



56-9418

United States Department of 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 an 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. Mary School  
other names/site number St. Mary's School, St. Mary's Catholic School

2. Location

street & number 63 East Merrill Avenue N/A not for publication  
city or town Fond du lac N/A vicinity  
state Wisconsin code WI county Fond du lac code 039 zip code 54935

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.)

*David J. Leubman*  
Signature of certifying official/Title

3/13/2017  
Date

State Historic Preservation Office - Wisconsin  
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 commenting official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

St Mary School Building  
Name of Property

Fond du lac  
County and State

Wisconsin

#### 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.)

Edson H. Ball

5-1-17

lax

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

#### 5. Classification

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

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

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

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

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

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> contributing	<input type="checkbox"/> noncontributing
1	buildings
	sites
	structures
	objects
1	0 total

**Name of related multiple property listing:**  
(Enter "N/A" if property 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)

RELIGION/church school

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/not in use

#### 7. Description

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls STONE

roof ASPHALT

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 the National Register listing.)

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

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

Property is:

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

**Areas of Significance**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

- Education (A)
- Architecture (C)

**Period of Significance**

- 1949-1966 (Education)
- 1949 (Architecture)

**Significant Dates**

- 1949

**Significant Person**  
(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

- N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

- N/A

**Architect/Builder**

- Stepnoski, Frank J.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**  
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographic References**

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

**Previous Documentation on File** (National Park Service):

- 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:

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** less than one acre

**UTM References** (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1    16      383787.54      4848596.28  
      Zone    Easting            Northing

3    \_\_\_\_\_  
      Zone    Easting            Northing

2    \_\_\_\_\_  
      Zone    Easting            Northing

4    \_\_\_\_\_  
      Zone    Easting            Northing

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**

<b>name/title</b>	Emily Ramsey, Terry Tatum	<b>date</b>	November 8, 2016
<b>organization</b>	MacRostie Historic Advisors LLC	<b>telephone</b>	(312) 786-1700
<b>street &amp; number</b>	53 West Jackson Boulevard, Suite 1142	<b>zip code</b>	60604-3619
<b>city or town</b>	Chicago	<b>state</b>	IL

St. Mary School  
Name of Property

Fond du lac  
County and State

Wisconsin

### 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.)

<b>name/title</b>	Kevin McDonell	<b>date</b>	November 8, 2016
<b>organization</b>	Commonwealth Development Corp.	<b>telephone</b>	(608) 709-5677
<b>street &amp; number</b>	54 E. First Street	<b>zip code</b>	54835-4204
<b>city or town</b>	Fond du lac	<b>state</b>	WI

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

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Site and Setting

The St. Mary School, the subject of this nomination, is located in the city of Fond du Lac, in the center of the city, just north of the downtown. The school is part of a larger complex having a church, rectory, convent, and school. St. Mary School is individually eligible and is therefore being nominated apart from the complex. The school is located in a residential neighborhood of single-family homes and faces East Merrill Avenue, east of the St. Mary's Church building (built 1901) and southwest of the parish's convent building (built 1955) which faces Amory Street. A small landscaped lawn is set between the east end of the building and Armory Street and has a small statue of St. Joseph from 1960. This statue lacks sufficient size to be included in the resource inventory. A large paved parking lot behind the school faces, and is accessed from, East Rees Street. Single-family houses line the south side of Merrill Avenue, across from the school building.

The St. Mary School retains excellent historic integrity, retaining the vast majority of both exterior and interior character-defining features, including masonry walls and detailing, historic window openings, interior circulation patterns, staircases, significant interior spaces, and historic plaster, wood, terrazzo and tile finishes.

The historic record shows that the church and parish were referred to as St. Mary's (possessive). The name of the school fluctuates in the historic record, sometimes being referred to as St. Mary's but more frequently called St. Mary. One might consider both versions correct, but since one version had to be chosen for the nomination, the name most frequently used in the historic record: St. Mary School, is used.

Exterior

The school building was built in 1949 in the mid-century modern Contemporary architectural style. It is two stories in height with a concrete foundation and is clad with rusticated limestone similar to that used for the church building, plus gray limestone trim. It is T-shaped in floor plan, with classrooms facing East Merrill Avenue and a rear auditorium/gymnasium wing extending north into the rear parking lot and towards East Rees Street. The building is rectilinear in its overall form and details. It has a flat roof with bitumen roofing material on the main building. The gymnasium has a shallow gable roof. Horizontal bands of windows at the first and second floors dominate the primary (south) façade and the rear (north) wall of the main building.

The south (front) facade facing Merrill is symmetrical, with a central entrance "pavilion" projecting slightly in front of classroom wings extending to either side. Interestingly, this arrangement and massing reflects Neoclassical influences. A trio of front doors are accessed by a wide set of nine

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limestone steps with flanking limestone walls and a simple metal pipe railing. The three doors have transparent glass above opaque painted panels and are set in silver-metal sash with clear, non-historic transoms. The doors are flanked by a pair of windows set in similar silver-metal sash. A second-floor band of windows with similar silver-metal sash and multiple panes, some operable as hopper sash, is centered above the entrance. Both the entrance and second-floor windows are non-historic replacement windows within the original openings and are set within a gray limestone wall ornamented with flanking slender limestone sculptures rising to modernistic low-relief sculptures of the Virgin Mary and Jesus. Between the entrance and the second-floor band of windows are four sculptural blocks depicting the emblems of the Four Evangelists in a modernistic style. Above the second-floor windows is the name of the building, "ST MARY'S SCHOOL," set in thin, sans-serif, modernistic lettering projecting from the building wall. A modernistic cross in silver metal rises above the roof parapet.

The flanking classroom wings are rectilinear in form and simple in detailing. Limestone walls are pierced with horizontal bands of windows on both first and second floors. These windows have lower silver-metal sash with two rows of window panes—although the configuration of these windows is consistent with the windows that appear in historic photographs, the windows themselves appear to be replacements within the original openings. Above, painted-metal panels appear to cover original glass block. The basement windows are small, a pair of windows flanked by single windows in each structural bay. At either end of the school, slightly-projecting secondary entrances have a pair of non-historic glass doors and associated single-pane transom set in silver-metal sash. Separating each of these entrances and second-floor windows are smooth gray-limestone spandrels with small modernistic sculptural blocks. The original glass block in these second-floor openings has been replaced with metal and glass windows within the original openings.

The east (side) facade has a pair of windows, one on each floor, and faces a small landscaped garden with a sculpture of St. Joseph dating from 1960. The west side of the building faces the church and a paved area ornamented by the 1948 grotto. This side has a secondary entrance with a pair of doors and clerestory windows projecting out from the building. Above is a second-floor window. All sash is silver metal consistent with the non-historic windows on the south facade. Both of these facades are clad with rusticated limestone.

Rear facades are more utilitarian in appearance. Walls are light-red brick with gray limestone trim. The classroom wings have horizontal bands of windows similar to those on the front facade. The rear auditorium/gymnasium wing is two stories in height, clad with brick, and has a shallow gable roof. Large clerestory windows light its interior. The windows in the gymnasium appear to be original. A rear entrance with two pairs of double glass doors, set under an entrance roof, are located at the west intersection of the rear auditorium/gymnasium and front classroom wing. To the north of this entrance is a one-story service wing, projecting somewhat from the auditorium/gymnasium, which is clad with

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brick and with four garage doors and a recessed pedestrian entrance. North of this projecting section is a double-door entrance to the northern end of the auditorium/gymnasium. These doors are gray metal with small slit windows.

Continuing around the school building in a clockwise manner, a one-story brick wing with a flat roof extends north from the auditorium/gymnasium. It has small basement and first-floor windows. The east side of the auditorium/gymnasium has high clerestory windows set apart by projecting piers.

Interior

Inside the school, the main entrance from Merrill Avenue opens into an airlock vestibule with three wood inner doors, each with three horizontal panes of glass and a transom. Past these doors, a small inner lobby opens directly into a wide east-west, double-loaded corridor with tile wainscoting and terrazzo floors, off of which classrooms, offices and restrooms all open. Doors are varnished wood with glass panels. Classrooms are large, with linoleum-tile floors, plaster walls and acoustic-tile ceilings. Florescent-light fixtures hang from the ceiling. Some classrooms have built-in wood wall cabinets. Staircases at either end of the school lead to the second floor and basement. The second floor has a similar arrangement of corridor and classroom spaces with similar detailing. The building served grades 1-8. Classrooms on the first and second floor do not appear to include any specialized spaces. The lunchroom, a large library and support spaces are all located in the basement. The basement cafeteria features original kitchen with pass-through opening, glazed tile walls and linoleum flooring. The west side of the basement originally housed a bowling alley that was used by all parishioners, but in 1966 this space was converted to a library to serve the school specifically. The library features non-historic carpeting and painted walls.

