

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received JAN 4 1985

date entered JAN 1 1985

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Manresa House of Retreats; Jefferson College

and/or common same

**2. Location**

street & number La. Hwy. 44 @ 2 miles south of Convent N/A not for publication

city, town Convent -X vicinity of

state LA code 22 county St. James Parish code 093

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	N/A in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	N/A being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Manresa House of Retreats

street & number Rev. Thomas J. Naughton, S.J., Director 504-562-3596

city, town Convent -X vicinity of state LA 70723

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. St. James Parish Courthouse

street & number P. O. Box 63 River Road (no specific address)

city, town Convent state LA 70723

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title LA Historic Sites Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1984  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records LA State Historic Preservation Office

city, town Baton Rouge state LA

# 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date <u>      N/A      </u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

Manresa is a collegiate complex featuring the Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, and Georgian Revival styles. The contributing elements range in date from 1836 to 1922. The complex is located on the east bank of the Mississippi River and has a semi-formal garden setting. Despite a number of architectural changes, Manresa easily retains its National Register eligibility.

Manresa was chartered in 1831 as the College of Jefferson and the first buildings were completed two years later. In 1836 the present twin gate houses and the president's home (now Ignatius House) were added (see sketch map). Presumably the cook house also dates from about 1836 because it was built as a dependency of the president's home. In 1842 a fire destroyed much of the campus, leaving only the gate houses, the president's home and the cook house dependency. The present main building was constructed in 1842 along with numerous other collegiate structures. A new campus rose from the ashes, but of this second group of buildings, only the main building survives.

In 1859 Valcour Aime purchased the college and constructed the Gothic Revival chapel (see plan) as a memorial to his deceased son and daughter. At that time the green in front of the main building was encompassed on three sides by a brick wall. Some of the wall remains (see map), but it has been lowered in various places and in the late nineteenth century the front portion was fitted with a delicate cast-iron balustrade top. The Greek Revival main gate is supposed to date from the late nineteenth century as well, but it looks older.

In the early twentieth century the Neo-Georgian dining hall was added as well as the present garage (originally a power plant). The water tower, the four small pump houses, the covered walkways and the library were all added in the 1950's (see map). The story and a half library was styled to resemble a Creole house (without galleries) and blends into the campus very well. The walkways deserve special mention because in contrast to the usual institutional covered walkways with galvanized metal, these are beautifully crafted with English bond brick piers and openwork ceilings with Creole style beaded beams.

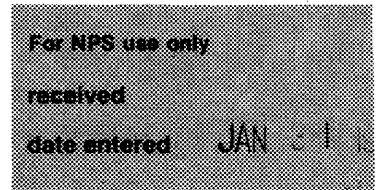
The present live oak garden grew up over the past 130 years. At the beginning of this century the river levee was moved to the south, which gave the complex considerable new front acreage. Almost immediately this new area was planted with an oak alley set on axis with the main building (see map). This complemented the pre-Civil War oak alley behind the main building. A third oak alley was planted slightly upriver of the complex in 1966. Live oaks also encompass the aforementioned front green (see map). This semi-formal oak setting atones somewhat for the diminishing rural character of the surrounding area.

Ignatius House (formerly the president's home, 1836)

Architecturally speaking, Ignatius House is a somewhat reduced version of a Great River Road plantation house. All the required features are there, but on a smaller scale. The English bond brick house has a central hall on the first and second stories and an unfinished attic. The plan is two rooms deep with a staircase set in the rear east corner. The five bay front gallery features colossal fluted columns of the Roman Doric order which are rather attenuated in proportion.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet MANRESA HOUSE COMPLEX

Item number 7

Page 2

7. Description (cont'd)

The house is surmounted by an entablature and a hip roof with two classical style dormers front and rear. The upstairs rooms open onto the gallery through jib doors. The front door on each story has a fanlight and side lights. Most of the interior window and door openings have molded board surrounds with molded corner blocks. Mantels are of the aedicule style. Alterations include the installation of bathrooms, closets and a kitchenette and the construction of a small rear porch.

