

1983 JUN 1 1983  
EXP. 10/1/84

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received JUN 1 1983  
date entered

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

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

1. Name

historic Convent Immaculate Conception Historic District

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 802 E. 10th Street, R. R. 3, Box 201 N/A not for publication

city, town Ferdinand N/A vicinity of ~~Congressional district~~

state Indiana code 018 county Dubois code 037

3. Classification

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<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 Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand, Indiana, Inc.

street & number 802 East 10th Street

city, town Ferdinand N/A vicinity of state Indiana 47532

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Dubois County Courthouse, Recorder's Office

street & number Courthouse Square

city, town Jasper state Indiana

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records N/A

city, town state

## 7. Description

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

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

The Benedictine Convent at Ferdinand, Indiana, occupies a rolling site just east of the Dubois County town (photos 1 & 2). The principal natural feature of the site is a prominent hill known as Mount Tabor, the heavily treed setting for the earliest Convent buildings (photo 3). The lower portions of the site contain the newer buildings on flatter, more open terrain, land devoted, at one time, to the community's rather extensive farming activities. The site is a verdant background for the various Convent and Academy buildings, unifying the numerous structures and creating a rarified and peaceful ambience crucial to the understanding and significance of the community.

The buildings—new and old—of the Convent community fall into two groups and general locations (photo 4). First, there are the older buildings clustered about the crown and crest of the hill (photos 4-6). It was here that the Convent was founded and the first building was completed in 1887. Later additions, particularly the major constructions of the early 20th century, attach to and interconnect with this late-19th century nucleus. (See attached Site Plan, buildings 1 and 2).

The earliest sections of the hilltop group are referred to as the Academy (Site Plan, building 2). This portion is at the core of the group and was completed in 1887 (photo 7). Constructed of red brick in a common bond, the two story structure contained all of the community's activities for nearly its first half-century of existence (photo 8). The Romanesque Revival building formed two equally sized cloister-type courtyards bisected by the nave of the original Convent chapel. Though now devoid of its original steeple and conjoined with the later Convent and chapel structures, the 1887 building is still very much in evidence (photo 9). The round arched windows (topped by a double rowlock course and raised keystone), slate-covered gable roofs, limestone watertable, and blind arcade cornice work are still intact after a century. A 1906 wing to the southeast of the original building maintains the design of the older structure. The point at which the two sections join (photos 10 and 11) forms a heroically scaled porte-cochere. The right-angled intersection of the two sections is apparent from the north, or courtyard, side of the buildings (photo 12). Here are visible the cast-iron details of the 1887 structure and the loggia and veranda of the later addition.

In 1915, the Sisters of St. Benedict undertook a major expansion of the Convent facility by the addition of an enormous "chapel" and two new Academy buildings (Site Plan, building 1). Attached at the western end of the original cloister (photo 13), the new chapel rises from the brow of Mount Tabor in ever-diminishing layers of brick-constructed Romanesque forms (photo 14). Built according to the plans of St. Louis architect Victor Klutho, the new chapel is flanked on the north and south by two 2½-story end-pavilions, constructed of the same reddish-brown textured brick and surmounted by low-hipped roofs of the same red pantiles as that of the chapel. From the air, the full extent of the chapel and academy pavilions can be grasped, as well as their interrelationship to the older parts of the convent (photo 15). But from a ground-level perspective, the impact of the chapel is perceived as awesome bits and pieces. Nestled among a variety of mature trees on the side of the hill (photo 16), the chapel presents an ever-changing vision of rounded and conical forms (photo 17), of limestone, brick, and terra cotta (photo 18), of red, brown, white, and cream (photo 19), of superb workmanship and humane scale (photos 20 and 21), and of occasional glimpses of the town and surrounding landscape (photo 22). The interior of the chapel imparts elements of enclosure, procession, and aspiration—all through the designer's careful attention to detail, color, composition, and plan. The principal entrance to the chapel is gained by way of an entrance loggia (photo 19) and vaulted

## 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) ethnicity

**Specific dates** 1883-1924+      **Builder/Architect** V. Klutho, Convent Chapel Architect

### Statement of Significance (~~in one paragraph~~)

The Convent Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand, Indiana, founded in 1867 and moved to its present location in 1887, is historically significant as an architectural and artistic masterpiece, as an educational institution, as a religious foundation, as a social-humanitarian base, and as the preserver of a German-American culture and tradition for which Dubois County, Indiana, is well known. The home of 300 Catholic Benedictine sisters, the convent community has for 114 years dedicated itself, through its ministeries, principally to the people of Southern Indiana, to preserving the past and building the future.

