria Consideration A, as its significance derives from its architecture rather than its religious affiliations.

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**Geographical Data**

**Verbal Boundary Description:**

St. John's High School and Seminary is located on a 10.9-acre rectangular parcel bound by East 72<sup>nd</sup> Street on the north, Brooklyn Avenue on the east, East 73<sup>rd</sup> Street on the south, and property boundaries with adjacent parcels on the west. The Jackson County Assessor describes the nominated property as follows: Marlborough Heights --- Lots 181 & 184 & 189 & 190 & Vac Euclid Ave Adj Sd Lots & Marlborough Heights Terrace Lots 1-13 (Parcel #47-640-07-29-00-0-00-000).

**Boundary Justification:**

The boundary encompasses the land historically and currently associated with the St. John's High School and Seminary complex.

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**Boundary Map.** Base map from the City of Kansas City, Missouri, parcel viewer (<https://maps.kcmo.org/apps/parcelviewer/>).



Point	Latitude	Longitude
A	38.996377	-94.561672
B	38.994651	-94.561787
C	38.994759	-94.564553
D	38.996495	-94.564423



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**Photo Map.** Source: Base map from Google Earth, 2020.





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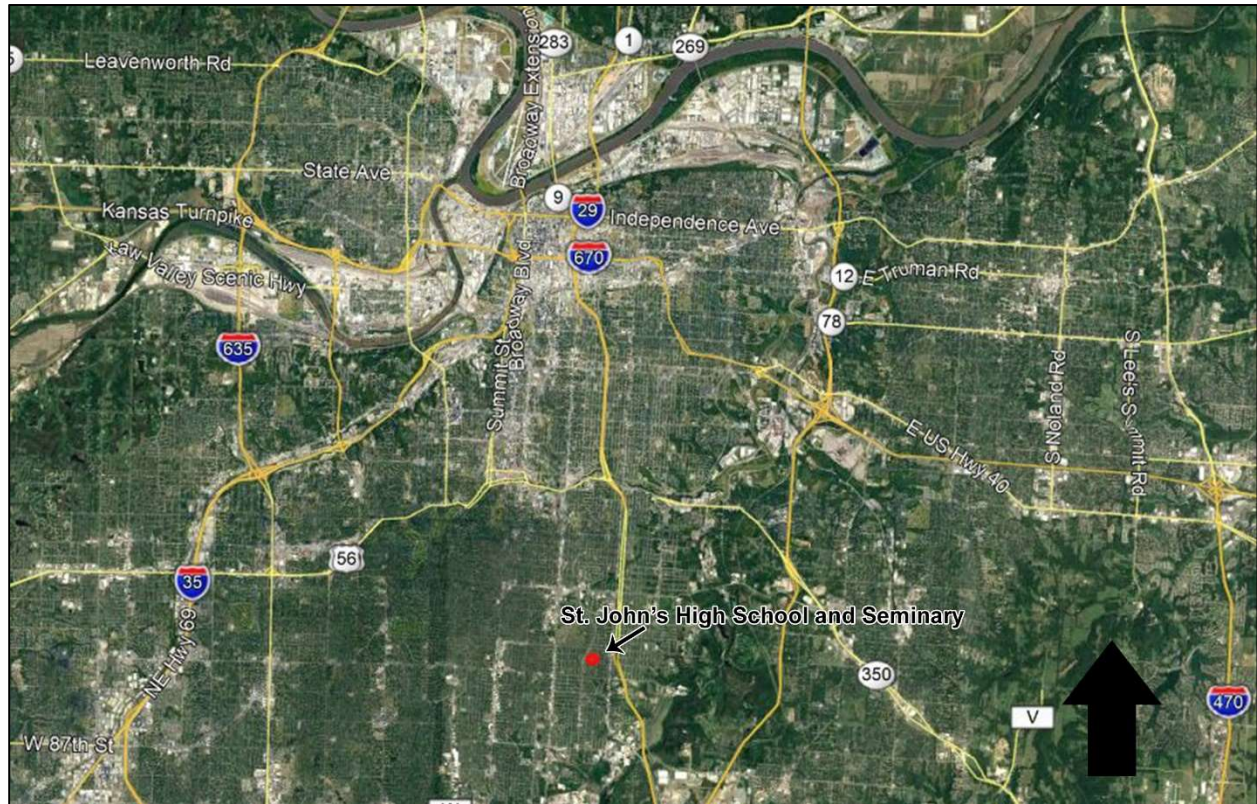
Jackson County, Missouri

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**Figure 1.** Location Map. *Source: Google Earth, 2020.*



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**Figure 2.** Contextual map with boundary outlined. *Source: Google Maps, 2020.*





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**Figure 3.** District Map. Contributing (C) and non-contributing (NC) resources identified. *Source: Google Earth.*



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**Figure 4.** Site map, showing historic lot lines. *Source: Base map from the Jackson County, Missouri Parcel Viewer.*