Cook House (c.1836)

This English bond brick, two room structure has a large central chimney, a hip roof, and a front gallery with chamfered columns. The interior features beaded beams and wooden bars on the windows. The only major change in the house since construction has been the installation of an interior door.

Gate Houses (1836)

This pair of English bond brick, single room structures flank the main entrance to the campus. Each gate house has a low pyramidal roof and a three bay fluted Roman Doric gallery. In recent years the bottoms of the columns have rotted and been replaced with brick pedestals. However, the pedestals are thin and are painted white to match the columns. Hence the lines of each column are not seriously marred, and consequently the gate houses easily retain their Greek Revival identity.

Main Building (1842)

The main building is a three story English bond brick structure with a colossal Roman Doric order front gallery of twenty-one bays. The gallery culminates in a projecting five bay pedimented portico. There is also a curving bay each side of the portico which links it with the rest of the gallery. The third story is hidden by a massive entablature and parapet. Except for the front gallery, the main building is sparingly styled with only a cornice and parapet.

Originally the building was one room deep with a central hall and sets of large deep classrooms. Circulation took place via the front gallery. It is not known if the curving staircases at each end of the building are original or not. They look as if they could well date from the Greek Revival period, but their curious vertical board treatment (see photo) is most probably an early twentieth century modification. The present staircase in the central hall appears to have been heavily remodeled at the turn of the century. Again, it is not known if this stair is original to the main building or not.

In 1949 the interior was subdivided for dormitory bedrooms. A hallway was also cut through the middle of the building on each floor and an elevator was installed. These interior changes have not adversely affected the building's

CONTINUED

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only
received
Date entered JAN 1

Continuation sheet Manresa House Complex

Item number 7

Page 3

7. Description (cont'd)

architectural importance. The interiors were never elaborately styled and the impressive exterior articulation remains intact.

Chapel (1859)

The Gothic Revival stuccoed brick chapel has a cruciform plan and a double frame openwork ceiling. The entrance vestibule, nave, and transept arms are all styled with stepped buttresses which terminate in pinnacles. Most of the arches are of the Gothic two-center variety. The entrance vestibule has been fitted with a slight lean-to side extension. Other changes include the renovation of the altar, the reconstruction of the sacristy, and the removal of some of the interior plaster. In addition, the rooftop crenelation has been removed from the side bays. Despite these changes, all but one of the Gothic elements remain and the surviving Gothic features easily overwhelm the alterations. Therefore, the chapel still stands as a legitimate representative of the ecclesiastical Gothic Revival style.

Dining Hall (1911)

The neo-Georgian, or more specifically neo-Palladian Revival, dining hall is a two story stucco over masonry structure set on a raised basement. The walls are flat and planar with little relief. The only exceptions to this are the consoles set above the first story windows. The building is entered through an elegantly proportioned colossal Roman Doric pedimented portico. The front door is surmounted by a segmental pediment. As originally built, the dining hall had a central hall with an imperial staircase and a corridor running to each end of the building. In recent years one of the arms of the corridor has been incorporated into a large dining room. Also, the second story has been reworked for apartments. Other changes include the addition of a rear carport and the replacement of the rooftop balustrade with a parapet. In our opinion, these changes should be regarded as minor given the total scope of the building's original architectural fabric.

Contributing Elements

Of course, Ignatius House, the gate houses, the main building, the chapel, and the dining hall are listed as contributing elements. The cook house and the c.1922 brick garage are listed as contributing elements because they are historic support structures for the architecturally significant complex. The brick wall and the pre-1935 oaks are listed as contributing elements as well because they are part of the landscape development of the complex. Of course, the water tower, the walkways, the library and the pump houses are listed as non-contributing elements.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1836, 1842, 1859, 1911 **Builder/Architect** Builders: College of Jefferson (1836 & 1842 bldgs.); Valcour Aime (1859 chapel); St. Mary's Jefferson College (1911 dining hall)

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)** Criterion C

Manresa is significant in the area of architecture on the national, state, and local levels. Its main significance relates to the overall history of Greek Revival architecture both in Louisiana and the nation as a whole. Its secondary significance is concerned with individual examples of the Gothic Revival and Georgian Revival styles.