✓ The Convent buildings, which dominate a 190-acre area, were begun on their present site in 1883. The first building to be erected, a large quadrangular structure with two inner courtyards, stands largely unchanged and in excellent repair. An east wing, which was added in 1906 for the Academy Immaculate Conception, a school that the sisters founded in 1870 for girls of the locality who wished to acquire some proficiency in the fine and practical arts, is structurally sound and presently houses administrative offices, an International Center, and renovated classrooms. Rising like a "Castle on the Hill," the Convent chapel is most outstanding for its beautiful Romanesque architectural style. The chapel, with an awesomely beautiful cloister hall, colonnades that extend around the dome-topped structure, and a large crypt auditorium, was begun in 1915 and dedicated in 1924. A five-story structure to the north of the original building was constructed and completed in 1936; St. Joseph's Annex was added in 1950; Kordes Hall, now a retreat and enrichment center, was dedicated in 1962; Benet Hall, a residence hall for the sisters, was built in 1964; and a cow barn, renovated into a modern art building, has been utilized since the mid-sixties. Madonna Hall, a five-story residence hall for the Academy, which was renamed Marian Heights Academy in 1973, was erected in 1970. This building was designed to complement much of the architecture in the older buildings. The Marian Heights Gymnasium was completed in 1980. These buildings, designed for the sisters and the many constituencies that the religious community serves, blend into the rolling hills of the area to form one of the truly magnificent and historic settings of Southern Indiana.

The Convent has in its history at Ferdinand been the home of 947 religious sisters, most of whom have served in the public, private, and parochial schools of southern Indiana for over 114 years. The sisters operated St. Benedict's Normal and St. Benedict's College (a teachers' training institution) for several years and still own and operate Marian Heights Academy, an accredited residential high school for girls since 1912. The influence which this community of sisters has exerted over the educational development in Indiana is immeasurable.

As a religious institution, the Convent Immaculate Conception has been an enduring example of Christian living and practice for the German Catholic population that surrounds it, as well as for all people who have come in contact with the sisters. Over 900 women have made the Convent their home and have taken religious vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. The sisters belong to the Order of St. Benedict, the oldest religious order in western civilization, and follow the monastic Rule of Benedict. In 1980, the followers of Benedict

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Please see continuation sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 190

Quadrangle name St. Meinrad

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UMT References

A	1 6	5 1 2 4 8 0	4 2 3 1 0 7 1 8 1 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B	1 6	5 1 3 3 8 0	4 2 3 1 0 8 1 0 1 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C	1 6	5 1 2 4 8 0	4 2 2 9 9 6 1 0
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D	1 6	5 1 3 4 0 1 0	4 2 2 9 9 6 1 0
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E			
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F			
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G			
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H			
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### Verbal boundary description and justification

Please see continuation sheets

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
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N/A			
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# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Sister Mary Dominic (with Douglas L. Stern)

organization Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand

date May 28, 1982

street & number 802 East 10th Street

telephone 812/367-1431

city or town Ferdinand

state Indiana

# 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 J. M. Redman

title Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer

date May 4, 1983

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

Linda McClelland  
Keeper of the National Register

date 7-13-83

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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narthex. This narthex—the point where old and new sections connect—takes visitors through a dark, low-ceiling passage (photo 23). At either end are the entrances to the newer academy additions (photo 24), and at the mid-point are opposing doors to the chapel on one side and the 1887 Convent building on the other (photo 25). The Byzantine decorative program of the 1915 buildings is apparent here, with terra cotta and Guastavino tiles in addition to the textured brick seen elsewhere. Once through the loggia and passageway, the plan and extent of the chapel becomes immediately evident. A simple nave-plan church with side aisles and triforium, the chapel soars high above the congregation in a complex series of bold arches and barrel vaults atop alternating columns and piers (photo 26). The longitudinal and upward thrust of the nave toward the apse and chancel is enhanced by finely detailed terra cotta trim and the volumes of the transepts and dome (photo 27). The flood of light from clerestories, the drum of the dome, the transepts' large rose windows, and from the aisle windows is in contrast to the darkness and enclosure of the narthex.