■ ■ ■ ■ Nominated district boundary, in place by 1959

— Original 1927 purchase

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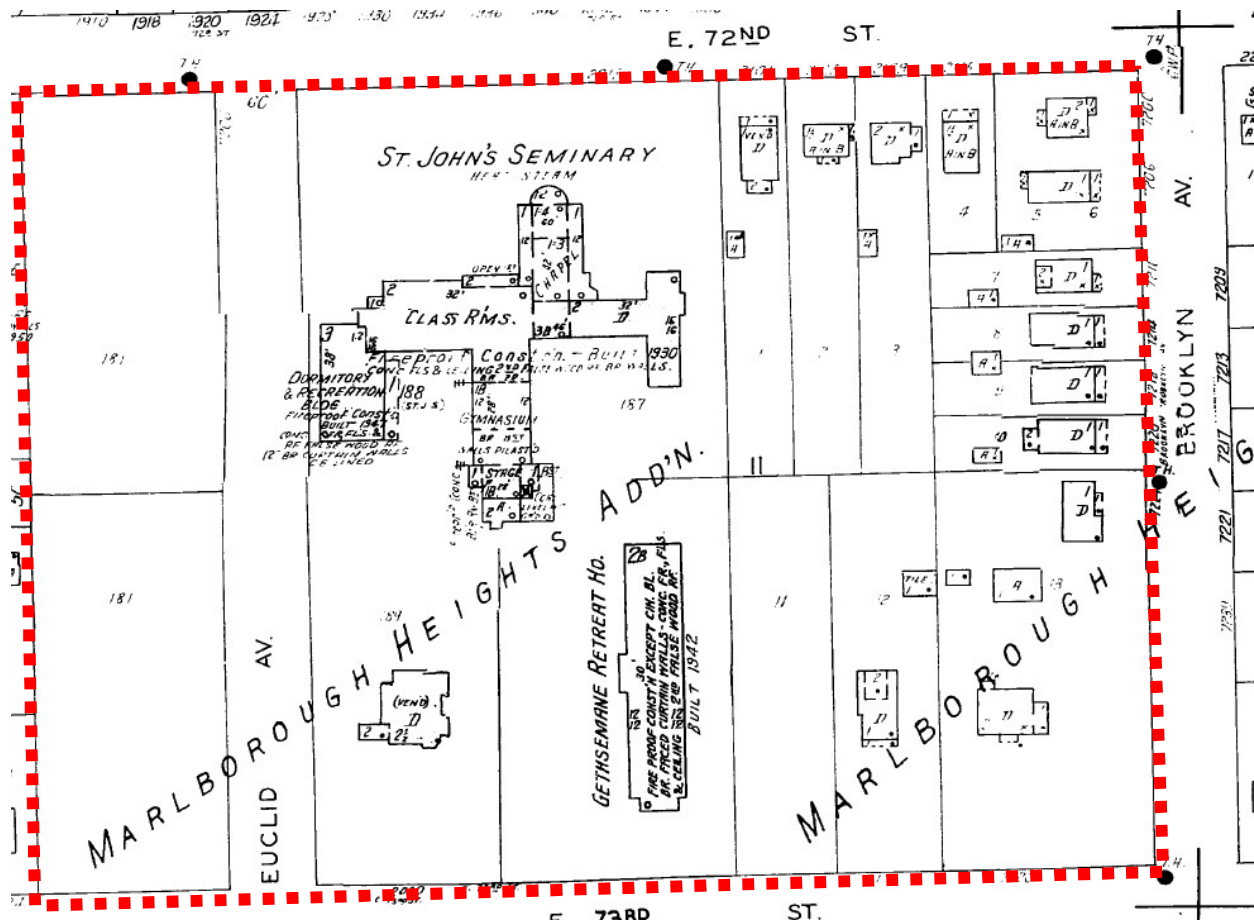
Jackson County, Missouri

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**Figure 5.** Snippet of the 1951 Sanborn, showing St. John's campus as the immediate environs. The dashed line depicts the nominated boundary. *Source:* Insurance Maps of Kansas City, Missouri, 1909-1951, Vol. 9 (New York: Sanborn Map Company 1930, republished May 1950), sheet 1111.