### Main Building

The main building at Manresa is significant in its own right on the national level because it represents the ultimate statement in a regional mode of the Greek Revival style. It is one of a limited number of important examples of a regional variation of the Greek Revival which is fundamentally different from the basic model (i.e., the temple form). Hence it represents an important facet of the American Greek Revival movement.

It is generally acknowledged that the galleried houses of the Gulf Coast region gave rise to the peripteral mode plantation houses of the mid-nineteenth century. They also gave rise to large linear institutional buildings with colossal colonnades such as the Pentagon Barracks (National Register) and the main building at Manresa. Structures of this ilk are shallow in plan, very wide, and utilize the gallery as a major circulation space. Although they resemble Greek stoas, they were probably not conceived as stoas when they were built. Structures like the main building at Manresa are peculiar to the Gulf South region. As Jessie Poesch noted in The Art of the Old South, they are "in essence, an adaptation to institutional life of the basic scheme developed for Louisiana plantation houses." The main building at Manresa is more developed than most other examples because it features a grand pedimented portico as the centerpiece of the colonnade. In most other examples the colonnade is flat and uninterrupted.

### Manresa Complex

Manresa is a worthy example of a Greek Revival complex within the context of Louisiana. There are probably over a thousand individual Greek Revival buildings in the state, but complexes in the Greek Revival style are very unusual. As far as the State Historic Preservation Office is aware, Manresa is one of only six. Of course, at one time there were many more. In fact, in the decades before the Civil War, the Greek Revival style was so predominant that it characterized much of the Louisiana landscape. Complexes such as Manresa offer rare glimpses of that landscape; indeed they offer the most complete picture possible of the architectural environment of that taste and time. Relevant features at Manresa include the five oldest buildings, the green, the classical gateway, the live oak setting, and the axial orientation of the complex.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

- Carriere, Oliver P. A Sketch of the History of Jefferson College and Manresa House of Retreats, Convent, Louisiana. Manresa House of Retreats, Inc., 1974. The bibliography at the end of this booklet lists numerous primary and secondary sources.
- Poesch, Jessie. The Art of the Old South: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture & the Products of Craftsmen, 1560-1860. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property @70acres

Quadrangle name Thibodaux, LA

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

### UTM References

A 

1	5	7	1	0	5	5	0	3	3	2	0	6	0	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

B 

1	5	7	1	0	3	0	0	3	3	1	9	3	2	5
Zone	Easting				Northing									

C 

1	5	7	1	0	0	5	0	3	3	1	9	3	5	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

D 

1	5	7	0	9	9	0	0	3	3	1	9	6	5	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

E 

Zone	Easting				Northing									

F 

Zone	Easting				Northing									

G 

Zone	Easting				Northing									

H 

Zone	Easting				Northing									

**Verbal boundary description and justification** Please refer to attached survey plat map. Boundaries were chosen to encompass all the land under single ownership. In this case, it is approximately the original extent of the holdings of the complex. In addition, the large acreage is necessary because it recognizes the complex's pastoral setting, which is a major element in

**List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries** the overall appearance of the resource.

state	code	county	code
N/A			

state	code	county	code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title National Register Staff ASSISTED BY OWNER

organization Division of Historic Preservation

organization State of Louisiana date October 1984

street & number P. O. Box 44247 telephone 504-922-0358

city or town Baton Rouge state LA 70804

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

Robert B. DeBlieux

title State Historic Preservation Officer date December 19, 1984

### For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the National Register

date 1-31-85

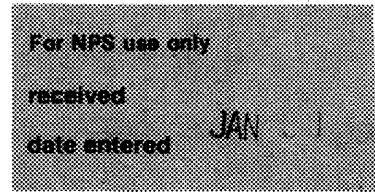
for  Keeper of the National Register

Attest: date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet Manresa House Complex      Item number    8      Page    2