The second major group of buildings is of more recent vintage and can be found removed from or secondary to the older hilltop complex. A large, five-story addition (Site Plan, building 5) was constructed in 1936 in a complementary design. Featuring a rounded-arched piano nobile, this reddish-brown brick building (photo 28) connects to the older group on the north side of the hill but does not completely interconnect. The limestone watertable and slate roof carry on the prevailing materials and details of the original buildings in a large but similarly scaled building. To the northwest of the hilltop group (Site Plan, building 4) is a modern building known as Benet Hall. Near the bottom of Mount Tabor (Photo 29), Benet preserves the scale and general feeling of the older buildings without intruding on the original group (photo 30).

Much the same can be said for another modern building, Kordes Hall (photo 31). Built on flat land to the northeast of Mount Tabor and the hilltop group (Site Plan, building 6), the small building repeats the materials and detail of the other completely free-standing new building, Benet Hall. The last major new building, however, achieves the same respectful "distance" without being physically far-removed from the hilltop group. This structure, Madonna Hall (Site Plan, building 3), is situated to the south of the original complex along major access to the Convent community (photo 32). Built in 1970 according to the plans of the nationally recognized firm of Hellmuth, Obata, and Kassabaum of St. Louis, Madonna Hall complements the old buildings by adapting their materials, scale and massing to modern forms. The dialogue between Madonna Hall and the 1887 Convent building (photo 33) is an excellent example of new design within the context of historic buildings. Madonna Hall is, in many ways, a landmark in its own right and falls well within the spirit of high architectural standards which has guided the community since its founding.

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of Nursia celebrated their fifteen hundredth anniversary (sesquimillennium) with world-wide observances. The Convent at Ferdinand was one of the sites where religious leaders throughout the country and world gathered for sesquimillennium events.

Besides their concentration on education as teachers, the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand have been involved in many social-humanitarian programs throughout Indiana and Central and South America for many years. The Sisters of St. Benedict have been educated as nurses, medical assistants, social workers, psychologists, instructors for the mentally and physically handicapped, hospital administrators, and parish workers. The nuns at Ferdinand own and operate St. Joseph's Hospital in Huntingburg, Indiana, just one of their many social-humanitarian endeavors. Convent members also serve as missionaries in Guatemala, in Peru, and in eastern Kentucky.

One needs only to visit the Convent Immaculate Conception to recognize it as a preserver of its European heritage. Proud of their roots, traceable to Eichstaat in Germany, the sisters maintain a large library and archives which contain numerous books, pieces of art, and documents of German origin. German literature and music are loved and revered. German inscriptions may be found throughout the buildings and on the grounds. Many German customs, begun when the native German foundresses came to Ferdinand in the 1860's, are observed daily. The sisters have cooperated throughout the years with historians and the Indiana Historical Society in recording and preserving this ethnic legacy.

The Convent's claim to artistic significance can be justified in two different ways. The quality of the decorative art employed in the Convent's basilica-like chapel would, in itself, be sufficient to merit this distinction. Additionally, however, the Convent maintains an extensive and varied private art collection, which includes a substantial number of items brought over from Germany in the 19th century.

The chapel features a number of significant decorative elements imported and installed between 1915 and 1928. The sanctuary screening, pews, confessionals, and lectern, all hand-carved from quarter-sawn oak, were made by the firm of Anton Lange, of Oberamergau, Germany. The relief-molded panels depicting the Stations of the Cross were designed and executed by Joseph and Charles Horchert, of Munich, Germany. The chapel contains 47 stained glass windows made by the Emil Frei Studios of Munich, Germany. Designed by Rev. Bede Maler, O.S.B., of St. Meinrad's Abbey, St. Meinrad, Indiana, specifically for this church, they depict the historical background of the Ferdinand Benedictine Sisters. Various statuary pieces located in the church and throughout the Convent were produced by Lausberg and Mach, of Louisville, Kentucky, around 1892.

The Convent's art collection includes items brought from Germany in the 1860's as well as modern works executed by members of the Order. Among the other items are a small statue of the Christ Child, dating from before 1867, and two large oil paintings of a religious nature, signed by an I. Schmitt. More recent works include some nine different religious paintings by Sister Gregory Ems, O.S.B. (1869-1954) and three landscapes by Sister Claudia Backert, O.S.B. (1883-1981). Six works by watercolor artist Jerry Baum are also included in the collection. The Dr. Scholl International Center contains artifacts and coins from over a dozen different countries, as well as a large collection of Hummel figurines.