On the first floor, a north-south cross-axis corridor leads to the main rear entrance lobby, accessed by a short flight of steps descending to the entrance to the auditorium/gymnasium. The two-story connector between the main building and gymnasium wing features a large entrance lobby on the first floor, with the main exterior entrance to the gymnasium on the west wall and offices and a stair on the east wall. Double doors on the north wall of the lobby open directly into the gymnasium. On the second floor, the connector features a short corridor that terminates with a doorway to the balcony seating on the south wall of the gymnasium. Small storage closets are located along the east wall of the connector at the second floor.

The gymnasium wing houses primarily the large, two-story, clear-span gymnasium/auditorium space. The floors in this space are wood and walls are faced with glazed tile. Pull-out wooden bleachers line the walls and a large stage occupies the north wall of the space. The metal roof structure is exposed and the ceiling between the structural frames is acoustical tile. Along the west side of the gymnasium wing on the first floor is a large kitchen and garage. Storage rooms are located north of the stage on the



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first floor. Stairs lead down to the basement locker rooms.

Integrity

The St. Mary School has very good exterior integrity, retaining its historic form, most building materials, and detailing. The only significant change involves the building's windows. Metal panels cover what were originally glass-block transoms that were part of the long horizontal bands of windows on both first and second floors. Put in place after 1989, these panels appear to be simply covering the existing glass block; further investigation is needed to determine the existence of the glass-block transoms. The remainder of the windows appears to be non-historic replacement windows within the original openings.

The interior integrity of the St. Mary School also is very good. It retains its historic double-loaded corridors with plaster walls, tile wainscoting, terrazzo floors, and wood-and-glass classroom doors. Classrooms retain historic spatial configurations, wood trim and built-in shelves and cabinets, light fixtures and other details. The gymnasium/auditorium also retains its historic spatial configuration, details and finishes.

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Summary

The St. Mary School, designed by the Fond du Lac architectural firm of Frank Stepnoski and Sons and built in 1949, is locally significant under National Register Criterion A, in the area of Education as a laboratory school devoted to teacher education. This is where student teachers from Marian College, a local Roman Catholic school of higher learning, could receive their necessary teaching experience guided by experienced professionals. As such, the school is a significant local building exemplifying the important twentieth-century themes of education professionalization and teacher education. Therefore the building is nominated under Criterion A for education, the building's period of significance is 1949 (the date the building opened as a school) to 1966 (the fifty-year cut off for National Register listing).

The St. Mary School is also locally significant under National Register Criterion C, in the area of Architecture as a distinctive and exemplary early modern school building designed in the Contemporary architectural style within the context of the city of Fond du Lac. Before World War II, Fond du Lac school buildings, whether public or private, elaborate or simple, were designed in historical styles. The St. Mary School is an early post-war example of modernism used for a school building in the city. Its rectilinear form, flat roof, horizontal bands of windows, and use of non-historic, abstracted decoration, as well as modern interior elements, exemplify modern Contemporary style schools being built after World War II. Within the local context of Fond du Lac, the St. Mary School building is the earliest of this wave of modern educational construction. The building retains very good exterior and interior historic integrity. Under Criterion C, the building's period of significance is 1949 (its date of construction).

The St. Mary School also meets Criteria Consideration A as a building built by a religious institution and owned by that religious institution during its period of significance, but which possesses architectural and secular historical significance separate from religious belief or doctrine. The building is a locally-significant Contemporary style school building, and its architectural form and detailing exemplifies this style of importance in the history of American architecture. It also is significant as an elementary school building that exemplifies the historic importance of education and teacher education in the context of Fond du Lac.

An Overview of the History of Fond du Lac

The city of Fond du Lac is a largely working- and middle-class city in Fond du Lac County, located on the Fond du Lac River at the southern tip of Lake Winnebago in east-central Wisconsin. Historically its economy depended on industries and businesses such as lumber and railroads, which drew

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European immigrants as residents to the city during the period of its greatest development in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. In support of Fond du Lac's large Roman Catholic immigrant population, Catholic parishes, including St. Mary's Parish, were established in the early decades of the city's history. Founded in 1865, St. Mary's Parish was the city's national parish for ethnic-German Catholics. Through its church and school, St. Mary's has served as a center of faith, education and community for roughly 150 years. St. Mary School in particular was a focus for ethnic-German immigrants and their descendants from its early establishment in 1857, even before the parish's founding, to the late-twentieth century.

The part of the state of Wisconsin where Fond-du-Lac is located was first explored by French Catholic missionaries and fur traders most likely between the 1670s and 1718. The name "Fond du Lac" means "farthest or end of the lake" in French and appears to have become associated with this general area during this early period of European exploration.<sup>1</sup>

In 1787, the Fond du Lac area officially became part of the United States as part of the Northwest Territory. That year, a European trading post was established at the forks of the Fond du Lac River. Although abandoned sometime before 1819, this post served early European traders and trappers in their interactions with Winnebago Indians living in the area, as did a trading post established that year in the area.<sup>2</sup>

By the 1820s, the fur trade was waning, and Native Americans were being removed from their land for resettlement on reservations or pushed further west. Europeans began to settle in the Fond du Lac area permanently in the 1830s, starting with the 1835 purchase of 3,705 acres of land at the mouth of the Fond du Lac River into Lake Winnebago by the Fond du Lac Company, led by James Duane Doty and George McWilliams. At this time, the city of Fond du Lac was platted. Soon after, early pioneers Colwert Pier and Edward Pier each purchased 160 acres of Doty's original plat of Fond du Lac from the Fond du Lac Company, and Colwert Pier and his wife Fanny began operating a tavern, inn, and land office as agents for the company. The Piers are acknowledged as the first permanent European settlers of Fond du Lac.<sup>3</sup>

In 1838, the Fond du Lac Company recruited a doctor, Mason C. Darling, to settle in the new community. Darling saw opportunity in real-estate development and purchased 80 acres from the company. Through shrewd business moves, Darling was able to center the new settlement's

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<sup>1</sup> Michael D. Lempinen and Les Ross, "Intensive Survey Report, Architectural and Historical Survey Project, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin," Prepared for the City of Fond-du-Lac, Wisconsin, May 1989, Historical Overview, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

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development on his acreage, which became the center of Fond du Lac's historic downtown.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the efforts of Darling and other early residents, the new town grew slowly, reaching a population of only 400 by 1847. That year, the Wisconsin territorial legislature authorized a village charter for Fond du Lac.<sup>5</sup> Commercial activity quickened in the next few years, thanks to receiving a branch line of the Chicago & NorthWestern Railroad. By 1852, when the community received a city charter, Fond du Lac was a bustling city of approximately 5,000, centered on several lumber mills making 12 million board feet of lumber and 6 million shingles a year. Besides eight hotels and numerous shops and other commercial ventures, the city now had four elementary schools and six churches of major denominations, including St. Louis Roman Catholic Church (the parent church of St. Mary's Church), which was started in 1847. It was during this decade that German Catholic immigrants, feeling strongly the need for their children to receive a Catholic-oriented education in their own language, established a small school in a modest wood-frame building on East Merrill Avenue, on the site of the current school and parish. This was the founding institution for St. Mary School.<sup>6</sup>

The combination of the lumber industry and the Chicago & NorthWestern Railroad encouraged Fond du Lac's growth. By the Civil War period of the 1860s, the city had doubled in size to 10,000 residents, many of whom worked in the lumber mills and the railroad's car shops. Other industries included flour mills and iron works. It was during this decade that St. Mary's Parish, dedicated to ethnic-German residents of Fond du Lac, was formally established in 1865.<sup>7</sup>

In 1875, Fond du Lac had 15,308 residents. The 1989 "Intensive Survey Report" for the city noted that, at this time, the community had "18 churches, six banks, a dozen hotels, four foundries, 14 sawmills, and two flour mills."<sup>8</sup> Church buildings were built in Fond du Lac's downtown area, including buildings for St. Mary's Parish and its sister parish, St. Joseph.<sup>9</sup>

The lumber industry was waning by this time, and combined initially with the 1873 economic panic which affected economic growth in general throughout the United States, Fond du Lac began to slow in economic growth despite the efforts of new industries, including tanneries, machine shops and similar endeavors. A small resort industry centered on Lake Winnebago and local artesian wells grew

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Michael D. Lempinen and Les Ross, "Intensive Survey Report, Architectural and Historical Survey Project, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin," Prepared for the City of Fond-du-Lac, Wisconsin, May 1989, Historical Overview, p. 10; Michael D. Lempinen and Les Ross, "Intensive Survey Report, Architectural and Historical Survey Project, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin," Prepared for the City of Fond-du-Lac, Wisconsin, May 1989, Settlement and Immigration, p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., Michael D. Lempinen and Les Ross, "Intensive Survey Report, Architectural and Historical Survey Project, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin," Prepared for the City of Fond-du-Lac, Wisconsin, May 1989, Religion, pp. 98-99.