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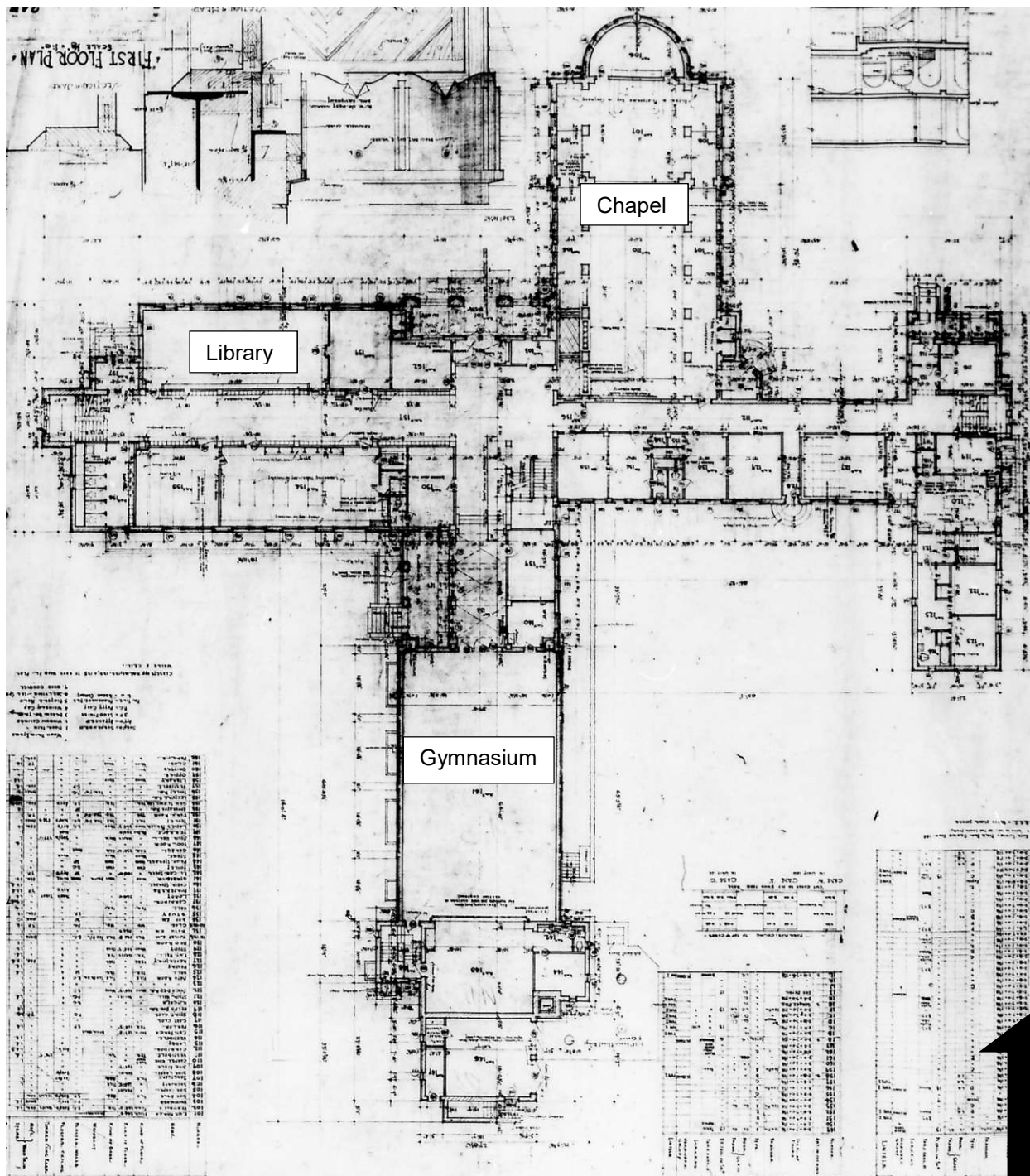
Jackson County, Missouri

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**Figure 6.** High School and Seminary Plan, first floor, 1930. *Source: Carroll, Maurice and O'Meara & Hills Saint John's Seminary, original plans. March 1930.*



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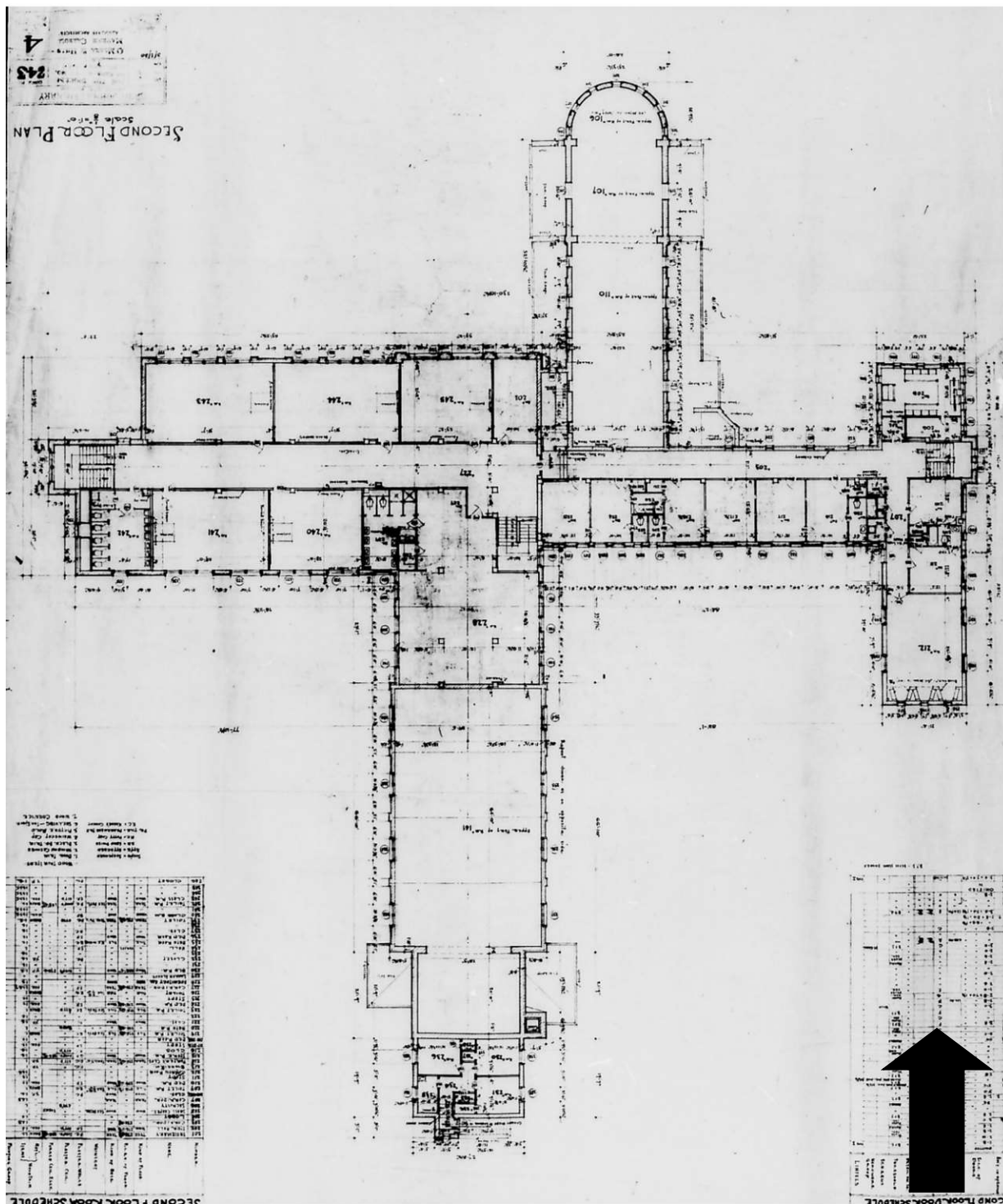
Jackson County, Missouri

