

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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Convent de Bon Secours  
other names \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 4101 Yuma Street, N.W.  not for publication  
city or town Washington, D.C.  vicinity  
state District of Columbia code DC county \_\_\_\_\_ code \_\_\_\_\_ zip code 20016

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  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  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments).

[Signature] ASAPD 10/16/04  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
DC Historic Preservation Office  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

- I hereby certify that this property is:
- entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.
  - determined eligible for the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.
  - Determined not eligible for the National Register.
  - removed from the National Register.
  - other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

[Signature] \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper  
Edson Beall 11/19/04  
Date of Action

Convent de Bon Secours  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)  
  
N/A

**number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**  
  
0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: Church-related residence

RELIGION: Church-related residence

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Italianate

foundation Brick  
walls Brick  
roof Green tile  
other

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

**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 pattern of our history.
- B** Property 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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

**Area of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture  
Religion  
Architecture

**Period of Significance**

1927-1954 (50 years from the present)

**Significant Dates**

1927; 1966

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

Maurice Moore

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

**Previous documentation on files (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 # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

D.C. Historic Preservation Office

Bon Secours  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 43,200 square feet

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	1 8	3 1 9 6 8 6	4 3 1 2 9 0 3	3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2				4			

See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Paul K. Williams  
Organization Kelsey & Associates, Inc. date May 2003  
street & number 1605 7<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W. telephone (202) 462-3389  
city or town Washington, D.C. state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code 20001

## Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

### Continuation Sheets

### Maps

- X A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- X A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

### Photographs

- X Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

### Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

## Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO)

name Heights Foundation, Inc.  
street & number Murry Hill Station telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town New York state New York zip code 10156

**Paperwork Reduction 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. 470 et. seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Convent de Bon Secours

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

Section 7 Page 1

## Description Summary:

Bon Secours Convent, at 4101 Yuma Street, N.W., is located on an approximately one-acre tract of land just west of Tenley Circle in the Tenleytown neighborhood of northwest Washington. Several religious/institutional buildings surround the convent: to the east of Bon Secours, facing Tenley Circle, sits St. Ann's Catholic Church; across Yuma Street to the south of the Convent is the former Immaculata High School for Girls (now the American University Tenley Campus building); and to the north, Janney Elementary School abuts the rear of the convent property. A row of single-family dwellings is located west of the convent.

The convent building itself is set back from the street on a terraced front lawn. It is a large 2-1/2-story brick building designed in an Italianate style of architecture derived from the early Romanesque architecture of Lombardy in northern Italy, together with vernacular American influences. The building has an L-shaped footprint with a basilican-plan chapel forming the longer leg of the L and the two-story convent, the shorter leg. The building is set upon a raised limestone foundation, features brick walls clad with variegated orange-tan tapestry brick, and is covered with a hipped roof, sheathed with variegated green terra cotta tile, with gently flared eaves and centrally placed gable dormers on the main block. Double-story, round-arched windows on both the convent and chapel sections of the building, and a tall entry tower with arched openings define the building and give Bon Secours its early Romanesque character.

## General Description:

### Exterior Description:

#### Main Block:

The Convent de Bon Secours consists of two principal parts: the two-story main block of the building, and the four-bay deep, chapel wing, joined by the tall and slender bell tower. Set upon a slightly raised granite ashlar foundation on the façade and a brick foundation with a granite waterable on the rear, the main block of the building is divided into five symmetrical bays with the entry on center, tall and narrow paired arched windows on the first floor and rectangular, flat-headed windows on the second floor. The main entry features an engaged, arched Lombard portico of limestone, supported by full columns with composite cushion capitals, and supporting a pedimented roof with green terra cotta tiles matching that of the main roof. The face of the portico is smooth ashlar, but the soffit is embellished with carved rosettes set in a double row of square panels, and the capitals are embellished with Latin crosses and foliate carving. The wood

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Convent de Bon Secours

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

Section 7 Page 2

entry doors display similar recessed square panels. Above the door lintel, a transom light is covered with wood boards.

