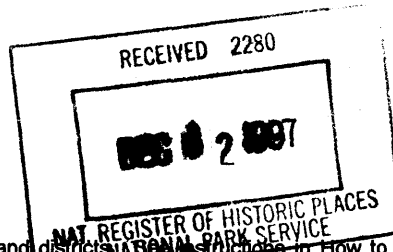


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM



1637

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. **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 ST. LEO ABBEY HISTORIC DISTRICT

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 33701 State Road 52 N/A not for publication

city or town St. Leo N/A vicinity

state FLORIDA code FL county Pasco code 101 zip code 33574

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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] 12/2/97
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Florida State Historic Preservation Officer, Division of Historical Resources
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 the 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 See continuation sheet.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain) _____

[Signature]
Signature of the Keeper
Edson H. Beall

Date of Action

Jan, 7, 1998

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- buildings
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

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

Contributing		Noncontributing	
3		1	buildings
0		0	sites
0		0	structures
0		0	objects
3		1	total

Name of related multiple property listings

(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)

EDUCATION/Education Related

RELIGION/Religious Facility

/Church Related Residence

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/Religious Facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/

Italian Romanesque Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Concrete; Stucco

Stone: Sandstone

roof Tar and Gravel

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.)

- Criteria A, B, C, D with checkboxes and descriptions.

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- Criteria A through G with checkboxes and descriptions.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION

EDUCATION

ARCHITECTURE

SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

1912-1948

Significant Dates

1912

1936

1941

Significant Person

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Arch: Unknown

Blder: Poiger, Brother Anthony

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

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 file (NPS):

- Criteria for previous documentation on file (NPS).

Primary location of additional data:

- Criteria for primary location of additional data.

Name of Repository

#

ST. LEO ABBEY HISTORIC DISTRICT
Name of Property

Pasco Co., Florida
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property approx. 10 acres

UTM References

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

1 | 1 | 7 | | 3 | 7 | 6 | 4 | 0 | 0 | | 3 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 0 | 9 | 0 |
Zone Easting Northing
2 | 1 | 7 | | 3 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 0 | | 3 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 0 | 9 | 0 |

3 | 1 | 7 | | 3 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 0 | | 3 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
Zone Easting Northing
4 | 1 | 7 | | 3 | 7 | 6 | 4 | 0 | 0 | | 3 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

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 Mikki Hartig/Sherry Piland/Carl Shiver, Historic Sites Specilaist

organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date August 1997

street & number R.A. Gray Building, 500 S. Bronough Street telephone (904) 487-2333

city or town Tallahassee state Florida zip code 32399-0250

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

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 Order of St. Benedictine of Florida

street & number 33701 State Road 52 telephone (352) 588-4400

city or town St. Leo state Florida zip code 33574

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and amend 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 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 Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 1

**ST. LEO ABBEY HISTORIC DISTRICT
PASCO COUNTY, FLORIDA
PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION**

SUMMARY

The St. Leo Abbey Historic District consists of three buildings: St. Leo Hall, built between 1912-1920; the Carmel Convent, built between 1941-1942; and the Church of the Holy Cross, started in 1936 and completed in 1948. All three buildings are located on the campus of St. Leo College in the town of St. Leo, and all are of masonry construction. As a whole, the buildings retain their architectural integrity. The resources of the historic district are unique in Pasco County and have few parallels in Florida.

SETTING

Saint Leo, Florida, is located approximately one mile east of downtown San Antonio, five miles from Dade City, and approximately 35 miles north of Tampa, Florida. A major east/west corridor, State Road 52, runs just south of the St. Leo College campus. Most of the college complex is located on a high ridge above the south shore of Lake Jovita. With the exception the town hall and a few residential buildings, the town of Saint Leo consists entirely of the Saint Leo Abbey and College Complex, from which the town originated in 1889. All three buildings are contiguous to one other and all are set back some distance from State Road 52 and are located between the highway and the shore of Lake Jovita.

Over the years, several non-historic buildings have been constructed in various locations on the original Saint Leo College site. The buildings included in this proposal are under separate ownership from the other buildings on the St. Leo College campus.

ST. LEO HALL

Exterior

The construction of Saint Leo Hall occurred in two phases. Construction began on the western section in 1906 (Photo 1). In October, 1912, even before construction of the first part of the building was complete, work began on extending it to the east, using the same building materials and construction techniques.

Saint Leo Hall is a rectangular building constructed of rusticated concrete block and measures 132 X 52 feet at the base. The three-story building rests on an elevated basement, and a foliated string course runs around the building, just above the basement level windows. The

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**ST. LEO ABBEY HISTORIC DISTRICT
PASCO COUNTY, FLORIDA
PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION**

building has a flat tar and gravel roof, and its main (north) facade overlooks a long lawn that slopes down to Lake Jovita (Photo 2).