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in popularity, but by itself was unable to replace the economic might of the declining lumber industry.<sup>10</sup> It was in 1886-1887, during this period of slower town growth, that St. Mary's parish built a two-story school building on Merrill to replace the 1857 wood-frame building, which was moved elsewhere on the parish property. This new building, given the nickname, "Old Dutch College," by generations of St. Mary's parishioners, was located on the western portion of the site occupied by the current school building.<sup>11</sup>

It was not until the early 1900s that Fond du Lac's economy began to quicken. Railroad repair shops owned by the Soo Line and the Chicago & NorthWestern Railroad employed around 1,700 men in 1912. The city's industrial base diversified further with companies such as the Fred Rueping Leather Company, the Sweet Company, the Moore and Galloway Lumber Company, the Huber and Fuhrman Drug Mills, the Giddings and Lewis Company, the O.C. Steenberg Company, the Vulcan Manufacturing Company, the Galloway-West Company, and the Bechaud Brewing Company. Between the railroads and these and other industries, Fond du Lac remained a prosperous small city of commerce and industry until the post-World War II era.<sup>12</sup> It is during this era of prosperity and growth that the current St. Mary's Church building was constructed in 1901. Plans for a new school building for St. Mary's Parish were discussed in the late 1920s before the economic downturn of the Great Depression dried up money for such construction.<sup>13</sup>

The post-World War II era saw some stagnation in industrial output and the removal of much retail activity from Fond du Lac's historic downtown to the city's west side, although specialty retail shops remain in the historic downtown, along with many government offices and professional service providers.<sup>14</sup> Several historic church buildings, including the St. Mary's Church, remained downtown, located on or near Marr Street. It was early in this period that money became available for the construction of the St. Mary School. Built in 1949, the building solidified St. Mary's Parish as an important center of Catholic elementary education in Fond du Lac.<sup>15</sup>

Industry has declined with the general rise of overseas manufacturing since the 1960s, which has adversely affected formerly industrial-oriented communities through much of the United States, including Fond du Lac. The city today has 43,021 residents as of the 2010 United States census.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Schmitz, *More than Brick and Stone*, p.29.

<sup>12</sup> Michael D. Lempinen and Les Ross, "Intensive Survey Report, Architectural and Historical Survey Project, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin," Prepared for the City of Fond-du-Lac, Wisconsin, May 1989, Historical Overview, pp. 11-12.

<sup>13</sup> Schmitz, *More than Brick and Stone*, pp. 31-32.

<sup>14</sup> Michael D. Lempinen and Les Ross, "Intensive Survey Report, Architectural and Historical Survey Project, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin," Prepared for the City of Fond-du-Lac, Wisconsin, May 1989, Historical Overview, p. 12

<sup>15</sup> Schmitz, *More than Brick and Stone*, p. 33.

<sup>16</sup> "American Fact Finder," United States Census, [http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community\\_facts.xhtml](http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml); accessed December 6, 2015.

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History of St. Mary's Parish

St. Mary's Parish was an off-shoot of the original St. Louis Church (now St. Joseph Parish), the "mother church" of Fond du Lac Catholics. Great growth of Catholics in the burgeoning city in the mid-nineteenth century, combined with the desire of each ethnic group to have its own church, led German Catholics to leave St. Louis Parish for their own new parish, named St. Mary's, which was founded on November 15, 1865, with a core of 21 German-speaking families.<sup>17</sup> Two lots were acquired at the northeast corner of Merrill and Marquette streets for the new church. Located on the current site of St. Mary's Church, the first St. Mary's Church building (no longer extant) was dedicated the following year on December 8, 1866. It was a 40 by 60 foot, wood-frame building with a steeple costing \$2,000.<sup>18</sup> Two years later, in 1868, a rectory was constructed. The parish grew, and a church addition was built in 1875.<sup>19</sup>

This first St. Mary's Church was built next to an already-established German-language Catholic school. Prior to the formal establishment of this German parish, this school had been established in 1857 when a small German-language school was opened on Merrill Street by German members of St. Louis Church. This facility is credited as the first parochial school in Fond du Lac and is considered the original St. Mary parish school. The building was a one-room frame building (no longer extant).<sup>20</sup>

In 1887, a new parochial school building replaced the original St. Mary School building from 1857. A two-story brick school building (no longer extant) was built on Merrill Avenue, east of the existing church building. The old wood school from 1857 was moved and used as a church annex until 1901.<sup>21</sup>

In 1900, St. Mary's Parish had approximately 200 families counted as members, while the school itself had about 235 students.<sup>22</sup> The current St. Mary's Church building was constructed in 1901. Planning for the new church building began in the fall of 1900. The Milwaukee architectural firm of Henry Messmer & Son was selected to design the building, with Gordon Georgerson as builder. The cornerstone was laid on July 7, 1901. Construction was rapid, and the church building was complete enough to have masses begin in September 1901. The building's dedication was held in February

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<sup>17</sup> Heritage Research, Ltd., "Historical & Architectural Resource Survey, City of Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI," Prepared for Fond du Lac Historic Preservation Commission, 2011, p. 46.

<sup>18</sup> Wettstein, *150 Years of Catholic Faith*, p. 70.

<sup>19</sup> Heritage Research, Ltd., "Historical & Architectural Resource Survey, City of Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI," Prepared for Fond du Lac Historic Preservation Commission, 2011, p. 46; Wettstein, *150 Years of Catholic Faith*, p. 72.

<sup>20</sup> Wettstein, *150 Years of Catholic Faith*, p. 70, 79.

<sup>21</sup> Heritage Research, Ltd., "Historical & Architectural Resource Survey, City of Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI," Prepared for Fond du Lac Historic Preservation Commission, 2011, p. 46; Wettstein, *150 Years of Catholic Faith*, p. 80-81.

<sup>22</sup> Schmitz, *More than Brick and Stone*, p. 64.

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1902.<sup>23</sup> Costing approximately \$40,000, the new Gothic Revival-style church building was located on the northeast corner of Merrill and Marquette streets and was constructed of Fond du Lac limestone quarried in Knowles and trimmed with Indiana Bedford limestone.<sup>24</sup>

In the early-twentieth century, St. Mary's Parish was an important religious institution for ethnic-German Catholics in Fond du Lac. In his history of St. Mary's Parish, the Rev. John J. Schmitz noted:

These (the early 1900s) were the "good old days" of the "institutional church" when it was important to be something, and belong to organizations. It was the era of the German ghetto, and the people sought their identity through belonging to organizations. The parish was not merely their place of worship, but their social, intellectual and cultural center as well.<sup>25</sup>

By the parish's Golden Jubilee in 1916, St. Mary's Parish had 400 member families, while its school had an enrollment of about 400 students.<sup>26</sup>

The 1887 St. Mary School building received rear additions in 1900 and 1910. Overcrowding forced the school hall stage to be subdivided as classrooms in 1925, but a campaign to raise money for a new school was suspended with the onset of the Great Depression. Also in 1925, the use of German was discontinued in St. Mary School after having been required for half the day's classes since the school's beginnings.<sup>27</sup> This change in instruction was due in part to the anti-German feelings stirred in the United States in the wake of World War I, when German-language instruction in most ethnic-German schools around the country was discontinued; however, the discontinuance of German-language instruction at St. Mary School also reflected changes in parish membership, as later-generation parishioners frequently were not fluent in German and identified with mainstream America.<sup>28</sup>

Finally, a new 16-classroom school building was built in 1949.<sup>29</sup> It was designed in the mid-century modern Contemporary style by the Fond du Lac architectural firm of Frank Stepnoski and Son and built by the Hutter Construction Co., also of Fond du Lac. Plans were drawn up in late 1948 and construction began in 1949. The school opened in September 1949 with 592 students, while its formal

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<sup>23</sup> Heritage Research, Ltd., "Historical & Architectural Resource Survey, City of Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI," Prepared for Fond du Lac Historic Preservation Commission, 2011, p. 46.

<sup>24</sup> Heritage Research, Ltd., "Historical & Architectural Resource Survey, City of Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI," Prepared for Fond du Lac Historic Preservation Commission, 2011, p. 45; Schmitz, *More than Brick and Stone*, p. 43.

<sup>25</sup> Schmitz, *More than Brick and Stone*, p. 47.

<sup>26</sup> Schmitz, *More than Brick and Stone*, p. 48.

<sup>27</sup> Heritage Research, Ltd., "Historical & Architectural Resource Survey, City of Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI," Prepared for Fond du Lac Historic Preservation Commission, 2011, p. 46; Wettstein, *150 Years of Catholic Faith*, p. 87.

<sup>28</sup> Wettstein, *150 Years of Catholic Faith*, p. 81.

<sup>29</sup> Heritage Research, Ltd., "Historical & Architectural Resource Survey, City of Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI," Prepared for Fond du Lac Historic Preservation Commission, 2011, p. 45.

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dedication waited until the following year.<sup>30</sup>

In 1966, St. Mary's Parish had 6,958 members;<sup>31</sup> however, membership declined a great deal in the remaining years of the twentieth century. St. Mary's ceased to be a separate Catholic parish in 1998, when all Fond du Lac parishes were merged to form Holy Family Catholic Community.<sup>32</sup> The church building continues to be used for religious services, while the school building remains used as a school.