8. Significance (cont'd)

Chapel

The chapel is significant on the state level as a rare antebellum example of the Gothic Revival style in ecclesiastical architecture. Despite the influence of the Ecclesiological movement in much of the country, it seems to have made little impact in Louisiana. As a result, the Manresa chapel is one of only eleven antebellum Gothic style churches in the state.

Dining Hall

The dining hall expands Manresa's scope as a neo-classical complex. It also has significance in its own right as the grandest early twentieth century building in St. James Parish. Its thirteen bay facade and colossal pedimented portico place it far above the shotgun houses, bungalows, and small stores which typify early twentieth century architecture in the parish.

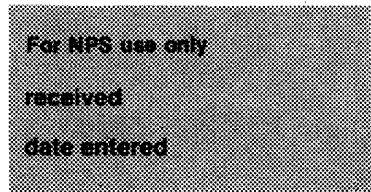
MANRESA CHRONOLOGY:

- Sept. 1, 1830      Constitution of "College of Jefferson" adopted by subscribers in St. James Parish.
- Feb. 28, 1831      "College of Jefferson" incorporated by Louisiana legislature.
- Feb. 1834      College of Jefferson opened its doors for registration.
- March 31, 1835      State legislature passed an act making a yearly appropriation for support of the college.
- March 6, 1842      Fire destroyed all the buildings except the president's home, the gate houses, and the cook house.
- 1845      State ceased its appropriations.
- Jan. 1, 1848      College sold by sheriff of St. James Parish to the Citizens Bank of New Orleans.
- 1848-52      College is closed and caretakers are placed in charge of the plant.
- Sept. 5, 1853      Citizens Bank sold college to Professor Louis Dufau.
- 1853-56      Professor Dufau operates "Louisiana College" on site of old "College of Jefferson."
- Dec. 1856      "Louisiana College" is forced to close and land and buildings are retroceded to Citizens Bank of New Orleans.