The central section of the building features a pavilion that projects beyond the main body of the structure and has a one-story, three-bay porch that rests on four rusticated piers that raise it to the height of the elevated basement. The porch has a steep flight of steps that leads to the main entrance of the building. Similar piers support the roof deck that shelters the porch. (Photo 3). Ornamental concrete balustrades with urn balusters and molded handrails are found both on the porch, where they run between the piers, and on the roof deck where they are attached to rusticated pedestals. The roof deck is accessed by a second floor doorway.

A decorative, bracketed cornice is found just below the pierced, concrete block parapet that encircles the building. The parapet is stepped over the entrance and ornamented with a cross (Photos 2 and 3). Metal, 1/1, single hung windows, arranged in pairs, are used throughout the building. These are replacement windows, set in the original window openings that are embellished with stone lintels and sills.

The east elevation has a projecting, two-story, entrance portico (Photo 4) that is supported by a rusticated concrete block base with a central entrance at grade. Flights of steps on the north and south sides of the portico lead to the first floor entrance. This entrance is sheltered by a low-pitched, gable roof supported by chamfered posts.

The rear (south) elevation contains two secondary entrances to the raised basement level, one near the middle of the building and one near the east end (Photo 6). The entrance at the east end is sheltered by a flat canopy projection. The lintel over the door is carved with the initials "S.L.C." (Photo 7).

Interior

The interior of Saint Leo Hall has received no alterations to its original floor plan. Flanking a central hallway, running east to west on each floor, are classrooms, offices, and living quarters. The original plaster interior walls in the hallways and some of the rooms have been covered with wood paneling. The west section of the building has wood floors, while the east section has concrete floors. Interior wood stairs retain their original simple wood hand railings and turned balusters (Photo 8).

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ST. LEO ABBEY HISTORIC DISTRICT
PASCO COUNTY, FLORIDA
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NONCONTRIBUTING DORMITORY BUILDING

A noncontributing, four-story, dormitory building, constructed in 1958 (Photo 5), is attached to the west elevation of St. Leo Hall. The construction of this dormitory wing involved no significant alterations to the original building.

CHURCH OF THE HOLY CROSS

Exterior

The Church of the Holy Cross is located south of St. Leo Hall. Although attached at one juncture to Saint Leo Hall, the main facades of the church and Saint Leo Hall are oriented in opposite directions. St. Leo Hall faces north, looking toward Lake Jovita; the church faces south. In front of the church is a circular, landscaped courtyard that has a fountain at its center (Photo 9). A sidewalk leads from a parking area to the courtyard fountain and continues on the opposite side to the slightly elevated, paved terrace directly in front of the church.

The Church of the Holy Cross has a standard basilica form, with a narthex, nave, side aisles, and apse (Photo 10). It has features of the Italian Romanesque style. The main mass (center) of the church measures 160 by 180 feet and is covered by a gently-sloping cross-gable roof surfaced in Spanish clay pan tiles. Throughout the church, the white, cement brick is contrasted with red sandstone used for the decorative details, such as the door and window surrounds, and belt courses.

The west end of the main (south) facade has a twenty-four foot, square bell tower that rises eight-six feet (Photo 11). The upper level of the tower has three arched openings on each elevation. A concrete balustrade supports a limestone handrail and encloses the lower portion of the arched openings. The limestone railing extends past the arched openings to incorporate a simple decorative cross pattern detail at each corner of the tower. A plain horizontal sandstone band bisects the unadorned wall space between the railing and cross entablature. Two narrow, multi-light windows are placed side-by-side on the flat wall plane of the central section of each elevation of the tower. The low-pitched hip roof of the tower is surfaced with barrel tiles.

East of the bell tower is a one-story, entrance block. The double, wood entrance doors are separated by a stone trumeau (Photo 12). The door jambs, formed by grouped moldings in receding planes, support the archivolt. The jambs have simple block capitals. Centered above the

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ST. LEO ABBEY HISTORIC DISTRICT
PASCO COUNTY, FLORIDA
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doors, the tympanum is decorated with a mosaic, featuring a gold leaf background and a half-length figure of Christ. The parapet above the entrance is constructed of red limestone. The gabled end wall, behind the entrance block, features a round, stained glass window with stone tracery (Photo 13). An arched corbel table is just below roof line.

A shed roof covers the side aisle along the west elevation of the church, between the bell tower and the north end of the transept. Simple rectangular windows pierce the wall of the side aisle.

The east elevation of the church is treated in a similar fashion, except that instead of a side aisle, there is an arcaded walkway covered with a shed roof covered with asphalt shingles (Photo 14). At the northeast corner of the church, the walkway provides a connection to St. Leo Hall. Arched, clerestory windows on the east and west elevations of the church are separated by slightly projecting piers. Paired, arched windows are placed at the east and west ends of the transept (Photo 15).

The north elevation of the church consists of a two-story wing with a flat roof. A smaller, stained glass, circular window is located on the north wall.