To either side of the main entry, pairs of round-arched 8-light casement windows with four-light transoms with brick surrounds are set within larger, untrimmed, recessed blind arches. Each pair of windows is separated by a round limestone colonnette with a plain cushion capital supporting a short brick pier and the brick window surrounds. The tympanum area above the paired arches and inside the larger, blind arch is faced in smooth stucco.

The 8/8 wood windows on the second floor are set within plain openings with simple brick surrounds and limestone sills. Two limestone shield bas reliefs, carved with Latin crosses, sit to either side of the central window. Directly above the second floor windows, runs a continuous frieze of tapestry brick with alternating panels of limestone symmetrically arranged above the window openings. The frieze board is defined by a limestone beltcourse at the bottom and a limestone cornice with dentils above. The exposed rafter ends of the overhanging roof have S-shaped profiles. A gable dormer, with sides and roof sheathed in green tile, is located on center of the main slope of the tiled roof, directly above the central window of the second floor.

The raised basement level features single-pan, rectangular windows in each bay, protected with iron bars.

The north (rear) elevation of the main block presents a more asymmetrical arrangement than the five-bay front elevation. Like the front, this elevation is divided into five bays, but here the bays are unequal. The two west end bays mirror those on the front with round-arched recessed panels on the first floor holding pairs of round-arched windows with multi-pane sash and rectangular 8/8 windows on the second floor. The three eastern bays, however, consist on the first floor, of three arched openings leading to an open, recessed porch. Stretcher bricks laid in a checkerboard pattern serve as a balustrade between the brick arches. Above the porch, the second story windows contain pairs of round-arched, six-light casement windows, rather than the typical 8/8 rectangular window of the front elevation. The round-arched openings above the porch below are unified by a continuous limestone sill, and are almost evenly spaced to suggest a small arcade. A single, gable dormer is centrally placed on the roof slope of this elevation, as is a basement entry.

A projecting one-story wing extends the west end of the main block by a single bay. The façade treatment of this wing is similar to the main block, with the bay treated as a wider arch in which there is a slightly recessed stucco filled with a six-light roundel set above a pair of 6/6 rectangular sash windows. The arch rests on the granite water table.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Convent de Bon Secours

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

Section 7 Page 3

The east elevation of the main block is eight bays deep, each bay identical in treatment to those on the front elevation, excluding the far north end bay. Here, rather than the typical, paired windows in round-arched openings on the first story and rectangular 8/8 windows above, there is an engaged pedimented arched entry leading to the open porch on the west end of the building. Approached by a flight of concrete steps, this entry features brick piers with limestone impost blocks and a plain limestone shield bas relief on center of the tympanum area. Also breaking the rhythm on this elevation is a single, small 8/8 light window on center of the first story.

The west elevation consists of the one-bay wing that extends the full width of the elevation on the first story before abutting the chapel wing of the building. A small, two-bay open, recessed porch is located towards the southernmost end abutting the chapel. Three evenly spaced dormers line this western slope of the roof above.

Except for a few window air conditioning units, mechanical louvers, replaced window sashes, grilles on the operable chapel windows, and electrical conduits for emergency lighting, there appear to be very few alterations to the original appearance of the building.

### Chapel Wing and Tower:

The chapel wing is a tall one-story, absidial space with the gable roof reaching the cornice line of the main block. This wing extends three bays deep and features an hexagonal apse on the west end. Each of the three bays is set within a recessed panel separated by brick pilasters and topped by blind arcading of small Lombard arches. In each of the three bays are tall multi-paned round-arched windows with continuous sidelights and operable sections at the base of each unit. In the apse, the panels to either side of the center panel are filled with brick, while the center panel features a semi-octagonal brick reliquary oriel with a corbelled brick base and terra cotta tile roof. The oriel itself has two lancet windows in the chamfered side walls.