The History of St. Mary School

The nominated building is an educational institution of importance to the Fond du Lac community. Educational buildings, including elementary schools such as St. Mary School, reflect the profound importance that the education of children has in the history and development of the United States. By the twentieth century, every American locality, whether it be a sparsely populated rural area served by modest one-room school buildings, or great cities where a plethora of educational opportunities abounded, both public and private, saw education as fundamental to society. In Fond du Lac, there were both public and private schools serving the city's children. Many of the buildings that historically served Fond de Lac have been demolished. The St. Mary School building is one of a very few historic period schools that remain.

The St. Mary School exemplifies the importance of teacher education and the professionalization of education in twentieth-century America. St. Mary School was a laboratory school, an important twentieth-century concept where teachers were educated and new techniques for teaching were developed. The St. Mary School was the setting for student teaching and training of education students studying at the local, Roman Catholic, Marian College. College faculty and St. Mary's teachers worked together to support and nurture these nascent teachers. As such, the St. Mary School building reflects the importance of laboratory schools and student teaching to the history of education in Fond du Lac.

St. Mary School as an educational institution dates from 1857, when a group of German immigrants joined together to build a school for their children. Members of St. Louis Parish, these people wanted educations for their families taught in German and more closely in tune with their cultural values. Not receiving much encouragement from church leaders, three men—German Scherzinger, Anton Rothgery and John Dana—went ahead with acquiring land, the Servatius property on Merrill Street, for

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<sup>30</sup> Heritage Research, Ltd., "Historical & Architectural Resource Survey, City of Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI," Prepared for Fond du Lac Historic Preservation Commission, 2011, p. 46; Wettstein, *150 Years of Catholic Faith*, p. 82.

<sup>31</sup> "500 to be at St. Mary's 100th Anniversary Event," *Commonwealth Reporter*, December 10, 1966.

<sup>32</sup> Heritage Research, Ltd., "Historical & Architectural Resource Survey, City of Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI," Prepared for Fond du Lac Historic Preservation Commission, 2011, p. 46.



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the school. Here, a one-story wood-frame school building (demolished) was built, opening in 1857 with John H. Gores as schoolmaster. This small German school provided instruction in both German and English.<sup>33</sup>

With the establishment of St. Mary's Parish in 1865, the little school building formally became a parish school. It prospered as the parish prospered, with many new German immigrants coming to Fond du Lac in the post-Civil War era. In 1879, the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Agnes, a religious community dedicated to teaching and nursing, began to teach at the school. The Sisters of St. Agnes had been founded only recently, in 1850 in Barton, Wisconsin, by Father Caspar Rehrl.<sup>34</sup> The teacher-nuns were housed in a small building (demolished) behind the school.<sup>35</sup>

This old school building, small in size and residential in overall form and feeling, was replaced in 1886-1887 by a new two-story, red-brick building with a more imposing appearance. Two existing houses nearby on Merrill Ave. were bought and demolished for the site of the new school, designed by Van Rynn and De Gellee of Milwaukee. The building had a front-gable roof and projecting entrance with corbel detailing and a delicately-detailed spire within which the school bell hung. Much larger than the old school building, this new structure, intended to accommodate 200 students, was constructed for \$7,700 and had four classrooms on the first floor and a hall with stage and gallery on the second floor. The old school building was moved elsewhere on parish property, serving until 1901 as a small chapel, then an annex to the church itself, being demolished when the current St. Mary's Church was constructed.<sup>36</sup>

The Rev. John J. Schmitz, a priest with St. Mary's Parish in the 1960s and the author of a centennial history of the parish, noted the pride that the parish took in the new 1886-1887 building and the parish's by-then 30-year dedication to parochial education: "This was the red 'Old Dutch College' that for so many years stood as a landmark beside the Church as the only Catholic parochial grade school in the city."<sup>37</sup> The Sisters of St. Agnes continued to staff the school, including providing musical instruction through the formation of a school band in the early 1900s.<sup>38</sup>

Over time, additions were made to the 1886-1887 school building as more students were taught at the school. A two-room, one-story frame addition was built on the rear of the existing building in 1900. It was used until 1910 when a larger, two-story addition replaced it. The second-floor hall stage was

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<sup>33</sup> Schmitz, *More than Brick and Stone*, pp. 27-28.

<sup>34</sup> "Catholics," Wisconsin CRMP, not paginated; Margaret Lorimer, *Ordinary Sisters: The Story of the Sisters of St. Agnes, 1858-1990*.

<sup>35</sup> Schmitz, *More than Brick and Stone*, p. 28.

<sup>36</sup> Schmitz, *More than Brick and Stone*, pp. 28-29.

<sup>37</sup> Schmitz, *More than Brick and Stone*, p. 29.

<sup>38</sup> Schmitz, *More than Brick and Stone*, pp. 35, 37.

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subdivided into classrooms in 1925.<sup>39</sup>

By 1928, plans for a new school building were begun. Money was donated and property for the larger school was obtained. Unfortunately, fundraising had not been completed when the Great Depression descended upon the country, making any new buildings for St. Mary's Parish out of the question. Parish income dropped from \$31,000 in 1928 to less than \$20,000 in 1930, and many pledges of money made in flush times were not fulfilled.<sup>40</sup>

For several years, no progress was made on a new St. Mary's School building. By 1938 though, the economy had improved enough that the parish revived construction plans. The following year, additional property for the school was acquired. Then World War II put any hopes for construction on hold.<sup>41</sup>

Fortunately, the school building fund held by the parish increased in the economic prosperity encouraged by wartime spending, reaching \$151,807.49 by war's end in 1945. In 1948, a building committee was formed, an architect (Frank Stepnoski and Son) was hired, and permission for a new school was granted by the archbishop. The Hutter Construction Company was hired as contractors, and a ceremonial groundbreaking for the new St. Mary's School took place on June 12, 1949.<sup>42</sup>

Construction of the east portion of the new school took place while the old school building, located just to the west, continued in use. Upon completion of the east wing, the old school building was quickly demolished and the remainder of the new school was built. The new school building opened for the 1949-1950 school year, but its dedication by Archbishop Moses E. Kiley did not occur until 1950. Initial enrollment was 592 students.<sup>43</sup>

The new St. Mary's School building was touted as the most modern and up-to-date parochial school in Wisconsin. Rev. Schmitz noted, in his history, the basement cafeteria, which was also used for parish meetings of various sorts over time. He goes on to state:

The school building has always been more than a classroom building; it has been a social center and gathering place. The west wing of the school had a bowling alley in the basement, and for years the ten lanes provided a center of interest and recreation for the parish. The lanes have since been removed [by 1966] to provide for further progress. Space was needed for ever growing educational demands of the parish. Room was needed for showing visual aids and filmstrips to children, and religious instruction

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<sup>39</sup> Schmitz, *More than Brick and Stone*, pp. 29, 31.

<sup>40</sup> Schmitz, *More than Brick and Stone*, p. 31.

<sup>41</sup> Schmitz, *More than Brick and Stone*, p. 31.

<sup>42</sup> Schmitz, *More than Brick and Stone*, p. 33.

<sup>43</sup> Schmitz, *More than Brick and Stone*, pp. 37, 39.

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programs for the children in public schools had expanded.<sup>44</sup>

*The Official Catholic Directory for the Year of Our Lord 1953* noted that St. Mary's School was the largest Catholic parochial elementary school by far in Fond du Lac, with 706 students. By comparison, the next largest, St. Joseph School, had only 579 students, while St. Patrick School had 363 students and Presentation School at 206 students. (St. Louis Parish did not yet have a school and Sacred Heart Parish had not been founded yet.)<sup>45</sup> The 1961 edition of this national publication noted that St. Mary's School remained the largest Catholic elementary school in Fond du Lac with 869 students. Next largest remained St. Joseph with 749 students, followed by St. Patrick (410), Presentation (394), Sacred Heart (300) and St. Louis (288).<sup>46</sup>

Criterion A – Education

In the years after its construction, the St. Mary's School was used as a laboratory school by Marian College in support of its elementary teacher education program. Established in 1936 by the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Agnes, the same religious order that staffed St. Mary's School, Marian College was started to provide college education in teaching and nursing, among other fields. Its focus was especially on providing Agnesian nuns a convenient means by which they could receive the kind of specialized training in teaching that increasingly was required by state accreditation standards. A 1960 handbook published by Marian College noted: "St. Mary's Parochial School, a modern school with 16 classrooms, gymnasium, library, cafeteria, service and conference rooms, serves as a laboratory school for the college. Students may arrange to observe and work with children here in connection with various course assignments."<sup>47</sup>

Laboratory schools developed as part of progressive educational theories and practices in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. During this Progressive Era, innovative educators worked to create more effective teaching methods that could be incorporated in elementary and secondary schools. John Dewey was prominent in this larger movement of progressive educational thought as he founded the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools in 1896 as a necessary venue for testing new teaching practices. Teachers College at Columbia University also was a center of progressive education, as was the Catholic University of America. Many colleges with teaching programs started their own elementary schools, or associated themselves with existing local schools, which became "laboratories" for the evaluation of new teaching methods and the training of teachers. Although the effectiveness of such laboratory schools was questioned in the immediate post-World War II years, laboratory schools remain a significant component of many university teaching programs throughout

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<sup>44</sup> Schmitz, *More than Brick and Stone*, p. 39.