Interior

The nave has a vaulted cedar ceiling (Photo 16), at points decorated by carved limestone corner brackets. Red cedar trees located on the Abbey property supplied the wood for the ceiling and interior trim. The interior walls consist of plaster finished to simulate limestone block. The church retains its original hand carved oak pews (Photo 17) and Spanish tile flooring.

The marble altar at the north end of the nave features a rose window, marble crucifix carved by Frank Aretz and modeled after the Christ figure on the Shroud of Turin (Photo 18). The crucifix is suspended beneath an intricately carved canopy and it is placed in front of a mosaic panel. A crypt below the altar area, now used to house the Abbey archives, is decorated with murals representing the Roman catacombs and were painted by Urban Louis Sprugg.

There are 42 stained and painted glass windows in the building (Photos 16 and 17). The windows, installed in 1943, are in relatively good repair.

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ST. LEO ABBEY HISTORIC DISTRICT
PASCO COUNTY, FLORIDA
PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

CARMELITE CONVENT

Exterior

The Carmelite Convent, now referred to as Carmel Hall, is located directly west of the Church of the Holy Cross, and is oriented to the north to face Lake Jovita. The two-story building, masonry, rectangular building has a raised basement. The walls are brick, covered with stucco. It was designed and built in the Mission Style in 1941-1942. The building has a low-pitched, gable roof surfaced with asphalt shingles. The primary facade features a stepped parapet wall (Photo 19). An addition was placed across the rear (south) elevation in the 1960s (Photo 20). This addition, constructed of concrete block covered with board and batten siding, has a low pitched, hip roof surfaced with asphalt shingles. The original multi-light casement windows were replaced with metal awning units at about the same time. A small bayed projection, covered by a hip roof surfaced in asphalt shingle, is located on the west elevation.

Interior

The interior plan of the Carmel Convent includes a full-width parlor or reception room within the 1960s addition to the rear elevation. A central hall, running north/south, extends the full length of the building. Small rooms, originally used as bedrooms for the Carmelite nuns are accessed from the hall. A small kitchen and bath are located off the north end of the hall. The building retains its original floor plan, wood flooring, interior doors, and bath fixtures.

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**ST. LEO ABBEY HISTORIC DISTRICT
PASCO COUNTY, FLORIDA
SIGNIFICANCE**

SUMMARY

The Saint Leo Abbey Historic District in St. Leo, Florida, meets Criteria A and C for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The district is significant at the local and statewide levels in the areas of religion, education, social history, and architecture. The abbey is linked to the settlement of the Town of Saint Leo, to the establishment of a Benedictine community in Florida, and to the founding of one of the first Catholic colleges in Florida, St. Leo College. Saint Leo Hall, completed in 1920, is the oldest surviving building on the campus of St. Leo College. The Church of the Holy Cross, begun in 1936 and completed in 1948, is an excellent example of the Italian Romanesque Revival style. The Carmel Convent was built to house Carmelite nuns who took up residence at the abbey in 1941. St. Leo Hall is also significant for its extensive use of locally-cast concrete block in the construction of the massive structure. The use of hollow-cast concrete block, made to resemble stone, was popular in Florida and throughout the United States from about 1904 to 1930. The blocks were made on site by members of the monastic community who participated directly in the construction of the abbey's buildings.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

In 1881, the financially troubled state of Florida made the State's land holdings available for 25-40 cents an acre, the purchase price being dependent upon the volume of acreage purchased. Hamilton Disston, of Philadelphia, agreed to purchase a block of 4,000,000 acres, the largest amount of land ever bought by a private individual in the history of the United States. In Disston's land selection process and in the processing of title deeds, he was assisted by attorney Edmund Dunne. Dunne, a native of Herkimer County, New York, had studied law in San Francisco. He served in the California legislature and as a voting delegate of the constitutional convention for the new state of Nevada, for which he served as an eight-term member of its judiciary. A Catholic, Dunne was an outspoken proponent for the establishment of separate Catholic schools. He became a prominent figure in the Catholic church and was showered with honors for his principled stands in his judicial opinions. However, he was removed from the judicial bench for his staunch religiously orientated positions. For a period of time thereafter, he practiced law in New Mexico and Utah.

As partial compensation for assisting Disston in his Florida land purchase and subsequent sales to others, Dunne was to receive 100,000 acres of Disston's land. He was at first to choose 50,000 acres and was given the opportunity to receive a bonus of another 50,000 acres for

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**ST. LEO ABBEY HISTORIC DISTRICT
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securing and handling a certain amount of land sales. For many years, Dunne had dreamed of founding a colony solely for Catholics, an idea first envisioned by his father. With the help of his cousin, Father Patrick Quigley—a student at Rome's Gregorian University—Dunne succeeded in securing support for the colony from Pope Pius IX. Dunne, in the company of another cousin, Hugh Dunne, traveled through the woods of Disston's land holdings in central Florida seeking an appropriate site for the colony. In February 1882, they chose an area of rolling hills and plentiful lakes. The town site of the Catholics-only colony, named San Antonio, was placed at the highest point of the property, near the shore of the area's largest lake, Jovita Lake.