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**Figure 7.** High School and Seminary Plan, second floor, 1930. *Source: Carroll, Maurice and O'Meara & Hills Saint John's Seminary, original plans. March 1930.*



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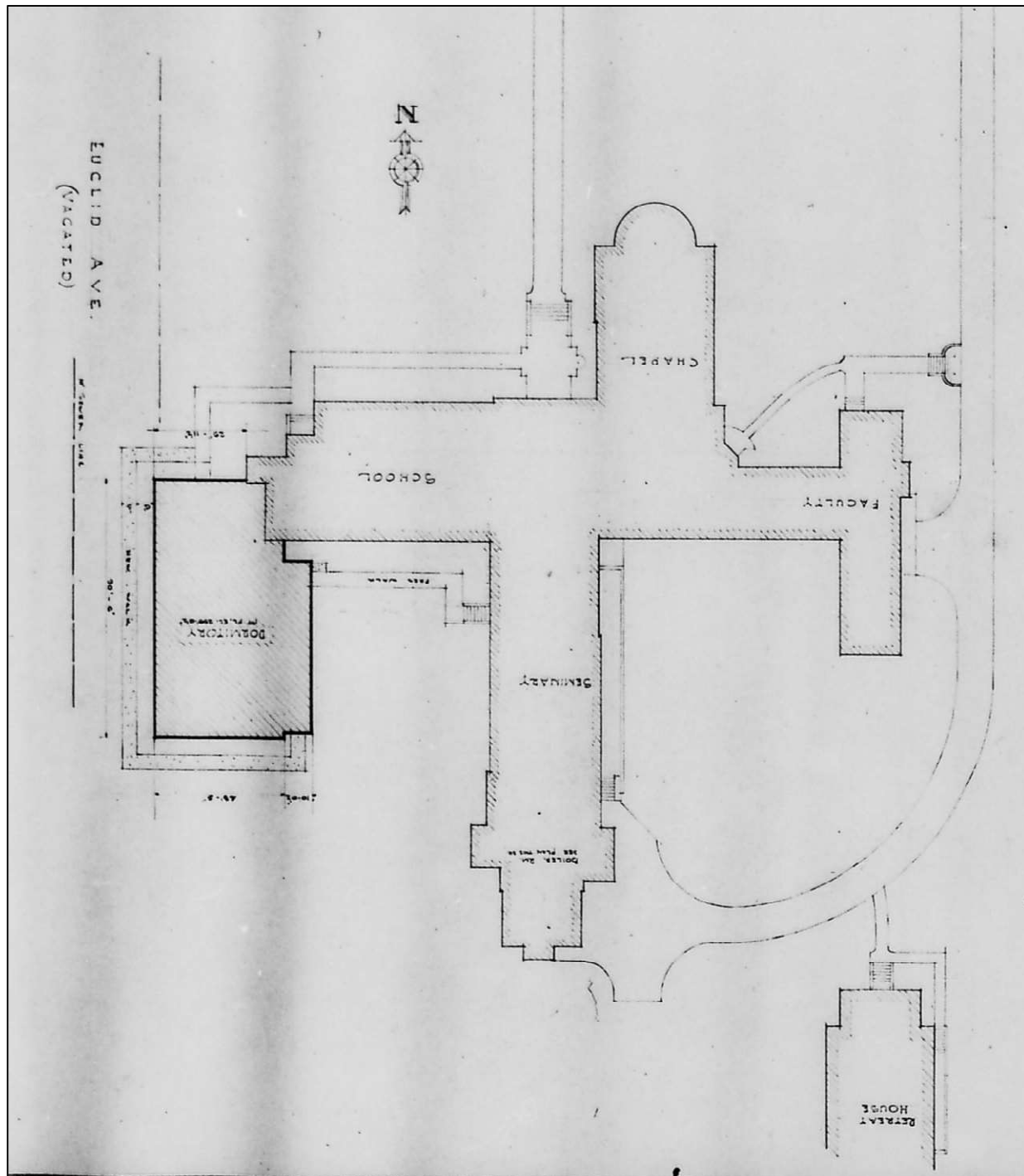
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N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