<sup>45</sup> *The Official Catholic Directory for the Year of Our Lord 1953*.

<sup>46</sup> *The Official Catholic Directory for the Year of Our Lord 1961*.

<sup>47</sup> Marian College, *The Program for Elementary Teacher Education at Marian College: A Handbook*, p. 6.

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the United States.<sup>48</sup>

The St. Mary's School Building was seen in the 1950s and 1960s as a spacious, well-equipped school building and a suitable place for teacher training. In a 1966 handbook detailing the Marian College teacher-education program, it was noted that, in a laboratory school, "the student is afforded specific opportunities to observe children in classroom situations, to work with them in small groups, or individually and to evaluate these experiences with the classroom teachers and the college instructors."<sup>49</sup> A report prepared in 1966 by Marian College for submission to the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education noted that St. Mary's School had been the only laboratory school for Marian College student teachers through the 1950s and early 1960s, and that it remained the most-actively used Fond du Lac school for such teacher training in 1966, with twice the number of supervising teachers and four times the number of student teachers of any other local school.<sup>50</sup> A similar 1975 report noted that the association of Fond du Lac schools such as St. Mary's with Marian College's teacher-training program had been ongoing for more than twenty years<sup>51</sup>. As such, the St. Mary's School was associated through the 1950s and 1960s with elementary school teacher training and methods innovation that was a historically-significant theme running through twentieth-century American education.

Criterion C – Architecture

The St. Mary's School building is a handsome and exemplary modern school building in the Contemporary architectural style. Its design and construction in 1949 reflects the profound shift away from historic revival styles and towards modern styles for many building types, including schools, in the United States in the post-World War II era.

The Contemporary architectural style became an important style in the post-World War II period of the late 1940s and 1950s, although aspects of the style can be seen in select trend-setting buildings built before the war, such as Crow Island School in Winnetka, Illinois (1940-41, Eero Saarinen with Perkins, Wheeler & Will, listed as a National Historic Landmark in 1990). Unlike most American buildings built in the early-twentieth century, Contemporary-style buildings are not based on historic architectural forms or detailing. There is influence from avant-garde International Style buildings built in Europe in the late 1920s and 1930s in that Contemporary-style buildings, like the earlier properties,

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<sup>48</sup> Wanda F. Johnson, *The Laboratory School: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*, Chapter 3; Pose M. Lamb, "The Laboratory School: An Historical Perspective," *The Journal of Educational Research*, Vol. 56, No. 2 (October 1962), pp. 107-109.

<sup>49</sup> Marian College, *The Program for Elementary Teacher Education at Marian College of Fond du Lac: A Handbook*, p. 28.

<sup>50</sup> Marian College, *A Report on the Teacher Education Programs of Marian College of Fond du Lac to the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education*, pp. 103, 105.

<sup>51</sup> Marian College, *Teacher Education Programs at Marian College of Fond du Lac: A report to the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education*, p. 94.

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also emphasize geometric building forms, flat roofs, horizontal arrangement of windows, and restrained use of ornament, typically non-historic in appearance. Windows may be separate, but often they stretch across facades in continuous bands or strips of glazing. The results are clean-lined buildings that speak of modernity, rational purpose, and a visual sense of "looking ahead" rather than to the past. The St. Mary's School building's rectilinear form, clean building lines, simplified ornament, horizontal bands of windows, and flat roof epitomize modern Contemporary style architecture as it was used for school buildings during this period.

Throughout the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, most school buildings in the United States were considered functional buildings, given exterior decoration in architectural styles based on historic design influences, typically either Classical or medieval in origin. Early in the twentieth century, the Prairie style was influential in some places, especially Chicago and other Midwestern cities, while the Arts and Crafts, with its focus on the inherent visual qualities of building materials, gained popularity. In the 1920s and 1930s, the Art Deco and Art Moderne styles, both non-historic yet decorative, were used for schools. During the Depression years of the late 1930s, a rising trend towards simplification of form and ornament heralded the coming popularity of Modernism after the hiatus in building caused by the Depression and World War II.<sup>52</sup>

This modernist trend was aided by the rising popularity of functional design. School buildings had always been seen as needing to inexpensively fulfill the use requirements of educational practice in fashion at the time of their construction. Combined with the financial stress that many school systems had as they attempted to construct schools fast enough to match demand in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, functionalism had always been a part of school design. The focus on function intensified<sup>53</sup> in the wake of general architectural changes brought about by modernist architects and theorists.

Educators increasingly were advocating for schools that were flexible and adaptable in their spaces. Modern technical innovations including air conditioning, fluorescent lights, and the use of ceramic and linoleum tiles for wall and floor cladding also encouraged stylistic innovation. Functionalism focused design attention on simplicity and practicality. It realistically addressed challenges of meeting the post-war demand for new schools, while also being seen as being in support of modern theories and practices of education. Modern schools used new building technologies and materials, reducing the costs to build and to maintain.<sup>54</sup>

This transition to non-historic modern styles for school buildings is part of a larger trend in American

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<sup>52</sup> R. Thomas Hille, *Modern School: A century of design for education*, Chapter 1.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapters 3 and 4.

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architecture in the late 1940s and 1950s. A variety of modern styles, ranging from the geometric purity of the International Style as practiced by the German-born Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, to the more Expressionistic architecture of Eero Saarinen, to the everyday modernism as found in modest housing and commercial buildings, were increasingly used for a wide range of building types. School buildings are part of this profound change in American architectural design.<sup>55</sup>

Visual characteristics of modernism as used in post-World War II school buildings typically included one or two stories, emphasizing a horizontal building profile; the increased use of metal and glass in concert with masonry; bands of continuous windows, usually in metal sash; flat roofs; glazed tile interior walls; lower ceilings than typical in pre-war schools; aluminum railings; simple detailing and low-relief ornament, often abstract; and fluorescent lighting.<sup>56</sup> The subject building embodies these character defining features.

The St. Mary School building is a handsome example of modernism, possessing very good historic integrity. Its wide, horizontal building form fits well into its small-city neighborhood of 2 and 2 1/2-story single-family houses and other St. Mary's Parish buildings. It is symmetrical with a central pavilion clad with smooth limestone, flanked by wings, the length of which are emphasized by horizontal bands of windows set in metal sash. The entrance has simplified, abstracted ornament, including low-relief sculptures of the Virgin Mary, Jesus and the Four Evangelists. The roof is flat. Behind the street-facing section of the building, which houses classrooms, a rear wing contains the school gymnasium/auditorium. Such a separate arrangement of classrooms from gymnasium, although seen in schools from the 1920s and 1930s, became more common in the post-war period. Inside, the building's corridors, classrooms, gymnasium/auditorium, and auxiliary spaces retain their historic spatial configurations and an impressive amount of detailing and finishes, including tiled corridor walls, terrazzo floors, wood built-in cabinets and shelves, and fluorescent lights.

Mid-century modern school buildings such as the St. Mary School are increasingly being recognized by architectural historians and historic preservationists for their architectural and historical significance. The Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory lists almost 180 buildings identified as school buildings built between 1940 and 1970. The styles of many of these buildings reflect the increased dominance of modernism in the post-war years as school systems around Wisconsin built new buildings to replace older ones and to handle greater school populations.<sup>57</sup> The St. Mary School building is a locally-significant example in Fond du Lac of this larger statewide trend in school architecture after World War II.

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<sup>55</sup> Leland M. Roth, *American Architecture: A History*, Chapter 9.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter 4.

<sup>57</sup> Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, <http://www.wisahrd.org/AHI/Properties/Search.aspx>; accessed July 26, 2016.

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Criteria Consideration A

The building meets Criteria Consideration A because although built and owned by a religious institution, its significance is derived from its stylistic distinction and for its association with the professional advancement of teaching and education. The school possesses architectural and secular historical significance separate from religious belief or doctrine.

Frank J. Stepnoski – Architect

Frank J. Stepnoski (1880 - 1952), the architect of the St. Mary School, was born in the province of Galicia, Austria. He immigrated to New York City in 1904 and worked for the architectural firm of Smith & Lazarus for three years. In 1907 he moved to Oshkosh, Wisconsin, where he soon married and had a son, Sylvester J., born in 1910, who would eventually join his father in practice. Stepnoski and his family moved to Fond du Lac in 1913, where, between 1915 and 1919, Stepnoski worked as an interior designer for the lumber firm of Moore & Galloway. In 1920, Stepnoski became a registered architect in Wisconsin. He opened a Fond du Lac office and an early design was the paper board factory for the Fond du Lac Paper Company.<sup>58</sup>

Through his career, Stepnoski designed a number of Fond du Lac buildings, including the National Oil Filling Station, the Marcoe Store and flat building, the Moose Temple (1924), and the Commercial National Bank Building (1922-23), as well as a pavilion for Lakeside Park. He also was the architect for school buildings for St. Peter and St. Patrick parishes, as well as the school for St. Mary's parish. His son Sylvester later designed the St. Mary's Convent building.<sup>59</sup>

Comparative Analysis

The St. Mary School building is arguably the best building to exemplify the important history of Catholic parish education in Fond du Lac in terms of history, architecture and integrity. The majority of historic school buildings in Fond du Lac, whether public or private, have been demolished or greatly altered. Others that remain are later than St. Mary or do not have its strong historic connection to more than a century of parish educational history. In addition, the St. Mary School is the Fond du Lac school building that has the best documented connection, and best exemplifies the important history of laboratory schools in the twentieth century and the contemporary approach to educating new teachers.