At the juncture of the chapel and the main block is a tall and slender brick tower, about five feet square in plan and featuring an open belfry-like cap that appears to serve as a ventilation shaft. The base of the tower has a recessed panel with blind arcading that matches those of the chapel wing. Two limestone beltcourses surround the tower at the height of the cornice, while a projecting modillioned cornice serves as a base for the belfry well above the roofline. The belfry is pierced with a pair of arched openings, separated by colonettes. The tower is covered by a hipped roof with green terra cotta tiles.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Convent de Bon Secours

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

Section 8 Page 1

## Summary Statement of Significance:

The Convent of Bon Secours was erected in 1927-28 as the chapter house for the Washington, D.C. location of the Sisters of Bon Secours, an order dedicated to nursing in private homes. The Order, founded in France in 1824, spread to the United States in the 1880s, first establishing itself in Baltimore. The first nuns came to Washington during the typhoid epidemic of 1905 and provided much-needed service, particularly during the Spanish Flu pandemic after World War I. The convent first occupied the former rectory of the adjacent Saint Ann's Catholic Church, but eventually built the present building. The Convent of Bon Secours meets Criteria C of the National Register, with architecture as its area of significance for the following reason:

The Convent of Bon Secours represents a clear architectural expression of the building's purpose and function. The building was designed by Irish-born architect Maurice Moore in an Italian Villa style of architecture. And, while sharing little with the Modern movement that was blossoming at the time, the convent follows the Sullivan dictum that "form follows function." The main block, essentially a large foursquare house, provided residential quarters for the sisters, while the hemi-hexagonal west wing, unmistakably ecclesiastical in appearance, provided a private chapel for the sisters.

The Period of Significance for the Convent of Bon Secours extends from 1927-28 when the building was constructed until 1954, a date 50 years from the present. The convent ceased operation in 1966.

## Resource History and Historic Context:

### The Origins of the Order of Bon Secours

The sisters of Bon Secours means "good aide or assistance" and is translated as the Sisters of Good Help. At the time of its founding in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, France was in a state of political, social and religious upheaval that was already several centuries old. During that time, the general level of nursing fell far below that of earlier periods. Prior to the French Revolution (1789-1799), much of France's traditional structure had weakened. Belief in Christianity became unfashionable and the rhetoric that influenced much of the nation based on philosophic teachings by men such as Voltaire and Rousseau specifically excluded religious concepts. Religious houses were suppressed, and church property was transferred from ecclesiastical to civil use.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Convent de Bon Secours

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

Section 8 Page 2

Napoleon Bonaparte, who became First Consul of France in 1799, was anxious to restore internal peace to his country. In 1801, he opened negotiations for a concordat with Pope Pius VII. One of the most important and celebrated agreements in history, it assured peace to French Catholicism, in essence, by making it the official faith of France. The religious orders dispersed during the Revolution were reconstructed, and many new ones were founded. The civil constitution of the clergy—that had cost Louis XVI his head—was dissolved.

Women played a vital role in this work of religious restoration. The focus of most of the new and restored institutions was the instruction and education of youth. None was devoted exclusively to the care of the sick and all classes. Under the ministrations of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, the sick poor were cared for, but these sisters were not allowed to stay in the homes of sick overnight. For those other classes, there was no special provision made to minister spiritual help or nursing care.

In 1821, the wealthy Madame de Montale tried to organize a religious association specifically devoted to the sick of all classes in their homes. She gathered together a select group of young women chosen for their piety and nursing abilities, procuring for them a residence in the Rue de Bac in Paris. Despite an unsuccessful first start, the followers of Madame de Montale were dedicated to meeting this need. The group reassembled in a modest lodging in the Rue Cassette, considered the cradle of the future Bon Secours. These women placed themselves under the guidance of Josephine Potel, selected by the women as the most capable of directing the group according to the spirit of God. The group sought to be recognized as a religious community, making their appeal to Father Desjardins, vicar general of Paris.