Dunne constructed a home for his family on the south side of Lake Jovita. By the spring of 1882, San Antonio was ready to receive settlers. Dunne promoted his colony through letters to Catholic newspapers in the northern states of the U.S. The Catholics-only policy lasted only until 1887, when after over four years there were only 400 colonists. However, the town remained predominantly Catholic. For many more years, Dunne continued to promote his venture in letters to Catholic newspapers, describing the progress and opportunities of the colony. Because the economic base of the colony was the cultivation of oranges, Dunne extolled San Antonio as the "Sicily of America." The Mediterranean island was one of the principal areas for the growing of oranges in Europe.

By the mid-1880s, the San Antonio Colony had grown to include a number of general stores, barber and butcher shops, a photographic gallery, a doctor and a dentist, several boarding houses, and a hotel. In 1885, nearby Dade City had acquired regular rail service. The Orange Belt Railway extended a line to San Antonio in 1887, with passenger service beginning in 1888.

Dunne had envisioned a number of satellite communities to encircle San Antonio. However, by 1885 only two such communities had been established, Saint Thomas and Carmel. Saint Joseph, a third community not originally planned by Judge Dunne, was founded in 1883 as a German Catholic settlement. Dunne had reserved a valuable tract of land for the establishment of a monastery, one mile east of San Antonio. After consulting with Dunne about his plan, Bishop John Moore of Saint Augustine, announced his plan to turn over San Antonio's church to the Benedictine order. He wrote to Arch Abbot Boniface Wimmer to request a Benedictine priest for the town. Subsequently, the first members of the Benedictine Order arrived in Florida in 1886. The Benedictines later established Saint Leo College and Abbey in 1890, and the nearby Holy Name Priory, a convent for teachers who would teach in the community school. Saint Leo was incorporated as a separate town on February 24, 1891.

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**ST. LEO ABBEY HISTORIC DISTRICT
PASCO COUNTY, FLORIDA
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HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

The first Benedictine priest, Father Gerald Pilz, arrived in San Antonio on May 12, 1886. Pilz, a native of Bavaria, was sent from Saint Vincent Arch Abbey in Pennsylvania. He had previously served as the superior of the Benedictine priory in Newark, New Jersey. In 1888, because of the problems posed by the distance of Florida from the administrative offices in Pennsylvania, jurisdiction over St. Leo was transferred to an abbey in North Carolina, which was five hundred miles closer to St. Leo. All major decisions for Saint Leo were made in Belmont, North Carolina, principally by Abbot Haid. Over time, some disagreements arose between Florida and the distant abbot in North Carolina.

Edward Dunne's involvement with the colony lessened over time and Father Pilz became the dominant leader. He sent glowing reports to his superiors on the healthy environment and beauty of the colony. The mission gained a reputation as a Benedictine healing center and became a sanitarium for invalid members of the American Cassinese Congregation of the Benedictine Order. Pilz found it necessary to request additional staffing and was soon joined by other Benedictine monks and priests.

Although Pilz first lobbied for the establishment of a Catholic High School, the plan was quickly superseded by the promotion of a college for San Antonio. In 1886, a gift of forty acres of land near the town was offered to the monastery on the condition that a college be built on the site. In February 1889, Pilz received a visit from his superior in North Carolina, Abbot Haid, who selected a site for the school. A charter was sought from the State of Florida to operate a college. The charter specified two purposes: "The education of youth and the establishment of churches and conducting services therein." The charter was enacted on June 4, 1889, considered the founding date of Saint Leo College and Saint Leo Abbey. The new college took its name from three men: Pope Saint Leo the Great (440-461); Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903), reigning at the time the college was established; and Abbot Leo Haid who founded the college and served as its first president. The college was the first Catholic college established in Florida. Pilz left the colony in late 1889, remaining in San Antonio only long enough to see the college founded.

In 1889, a group of five nuns of the Order of St. Benedict arrived to run the elementary schools in nearby San Antonio and Saint Joseph. The nuns established the Holy Name Priory in San Antonio and also began a private academy. Although the nuns staffed the two elementary

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**ST. LEO ABBEY HISTORIC DISTRICT
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schools for many years, the private academy was discontinued in 1964. By 1890, the Benedictine monastic community had grown to almost 20.

Father Pilz was replaced in 1890 with Father Charles Mohr, who became the first director of the college. His first task was to obtain students by recruiting throughout the northern part of Florida. The original Saint Leo's College and monastery building—no longer extant—was completed and formally dedicated in September 1890. The building was constructed by Benedictine brothers sent specifically to assist local San Antonio laborers in its construction. The dedication was publicized in newspapers through the country, and was well attended by both Catholics and Protestants.