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The Convent and Academy Library maintains a collection of approximately 55,000 volumes and 2,000 audio-visual programs. Within this library are several special collections. The Bible Collection includes many 18th and 19th century Bibles and other religious volumes, many of which are art editions with ornate bindings. Some 600 volumes deal specifically with the Benedictine communities here and abroad. The Indiana Room houses over 500 titles on Indiana and local history, and also contains maps, pictures, a clipping file, and a number of early school texts.

The architectural, educational, religious, social-humanitarian, and ethnic features of the Benedictine Convent mark the institution's significance and are evident today through various buildings and their grounds.

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Dudine, Sister M. Frederica. The Castle on the Hill. Milwaukee, 1967

Kleber, Father Albert. Ferdinand, Indiana, 1840-1940. St. Meinrad, Indiana, 1940.

Photographic Collection, Archives and Library, Convent of the Immaculate Conception,  
Ferdinand.

(Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand.) Christ, Yesterday. . . Today. . . Forever,  
Centennial, 1867-1967. Ferdinand, 1967.

S.M.S. A Brief Historical Sketch of the Sisters of St. Benedict, Ferdinand, Indiana.  
Ferdinand, 1938.

Sonderman, Albert F. Business Activities in Ferdinand, Dubois County, Southwestern  
Indiana. Ferdinand, 1965.



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All in Township 3 south, range 4 west.

Part of the Southwest quarter of Section 27, bounded as follows: - Beginning at the southwest corner of Section 27; thence north 64 rods; thence east 160 rods; thence south 64 rods; thence west 160 rods to the place of beginning containing 64 acres.

Part of the southeast quarter of Section 28, bounded as follows:- Beginning at a stone in the center of Section 28, thence east 100 rods, more or less, to the northwest corner of the John Bahlmann tract; thence south 208 feet 8.5 inches; thence east 626 feet 1.5 inches; thence north 208 feet 8.5 inches to the northeast corner of the John Bahlmann tract; thence east 328 feet to a point 30 feet west of the northeast corner of said quarter section; thence south 17 degrees 30 minutes west 403 feet; thence south 100 feet; thence south 61 degrees west 225 feet; thence south 26 degrees east 220 feet; thence south 60 degrees west 465 feet; thence south 33 degrees west 550 feet; thence south 81 degrees 30 minutes east 1070 feet to the east line of said quarter section; thence south 50.21 rods to a point 15 rods north of the southeast corner of said southeast quarter; thence westerly to a point 20.5 rods north of the southwest corner of the southeast quarter of the southeast quarter; thence north 89 degrees 30 minutes west 348 feet to an iron pin at the northwest corner of the Schuler Packing Company tract; thence south 0 degrees 30 minutes west 380 feet to the center of the county road at a point 360 feet west of the southwest corner of the southeast quarter of the southeast quarter; thence west 58.18 rods to the southwest corner of the southeast quarter of Section 28; thence north 54 rods; thence east 33 rods; thence north 39 rods; thence west 33 rods, thence north 67 rods to the place of beginning containing 117.6 acres, more or less.

Part of the northeast quarter of the southwest quarter of Section 28, bounded as follows:- Beginning 49 feet south of the center of said Section 28, thence south on the east line 1056 feet to a road; thence westerly 292 feet; thence north 665 feet to a point 60 feet east of the southeast corner of Lot No. 11 in the First Addition to the Town of Ferdinand; thence north 6 degrees east 118 feet; thence north 20 degrees east 124 feet; thence north 26 degrees east 132 feet to a point 168 feet east of the northeast corner of Lot No. 3 in the First Addition to the Town of Ferdinand; thence easterly 184 feet to the place of beginning, containing 7 acres, more or less. (This last description includes what were formerly Lots No. 1, 8, 9, 16, 17, 24, 25, and 32, Part of Vacated South Street, and Part of vacated Lots 2, 7, 10, 15, 18, 23, 26, and 31, and Vacated East Street, in the East Addition to the Town of Ferdinand, Dubois County, Indiana).