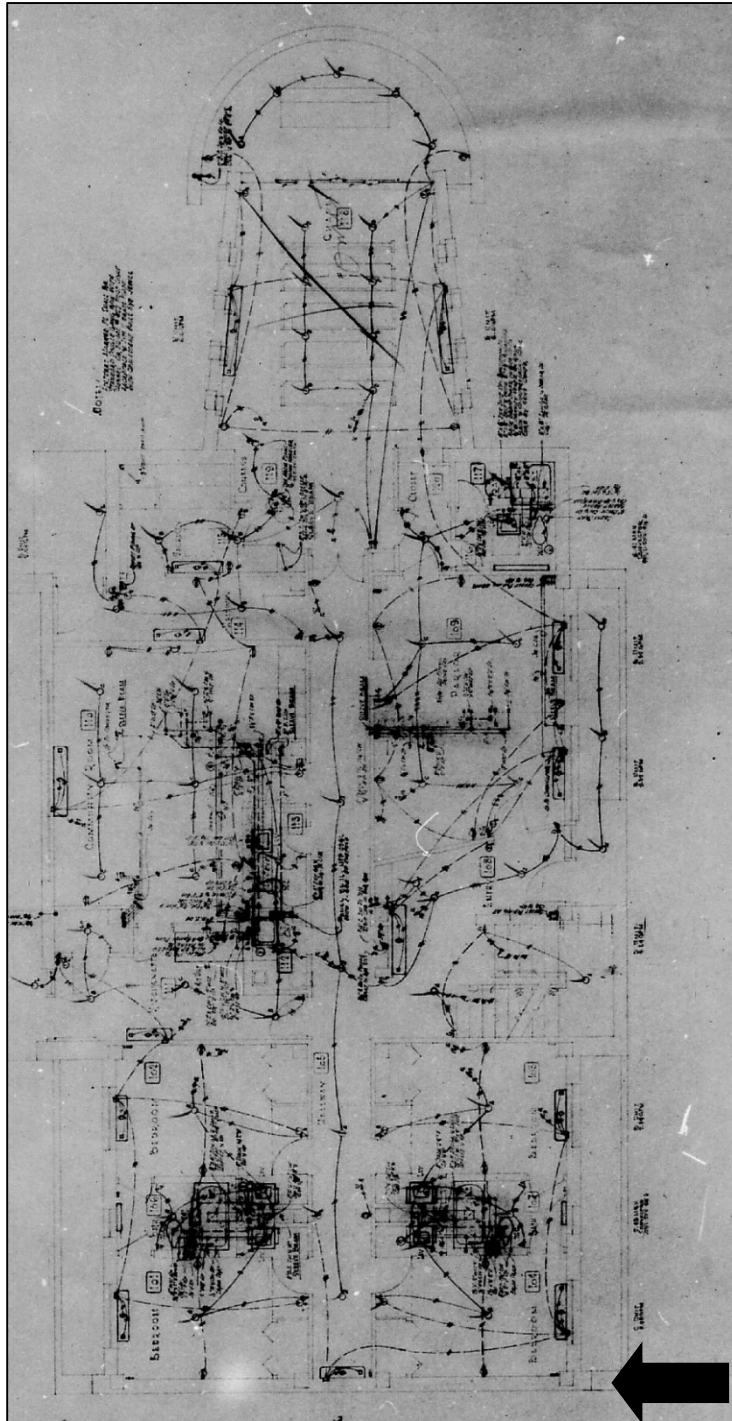
**Figure 8.** High School and Seminary Site Plan. Completed in association with addition planning, 1946. Source: Shaughnessy, Joseph B., *Addition to St. John's Seminary, original plans. 1946.* On file, State Historical Society of Missouri.





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**Figure 9.** Sisters' House plans, first floor, 1957. The chapel noted on the plan was never constructed. Source: Shaughnessy, Bower, and Grimaldi. *Sisters House, original plans*. June 1957. On file, State Historical Society of Missouri.



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**Figure 10.** High School and Seminary under construction, 1930. *Source: Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.*