After the first college building was completed, several other buildings were erected on the campus. These included Saint Benedict's Convent, St. Mary's Hall, a dormitory for the monks and students, a cadets study hall, and bath and boat houses along the lake. None of these structures, including the original 1890 college building (destroyed by fire in 1928), has survived. The school opened with only three pupils the day following completion of the first building, but enrollment grew to fifteen students by the following week and expanded to thirty-two during the course of the year. The first graduating class in 1893 numbered five.

In December of 1890, the construction of an Orange Belt Railway depot was financed and built by the Benedictines at Saint Leo on the opposite side of Lake Jovita. This rail line was later purchased by prominent Florida developer and railroad builder Henry Plant. It eventually became part of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad. Besides providing direct mail service and easier passenger and cargo access to the school, the rail company provided discount fares for the monastery clerics and students. Rail service to San Antonio continued until 1972.

The Benedictine monks took up farming on the Saint Leo property in late December, 1893. Many crops were produced on the college grounds, including melons, sugar cane, citrus, and strawberries. In 1896, the U. S. Post Office opened bids for the position of mail carrier, and Brother Leo, recognized as Saint Leo's master farmer, was awarded the contract. He boated across Lake Jovita to deliver the mail to the college and abbey.

Teaching assignments for the school staff, which had grown to six by 1893, varied from year to year. The faculty, comprised entirely of priests or other clerics, taught a variety of subjects. With few exceptions, laymen were not a part of the school operation in the early years. School enrollment numbers in the 1890s ranged from 28 to 42, reaching 52 in 1900. Between

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1900 and 1920, enrollment averaged 50-60 students. The monastery-school accommodated both male boarding and day students.

By 1894, Father Mohr believed that an independent status for Saint Leo was needed. By the second year the school was open, it was financially self-sustaining. Saint Leo obtained its independence on May 17, 1894, by obtaining a designation of "conventual" or "canonical" priory, the terms for a Benedictine community of men which does not yet have the full status of an abbey, but is completely separate from its founding abbey. Father Mohr was appointed Prior by the newly formed Benedictine chapter which served as the institution's governing board. Astonishingly, and at the time viewed as petty by Father Mohr, the North Carolina Abbot required them to reimburse Maryhelp Abbey a staggering \$6,000 for the money expended in establishing Saint Leo College. Mohr borrowed part of the money for a substantial partial payment, and signed a promissory note for the balance. In 1900, a fire at Saint Mary's College in Belmont caused the loss of all of the financial records of the Abbey. Since no note could be produced the Abbey forgave the balance due from Saint Leo.

In 1902, Saint Leo applied for and was granted full designation as an Abbey. Father Mohr was elected Abbot by the religious community on July 11, 1902, contingent on confirmation by Rome. On September 25, 1902, Pope Leo XIII confirmed the elevation of Saint Leo to an abbey and Mohr's election as abbot. The Abbey had earned this distinction after thirteen years by its financial security, capacity to attract new members, general stability, and effectiveness in its mission. Saint Leo now had 24 members (10 priests, two seminarians and 12 lay brothers), a surplus income, and a net worth of nearly \$25,000. The monks served over 400 Catholics in Pasco, Hernando, and Citrus counties at 25 missions and stations, and also had jurisdiction over a mission in Cuba. The school was stable and flourishing.

In 1906, the monks laid a cornerstone for their second major building, Saint Leo Hall. For the previous sixteen years, the Saint Leo priests had resided on the second floor of the college, in the midst of classrooms and the student dormitory. The brothers resided in the convent behind the main building, but wanted their own cloistered residence. The building they constructed, Saint Leo Hall, took fourteen years to complete (1898-1912). An addition to Saint Leo Hall for additional student housing was begun in 1914 and completed in 1920.

The institution dedicated as Saint Leo's College has had many names in the past century: Saint Leo Military College (1890-1903), Saint Leo College (1903-1920), Saint Leo's College-High School (1920-1923), Saint Leo Academy (1923-1927), Benedictine High School (1927-

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ST. LEO ABBEY HISTORIC DISTRICT
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SIGNIFICANCE

1929), Saint Leo College Preparatory School (1929-1964) and Saint Leo College (1959-present). For the first 13 years, Saint Leo was a military college with students wearing military uniforms, not to train them for military careers but to teach them the values of discipline, order, pride in appearance, and respect for authority.

The school has counted many prominent people from Florida and elsewhere in the United States among the school's early students. One of these was James L. McDermott, who became a partner in the New York City contracting firm of McDermott & Hanigan, which built a number of churches, convents, and college buildings in the northeast. Two others were Eugene Ashe, who became the U.S. Ambassador to Cuba in 1921 and Frank Morse, who had a long career as an editor of the New York Post. Actor Lee Marvin, although not a graduate of the school, was a student from 1940 until 1942, where he distinguished himself as an athlete. Desi Arnaz attended Saint Leo briefly to improve his English. Brothers Luis and Anastasio Somoza, both later presidents of Nicaragua, attended Saint Leo in 1936-1937.