Part of the Northeast Quarter of the Southeast Quarter of Section 28, Township 3 South, Range 4 West, bounded as follows:

Commencing at a point 513 feet west and 15 feet south of the northeast corner of said quarter-quarter section, which point is on the south right-of-way line of the Ferdinand and Siberia Road; thence west with the meanderings of said road 471 feet 1 1/2 inches; thence south parallel with the east line of said 40-acre tract 208 feet 8 1/2 inches; thence east parallel with the north line of said 40-acre tract 471 feet 1 1/2 inches; thence north 208 feet 8 1/2 inches to the place of beginning and containing 2.26 acres, more or less.

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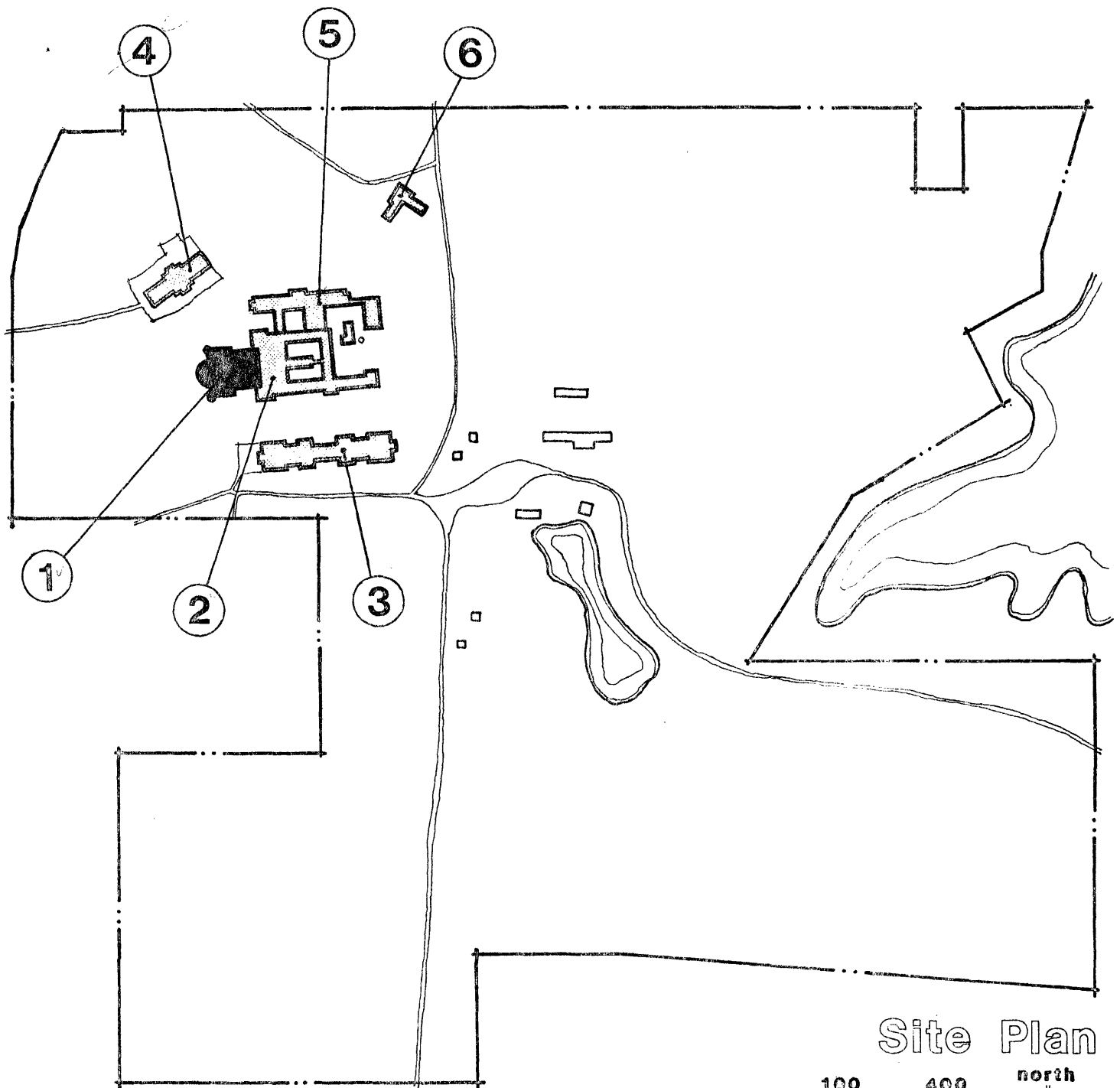
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Justification