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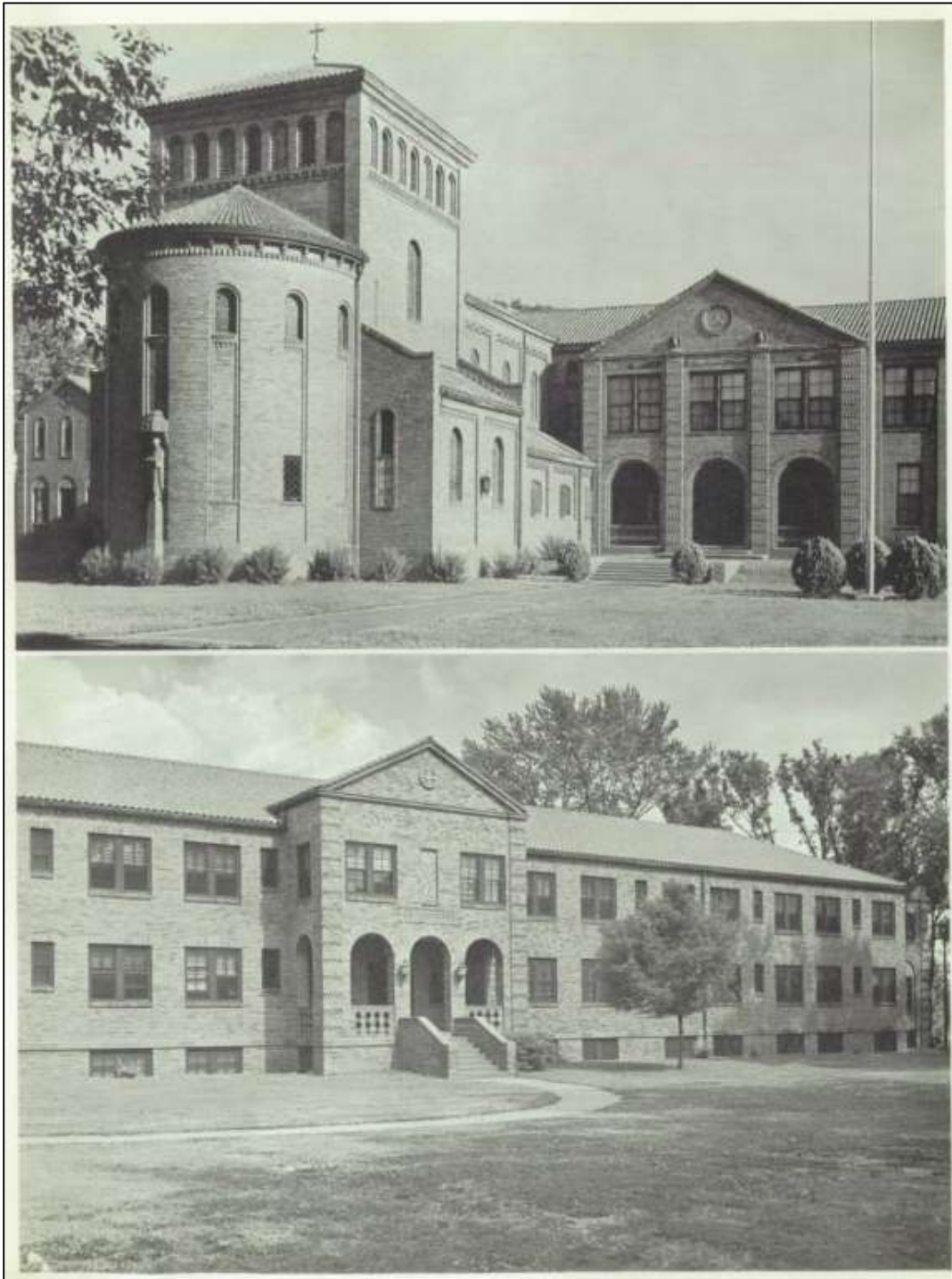
Jackson County, Missouri

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**Figure 11.** High School and Seminary (top) and Gethsemane Retreat House (bottom), c. 1965.  
*Source: St. John's Seminary Yearbook, 1965.*



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**Figure 12.** Gymnasium, c. 1966. *Source: St. John's Seminary Yearbook, 1966.*





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**Figure 13.** Chapel and gymnasium/auditorium, High School and Seminary Building. *Source: Brad Finch, 2020.*



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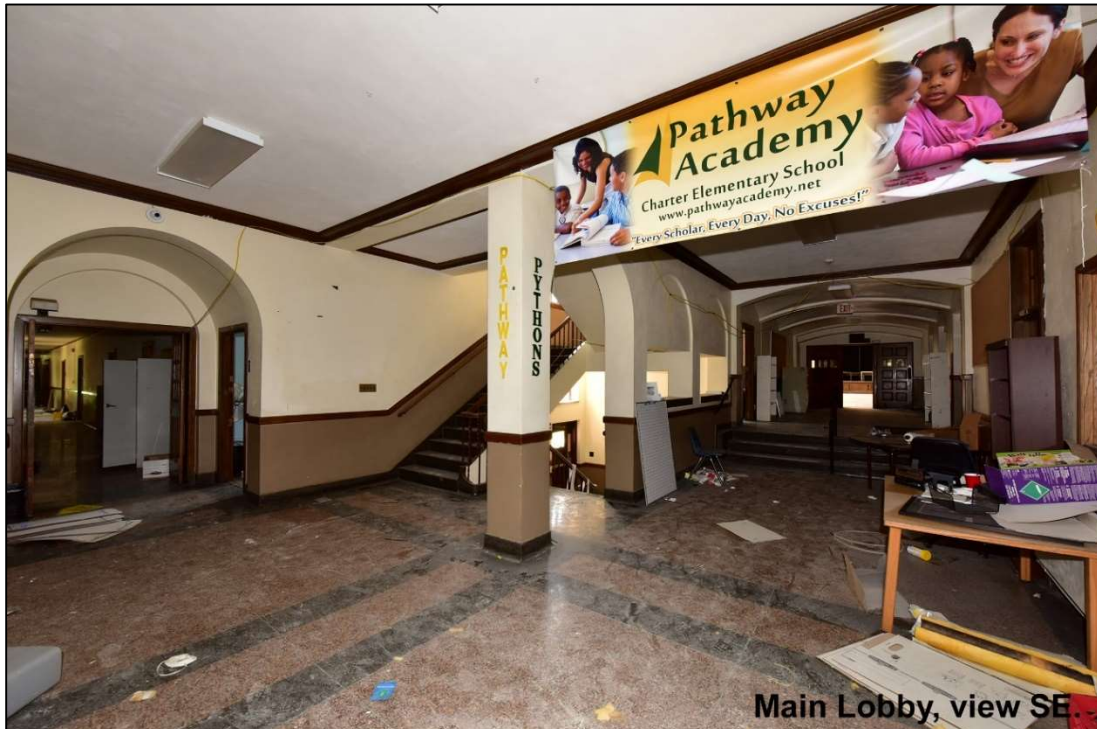
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**Figure 14.** Typical High School and Seminary Building finishes. *Source: Brad Finch, 2020.*