Religion was an important part of student life. A chapel had been located in the original college building. Saint Leo Hall also contained chapels. In 1932, Abbot Francis Sadlier secured approval to have plans drawn to construct an abbey church. Construction of the Church of the Holy Cross would begin in 1936.

About 1941, a group of Carmelite nuns arrived at Saint Leo's from New York to handle Saint Leo's kitchen responsibilities. Their arrival necessitated the construction of the Carmel Convent. They continued to occupy the convent building as their residence until the order's departure in 1963.

ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

St. Leo Hall

The construction of St. Leo was undertaken under the direction of Saint Leo's master builder and lay brother Anthony Poiger (1868-1926). For thirty years Poiger directed building projects to fulfill St. Leo's needs. A native of Bavaria, Poiger had received training as a cabinetmaker before coming to the United States. He arrived in Saint Leo in May 1890, and assisted in the construction of the original college building. He also constructed the first temporary altar for the students' chapel, built the permanent pews, fitted the first library shelves;

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and constructed an ornate pedestal for a statue of Saint Benedict donated to the school in 1895. Poiger was also skilled in boat building and crafted the first Saint Leo mail boat in 1893. He was responsible for the construction of the college gymnasium and supervised many other projects beneficial to the abbey.

Brother Poiger drew the initial sketches of the three-story St. Leo Hall Building. Bruno Riese, a visiting architect, completed the architectural plans, charging only \$2 for his services. Both sections of Saint Leo Hall were constructed of hollow concrete building blocks, made from a block-making machine the Abbey purchased for \$300 from the Harmon S. Palmer Company of Washington, D.C. The cement used in making the blocks was supplied by the Carolina Portland Cement Company of Charleston, South Carolina, for \$1.55 a barrel. Brothers Anthony, Gerard, and Bernard made all the blocks, commencing their work on May 21, 1904.

The foundation of the building was excavated by Andrew Barthle, his son Matthew, and Ben Blommel, residents of the nearby town of St. Joseph. Lumber used in the interior of the building came from the Mueller and Lutz Saw Mill of Odessa, Florida. Iron reinforcing rods were obtained from Carnegie Steel in Pittsburgh. In 1907, the Abbey had installed a 10-horsepower International Harvester gasoline engine to operate an elevator designed by Poiger used to lift the concrete blocks as the walls of the building rose.

The marble cornerstone for St. Leo Hall was made by the Southern Marble Stone Company of Jacksonville, Florida, for \$14. It contained items of historic interest, including an iron box with the signatures of all the members of the community and students in the College. The box remains in place. The cornerstone was blessed in a special ceremony that included a performance by the College Brass Band and a formal address by Prior Vincent Huber of Saint Bede Abbey in Illinois. The event was one of the largest gatherings at Saint Leo, with most of the people from the surrounding area in attendance.

The building was ready for occupancy in 1912. A New York contractor and patron, Isaac Hopper, toured the building in March 1912, and described it as "flawless". Abbot Charles was the first to move into the new building. The chapel in the building was dedicated in September, 1912. A ceremony was held to bless the building on January 6, 1914, and the public was invited to view and investigate the "mysteries" of a Benedictine monastery. After this, admittance of outsiders to the cloister was prohibited and remains so to the present.

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As the main section of St. Leo Hall was being completed, an eastern wing known as the "College Annex" was underway to provide classrooms for the growing student body. It was constructed at a cost of \$12,000. The foundation was excavated by A. G. Wahlmeier in October, 1912. A cornerstone was laid on September 12, 1914, and the last of the concrete blocks were produced on November 15, 1917. The extension was completed in 1920.

The Church of the Holy Cross (Saint Leo Church)

Abbot Francis Sadlier's reputation as a stubborn man is reflected in his determination to pursue the construction of a church during the Great Depression. Fund raising for the project continued off and on for twelve years, with work progressing as money was available. The architectural plans were drawn by Frank Parziale of Tampa, with construction undertaken by Oliver Hoehn of San Antonio.

Ground was not broken until August 15, 1936. The cornerstone was laid on April 6, 1937, but construction was slow. The McDonald Corporation of Brooksville contributed 50,000 limestone bricks for construction of the church. The entrance archway was erected in 1940. The roof was completed in December 1942, and the first Mass was celebrated at midnight on Christmas Eve of that year, even though the tower and interior work remained unfinished. Although work was slowed by the disruption caused by World War II, it did not come to an end. In 1943 the forty-two stained glass windows and a \$12,000 organ were installed. The tower was completed by the end of 1943. Exterior construction was finally completed in 1945 and in the spring of 1946, the church was painted. The altar, produced by the Tennessee Marble Company of Knoxville, was installed in December 1946. Although the building was in use by 1942, all of the interior details were not completed until 1948. By then, construction costs had reached \$138,803.