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<sup>58</sup> Michael D. Lempinen and Les Ross, "Intensive Survey Report, Architectural and Historical Survey Project, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin," Prepared for the City of Fond-du-Lac, Wisconsin, May 1989, Architects and Builders, p. 5.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

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The first school of any kind in Fond du Lac was established in 1843.<sup>60</sup> By 1854, there were four public school districts in the general Fond du Lac area to accommodate roughly 900 children.<sup>61</sup> By the 1911-1912 school year, the city had 3,510 students attending public schools.

Few Fond du Lac public-school buildings with historic or architectural significance remain standing or with historic integrity. As of the 1989 Intensive Architectural Survey, only one historic elementary school building was identified and still extant, the Franklin School at 401 S. Military Road. However, the subsequent 2011 survey revision found that Franklin School had lost historic integrity and no longer was individually eligible for National Register listing. The only secondary school building still extant in 1989 was the original section of the Fond du Lac Senior High School at 382 Linden St. By 2011, it had been largely demolished.<sup>62</sup> The 2011 survey revision noted that one school building built in the post-World War II period appeared to have gained historic or architectural significance in the period since the 1989 survey. This was the Woodworth Junior High School at 101 Morningside Dr. Built in 1962, it was Contemporary in architectural style with a large two-story central pavilion distinguished by a folded-plate roof, set within a sprawling one-story building.<sup>63</sup> The Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory also lists two mid-century modern schools not otherwise identified on the Fond du Lac 2011 survey revision. These include the Sabish Jr. High School at 100 N. Peters Avenue, built in 1962, a mid-century modern design similar to the Woodworth Junior High School; and the Winnebago Lutheran Academy at 475 E. Merrill Avenue, built in 1954.<sup>64</sup>

A number of private schools were established over time as well in Fond du Lac, including both sectarian and religious schools. One that has survived and was documented as potentially National Register-eligible by the 2011 resurvey was the Merrille Institute at 29 S. Military Road, which was built in 1868 as an Italianate-style, elite school for girls.<sup>65</sup>

Several school buildings were built over time for Catholic parishes in Fond du Lac. St. Mary's Parish was the pioneering parish in terms of education, taking over the German Catholic school that had opened in 1857, then building a larger two-story brick building in 1886-1887 to replace this earlier

<sup>60</sup> Michael D. Lempinen and Les Ross, "Intensive Survey Report, Architectural and Historical Survey Project, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin," Prepared for the City of Fond-du-Lac, Wisconsin, May 1989, Education, p. 72.

<sup>61</sup> Michael D. Lempinen and Les Ross, "Intensive Survey Report, Architectural and Historical Survey Project, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin," Prepared for the City of Fond-du-Lac, Wisconsin, May 1989, Settlement and Immigration, p. 5.

<sup>62</sup> Heritage Research, Ltd., "Historical & Architectural Resource Survey, City of Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI," Prepared for Fond du Lac Historic Preservation Commission, 2011, p. 89.

<sup>63</sup> Heritage Research, Ltd., "Historical & Architectural Resource Survey, City of Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI," Prepared for Fond du Lac Historic Preservation Commission, 2011, pp. 48-49.

<sup>64</sup> Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, <http://www.wisahrd.org/AHI/Properties/Search.aspx>; accessed July 26, 2016.

<sup>65</sup> Heritage Research, Ltd., "Historical & Architectural Resource Survey, City of Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI," Prepared for Fond du Lac Historic Preservation Commission, 2011, p. 47.



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Section 8 Page 16St. Mary School  
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

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modest wood-frame building. This building received rear additions in 1900 and 1910, before being replaced by the current St. Mary School building in 1949.

Other parishes started parochial schools much later, with the next oldest parish school being established more than 70 years later. St. Joseph Parish, located at 2nd and Marr to the southeast of downtown Fond du Lac, opened its two-story school building in 1928. This brick building was designed in a simplified Gothic Revival style with Tudor Revival details.<sup>66</sup> A year later, Presentation Parish opened a modest two-story brick school (extant) with four classrooms on the northeast corner of Garfield Street and Minnesota Avenue on the far northwest side of Fond du Lac. It was designed with modest medieval detailing.<sup>67</sup> St. Patrick Parish started planning for a school building in the 1920s, but the one-story building (extant) that resulted, located at 37 East Follett Street north and west of St. Mary's Parish, was not opened until 1938. Built of brick, the new one-story school building had modest decoration in a minimalist Gothic Revival style. It received a rear addition in the early 1960s.<sup>68</sup> St. Louis Parish at Follett and Macy streets, also north and west of St. Mary's Parish, did not have a school building until 1958, when a two-story Contemporary style building (demolished) was opened. Costing \$250,000, the school building was built to house 365 students.<sup>69</sup> At Sacred Heart Parish at South Peters and Western avenues, west of downtown Fond du Lac, the school building at 678 Western Avenue came first in 1958. Also serving initially as the church, this building was a Contemporary style two-story building (extant - altered) similar to St. Louis School.<sup>70</sup>

Only three buildings associated with private education in Fond du Lac were identified in the 1989 Intensive Architectural Survey. One was sectarian—the Merrille Institute. Two were religious—St. Joseph's School and a school associated with St. Peter Evangelical Lutheran Church at 35 E. Second Street. By the 2011 resurvey, St. Peter School had lost historic integrity and was no longer considered potentially eligible for individual National Register listing.<sup>71</sup> Due to window changes, St. Joseph School no longer was considered individually eligible for National Register listing by the 2011 resurvey;<sup>72</sup> however, it has recently been determined individually eligible for National Register listing upon the submission of new information.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Wettstein, *150 Years of Catholic Faith*, p. 112.

<sup>67</sup> Wettstein, *150 Years of Catholic Faith*, p. 128.

<sup>68</sup> Wettstein, *150 Years of Catholic Faith*, pp. 55, 57, 61.

<sup>69</sup> Wettstein, *150 Years of Catholic Faith*, p. 32.

<sup>70</sup> Wettstein, *150 Years of Catholic Faith*, pp. 147-148.

<sup>71</sup> Heritage Research, Ltd., "Historical & Architectural Resource Survey, City of Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI," Prepared for Fond du Lac Historic Preservation Commission, 2011, p. 89.

<sup>72</sup> Heritage Research, Ltd., "Historical & Architectural Resource Survey, City of Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI," Prepared for Fond du Lac Historic Preservation Commission, 2011, p. 89.

<sup>73</sup> Reviewed and approved Historic Preservation Certification Application: Part I - Evaluation of Significance for the St. Joseph School Building, dated April 7, 2016.

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The St. Mary School building, built in 1949, was too young to be considered National Register eligible in the 1989 survey. The 2011 resurvey found it potentially eligible for National Register listing as part of the larger parish complex.<sup>74</sup> Further investigation of this school in the context of Modernist architecture found that this building was eligible for the National Register.

The St. Mary School is an exemplary Contemporary style school building, the earliest such building in that style, and is significant in the context of Fond du Lac. The building also is the best remaining school building to exemplify the history of elementary education and is associated with the history of laboratory schools and teacher education in Fond du Lac. Most historic period schools in the city, whether public or private, have either been demolished or have lost historic integrity. St. Mary's character-defining Contemporary style architecture and very good integrity support the case for its listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

**Summary**

The St. Mary School is eligible for the National Register under two criteria. It is locally significant under Criterion C, in the area of Architecture as an early modern school building and an excellent example of the Contemporary architectural style, significant in the context of Fond du Lac. It is also locally significant under Criterion A in the area of Education. The St. Mary School building reflects the importance of education to the Fond du Lac community. The building is significant as a center of teacher education and innovation in the 1950s and 1960s as a laboratory school for student teaching in association with Marian College (now University), a local Roman Catholic college. In its partnership role with Marian College student teachers and faculty, the St. Mary School is associated with the larger theme of progressive education and teacher training in the twentieth century. The building meets Criteria Consideration A because, although built, and owned, by a religious institution, its significance is derived from its stylistic distinction and for its association with the professional advancement of teaching and education. The school possesses architectural and secular historical significance separate from religious belief or doctrine.

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<sup>74</sup> Heritage Research, Ltd., "Historical & Architectural Resource Survey, City of Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI," Prepared for Fond du Lac Historic Preservation Commission, 2011, pp. 45-46.

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**Verbal Boundary Description:**

The St. Mary School is located on the St. Mary's Parish campus in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, on part of a city block bounded by Merrill Avenue on the south, Rees Street on the north, Amory Street on the east, and Marquette Street on the west. The school building is positioned between the St. Mary's Church to the west and the St. Mary's Parish Rectory to the east. The nominated parcel is a portion of this city block, the boundaries of which have been drawn to exclude other buildings and extraneous areas.