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County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

**Figure 15.** High School and Seminary Building primary entrances. *Source: Brad Finch, 2020.*



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St. John's High School and Seminary

Name of Property

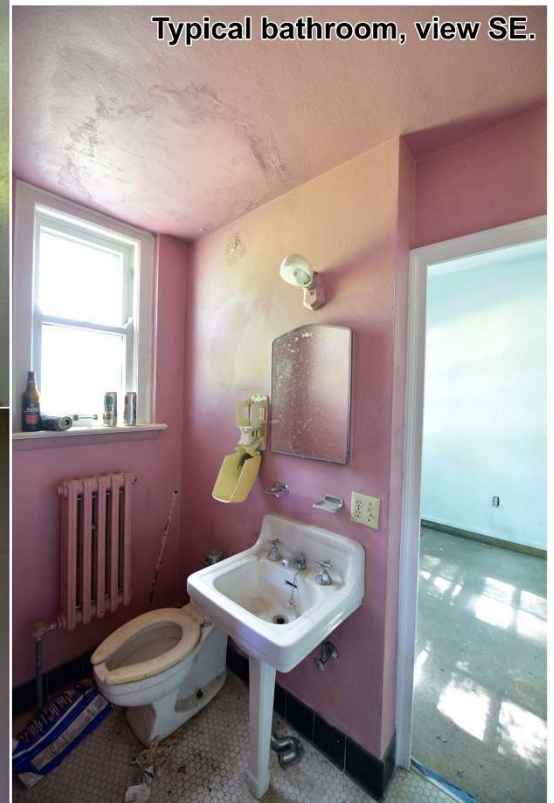
Jackson County, Missouri

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

**Figure 16.** Typical Gethsemane Retreat House finishes. *Source: Brad Finch, 2020.*





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St. John's High School and Seminary

Name of Property

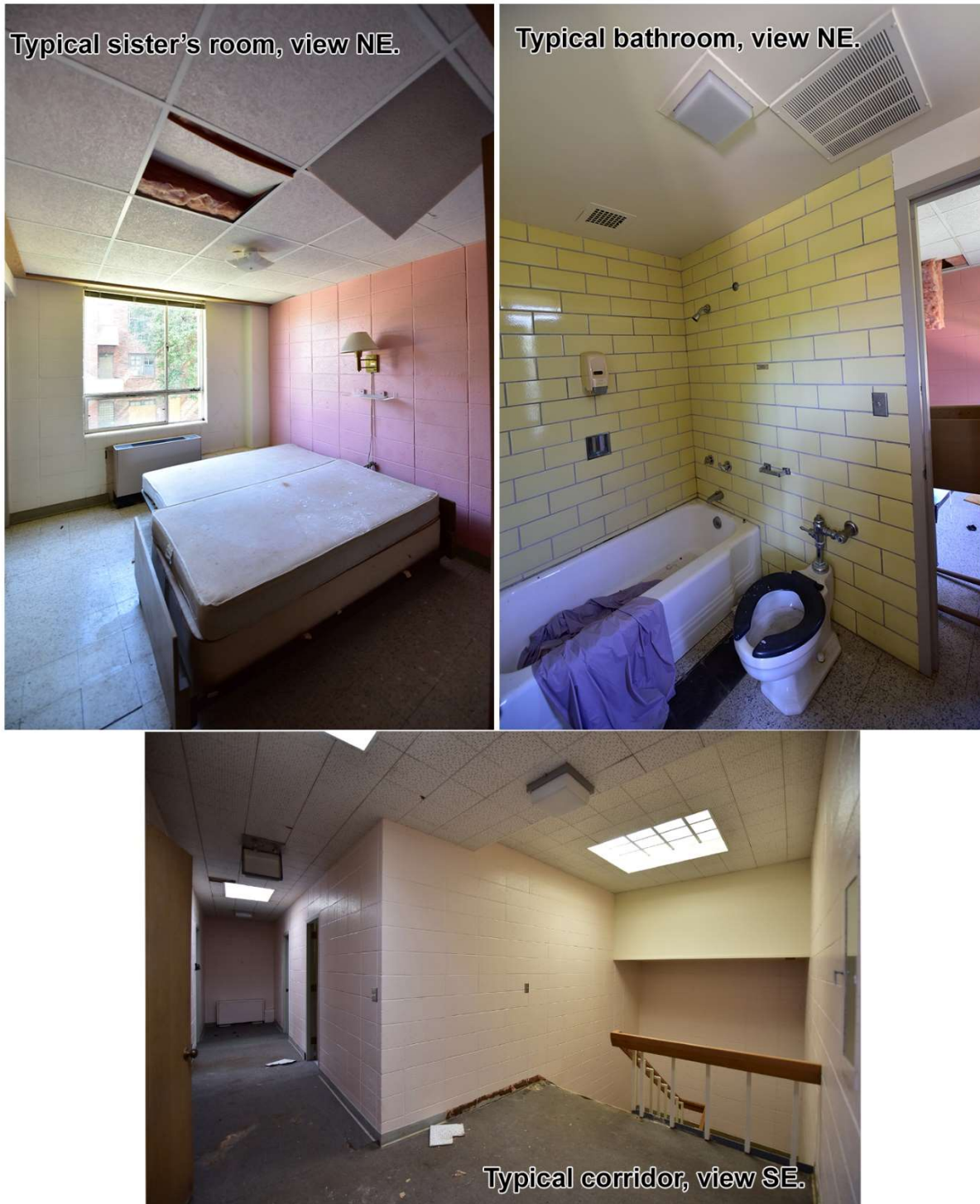
Jackson County, Missouri

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

**Figure 17.** Typical Sisters' House finishes. *Source: Brad Finch, 2020.*



**Figure 18.** Gymnasium playing court. *Source: Brad Finch, 2020.*

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St. John's High School and Seminary