The church was nicknamed "the church that orange juice built." Orange juice and grapefruit from Saint Leo's groves were traded for sandstone from the Saint Meinrad Abbey of Indiana. The barter arrangement with Saint Meinrad Abbey also provided the carved-oak choir stalls and benches. Benefactors were sought to cover the cost of the 42 memorial stained glass windows, their cost ranging from \$125 for the smaller windows and between \$750 to \$1,250 for the larger, sanctuary windows. The figural windows were created by the Karl Mueller Studio of Belleville, New York. The studio relocated to Zephyrhills, Florida, in 1952. For many years, the church basement served as the Town of Saint Leo's post office.

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SIGNIFICANCE

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

St. Leo Hall is a vernacular building that employed an innovative, early twentieth century building technique. Because the Florida peninsula has few deposits of clay suitable for the production of bricks and the material was not easily transported to Florida during the state's early history, masonry buildings were frequently constructed of native limestone, a type of poured concrete called tabby or concrete block. In 1900, Harmon S. Palmer obtained a patent for a cast iron machine with removable sides that could make hollow concrete blocks. The hand-operated device made it possible to produce large quantities of concrete blocks on the building site. By 1906, it was estimated that more than a thousand companies and individuals were using Palmer's machine and others like it to manufacture concrete blocks. Between 1905 and 1930, thousands of low-cost commercial and domestic structures were constructed of rock faced, hollow concrete block. A cement block cost only between 13 and 20 cents to make, and was less expensive to lay than brick. One element in the popularity of the concrete block was its potential for ornament. Numerous variations in wreathes, scrolls, or cobblestone faces could be produced to provide decorative details for buildings. One of Palmer's block-making machines was purchased by St. Leo Abbey in 1904.

The basilica plan was used for the Church of the Holy Cross, and Italian Romanesque design elements such as the arched doors and windows, vaulting, deep window reveals, and attached campanile were incorporated into its masonry construction. The simplicity of the design is counterbalanced by rich mosaic and painted decorations, and by numerous stained glass windows. The church has received no exterior alterations since its time of construction.

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ST. LEO ABBEY HISTORIC DISTRICT
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**ST. LEO ABBEY HISTORIC DISTRICT
PASCO COUNTY, FLORIDA
GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

Legal Description

Pasco County Tax Roll Parcel No. 01-25-20-0000-03000-0010.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the proposed district, shown as a dashed line on the accompanying site plan, encompass all of the property historically associated with Saint Leo Abbey and remaining under the ownership and control of the order of Saint Benedict of Florida.

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**ST. LEO ABBEY HISTORIC DISTRICT
PASCO COUNTY, FLORIDA
PHOTOGRAPHS**

PHOTOGRAPHS

1. St. Leo Hall, Saint Leo Abbey Historic District
2. 33701 State Road 52, St. Leo (Pasco County), Florida
3. Unknown
4. ca. 1915
5. St. Leo Archives, St. Leo Abbey
6. Historic Photo, St. Leo Hall during construction; main (north) facade, looking southwest
7. Photo 1 of 20

All of the resources photographed are located in the historic district. Items 2-5 are the same for the remaining photographs unless otherwise noted.

1. St. Leo Hall
6. Main (north) facade, looking south
7. Photo 2 of 20

1. St. Leo Hall
6. Main (north) facade, looking southwest
7. Photo 3 of 20

1. St. Leo Hall
6. Main (north) facade on right, east elevation on left; looking southwest
7. Photo 4 of 20

1. St. Leo Hall Dormitory Addition
6. showing connection of St. Leo Hall (on left) with St. Leo Hall Dormitory Addition (on right);
looking southwest
7. Photo 5 of 20

1. St. Leo Hall
6. Rear (south) elevation, looking northwest
7. Photo 6 of 20

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**ST. LEO ABBEY HISTORIC DISTRICT
PASCO COUNTY, FLORIDA
PHOTOGRAPHS**

1. St. Leo Hall
6. Detail, rear (south) elevation; looking north
7. Photo 7 of 20

1. St. Leo Hall
6. Interior detail, looking southwest
7. Photo 8 of 20

1. Church of the Holy Cross
6. Main (south) facade, looking north
7. Photo 9 of 20

1. Church of the Holy Cross
3. Unknown
4. Early 1940s
5. St. Leo Archives, St. Leo Abbey
6. Historic photo, showing Church of the Holy Cross under construction; main (south) facade on right, east elevation on left; looking northwest
7. Photo 10 of 20

1. Church of the Holy Cross
6. Main (south) facade, looking north
7. Photo 11 of 20

1. Church of the Holy Cross
6. Detail, main (south) facade; looking north
7. Photo 12 of 20

1. Church of the Holy Cross
6. Detail, main (south) facade; looking north
7. Photo 13 of 20

1. Church of the Holy Cross
6. East elevation, looking west
7. Photo 14 of 20

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**ST. LEO ABBEY HISTORIC DISTRICT
PASCO COUNTY, FLORIDA
PHOTOGRAPHS**