CONTINUED

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet Manresa House Complex

Item number 8

Page 3

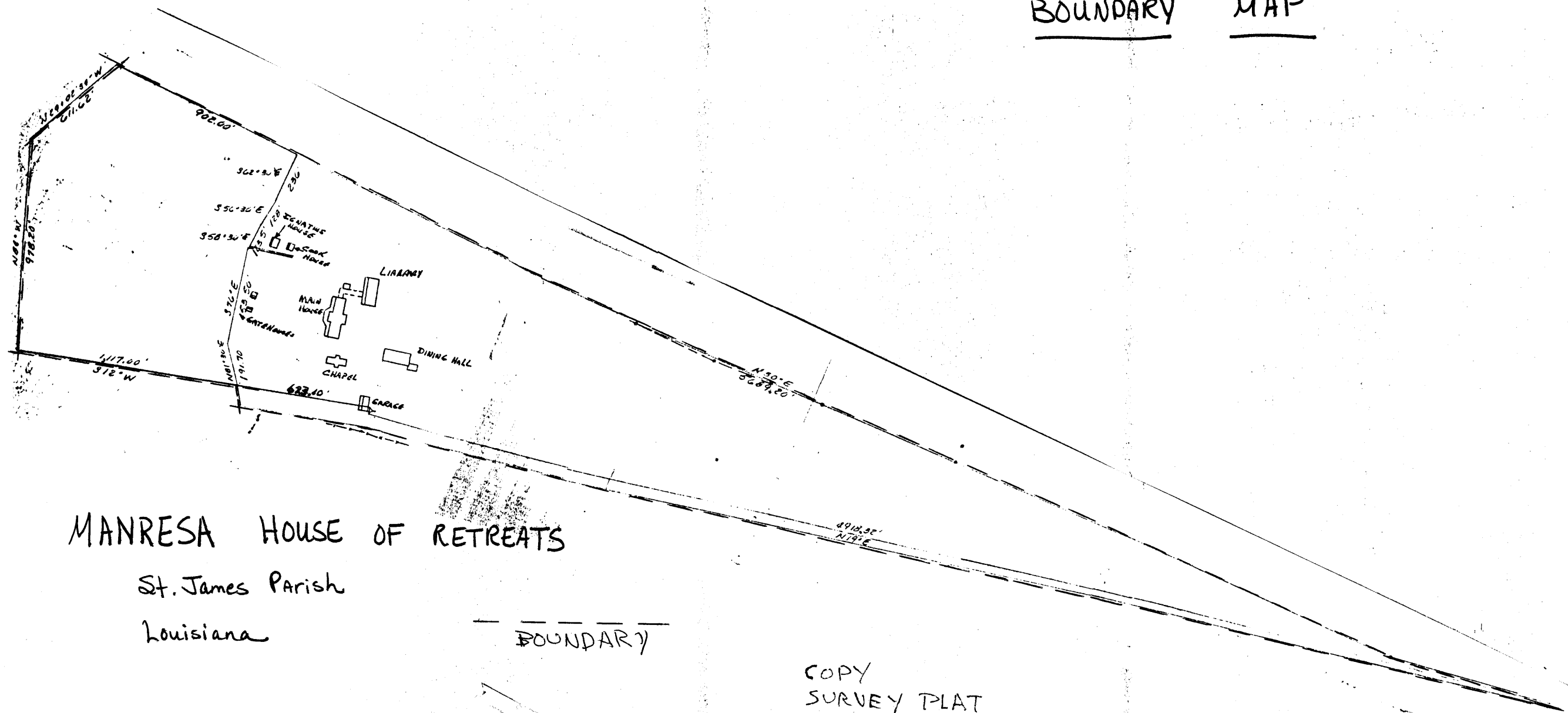
Manresa Chronology (continued)

- 1857-58            Caretakers in charge of grounds and buildings.
- May, 1859            Valcour Aime purchased the college from the Citizens Bank.
- Jan. 1, 1860            College reorganized and named "Jefferson College."
- Jan. 3, 1860            By Act of Donation Valcour Aime donated the college to a corporation known as Jefferson College.
- March 5, 1861            "Jefferson College" incorporated by Louisiana legislature. Valcour Aime controlled the corporation by virtue of the provisions of a "contract made between the shareholders of the College and Mr. Aime, the donor of said College."
- 1862-64            College is closed. Occupied and used as barracks by Federal troops.
- May 6, 1864            Act of Donation: Valcour Aime to the Marist Fathers. Act of Sale passed. "Jefferson College" transferred to Marist Fathers. U. S. government withdrew the troops.
- July 12, 1864            "Jefferson College" re-established by Marist Fathers and named St. Mary's Jefferson College."
- 1864-1927            Marist Fathers operate "St. Mary's Jefferson College."
- June 1927            Jefferson College closes.
- 1927-30            Caretakers in charge of grounds and buildings.
- Jan. 9, 1931            Jesuit Fathers of New Orleans purchased "Jefferson College." Renamed "Manresa House of Retreats."
- Feb. 26-  
March 2, 1931            First retreat held at Manresa under the direction of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus.