Name of Property

Jackson County, Missouri

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)





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St. John's High School and Seminary

Name of Property

Jackson County, Missouri

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

**Figure 19.** Union Passenger Depot, Providence, Rhode Island, undated. *Source: Wikimedia Commons.*



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St. John's High School and Seminary

Name of Property

Jackson County, Missouri

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

**Figure 20.** Woodland School (top) and Willard School (bottom). *Source: Brad Finch, 2011.*



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St. John's High School and Seminary

Name of Property

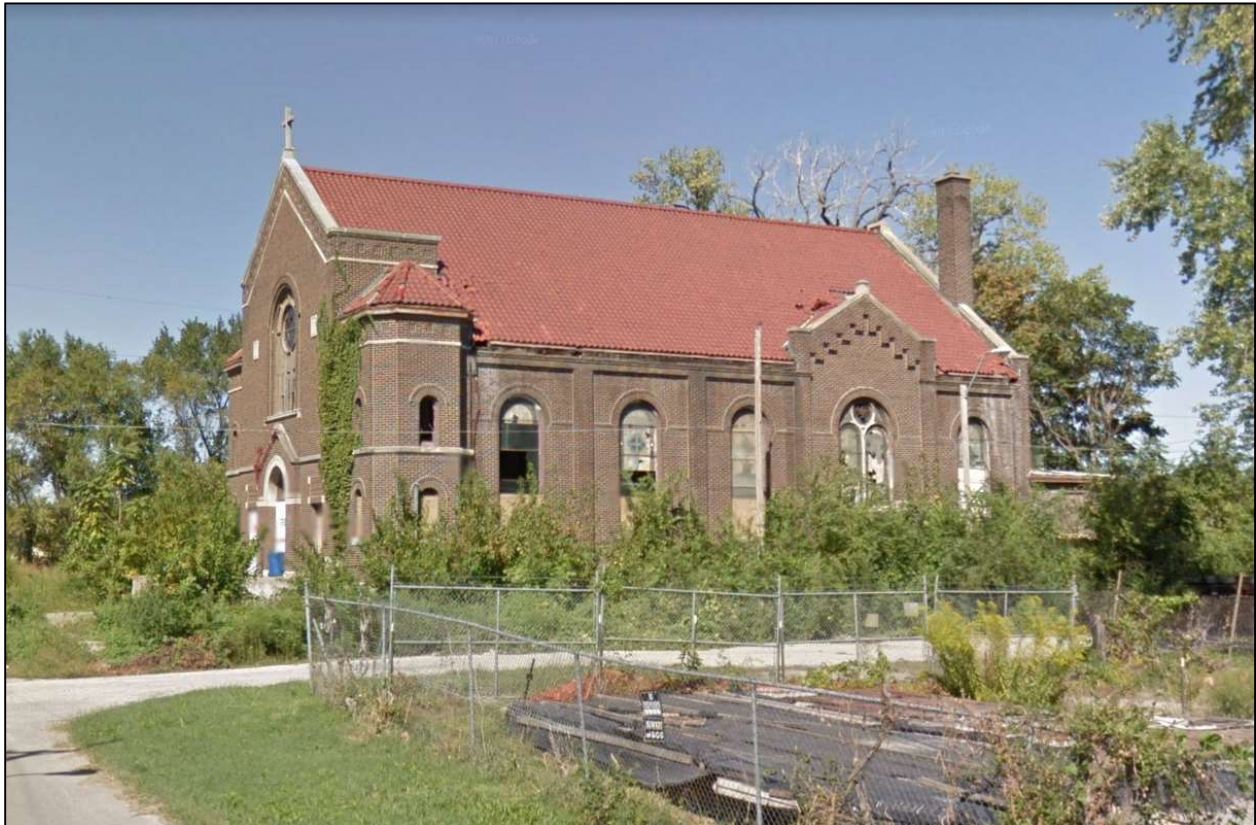
Jackson County, Missouri

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

**Figure 21.** The former St. Francis Seraph Catholic Church, looking NE. *Source: Google Streetview, 2014.*





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St. John's High School and Seminary

Name of Property

Jackson County, Missouri

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

**Figure 22.** Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church at the southwest corner of Bellefontaine Avenue and 39<sup>th</sup> Street in 1993. *Source: Historic Kansas City Churches Survey, JA-AH-032-034.*



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St. John's High School and Seminary

Name of Property

Jackson County, Missouri

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

**Figure 23.** Benedictine Sanctuary of Perpetual Adoration in 1993, looking south from Meyer Blvd (top); aerial image below shows the building within its landscape. *Sources: Historic Kansas City Churches Survey, JA-AH-032-094 & Google Earth, 2020.*



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St. John's High School and Seminary

Name of Property

Jackson County, Missouri

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

**Figure 24.** St. George Church & Rectory, St. Louis County, Missouri. O'Meara & Hills Architects. *Source: O'Meara & Hills, Catholic Churches and Institutions, 20-21.*