1. Church of the Holy Cross
6. East elevation, looking west
7. Photo 15 of 20

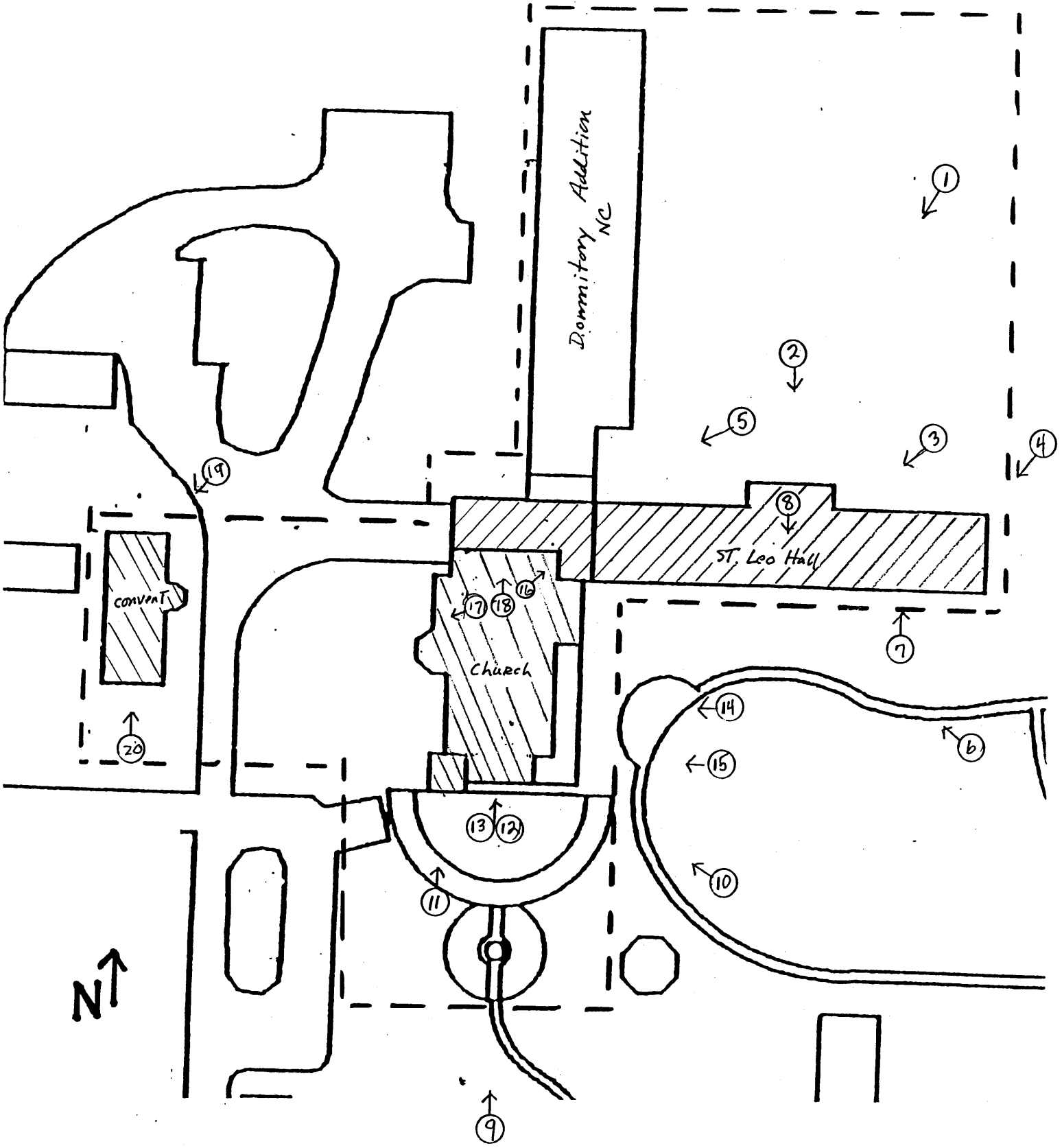
1. Church of the Holy Cross
6. Interior detail, looking northeast
7. Photo 16 of 20

1. Church of the Holy Cross
6. Interior detail, looking southwest
7. Photo 17 of 20

1. Church of the Holy Cross
6. Interior detail, of altar, looking north
7. Photo 18 of 20

1. Carmel Convent
6. Main (north) facade on right, east elevation on left; looking southwest
7. Photo 19 of 20

1. Carmel Convent
6. Rear (south) elevation on left, east elevation on right; looking northwest
7. Photo 20 of 20



CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES



NONCONTRIBUTING RESOURCES



SAINT LEO ABBEY HISTORIC DISTRICT
PASCO COUNTY, FL.
 Boundary - - - -
 Approx. Scale: 0.5" = 11'
 Photo Direction

SAINT LEO ABBEY HISTORIC DISTRICT

PASCO COUNTY, FL.

Approx. Scale: 0.25" = 33'

Boundary - - - - -

Building 1 = St. Leo Hall

Building 1A - St. Leo Hall addition

Building 2 - Church of the Holy Cross

Building 3 - Carmel Convent