BOUNDARY

MAP

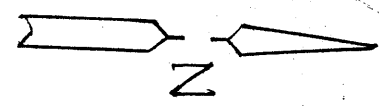


# MANRESA HOUSE OF RETREATS

St. James Parish

Louisiana

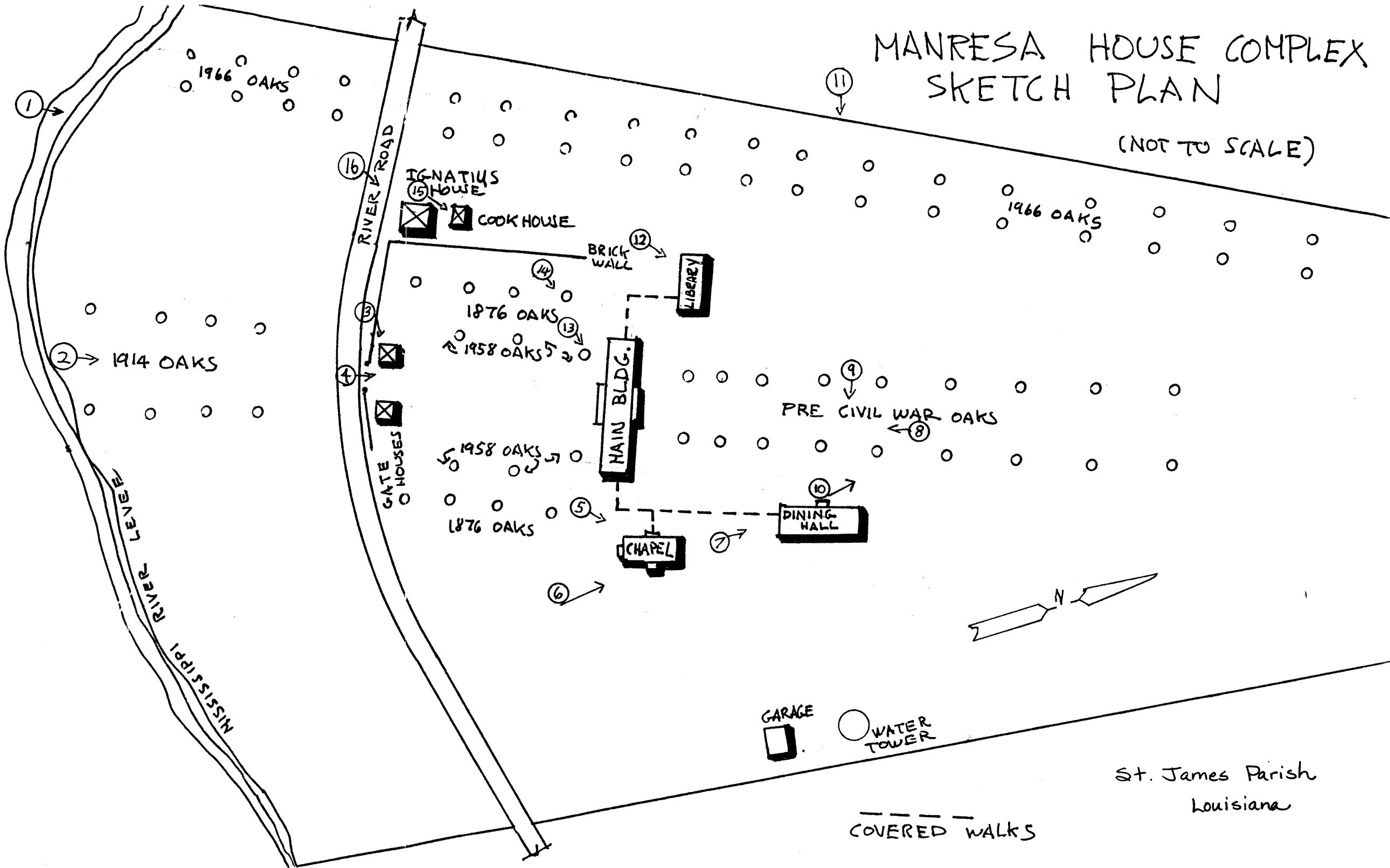
BOUNDARY



COPY  
SURVEY PLAT  
MAP PREPARED  
1984

# MANRESA HOUSE COMPLEX SKETCH PLAN

(NOT TO SCALE)



---  
COVERED WALKS

St. James Parish  
Louisiana