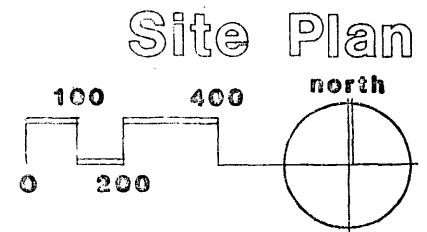
The extensive site proposed for nomination is justified on the basis of the entire site's role in the conduct and use of the Convent community. The rarified atmosphere of the Convent grounds is an essential part of the contemplative and spiritual nature of the community. In the past, as indicated elsewhere in this nomination, the grounds also served the Convent as farmland, affording both food and additional income, as well as opportunities for the Convent members to serve. The peaceful and natural terrain remains an important element in interpreting the Convent as an historical resource, this in spite of the few nonconforming buildings and structures on the grounds. The small lake, meadows and glades, rolling hills, and dense woodland all form a picturesque as well as purposeful foundation for the Convent's historic core.

The following buildings contribute to the historic district (see Site Plan):

1. Chapel
2. Academy
5. Convent Dormitory, Library, Refectory and Nun's Residence

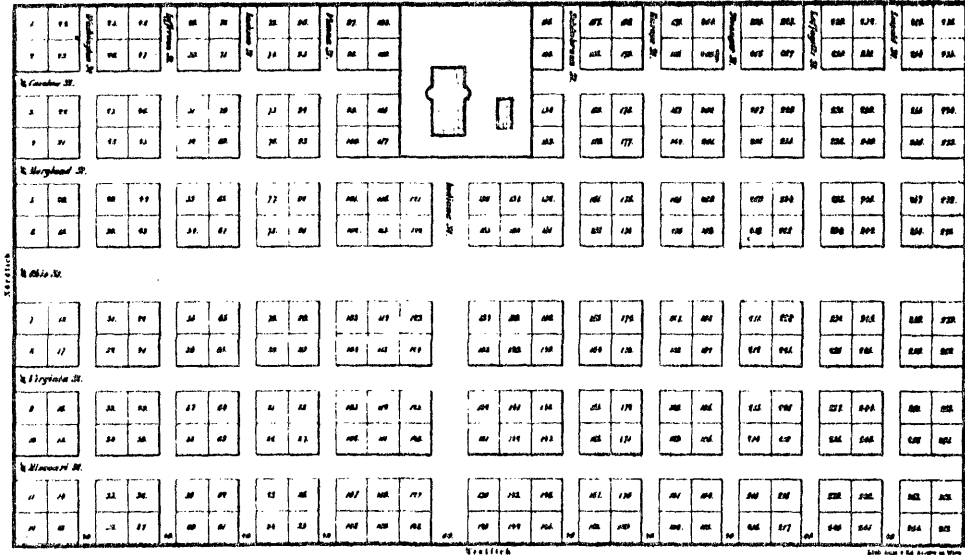


**The Benedictine Sisters  
 Convent Immaculate Conception  
 Ferdinand, Indiana**



- ① CHAPEL
- ② ACADEMY
- ③ MADONNA HALL
- ④ BENET HALL
- ⑤ CONVENT DORMITORY, LIBRARY, REFRECTORY & NUN'S RESIDENCE
- ⑥ KORDES HALL

**PLAN**  
**DER STADT FERDINAND**  
 in den nordamerikanischen Frei-Staaten  
*Indiana, Grafschaft Dubois*  
 angelegt am 6. Jänner 1840



zu Ehren S<sup>t</sup> Majestät  
**Ferdinand I. KAISER** von Oesterreich  
 so benannt.

und Allerhöchstdemselben in tiefster Ehrfurcht gemein  
 Josef Kundek  
Architekt und Bauherr in Wien

Copy of the original 1840 town plan. The parish grounds, since much enlarged, are shown in their present location. The Convent would be established some thirty years later to the northeast. The source of the place-name was to honor Ferdinand, Emperor of Austria and a patron of the Leopoldine Society. The town's planner, Father Josef Kundek, almost single-handedly founded the parish and town. This plat map was printed in German in hopes of attracting German Catholic immigrants.