On January 19, 1824, Father Desjardins provided the statutes that were to rule the new congregation. The professional ceremony for the first twelve women was held on January 24, 1824, in the Lady Chapel of St. Sulpice in Paris. The archbishop placed the newly professed sisters under the invocation of Our Lady of Help Christians, with the title of the Sisters of Bon Secours. The 25-year-old Josephine Potel, who received the name of Sister Marie Joseph, was appointed the first superior general by the archbishop.

Three words characterized the beginnings of Bon Secours: humility, poverty, and charity. Sometimes the sisters lacked the barest necessities of life, and their food was of the plainest. According to the *Abridged History of the Sisters of Bon Secours*, “when a sister came home, she took off her dress and gave it to another sister who was going to take her turn.”

The sisters' lives of dedicated service soon bore fruit; as their work became known, they received requests for their services from many parts of Paris and outlying towns. For the remainder of the 1830s and until the Revolution of 1848, the sisters continued their work and

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Convent de Bon Secours

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

Section 8 Page 3

established new foundations. During the Revolution of 1848, they cared for the wounded in the streets of Paris and in the former palace of the exiled king, Louis Philippe. The first foundation made outside of France was in Dublin, Ireland on May 6, 1861. In June 1875, the congregation received a Definitive Decree of Approbation from Pope Pius IX. Along with this recognition came greater stability for the congregation.

### Nursing in America and the Arrival of Bon Secours to Baltimore, 1881

According to *Nutting and Dock's History of Nursing* (Putnam, 1935), the organized system of nursing now prevailing in the United States dates from 1871. The New England Hospital for Women and Children was reorganized in 1872 and has been recognized as the first modern school of nursing in America. It was from that school that Linda Richards, known as the first trained nurse in the United States, received her certificate in 1873.

That same year, three other important training schools were established: Bellevue Hospital in New York, New Haven Hospital in Connecticut, and Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, Massachusetts. Over the course of the next decade, several nursing schools were organized in all parts of the United States. In 1880, one year prior to the arrival of Bon Secours, there were 15 trained schools in America with a total of 323 pupils. Still, pioneer nurses found themselves contending with dirt and disorder, vermin and infection, coarseness and vulgarity, and immorality.

In those days, the Sisters of Bon Secours could not be called professionally trained nurses. Nursing instruction and a practical training were given to them at the motherhouse in Paris. The young sisters accompanied experienced sisters on their excursions to care for the sick and in this way acquired clinical practice under supervision. The sisters also obtained clinical experience by taking care of sick sisters in the infirmary. This experience was further supplemented by helpful advice and instruction given by the attending physicians. In the settings of both private homes and the convent, individual tutoring thus became very meaningful and personal.

The first two accredited schools of nursing in Baltimore were opened in the year 1889—eight years after the Sisters of Bon Secours began their work in the United States. One of these was at the University Hospital and the other at the Johns Hopkins Hospital, which had just opened that year. After the establishment of these pioneer schools of nursing in Baltimore, others followed in quick succession, among them the schools of the three Catholic hospitals of the city: St. Agnes (1898); Mercy (1899); and St. Joseph's (1901).

Instructive Visiting Nurse Associations and Public Health Nursing Agencies were not yet organized when the Sisters of Bon Secours began their work as private-duty nurses in the homes

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Convent de Bon Secours

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

Section 8 Page 4

of both rich and poor in the City of Baltimore. The Sisters of Bon Secours were the first society of Visiting Nurses in the United States. They preceded by 15 years, visiting nurses in Baltimore, and by 6 years, visiting nurses in Philadelphia and Boston. They antedated all forms of public health nursing as well as organized private-duty nursing in the homes of patients. The term "public health nurse" as we know it today was first used in 1895 when two nurses, Lillian Wald and Mary Brewster, who founded the Henry Street Settlement in New York, emphasized the community values of this type of nursing.

It was at the request of Archbishop Gibbons that the Sisters of Bon Secours came to the United States in 1881. But, the first contact that Americans had with the sisters was not in the United States. In 1870, two U.S. citizens, Mr. and Mrs. Whedbe, were on their honeymoon in Paris and while there, Mrs. Whedbe became seriously ill. Mr. Whedbe asked the doctor if he could procure an English-speaking nurse for his wife, and a Bon Secours sister was sent to nurse the patient. Soon, Mrs. Whedbe was restored to health, and they returned to their prominent Baltimore family. The Whedbes made known to several doctors in Baltimore the work of the Sisters of Bon Secours in France, and not long afterward, Bishop Gibbons was made Archbishop of Baltimore. The Whedbes and a group of physicians urged the archbishop to secure Bon Secours sisters for his archdiocese. In 1880, upon his return from Rome to see Pope Leo XIII, Archbishop Gibbons stopped in Paris at the Sisters of Bon Secours, with a "view to establishing a like order in Baltimore."<sup>1</sup> On May 1, 1881, Mother St. Fulgence wrote to Archbishop Gibbons, noting, "At last I am able to respond to Your Excellency's desire, and announce to you that three of our Sisters will embark from Queenstown on May 8, sailing for New York on the Parthia."

As the first year of their work in Baltimore came to a close, the sisters were contemplating the purchase of a new building to be used as a convent, because although they had enjoyed the home of Mrs. Small, the increase in their numbers necessitated larger quarters. The sisters incorporated on April 17, 1882, under the title, "The Sisters of Bon Secours for the care of the sick, of Baltimore City." The sisters acquired a house on West Baltimore Street and for several decades pursued their work of nursing without regard to race or denomination. The Bon Secours sister with her black bag and fluted cap was a familiar figure in the streets of Baltimore.

By 1898, there was a large and thriving community of sisters in Baltimore. Although Baltimore was the sisters' only convent at that time, their ministrations spread to other states. In 1905, the Convent of Bon Secours established a second location in Washington, D.C., and in 1909, a Detroit chapter provided a third location. Ten years later, the Bon Secours Hospital in Baltimore opened its doors.

<sup>1</sup> *Baltimore Sun*, September 23, 1880.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Convent de Bon Secours

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

Section 8 Page 5

### The Convent de Bon Secours: Building History

The Convent of Bon Secours was first established in Washington in 1905, occupying the former rectory of St. Ann's church, adjacent to the site where the order would, in 1927, construct the present convent building, designed by Maurice F. Moore. The order was dedicated to nursing in private homes, and was the second location for the order, which was headquartered in Baltimore.

In 1905, Bon Secours purchased the former rectory of St. Ann's church, a stone structure then located at 4005 Yuma Street, directly west of the church. This rectory had been built in 1891 by St. Ann's church, but sold a short time later to the Sisters of Providence of St. Mary's in the Woods, Indiana. By 1905, these sisters had built a larger convent on an adjacent tract of land, and had put the former rectory up for sale. The Convent de Bon Secours purchased the property as the second location of the order in the United States.<sup>2</sup>

In October 1905, the first mass was said in the small chapel created inside the former dwelling. On the occasion of the opening of the order, the *Washington Star* reported,

“Simple ceremonies mark the formal opening of the new home in the District for the Sisters of Bon Secours, which will occur in the chapel of the institution, this morning at 7 o'clock. The home is located at Tenleytown...Rev. Joseph D. Mallon, rector of St. Ann's Roman Catholic Church, will officiate at the low mass and blessing of the building.”

At the time of its opening, Yuma Street, which runs in front of the convent, was a dirt road, and 41<sup>st</sup> Street, which runs to the west of the convent, did not extend north to Warren Street, but dead-ended next to the convent. When the sisters came to Washington in 1905, the city was in the throes of a typhoid fever epidemic. The sisters were almost constantly nursing the sick, and at least one nun succumbed to the disease.