Beginning at the southeast corner of the lot (at the corner of Merrill Avenue and Amory Street), the boundary extends west along the concrete sidewalk fronting the St. Mary School Building approximately 300 feet to a point just west of the westernmost wall of the one-story entrance vestibule on the west facade of the building. Turning north at that point, the boundary extends north approximately 114 feet to a point just south of the concrete walkway fronting the 1948 grotto on the parish complex. Turning east, the boundary extends east approximately 55 feet, then turns north and extends north approximately 175 feet to the southern end of the large parking lot that occupies the north end of the block. The boundary turns east and extends approximately 113 feet. Turning south, the boundary extends approximately 169 feet to a point just south of the former convent building. Turning east, the boundary extends approximately 68 feet before turning south again for approximately 24 feet. From that point, the boundary extends east approximately 64 feet to the concrete sidewalk. Turning south, the boundary extends south along this sidewalk approximately 97 feet to the point of beginning.

**Boundary Justification:**

The nomination boundaries encompass a parcel of land that includes the entire St. Mary School building in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, as well as associated landscaping and walkways that immediately surround the school. Areas that were historically part of the larger church complex, including shared parking lots and separate buildings including the church and convent, are excluded from this nominated parcel.

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**Photo Log**

<b>Name of Property:</b>	<u>St. Mary School</u>		
<b>City or Vicinity:</b>	<u>Fond du Lac</u>		
<b>County:</b>	<u>Fond du Lac</u>	<b>State:</b>	<u>Wisconsin</u>
<b>Photographer:</b>	<u>Terry Tatum</u>		
<b>Date Photographed:</b>	<u>November 6, 2015</u>		
<b>Location of Original Digital Photographs:</b>	<u>Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI</u>		

- Photo 1 of 15:** South facade - looking northwest.
- Photo 2 of 15:** South facade, main entrance – looking northwest.
- Photo 3 of 15:** South facade – looking northeast.
- Photo 4 of 15:** North and west facades – looking southeast.
- Photo 5 of 15:** North and east facades – looking west.
- Photo 6 of 15:** Lower level corridor – looking south.
- Photo 7 of 15:** Lower level cafeteria – looking southwest.
- Photo 8 of 15:** First floor main corridor – looking west.
- Photo 9 of 15:** First floor corridor – looking south.
- Photo 10 of 15:** First floor east stair – looking south.
- Photo 11 of 15:** First floor typical classroom – looking northwest.
- Photo 12 of 15:** Second floor main corridor – looking east.
- Photo 13 of 15:** Second floor typical classroom – looking east.
- Photo 14 of 15:** Second floor typical classroom – looking east.
- Photo 15 of 15:** Second floor auditorium balcony – looking north.

\_\_\_End of Photo Descriptions

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**Figure 2.** Site Plan  
**Figure 3.** Lower Level Floor Plan/Photo Key  
**Figure 4.** First Floor Plan/Photo Key  
**Figure 5.** Second Floor Plan/Photo Key  
**Figure 6.** Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1950  
**Figure 7.** The St. Mary School upon its completion in 1949 ( Schmitz, *More than Brick and Stone.*)  
**Figure 8.** The 1886-1887 St. Mary School (left) during the construction of the 1949 school building (Schmitz, *More than Brick and Stone.*)  
**Figure 9.** The St. Mary School in 1989, showing glass-block transoms. Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, accessed July 26, 2016.



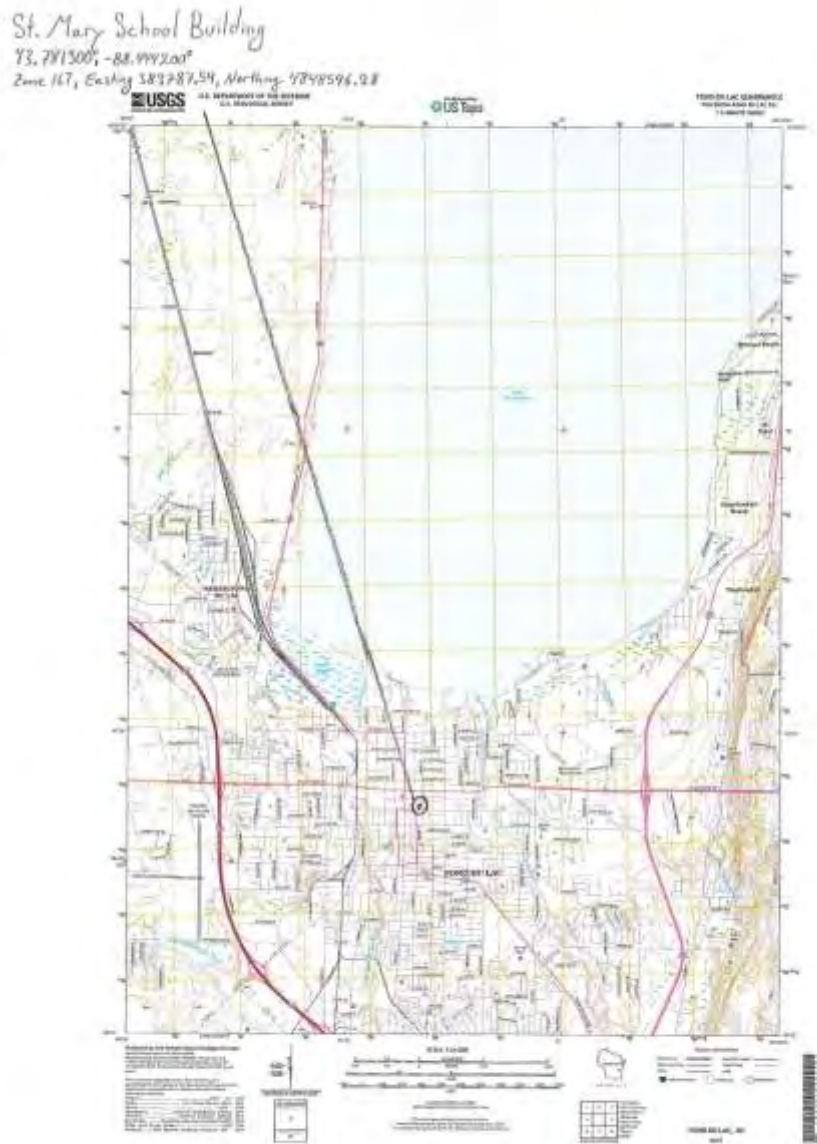
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**Figure 1.** USGS Map



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**Figure 2.** Site Plan



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St. Mary School  
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

**Figure 3.** Lower Level Floor Plan/Photo Key



St. Mary School Building  
85 East Central Avenue  
Fond du Lac, Wisconsin

Lower Level Plan 

National Park Service  
NR Photo Key

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

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St. Mary School  
Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac County, WI

**Figure 4.** First Floor Plan/Photo Key



St. Mary School Building  
85 East Central Avenue  
Fond du Lac, Wisconsin

First Floor Plan   
National Park Service  
NR Photo Key

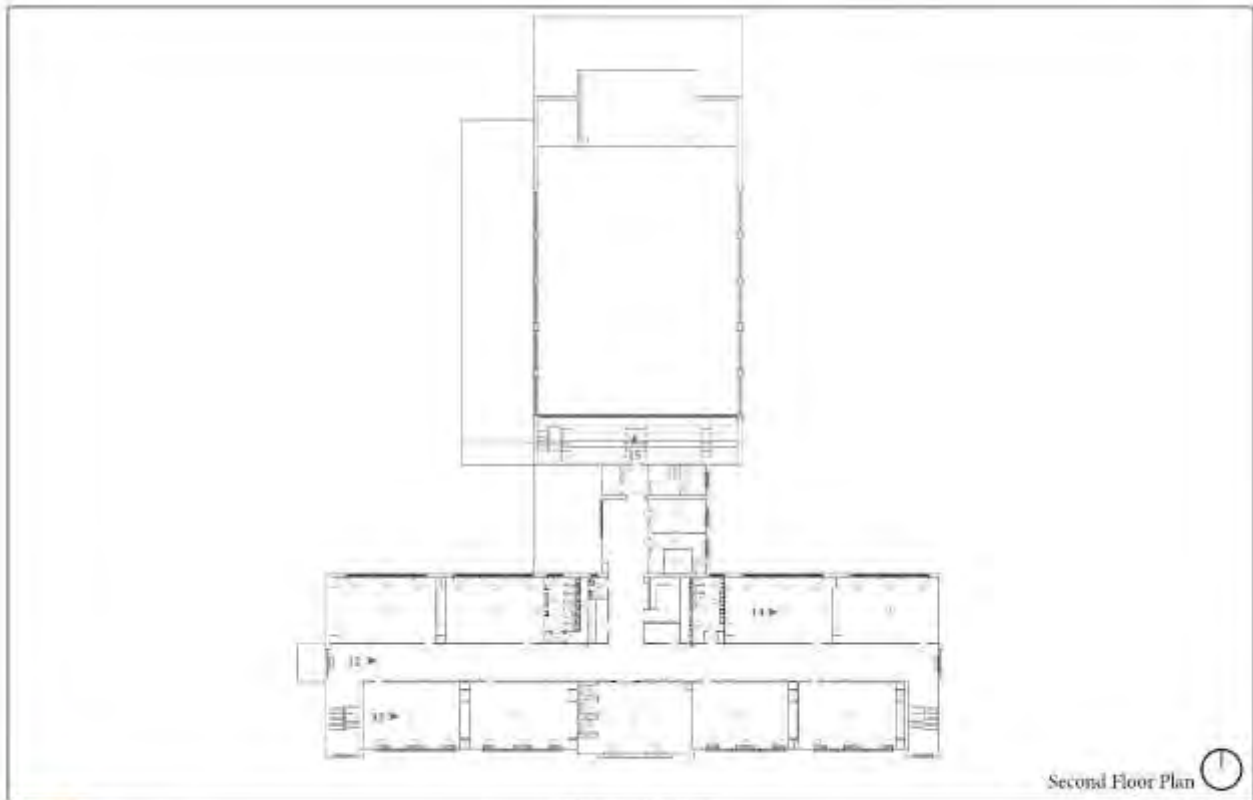
**United States Department of the Interior**  
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**Figure 5.** Second Floor Plan/Photo Key