In May 1907, the Bon Secours convent incorporated, gaining official legal status in the District of Columbia. In less than a year after the foundation was established, Mother Mary of the Angels came to the United States to visit the communities in Baltimore and Washington, along with 62 religious persons of various communities who were being exiled, as the war on Catholicism had begun in France. On July 26, 1911, Mother St. Victorine, head of the Convent de Bon Secours, was transferred to a new foundation in Detroit. Mother St. Emerentiana took charge of the Washington convent, where she would remain until 1918. Over the course of the next several decades, and through the Spanish influenza epidemic that hit during World War I,

<sup>2</sup> The sale price for the property was \$14,700.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Convent de Bon Secours

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

Section 8 Page 6

the Order recruited additional sisters to Washington. Eventually, housing in the former rectory became cramped as rooms were often doubled to accommodate the new arrivals of sisters. In 1923, the Green family donated a tract of land to the Order, across the still partially completed 41<sup>st</sup> Street, for construction of a new convent building.

Beginning in July 1927, Bon Secours began construction of their new convent building, designed by architect Maurice F. Moore. According to the D.C. Permit to Build, the building was to be constructed at an estimated cost of \$50,000 and was to contain 22 rooms. Later correspondence between the architect and the convent indicated that the building was specifically designed to receive an addition, namely of a hospital wing, should the Order need to expand. According to the building inspector's notes, the convent building was completed in March 1928; the sisters of Bon Secours moved into the building on April 14, 1928. Mother Mary of the Compassion was superior of the Washington community at the time of the move. On moving day, Father Hugh Curley from St. Ann's Church placed the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle. It was not until June 2, 1928, however, that the Right Reverend Eugene J. Connelly, pastor of St. Peter's Church, solemnly dedicated the chapel and blessed the house.

The sisters of the convent of Bon Secours assisted many sick and ailing patients in their private homes in Tenleytown, Washington, and rural parts of the city. Their order was apparently not one to wear the traditional habit, and the sisters spent extended periods away from the actual convent, nursing their patients on-site. As a result, little activity or visitation actually occurred within the convent itself. Instead, it was seen by the Order as a place of refuge, peace and reflection following periods of intense care giving. The sisters were also known to have spent time at the convent sewing exquisite lace for area churches for use on their altar tables, robes and other religious textiles. As was customary, the parish bell tolled when somebody whom the sisters were nursing had died.

With construction of the new building came substantial debt. Moore's estimate of \$50,000 proved too conservative; Bon Secours records indicate that the total building cost, with architect's fees, was \$84,000. In addition to local contributions, both Baltimore and the Mother house in Paris donated substantial sums to help erase the debt. In 1932, the Order sold the rectory back to St. Ann's church to minimize funding shortfall due to intensive nursing activity that coincided with the Great Depression and a decrease in the number of persons able to afford to pay for their care. In the 1940s, the rectory was demolished to make way for construction of the third St. Ann's Church building on the site.

The World War II years had a profound effect on the sisters, many of whom were sent to support activities in Baltimore, and others were shipped to Europe for nursing duties overseas. After the war, nursing evolved from a religious assistance to a professional, medical career. Board

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Convent de Bon Secours

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

Section 8 Page 7

minutes from 1947 reflected the trend, as the sisters were not able to do any repairs on the building, and were only provided maintenance in 1948 directly from the Baltimore order. Later, in 1948, in order to generate revenue, the sisters made available several rooms on the second floor to paying visitors. In another attempt to defray costs, the sisters, in consultation with the original architect, devised a plan to accept convalescent patients at the convent. In 1951, Moore wrote to the sisters:

“We talked about the hopes which inspired your beloved order when your present building was erected more than twenty-four years ago. Preparations were made at that time for the addition of a Convalescent Home or hospital similar to the Jenkins Memorial Hospital in Baltimore, which institution I visited several times. Your present building is not fireproof above the first floor and cannot be used for anything but its present purpose because of our present Building Regulation or Code. You can, however, attach to it the building you desire and make the basements of both buildings available for medical clinics, dispensaries, diet kitchens, etc. Many things can be done if some good angel comes to your assistance.”

The addition was never built, and the basement was soon after converted into a recreation room. It was also used for gatherings of the Guild and Red Cross members. In 1957, a small elevator was installed as a gift from one of the members. For many years prior to the 1950s, sisters attending classes at the Catholic and Georgetown University resided at the convent. This continued until 1966 when it was sold to the French Embassy. Shortly thereafter, the Embassy remodeled the interior into classrooms and opened the building as the French International School. The building was used as such until 1975 when overcrowding conditions dictated a move to Maryland. In 1977, the all-girls Oakcrest School, purchased the property where they remained until 2000. The current owner of the building is the Heights Foundation.

### The Architect:

Maurice Frederick Moore was born in Dublin, Ireland in 1874, and became a citizen of the United States at an unknown date. From 1879 to 1890, he attended the Christian Brothers Academy in Dublin, and then spent the following two years at the College of Science and Arts in that city. In 1892, he began classes at the Manhattan College in New York City, but left in 1893, before graduating. He did complete an architecture course of study through the International Correspondence School between 1899 and 1905. From 1904 to 1906, however, Moore attended lectures at the University of California, after working for the Washington Architecture Club. When asked when and where he began the practice of architecture, Moore indicated San Francisco, in 1904.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Convent de Bon Secours

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

Section 8 Page 8

Moore began his architecture in San Francisco as a draftsman in the firm of Bliss & Forille from 1904-1906, then the Reed Brothers from 1906-1908, and then as chief draftsman for White and Schumacher in 1908. Moore came to Washington to work for the Office of Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department, a job he held from 1908 to 1920.

In addition to the Convent de Bon Secours, Moore designed the Petworth M.E. Church (1914); St. Martin's Parochial School (1925); the offices and stores at 815-819 11<sup>th</sup> Street (1925); a "film exchange building for owner Ellen Kirby at New Jersey Avenue and K Street (1923). Moore was also the architect for St. Augustine's Chapel, School and Convent at 1715 15<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W. Moore maintained a suite of offices in the Colorado building for most of his career which ended in 1952.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Convent de Bon Secours

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

Section 9 Page 1

## Major Bibliographical References:

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O'Sullivan, Sister Mary Cecelia C.B.S. *A Century of Caring, 1881-1981*. Bon Secours, 1982.

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Convent de Bon Secours

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

Section 10 Page 1

## Verbal Boundary Description:

The Convent de Bon Secours occupies Lot 809 on Square 1729 in Tenleytown in Washington, D.C. ►

## Boundary Justification:

The Convent de Bon Secours has occupied Lot 809 on Square 1729 since construction of the building in 1928. ►

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

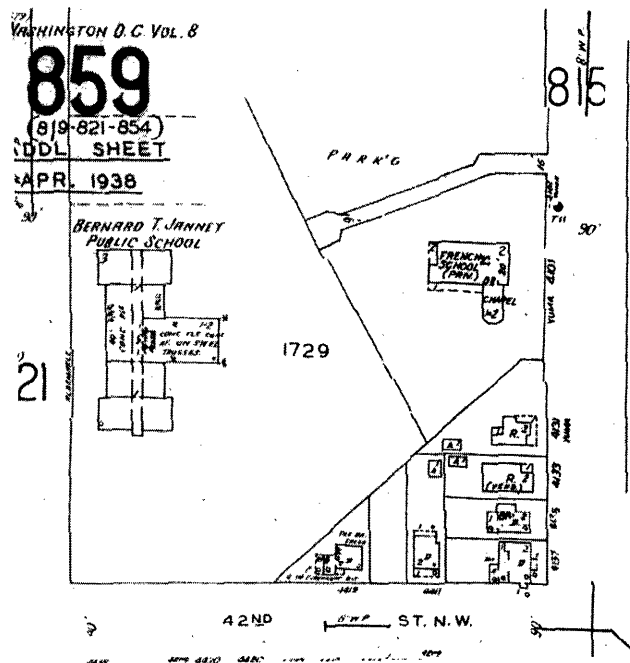
Convent de Bon Secours

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

## SITE MAP



Convent de Bon Secours  
4101 Yuma Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C.  
Sanborn Map, 1991