St. Mary School Building  
63 East Carroll Avenue  
Fond du Lac, Wisconsin

Second Floor Plan   
National Park Service  
NR Photo Key

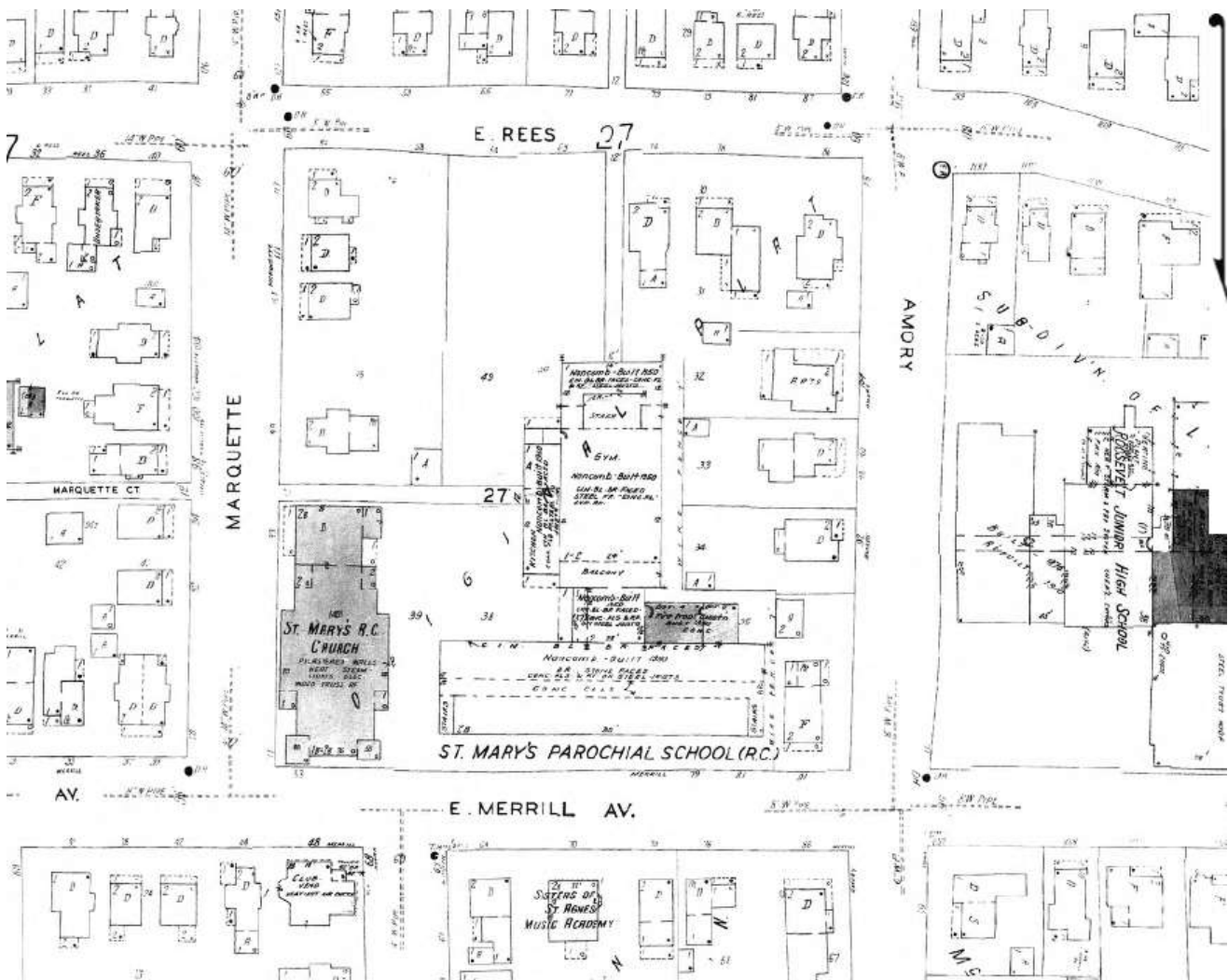
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**Figure 6: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1950.**



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**Figure 7:**

The St. Mary School upon its completion in 1949. Schmitz, *More than Brick and Stone*.



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**Figure 8:** The 1886-1887 St. Mary School (left) during the construction of the 1949 school building.  
*Schmitz, More than Brick and Stone.*





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**Figure 9:** The St. Mary School in 1989, showing glass-block transoms.  
Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, accessed July 26, 2016.



\_\_End Figures





ST. MARY'S SCHOOL

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received:  Date of Pending List:  Date of 16th Day:  Date of 45th Day:  Date of Weekly List:

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

- |                                       |  |   |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appeal       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PDIL | <input type="checkbox"/> Text/Data Issue    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SHPO Request | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape       | <input type="checkbox"/> Photo              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiver       | <input type="checkbox"/> National        | <input type="checkbox"/> Map/Boundary       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resubmission | <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Resource | <input type="checkbox"/> Period             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other        | <input type="checkbox"/> TCP             | <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years |
|                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> CLG             |   |

Accept  Return  Reject  Date

Abstract/Summary Comments:

Recommendation/ Criteria

Reviewer Edson Beall Discipline Historian

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.

GLENN GROTHMAN  
6TH DISTRICT, WISCONSIN

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE

COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

COMMITTEE ON  
OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM



UNITED STATES  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

RECEIVED  
FEB 23 2017

24 WEST PIONEER ROAD  
FOND DU LAC, WI 54935  
(920) 907-0624

BY: .....

1217 LONGWORTH BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515  
(202) 225-2476

GROTHMAN.HOUSE.GOV

February 20, 2017

Wisconsin Historic Preservation Review Board  
c/o Peggy Veregin  
Wisconsin Historical Society  
816 State Street  
Madison, WI 53706

Wisconsin Historic Preservation Review Board:

I am writing in support of St. Mary School's nomination to the Wisconsin State Register of Historic Places and the National Register of Historic Places. The school building, located in Fond du Lac, is part of the Sixth Congressional District which I represent.

St. Mary School was built in 1949. It is significant to the history of education for its role as a laboratory school which developed as part of the progressive educational theories and practices in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Used by Marian College, it was devoted to teacher education to create more effective teaching methods.

St. Mary School is an excellent example of Modernist design, a distinctive example of the important contemporary architectural style, and is an early post-war example of modernism used for school building in Fond du Lac. The style emphasizes geometric building forms, flat roofs, horizontal arrangement of windows, and restrained use of ornament. The results are clean-lined buildings with a modern appearance and rational purpose. The St. Mary's School building epitomizes modern Contemporary style architecture as it was used for school buildings during this period.

Please give all due and fair consideration consistent with current federal and State laws and agency regulations. Please keep me apprised of your efforts and findings by contacting my District Director, Alan Ott, at 24 West Pioneer Road, Fond du Lac, WI 54935 or by calling (920) 907-0624. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Glenn Grothman".

Glenn Grothman  
Member of Congress



WISCONSIN  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY



TO: Keeper  
National Register of Historic Places

FROM: Peggy Veregin  
National Register Coordinator

SUBJECT: National Register Nomination

The following materials are submitted on this Fourteenth day of March 2017, for the nomination of the St. Mary School to the National Register of Historic Places:

<u>1</u>	Original National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form
<u>1</u>	CD with NRHP Nomination form PDF
<u>          </u>	Multiple Property Nomination form
<u>15</u>	Photograph(s)
<u>1</u>	CD with image files
<u>1</u>	Map(s)
<u>9</u>	Sketch map(s)/figures(s)/exhibit(s)
<u>1</u>	Piece(s) of correspondence
<u>          </u>	Other:

COMMENTS:

<u>          </u>	Please ensure that this nomination is reviewed
<u>X</u>	This property has been certified under 36 CFR 67
<u>          </u>	The enclosed owner objection(s) do or do not constitute a majority of property owners
<u>          </u>	Other: