

**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** Maria Angelorum Chapel

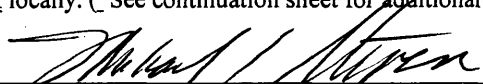
**other names/site number** Mary of the Angels Chapel and the Chapel of Perpetual Adoration

**2. Location**

<b>street &amp; number</b>	901 Franciscan Way		N/A	<b>not for publication</b>
<b>city or town</b>	La Crosse		N/A	<b>vicinity</b>
<b>state</b> Wisconsin	<b>code</b> WI	<b>county</b> La Crosse	<b>code</b> 063	<b>zip code</b> 54601

**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.)



Feb 7, 2006

Signature of certifying official/Title  
State Historic Preservation Officer-WI

Date

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

Maria Angelorum Chapel

La Crosse County

Wisconsin

Name of Property

County and State

**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. Beall*

3/29/06

*Jan*

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

**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)

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

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

contributing	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 is previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/ religious facility

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/ religious facility

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

ROMANESQUE

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation STONE

walls BRICK

roof CERAMIC TILE

other LIMESTONE

**Narrative Description**

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

Maria Angelorum Chapel  
Name of Property

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## 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)

ARCHITECTURE

### Period of Significance

1906-1919

### Significant Dates

1906

### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

Liebert, Eugene R.

Leibig, Adolph

### Narrative Statement of Significance

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

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**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:**

- X State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State Agency
  - Federal Agency
  - Local government
  - X University of Wisconsin – La Crosse (ARC)
  - X Other
- Name of repository: Archives of the FSPA

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreeage of Property less less than 1 acre

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

1    15    641290    4851390

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Zone    Easting    Northing

3    \_\_\_\_\_

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Zone    Easting    Northing

2    \_\_\_\_\_

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Zone    Easting    Northing

4    \_\_\_\_\_

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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>	Eric J Wheeler with assistance from Sr Jolyce Greteman/Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration	<b>date</b>	October 2005
<b>organization</b>		<b>telephone</b>	608-785-7383
<b>street &amp; number</b>	223 23 <sup>rd</sup> Street North	<b>zip code</b>	54601
<b>city or town</b>	La Crosse	<b>state</b>	WI

Maria Angelorum Chapel  
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### 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>	Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration	<b>date</b>	October 2005
<b>organization</b>		<b>telephone</b>	608-785-5610
<b>street&amp;number</b>	912 Market Street	<b>zip code</b>	54601
<b>city or town</b>	La Crosse	<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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Maria Angelorum Chapel  
La Crosse, La Crosse County, Wisconsin

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DESCRIPTION OF PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Introduction

The Maria Angelorum Chapel was built for the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration of La Crosse, Wisconsin over a five-year period beginning in the summer of 1901 with completion and consecration on August 2, 1906. The towering, red brick Romanesque Revival style chapel was designed by Milwaukee architect Eugene R Liebert, based on a traditional early Christian cruciform plan with high style decorative elements inspired by models from central and southern Europe. The distinctive city landmark is the site of round-the-clock prayer, a religious practice central to the identity of the order of Franciscans who reside in the adjacent convent.

Site

The Maria Angelorum Chapel is situated in the southwest corner of a city block containing St. Rose Convent (the Motherhouse of the FSPA) and several other supporting buildings owned and operated by the order. More specifically, the chapel is located just east of the northeast corner of 9<sup>th</sup> Street South and Winnebago Street (recently renamed Franciscan Way). Just to the south of the chapel is the campus of Viterbo University and to the north and east is the Franciscan Skemp Healthcare complex. Both the university and healthcare facilities have historic and current connections to the FSPA order. The convent buildings, university and healthcare complex are collectively known as the Franciscan campus and are located in a residential neighborhood approximately ten blocks southeast of downtown La Crosse.

Exterior

The Maria Angelorum Chapel has a red brick exterior laid in white mortar, highlighted with red terra cotta and cut limestone detailing. The two and a half story cruciform chapel has multiple arms including twin towers on the east and west ends with a massive octagonal dome resting on a square base at the intersection of the nave and transept. At the point where the nave joins the apse are two square towers with pyramidal roofs. All roofs are covered by green and dark red glazed tile laid in a pattern repeated on the main roof and all seven towers. Each of the four corner towers is topped by a large glazed terra cotta finial; the central dome finial is a large terra cotta cross. The east end has a two story semi-circular apse with conical roof punctuated by three dormers. Fenestration throughout has the typical Romanesque semi-circular arch form displayed in single, paired, triple and multiple clusters with minimal to elaborate ornamentation. These hallmark Romanesque arches are open, blind or

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contain stained or clear glass. Three large eight-lobed rose windows with stone tracery are featured in the north and south transepts and on the upper west façade. The cut limestone tracery in all three rose windows repeats the Romanesque arch motif in the eight petals of the flower. Cut limestone accents are displayed in the corbels, windowsills, gablets and gable fascia. There is a main interior entrance to the chapel from the adjacent St. Rose Convent and five exterior entrances. All of the original entrance doors were of solid cast bronze and richly ornamented. Several have been replaced with oak doors. The ashlar limestone foundation projects as much as ten feet above grade level and is frequently punctuated with windows and doorways. The overall footprint of the chapel is approximately 85 feet north to south by 165 feet east to west and built of steel frame construction.

The south facade of the chapel faces the Viterbo University campus is the elevation most fully seen by the public. Starting at the west end, a 75 foot tall square tower with hexagonal roof and gabled base with blind arches anchors the southwest corner of the chapel. Below the gables is a multi-arched corbelled cornice that continues around the tower. Below the cornice on each of the four tower faces is a belfry opening with pair of large arches and another pair of arches on cut limestone sills recessed inside. Below the recessed arch is a pair of mostly obscured arches of which only the upper curve of the arch can be seen above a limestone stringcourse that continues around the tower. Below the stringcourse on each of the four tower faces is a pair of triple arched corbelled colonettes divided by a brick pilaster that extends through the stringcourse to the sill of the recessed arches above. Brick buttresses with limestone gablets are paired on the three exposed corners. On the west face of the tower just above the limestone foundation is a large blind arch with terra cotta ornamentation. Below the blind arch are located a pair of recessed arched windows separated by a mullion-like colonette. Further down the face of the tower on the west and south sides positioned between the central and corner pilasters are two offset single arched windows that provide illumination to the stairway inside the tower.

On the south facing wall at the base of the tower is the main exterior entrance with gabled projecting entrance supported by a cluster of paired and single columns with foliated capitals and ornately carved arched portal with a deeply recessed archivolt. The cut limestone cornice is supported by raked colonettes sitting on a cut red sandstone pediment ornamented at the base with two carved sandstone lion figures projecting from the façade. At the top of the face of the arched entry is a carved sandstone image of Christ flanked by the alpha and omega Greek letters symbolized "from beginning to end." A cut limestone cross caps the top of the gable. The highly decorated tympanum in the recessed arch contains a central cut limestone quatrefoil window. A series of eight cut limestone steps leads to a pair of paneled oak doors opening into the vestibule of the chapel. Above the doors is a bronze transom that reads in Latin "Cum Deo, Per Deum, Ad Deum," translated in English to mean "With God, Through God, To God."

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Proceeding east along the south façade is a recessed two story bay divided by two stepped buttresses into three smaller bays. A gabled dormer sits atop the middle bay just above a multi-arched corbelled cornice. Below the cornice at the second story level are three single arched windows, one in each bay. At the first story level in each bay is a large decorative arch with cut red sandstone inlay at the top of the arch and a pair of arched windows below. Continuing east along the south facade is a projecting bay that provides a stairwell enclosure just west and adjacent to the south transept. The multi-arched corbelled cornice continues around this bay as well. Two small arched windows on the west side of the bay provide light for the interior stairwell. The south wall of this projecting bay contains a large arched window of the same shape and size as the bays to the west. A gabled entry with limestone cap and cross finial has a triple arch above the original ornate solid bronze door leading to the base of the interior stairwell. Stepped buttresses meeting at right angles define the corners of the stairwell bay.

The next projecting bay to the east is the façade of the south transept featuring one of the three large stained glass rose windows with eight lobes of cut stone tracery. Directly above the rose window is a row of raked arched openings with cut limestone sills. The raked arch pattern is repeated in the multi-arched corbelled cornice. Below the rose window at the first story level is another large decorative arch with cut red sandstone inlay and three arched windows below. Pairs of gablet capped stepped buttresses define the corners of the transept bay.

Following east along the south façade is a bay recessed back from the transept that continues to the corner tower. The multi-arched corbelled cornice continues along this bay as well. The upper story arched windows are similar to the other second story windows and the first story contains three pairs of arched windows with decorative red terra cotta inlay similar to those first story windows described earlier.

Defining the east end of the south façade is the south tower of the east pair of flanking twin towers that contain an inner stairwell. This tower is actually two towers; the inner tower with tile hip roof is about 60 feet tall and the smaller tower that projects to the south away from the façade has an octagonal roof and is about 35 feet tall. The shorter section of tower has five exposed sides that feature from top to bottom, a bracketed cornice, oculus windows with limestone stringcourse below and small, narrow arched windows on the second and first story. The taller inner tower walls are mostly concealed except for part of the east-facing wall. Directly under and around the eaves is a row of corbelled brackets. The belfry below is defined by ornamental triple arched openings on all sides supported by pairs of colonettes sitting on corbels. A limestone stringcourse surrounds the tower at the base of the colonettes. Access to the inner towers at the roof level is provided by a doorway leading out of the central tower to a flat walkway leading to the towers. The walkway is defined by parallel parapet walls,



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the outer wall punctuated by three rounded arches. Below the belfry and following down the east and south tower walls are small rounded window with limestone sills. At the base of the inner tower is a gabled entry with limestone cap and cross finial. A large open recessed arch contains three smaller arches with colonettes sitting on a limestone sill. Below this opening is an arched doorway opening with brick keystone arch supported by a pair of limestone columns. An ornamental bronze door leads to the entry to the adoration chapel adjacent to the tower.

Anchoring the east end of the chapel is a five bay apse with conical roof punctuated by three gable-roofed dormers with two open segmental arches supported by a single central column. A ring of multiple arches sitting on a limestone stringcourse defines the cornice of the apse. Four capped stepped buttresses define the five bays with a pair of plain arched windows on the second and first floors. The brickwork around these windows is slightly recessed providing contrast and definition to the window placement.

The north facade from the entry to the adoration chapel at the base of the inner tower on the east end to the north bell tower on the west end is a mirror image of the south façade. The foundation stone, brick wall ornamentation, window placement and detail and all roof elements are the same as on the south side. St. Rose Convent adjoins the chapel along the north wall of the north bell tower just to the west of the northwest corner of the tower.

The west façade is flanked by square towers surmounted by belfries with octagonal roofs and a central gabled bay featuring a large corbelled statuary niche with a statue of St. Michael the Archangel. The gabled parapet wall is capped with cut limestone and topped by a cross finial. Two sets of ornate recessed raked corbelled arches flank the statue of St. Michael. Directly below the statue is the third of the building's three rose windows, placed in the center of the bay. Colonettes emanate from the central circle in the windows; they are joined by rounded arches that contact the outer ring of the window. A single story rectangular wing with flat roof projects from the west end of the chapel. Two parallel stringcourses define the cornice on the west side and a multiple blind arch cornice caps the west and south walls. The exposed walls of the projecting wing have arched windows similar to those on the second story of the other facades. Semi-circular projecting bays emanate from the west and south sides of the west wing. A square open arched entry joins the northwest corner of the west wing and leads to a exterior door leading into the convent. The wing and entry share a party wall with the convent.

The 100 foot tall central tower has an octagonal glazed tile roof punctuated by a small gable roof dormer on each of the eight sides. A large cross sits atop the finial and below the tower eaves is a row of corbelled arches. In each of the tower faces below the cornice is an ornamental recessed arch with a pair of smaller arches with central colonette sitting atop a cut limestone stringcourse. Below these

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arches are simply segmented single arched openings. Surrounding the tower is a flat walkway that is defined by a low rectangular parapet wall with limestone cap and several drainage spouts on each side. There are three other low parapet walls on the east end of the roof between the central tower and the twin towers on the east end. The north-south parapet joins the east west parapets on the north and south sides at right angles.

Landscaping

Located on the lawn about 50 feet southeast of the southeast corner of the chapel is a black cast iron gate that was located at the Market Street entrance to the St. Rose Convent during the early and middle decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The gate was discovered in a backyard of a private home on the north side of La Crosse and was returned to the FSPA in 2004. In the past year, the gate was restored and repainted and placed in a very visible location adjacent to the chapel. The gate has historic significance for the order but was not part of the chapel history and is not included in the resource count because it is insubstantial in size and scale.

A twelve-foot diameter pool with small fountains is located several feet from the north wall of the chapel on the west end. Just to the south of the fountain is a religious carved stone statue of the Virgin Mary flanked by two three-foot tall flower urns. There are two similar flower urns flanking the main exterior entry on the southwest corner of the chapel. These flower urns are made of concrete with decorative stone insets. Both pairs of flower urns and the religious statue were salvaged from a large grotto that was located for many years just to the north and east of the chapel and removed for safety reasons in 1994. The fountain and pool along with the statue and flower urns were positioned in their current location on the north side of the chapel soon after the renovation of the convent was completed in 1997. This resource is also not included in the count.

Interior

The interior of the Maria Angelorum Chapel containing the Mary of Angels Chapel and Adoration Chapel has an exquisitely designed and ornamented interior of elaborate ecclesiastical detail. The interior floor plan is a classical cruciform layout with nave, transept, sanctuary and apse, completely surrounded by two storied side aisles. The chapel's design and decor establish an overall unity of symbolism, structure and detail. This unity was achieved through the cooperation of the architect Eugene Liebert, the decorator Adolph Leibig and the altar builder Egid Hackner. The highly decorated columns, arches and vaults of the interior echo the architectural themes of the exterior. The interior

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worship space of approximately 6000 square feet has been maintained and restored to a level unmatched by any religious building in the city of La Crosse.

Entry to the chapel is from the northwest corner through the attached St. Rose Convent and from the southwest corner from the outside entry described above. On the northwest corner, the chapel and the convent share a party wall that runs east-west approximately 20 feet. The entries lead to the narthex located at the rear of the chapel. Entry into the vestibule area from the narthex is provided by a passage opening into the main open chapel area. The nave runs east-west approximately 60 feet with 20 rows of pews on either side of the central aisle. Five pairs of highly ornamented clustered Corinthian columns flank the seating area in the nave. Though made of concrete and plaster the columns throughout the chapel have been elaborately finished to resemble Norwegian marble. On either side of the pews is a passageway defined by the exterior walls and the seating area that extends the length of the nave. There is a balcony above the passageway alongside the nave. On the rear or west end the balcony projects out approximately 20 feet over the rear of the nave. The north and south transepts provide seating on a row of four pews on either side. The red oak pews were designed by Bernard Dockendorff of La Crosse and carved by the Egid Hackner Altar Company of La Crosse and feature the Greek cross and the rose symbol. The bronzed beech wood stations-of-the-cross surrounding the nave were also carved by the Hackner Company. The nave and transepts are both highly ornamented with stained glass windows on all exterior walls. The transepts feature the massive eight petal stained glass rose windows that are replete with religious symbolism.

The sanctuary is located at the east end of the cruciform plan and contains the main altar which echoes the Romanesque style of the exterior. Two side altars are located at the end of the passageway on either side of the sanctuary and flank the main altar. The main and side altars were carved from white Italian marble and are decorated with cast bronze, onyx and inlaid mosaic of glass and mother of pearl. The main altar in the center of the sanctuary is considered the most outstanding feature of the chapel. It was designed by the architect Eugene Liebert and produced and assembled by Egid Hackner. At the base of the main altar are three panels of imported Italian mosaics composed of green and gold Venetian glass and mother of pearl. The principal mosaic work was executed by Giannini and Higart of Chicago, Illinois. The semicircular arch above the altar contains nine medallions that are of symbolic religious or floral design. The sanctuary also contains a modern altar, pulpit and baptistery that have replaced the originals. The original hand carved five panel red oak ambo is now located in the heritage room in the basement of the chapel. The chapel contains a total of eighteen statues; ten of these are of heroic men and women of the Christian tradition, many of them prominently displayed in the transept and sanctuary areas. These ten statues were sculpted by the Egid Hackner Altar Company and are made of bronzed beech wood, bronzed molten metal, plaster and marble.

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Passage doors flanking the altars lead into two sacristies with original oak vestment chests: one on the north side one on the south side. The two sacristies lead through the stairwell at the base of the twin east towers into the adoration chapel on the east end. The adoration chapel is where the "round the clock" prayers are offered. The resplendent Romanesque style altar in the adoration chapel is unique in form and ornamentation and complements the main altar in the main sanctuary. The gilded bronzing is lighter, the mosaics more detailed and the symbols fewer and simpler than those in the larger chapel. The ribbed and vaulted ceiling of this chapel has a dark blue background highlighted by gold stars. The chancel rail is of Italian marble with inlaid mosaic and rich cast bronze open work panels. The monstrance, which is located in the center of the altar, is 31 inches high and gold plated over a silver base. This highly ornate religious vessel was imported from Westphalia, Germany. A unique aspect of the adoration altar is a rotating platform that holds the monstrance for the adoration chapel providing view of the adoration monstrance in the main chapel when desired. Another unusual design feature of the adoration altar is the placement of flues directly over the six-jeweled candlesticks to draw away smoke and soot and allow it to escape to the exterior. Six columns ornamented in a similar way as those in the main chapel are arrayed in a semi-circle towards the rear of the chapel.

A balcony, also referred to as the gallery, extends completely from the rear of the nave on the west end along the north and south walls of the chapel through the nave and sanctuary area to the balcony above the adoration chapel on the east. The choir loft is situated at the west end of the gallery above the rear of the nave. The choir loft contains a Casavant pipe organ with 1,422 pipes, 20 stops, 30 ranks and tracker action. The organ was installed in 1983 by Casavant Freres of Holyoke, Massachusetts replacing the original organ built by the Estey Organ Co of Brattleboro, Vermont. The third of the three large rose windows is located in the wall behind the organ and is mostly obscured from view. Lining the gallery are ten large single paned stained glass windows representing ten women of outstanding historic and religious importance to the FSPA order. Throughout the chapel there are more than 100 windows of Bavarian stained glass furnished by the Royal Bavarian Art Institute of Munich, Germany. The windows depict the lives of important persons in the history of Christianity and also display symbolically several theological virtues. A bronze balustrade extends along the gallery above the main chapel. The gallery leads from the main chapel through two passage rooms into the gallery above the adoration chapel. The passage room on the south side contains relics of various saints of the Roman Catholic Church incased in glass displays. This room is called the reliquary. The room on the north side simply provides passage. The gallery in the adoration chapel features a bronze balustrade that is cruciform in pattern, matches the wall décor of the chapel and has a lighter appearance than the balustrade in the main chapel.

The ornamental detail in the chapel ceilings matches the opulence and complexity evident in the rest of the building. The general decoration scheme of the chapel is a cream colored background with gold

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tracery done in oil colors. The groined arches of the domed ceiling have ribs suggesting decorative marble. The soffits, spandrels and deep reveals are all equally ornamented. In the high arches of the sanctuary are paintings symbolic of the First, Second and Third Franciscan religious orders. Exquisitely detailed circular stained glass windows are positioned in the skylights of the central tower and the ceiling of the north and south transepts. A large prominently displayed painting of St. Francis of Assisi, founder of the Franciscan Order, is located directly above the altar in the main chapel. This painting and most of the other canvas paintings were created by Thaddeus von Zukotynski of Chicago, Illinois. Intricate and highly ornate hand painted details can be seen throughout the chapel. Danish born artist Bernhardt Hillig, Sr. painted the ceiling in the nave area. He and his son, Bernard Hillig, and Bernard's wife, Olive Hillig, completed the stencil painting in the sanctuary and transept areas in 1919-1920, several years after the dedication in 1906. Attention to artistic detail is evident in areas of the building not often seen by worshippers in the chapel. Decorative twisted baluster ironwork on the railings in the six stairwells was produced by the Tausche Hardware Company of La Crosse. The carefully planned and executed high style Romanesque influenced interior decorative schema indicates the thorough commitment of the FSPA order to manifest the spiritual mission of the order in this distinctive landmark chapel.<sup>1</sup>

Basement

The basement of the chapel extends to the interior of all of the foundation walls. The basement is accessed by three pairs of stairways on the east and west ends and in the middle near the transepts. The historic basement contained a large chapel and utility and storage areas. Renovation over the years has altered the basement floor plan and interior wall, floor and ceiling finish. Much of the space now is utilized for historic records and heritage displays as well as office space and a small chapel. A heritage room containing artifacts, photographs, and written documents occupies the ½ round room on the east end under the adoration chapel. Continuing to the west end is a mechanical room, flower preparation room, bathroom, two small offices and a heritage corridor that is an extension of the west end heritage room. There are separate offices for the FSPA historian and FSPA archivist. A large temperature and humidity controlled Archives Repository/ Document Room occupies much of the central area of the basement. Adjacent to this room is a spacious archives workroom and smaller archives research room. A corridor on the north side leads past the archives area to another but smaller heritage room with photographs and artifacts. This second heritage room is located under the north transept. The hallway

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<sup>1</sup> The majority of the descriptive information about the interior of the chapel was obtained from a publication by the FSPA titled The Chapels of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration – Symbols of a Rich Heritage, a Bright Future, FSPA, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1998; and a small booklet titled “Souvenir of the Consecration of the Chapel Maria Angelorum, St Rose Convent, August 2, 1906” located in the FSPA Archives.

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continues west to the lower vestibule located under the narthex. A small chapel is accessible from this vestibule and through a small passage on the south side that leads to the archives research room under the south transept. A stairway on the south side of the east end vestibule leads to a stairway and the main outside entrance and on the south side the stairway leads to the convent. Heating, lighting and plumbing in the basement have all been updated in the past fifteen years.

Alterations

Exterior alterations to the Maria Angelorum Chapel have been minimal. The original exterior brass doors on the southwest corner main entrance and the two east entrances to the adoration chapel have been replaced by red oak panel doors. The roof tiles have all been replaced with tile of the same color and design as the original. The roof replacement began in 1979 and continued progressively in stages until completion in 2004. The new tiles were supplied by the Ludowici Tile Company of New Lexington, Ohio; this company supplied the original tile for the chapel. Regular and thorough maintenance of the brick, stone, glass and wood exterior over the years has kept the exterior essentially unaltered and preserved the historic character of the chapel.

The interior has experienced some alterations and updates. As mentioned earlier, the organ was replaced in 1983. A major interior renovation project under the direction of Schute/Larson Architects of La Crosse was completed from 1990-1993 during which the sanctuary area was updated with modern, but aesthetically appropriate worship furnishings including a new and more functional altar, pulpit and baptismal font. The original Romanesque style solid cast bronze hanging chandeliers had been replaced perhaps as early as the 1930s and during the 1990s renovation contemporary and more concealed light fixtures were added. The original chancel rail was removed several decades ago and replaced by two communion stations. These communion stations were removed in 1992 during the renovation. Conrad Schmitt Studios of New Berlin, Wisconsin completely cleaned and restored the interior decorative finish on the walls and ceilings to the original color and conditions. The heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems were replaced and updated in 1996 and a new sound system was installed. The renovation and modernization projects mentioned above have enhanced the utility and preserved the aesthetic and historic environment of the interior and do not diminish the architectural integrity of the chapel.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Summary

The Maria Angelorum Chapel is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for architecture. It is an outstanding local example of the architecturally correct Romanesque Revival style and retains excellent interior and exterior integrity. The period of significance begins with the completion of the building's construction in 1906 and ends in 1919, the year that the interior decoration was completed.

Historical Overview - City of La Crosse

The prairie-like broad floodplain that is today the city of La Crosse located at the confluence of the Black, La Crosse and Mississippi perhaps had been a seasonal gathering place for Native Americans of the region for millennia. Earliest documented archaeological evidence indicates indigenous settlement activity in the Early Woodland Era, certainly by 1000 AD and continuing intermittently to the pre-settlement period of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Fur traders stopped at the area called "Prairie de la Crosse" by the early French voyageurs in the early decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but it was not until 1840 that a fur trader established a trading post in the vicinity. This unidentified trader did not stay. However, in 1841 Yankee Nathan Myrick established another trading post on Barron Island on the west side of the main channel of the Mississippi River across from what is now downtown La Crosse. In 1842 Myrick built a log cabin on the mainland and became the first permanent settler in the city. Myrick was also the first postmaster and in 1843 he shortened the name to La Crosse. A few settlers came to La Crosse, including a small Mormon community, but little major settlement occurred until the next decade. Although the Black Hawk War of 1832 resulted in the transfer of legal ownership and removal of most Native Americans from western Wisconsin; the presence of indigenous people was a discouraging factor for Euro-American immigration until the nearly complete Indian removal in 1849.

During the 1850s non-Indian Americans from the east and south and European immigrants mostly from central and northern Europe began to stream into the region. Fertile agricultural lands nearby attracted many settlers who began to establish farms and small communities with mills and stores throughout the area. La Crosse had an excellent steamboat landing and many settlers came upriver instead of the much more difficult overland route. The lumber era was beginning in the pineries of the Black and Chippewa river watersheds drawing entrepreneurs and vigorous young men looking for

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work. The first railroad connection to La Crosse was established from Milwaukee in 1858. Four years earlier the famous Grand Excursion of 1854 helped to promote business and settlement interest in the area. As La Crosse developed as a major transportation and mercantile center numerous mills, stores, warehouse and small industrial shops were established along the waterfront. The population of the community reflected this business boom and the city grew from 573 residents in 1853 to almost 4,000 in 1860.<sup>2</sup> Rapid growth continued in La Crosse through the 1860s and 1870s as retailing, lumber and grist milling, brewing and other small industries grew along with the increase steamboat and railroad activity. By 1870 the population of the city expanded to nearly 8,000 residents and by 1880 14,505 people lived in La Crosse making it the second largest city in the state.<sup>3</sup> Location on the river, the development of the regional railroad network and the lumber boom upriver all contributed to the emergence of La Crosse as the "Gateway City" and a popular destination for the flood of immigrants now streaming in from Europe in the middle decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Historical Overview – Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration

The first recorded Roman Catholic Mass in La Crosse was conducted on May 29, 1853 by the Rev. Lucian Galtier, pastor of St. Gabriel's parish in Prairie du Chien, at the home of James Gallagher near what is now 10<sup>th</sup> and Pine streets in La Crosse. On August 24, 1855, the Rev William Tappert, a Redemptorist missionary, became the first resident priest in La Crosse and pastor of the first Catholic Church, know as St. Mary's. One year later, in 1856, the first mass was celebrated in the modest wood frame St. Mary's Church located at the northeast corner of Seventh and Cameron streets. Initially, there were 25 families in St. Mary's parish. Rev. Tappert also served in at least six other counties in Wisconsin and Minnesota.<sup>4</sup> Within a decade, these frontier-like beginnings of the Roman Catholic Church in La Crosse changed dramatically with the influx of immigrants of the Catholic faith who came to La Crosse during the 1850s and 1860s.

St. Mary's Church was associated with the English and French speaking groups in the early settlement era in La Crosse. With the arrival of large numbers of German speaking Catholics a new parish split off from St. Mary's in 1863. It was called St. Joseph's, and in 1869 a large Gothic Revival church designed by Charles Ross was begun at the corner of Sixth and Main (the site of the current St. Joseph the Workman Cathedral). Because of the large increase in Roman Catholic population in La Crosse and surrounding areas, Pope Pius IX established a new diocese in western Wisconsin in 1868 with the

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<sup>2</sup> Joan Rausch, Intensive Historic Architecture Survey: City of La Crosse, 1996, page 376.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> *La Crosse Tribune*, 13 August, 2005, article by Faith editor Gayda Hollnagel, page A-6.



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headquarters in La Crosse. The new La Crosse Diocese included all of western Wisconsin east of the Mississippi and north of the Wisconsin rivers. Within the diocesan boundaries at that time were approximately 30,000 Catholics served by 18 priests. Rev. Michael Heiss, a native of Bavaria, became the first bishop of La Crosse in 1868 and chose St. Joseph's church as the cathedral for the newly established diocese. Within the next two decades the Roman Catholic presence in La Crosse under Bishop Heiss (1868-1881) grew steadily. Within two decades five new parishes were established in the city including St. Wenceslaus (1873) for the Bohemian community, Holy Cross (1885) for the Polish community, St. Nicholas (1887) for the German community (later Holy Trinity), and St. James (1886) and St. John's (1887) for the Irish, French and German communities on the north side of La Crosse.<sup>5</sup> Bishop Heiss was also to play a key role in the early days of the Franciscan Sisters in La Crosse.

In the spring of 1849 Fr. Anthony Keppeler and his assistant Fr Mathias Steiger led a group of twelve women and men, Third Order Secular Franciscans, from their home parish in Ettenbeuren, Bavaria to Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Ettenbeuren is located in the southwestern corner of Bavaria, west of Munich in the province of Swabia. Religious turmoil in Germany following the unsuccessful democratic reform movements of 1848 may have been part of the impetus for the small group of religious to emigrate from their homeland. According to FSPA histories, six women in the group under the leadership of Mother Aemiliana Dirr were intent upon founding a religious community for the purpose of spreading religious teaching among the newly arrived German immigrants. They also hoped to serve this community through education of children, care for the disadvantaged, and when possible establish perpetual adoration, i.e. round-the-clock prayer before the Blessed Sacrament exposed. They were received into the Diocese of Milwaukee on May 28, 1849 and established St. Francis Convent in Nojoshing. In 1853 Rev. Michael Heiss rector of St. Francis Seminary in Milwaukee and spiritual director for the small community of Franciscans, wrote the first constitution for the congregation and the sisters pronounced their first vows. Over the next few years several pivotal events set a new course for this small Milwaukee based community of Franciscans.

In the early years of the community, the sisters were charged with staffing a nearby orphanage and the St. Francis de Sales Seminary. In 1860, "diverted from education to household and dietary duties at the newly build diocesan seminary in 1856, overwhelmed with physical labor, and finding themselves unable to develop a truly religious life, the founders left the community."<sup>6</sup> In 1864, six remaining sisters and five novices and postulants, under the leadership of their newly elected leader Mother Antonia Herb, decided to move the motherhouse of the small community to Jefferson, Wisconsin

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<sup>5</sup> Joan Rausch, *Intensive Survey*, page 377.

<sup>6</sup> *FSPA Timeline*, 2003, FSPA Archives, St Rose Convent, La Crosse, WI.

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located about 40 miles due west of Milwaukee. At their newly built St. Coletta Convent in Jefferson the sisters renewed their commitment to the teaching mission of the order and it was here that Mother Antonia expressed a "two-fold promise" that was to become central to the mission of the FSPA. On St. Joseph's Day, March 19, 1865 Mother Antonia pledged that "if God would bless the community and it would continue to grow, it would establish perpetual adoration and build as fine a chapel as means would allow."<sup>7</sup> The new convent was designed by Joseph A. Leinfelder, brother of Mother Antonia Herb. Bavarian born Leinfelder learned his trade as an architect/contractor in Cleveland and apparently came with the Franciscan community to Jefferson, Wisconsin from Ohio. He lived and worked in Jefferson for five years during the tenure of his sister's community in that city. This was the beginning of a long association between Leinfelder and the Franciscan community and later the La Crosse diocese. Between 1870 and 1888 Leinfelder designed five significant buildings for the diocese including the landmark Second Empire style Bishop's House (1887) for Bishop Michael Heiss.<sup>8</sup>

During the next chapter of the community's history Bishop Michael Heiss again played a key role. In 1869, soon after his installation as the first bishop of La Crosse, Bishop Heiss requested that Mother Antonia move the motherhouse to La Crosse so that the new diocese would have sisters to staff the parochial schools. In 1871 the community of nearly 100 members moved into the newly built St. Rose of Viterbo Convent in La Crosse, designed and built by Joseph Leinfelder. At the time the Franciscan sisters came to La Crosse, the School Sisters of Notre Dame were staffing St. Joseph's Academy, the only Catholic school in the area. In 1872, several Franciscans who were on staff at a Catholic school in Prairie du Chien traded schools with the Notre Dame sisters who were in La Crosse. In 1873, thirty-seven of the professed sisters and one postulant returned to Milwaukee to form a new Franciscan community and sixty-five professed sisters with twelve novices and twelve postulants continued in La Crosse at St. Rose Convent. These activities were the beginning of the long years of Franciscan service in education in La Crosse. In 1872-1874, the first Maria Angelorum chapel was built to the east off the north wing of the convent and dedicated on August 2, 1874. A small adoration chapel was added at the southeast corner of the convent in 1878 where perpetual adoration commenced at 11:00 AM on August 1, 1878, thus realizing the first part of the "two-fold promise" made thirteen years earlier in Jefferson, Wisconsin. The title of the community was changed to Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in 1883.

Mother Antonia Herb, who led the community to La Crosse and made the historic "two-fold promise," died in 1882. She was succeeded by Mother Ludovica Keller, who led the community through several

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Joan Rausch, *Intensive Survey*, page 63.

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significant historic developments until her death in 1928. These developments included important new ministry initiatives as well as a broadening of the original goals articulated in the early years of the order in Milwaukee. In 1855, the sisters assumed the care and education of orphaned boys at St. Aemilian's Orphanage for Boys in Milwaukee near the original motherhouse. In La Crosse, the mission to serve orphans began in 1875 with the staffing of the diocesan St Michael's Orphan Asylum for girls. This orphanage later developed into a single St. Michael's Home for boys and girls in 1911 with continued staffing by the Franciscan sisters.<sup>9</sup> In 1883 at the request of La Crosse physicians and community-minded citizens, and with the encouragement of Bishop Kilian Flasch (1881-1891) the sisters built and staffed St. Francis Hospital, the first hospital in La Crosse. This hospital was also the first in western Wisconsin.<sup>10</sup> Also in 1883, the sisters built and administered their first home mission, St. Mary's Boarding School, on the Chippewa Indian Reservation in Odanah, Ashland County in northern Wisconsin. The mission closed in 1969. Continuing a teaching mission begun in Jefferson in 1864, the Franciscan sisters based in La Crosse at St. Rose staffed twelve elementary parochial schools in 1870. Involvement in secondary education began at St. Rose Convent in 1871. The elementary and secondary education mission was a significant part of the Franciscan community's service mission through most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Higher education became another important aspect of the sister's service in La Crosse with the accreditation of St. Rose Normal School in 1890 and the construction of the school building in 1892. This was the first teacher training institution in La Crosse and was originally intended solely to train FSPA teachers for service in the elementary and secondary schools. St. Rose Normal School developed into St. Rose Junior College by 1934, Viterbo College by 1937 and the current four year liberal arts co-educational Viterbo University in 2000.<sup>11</sup>

In early 1901, in order to fulfill the second part of the "two-fold promise" the sisters contacted four regional architects to submit plans for a new chapel in hopes to have it completed by August 1, 1903, the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of perpetual adoration at St. Rose Convent in La Crosse and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in the congregation's founding. German-born Milwaukee-based architect Eugene R. Liebert was selected by March 1901 and construction of the new chapel began that summer.<sup>12</sup> The chapel that was completed in August 1906 is a physical manifestation of the fulfillment of Mother Antonia Herb's 1865 two-fold promise of establishing perpetual adoration and building "as fine a chapel that means would allow." The chapels have served as the place of worship and as the site of nearly 100 years of perpetual adoration. Mary of the Angels Chapel and the Chapel of Perpetual Adoration have been and continue to be the spiritual center of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration and a significant

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<sup>9</sup> FSPA Timeline.

<sup>10</sup> Heritage Tour of a Franciscan Neighborhood, FSPA brochure, 2005.

<sup>11</sup> FSPA Timeline.

<sup>12</sup> St Rose Convent Diary 1901-1906, FSPA Archives.

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historic and architectural landmark in the city. The chapel with its distinctive towers and Romanesque arches has become a visual symbol of the FSPA in La Crosse and has been meticulously maintained and celebrated by the sisters since 1906. The Maria Angelorum Chapel appears on much of the FSPA literature and sisters offer tours to thousands of visitors every year. Of all of the historically and architecturally significant buildings on the Franciscan campus, the Maria Angelorum Chapel is the pivotal building architecturally, representing 135 years of FSPA service to the educational, healthcare and spiritual needs of the La Crosse community.

Architecture

The Maria Angelorum Chapel is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C as an outstanding and intact example of the Romanesque Revival style.

The Romanesque Revival style in several variations became widely popular in Germany, England and the United States from the 1840s through 1900. The defining feature of the Romanesque Revival is the semi-circular rounded arch used for window and door openings and wall enrichment. Broad smooth wall surfaces of monochromatic brick laid with thin mortar joints are typical. Other distinguishing motifs are belt- or stringcourses of contrasting color and material that mark horizontal divisions. Arcaded corbel tables are seen as a series of miniature arches below the eaves, horizontally or raked on the gable face. Column capitals and the archivolt of compound arches are enriched with geometric medieval or religious ornament. Facades have gabled roofs flanked by square or polygonal towers of differing heights, with parapets and occasionally spires of Gothic origin. The typical plan is basilican, with a long, narrow nave, vestibule, central tower or paired side towers, and self-contained massing.<sup>13</sup>

The historical roots of the Romanesque style can be traced to western Europe of 1000 AD to 1200 AD when the forms of imperial Roman vaulted architecture were revived and blended with local regional traditions. The foundation of this style was laid in the Carolingian architecture that flourished during the reign of Charlemagne (768-814). After the fall of Rome in the late 5<sup>th</sup> century and as Christianity spread through Europe in the following three centuries, Charlemagne created a pan-Germanic Christian state in which he promoted Christianity, learning and administrative order through his court and the monasteries. German culture was synthesized with traditional late Roman forms, early Christian basilicas with additional influences from the Byzantine and Oriental style of ornamental and design.<sup>14</sup> Much as Christianity became a blend of Greco-Roman art and philosophy with the pagan

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<sup>13</sup> Kathleen Curran, The Romanesque Revival – Religion, Politics, and Transnational Exchange, 2003.

<sup>14</sup> Common Bond, New York Landmarks Conservancy, May 1997.

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rituals and traditions of pre-Christian Europe, the Romanesque style became the architectural manifestation of that fusion that took place at the end of the first millennium AD.

The Romanesque Revival first started in Munich, Germany around 1830 where it was called "Runbogenstil," literally, round-arched style. An early example is the Allerheiligen-Hofkirche (1826-1837) designed by German architect Leo von Klenze (1784-1864) based on the Romanesque Palatine Chapel (begun 1131) located in Palermo, Sicily.<sup>15</sup> From its origins in Bavaria the Romanesque Revival style spread to England and later the United States where it initially was utilized in Christian churches because of the historic associations with the tradition of staunch faith and communal solidarity of the early Christian era. Fundamentally distinct from the Gothic Revival, another popular ecclesiastical building style of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in that the Romanesque Revival utilizes rounded forms for windows and doors and the Gothic Revival typically displays pointed arched window and door openings. The Romanesque Revival style became ubiquitous throughout the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the United States for a wide variety of building types, such as railroad stations, civic buildings, schools, armories, commercial buildings, factories and high-style masonry mansions. Perhaps the best known of the early Romanesque Revival buildings in the US is the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC designed in 1846 by architect James Renwick, Jr. (1818-1895).

Two variations of the middle-European form of the Romanesque Revival appeared in the US in the later half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The first of these is called "Victorian Romanesque" and is distinguished from the pure Romanesque Revival by a polychromatic exterior with different colored and textured stone or brick for window trim, arches, quoins, and belt courses that relieve the rock-faced stone finish. Decorated bricks and terra cotta tiles in conjunction with stone trim may also be used. The round arches usually are supported by short polished stone columns instead of brick and the windows vary in size and shape. This style was popular in the US from 1870 to 1890 and is associated with the English-born American architect Richard Upjohn (1802-1878).<sup>16</sup>

Another variation that developed somewhat later and achieved its zenith of popularity in America in the 1880s and 1890s is named after the man who developed this distinctive variation on the Romanesque architectural theme. Boston based Henry Hobson Richardson (1838-1886) was educated at Harvard University and then studied architecture at the Ecole de Beaux Arts in Paris. During his years in France he traveled extensively in southern France and Spain where he was inspired by examples of early Christian churches and monasteries from the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. "Richardsonian

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<sup>15</sup> The Grove Dictionary of Art, Macmillan Publishers Limited, 2000.

<sup>16</sup> John J.-G. Blumenson, Identifying American Architecture: A Pictorial Guide to Styles and Terms, 1600-1945, page 45.

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Romanesque” buildings are massive and weighty with rough hewn stone walls and large rusticated half-round arches highlighted with tight clusters of tall narrow ribbon-like windows.<sup>17</sup> Often a highly ornamented central arch springs nearly at ground level and is often referred to as a “Syrian arch.” The application of this Syrian arch motif in an intricately decorated central arched entry was used by Louis Sullivan in many of his landmark buildings and adapted by his protégé Frank Lloyd Wright in later Prairie Style applications in residences and public buildings of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory identified the Maria Angelorum Chapel of the St. Rose Covent as “an excellent, significant example of the architecturally correct Romanesque Revival style.”<sup>18</sup> The Maria Angelorum chapel has the basilican mass with uniform brick exterior, central and crossing towers of differing heights with pyramidal roofs, round arched windows and doorways, arcaded corbel tables, ornamented archivolt supported by columns with foliated capitals found in the pure form of the Romanesque Revival. The interior décor of the chapel repeats the exterior round arch theme and is highlighted by a towering groined arch ceiling. All of these features retain a high degree of integrity. Distinct from the Victorian Romanesque Revival with its polychromatic exterior with contrasting elements and the Richardsonian Romanesque Revival with heavy stone exterior that depends on mass, volume and scale rather than enriched decorative detailing, the Maria Angelorum Chapel retains most of the elements descriptive of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century Romanesque Revival buildings in Germany and the United States.

The 1996 AHI inventory identifies 23 Romanesque Revival buildings in La Crosse, including five other churches. The inventory identifies four Richardsonian Romanesque Revival buildings, including Christ Episcopal Church (1898) at 831 Main Street. A descriptive comparison of these six architecturally significant churches follows:<sup>19</sup>

First Methodist Episcopal Church (1886) 721 King Street is the earliest of the identified Romanesque churches in the city of La Crosse. This church is characterized by a rather low massive pyramidal roofed entrance tower and belfry as well as two small towers at the rear with a typical round arched entry. The polychromatic contrasting red brick and white stone surface elements place this building in the category of Victorian Romanesque Revival. Now known as the Wesley United Methodist Church, it is the oldest Protestant Church still serving the same denomination in La Crosse.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, page 46.

<sup>18</sup> AHI File # 33685, 1996 Survey.

<sup>19</sup> All of the following descriptions are based on information from the 1984/1996 Intensive Historical and Architectural Survey by Joan Rausch.

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St. Nicholas Church (1892) 1333 South 13<sup>th</sup> Street (later renamed Holy Trinity Church) was begun by a young group of 132 German immigrant families that hired architect Guido Beck of Beck and Hart of Dubuque, Iowa to design a brick church to replace the original wood frame church on the same site. Described as a rather severe symmetrical German interpretation of the Romanesque Revival this church features a central entrance tower and colorful domed wooden belfry, plain round arches and corbelled trim. Holy Trinity Church is the only original Catholic parish church of a continuing congregation in La Crosse.

Christ Episcopal Church (1898) 831 Main Street is an excellent, architecturally significant example of the Richardson Romanesque style. Designed by architect R.M. Detweiler, it was built as an elaborate interpretation of the style in anticipation of its proposed role as the seat of the Episcopal bishop (a role La Crosse later lost to Eau Claire). The cruciform mass is anchored on the east end by a massive square entrance tower and on the west by short square crenellated tower. Built of local limestone with a rough-cut ashlar walls and ornamented with contrasting red Michigan sandstone, the façade has a polychromatic appearance typical of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Romanesque variant. An impressive round arched stained glass window by the Tiffany Company in the south transept was restored in recent years by the congregation. Interior furnishings were provided by the Hackner Altar Company of La Crosse. Tall narrow windows in the belfries, short columns with carved capitals and a distinctive carved red sandstone recessed portal entry are features of this well preserved La Crosse landmark.

First German Methodist Episcopal Church (1895) 525 South 7<sup>th</sup> Street was designed by local architects Schick and Stolze and is another example of the Richardsonian Romanesque style. The uniform rough cut limestone façade lacks the polychromatic character of the Christ Episcopal Church and depends on mass, scale and volume rather than ornament. A large compound Syrian arch with German language inscription is flanked by a large tower on the south and a smaller tower on the north. Of diminished architectural significance because alterations made by several fires in the past century the light colored rock-faced church is now the Bible Baptist Church and still retains potential as a local historic landmark.

St. James Catholic Church (1900) 1032 Caledonia Street is one of two late Victorian era Romanesque influenced churches designed by local architect Andrew Roth, who for a time worked locally with Hugo Schick and Gustav Stolze. The red brick façade of this church is broken into patterns by the extensive use of Bedford blue stone trim and Merrimac white brick bands and borders that connect the round arched windows, accent the corbelled arcades and form the window surrounds. Byzantine influence is seen in the short pyramid roofed tower that is contrasted to a taller domed tower, both

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flanking the façade and creating a picturesque effect. Sandblasting in 1953 diminished the architectural significance of this building.

First German Evangelical Lutheran Church (1904) 400 West Avenue was also designed by Andrew Roth in partnership with Hugo Schick. The Byzantine influence is seen again in this church in the different sized domed square towers flanking the main east façade. Round arches and the red brick façade accented with white limestone trim highlight a typical, if somewhat less colorful example of the Romanesque Revival style. Interior furnishing and an outstanding carved wooden altar were created by the Hackner Altar Company of La Crosse.

Compared to the above examples of historically and architecturally significant churches of the Romanesque Revival styles, the Maria Angelorum Chapel stands out as the finest, intact local example of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century European form of the Romanesque Revival style in La Crosse. Possibly the religious connections of the FSPA to the Umbria region of central Italy, the home of St Francis of Assisi, and the historical connections of the Franciscan sisters to their former homeland in Bavaria influenced their choice of a preferred architectural style/decorative motif and their choice of an architect.

Eugene R. Liebert - Architect

Born in Germany in 1867, Liebert came to Milwaukee with his father at age 16 in 1883. His father was a building contractor in Germany and young Liebert was hired and trained by H. C. Koch of Koch and Schnetzky, one of Milwaukee's most prominent architectural firms. In 1890, Liebert partnered with H. P. Schnetzky and developed a steady clientele in the socially prominent German speaking community in Milwaukee. For these well-to-do clients Liebert designed homes, factories and office buildings employing a variety of interpretations of popular late Victorian neo-European architectural styles. He stayed in touch with his European counterparts, subscribing to numerous German architectural periodicals. Liebert became very interested in the German "New Renaissance" movement and the "Jugendstil," Germany's version of Art Nouveau. In 1896, he was hired by the School Sisters of Notre Dame to design a chapel and rest home in Elm Grove, Wisconsin. King Ludwig I of Bavaria contributed generously to the project but specified that the building for the sisters follow the "Bavarian style" of architecture. The cream brick building still stands at 13105 Watertown Plank Road in Elm Grove. Liebert designed several other religious buildings in the Milwaukee area, including the Evangelical Dreieinigkeits Kirche (1892), 2375 North 4<sup>th</sup> Street, St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church (1896), 6802 West Forest Home, and St. Michael's Catholic Church, 1453 North 24<sup>th</sup> Street.



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St Michael's is German-influenced Gothic Revival. However, Liebert's biographer H. Russell Zimmerman considers the Maria Angelorum Chapel in La Crosse to be Eugene Liebert's "religious masterpiece".<sup>20</sup>

Adolph Liebig – Interior Decoration

Born in Prussia in 1848, Leibeg came to Milwaukee in 1872. By 1893, he had established A. Liebig and Company, his own fresco painting firm based in Milwaukee specializing in the decoration of Roman Catholic churches. A regional church publication from 1898 described the Liebig firm's artists as "men of unquestionable skill and ability, who have graduated from the best art schools in Europe. In addition to their technical skill, they have made sacred history their chief study and hence are able to go about their work in an intelligent and appreciative manner."<sup>21</sup> One of those European trained master painters was Danish born Bernhardt Hillig, Sr. (1868-1948) who was hired by Leibig when Hillig was working at the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904. After working on the Maria Angelorum Chapel, Hillig continued to work as a church decorative arts painter in the upper Midwest and later settled in the La Crosse area. When Hillig was hired to complete some of the interior decorative details of the chapel in 1919, he brought his son Bernard Hillig and Bernard's wife Olive Hillig to assist him.

Also brought in to assist in the decorative arts were Polish born artist Thaddeus von Zutotynski who painted the large murals above the three altars in the main sanctuary and in the adoration chapel. Czech born artist and sculptor Albin Polasek (1879-1965) hand carved on site the stone statue of St. Michael that is positioned in a large corbelled statuary niche on the top of the west façade. Both Count von Zutotynski and Polasek were associated with the Art Institute of Chicago.

Egid Hackner – Altars and Pews

Born in Bavaria in 1856, Hackner had extensive training in Europe as an architect and craftsman and was apprenticed to a master of church art for two years at the Munich School of Art. He worked as a journeyman altar builder throughout Europe for four years before coming to La Crosse in 1880. That same year he opened the Hackner altar factory in rented rooms at the rear of the La Crosse Hotel. Later he built a home and workshop at 11<sup>th</sup> and Winnebago streets, but vacated that site at the request of the Franciscan sisters when the hospital was expanded in 1886. He then built a home and shop of his own design at 1235 Ferry. By 1894, twenty-six skilled craftsmen were employed at this shop, where nearly all the work was done by hand and foot-powered machine. Sculpting in marble began in 1891 and

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<sup>20</sup> H Russel Zimmerman, Milwaukee Home magazine, January/February 2005.

<sup>21</sup> Annemarie Springer, Nineteenth Century German-American Church Artists, chapter 2, page 6.

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continued until the supply of Italian marble was interrupted by WWII. In 1910 the E. Hackner Company built a new factory at 810 South 2<sup>nd</sup> Street where power tools were installed and the workforce increased to 50-75 men. By 1912 the Hackner altar company was considered one of the leading altar companies in the nation. Egid Hackner died in 1952 at the age of 95 and the Hackner Company continued under the direction of three sons and one daughter until 1963. Hackner altars and church furnishings were produced for dozens of churches throughout the upper Midwest.<sup>22</sup>

A year-long series of events celebrating the centennial of the Maria Angelorum Chapel began in August of 2005. On Sunday, September 11, 2005 the Franciscan sisters hosted a gathering of many of the descendants of the builders and craftsmen mentioned above who participated in the construction and decoration of this historic and architecturally significant chapel.

Criteria Consideration

Under Criterion Consideration A, properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes are not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. However, the Maria Angelorum Chapel of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration of La Crosse is significant for its Romanesque Revival architecture, not for any religious association. Therefore, on the basis of architectural significance, the Maria Angelorum Chapel qualifies for the National Register of Historic Places.

Conclusion

The Maria Angelorum Chapel of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration of La Crosse is a superlative and intact local example of a Romanesque Revival architecture. As such, it is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C.

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<sup>22</sup> Joan Rausch, Intensive Survey.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary is in the approximate shape of a rectangle approximately 150 feet by 240 feet including the chapel and a small site surrounding the building itself as indicated on the included site map.

Starting at a point approximately 90 feet east of the west end of a concrete sidewalk running along the south side of the chapel, continuing east about 240 feet along the sidewalk past the previously mentioned cast iron gate to a north-south earthen berm located east of the chapel, continue north along the earthen berm about 150 feet to a concrete sidewalk that runs east-west about 50 feet north of the chapel, continuing about 180 feet along the sidewalk to the east wall of the convent. Following the southeast wall of the convent to the point of contact with the chapel, continuing west along the party wall shared by the convent and the chapel to the northwest corner of the chapel to a point along the south wall of the convent about 15 feet west of an open porch/entry. Continuing south along the west wall of the porch/entry on a line between the chapel and the kitchen along a concrete driveway about 80 feet to the sidewalk on the south side of the chapel and the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries encompass the immediate setting of the Maria Angelorum Chapel and the lawn surrounding the chapel on the south, east and north, including the previously mentioned cast iron gate, fountain and statue. While the chapel shares a wall with the adjacent St. Rose Convent, these are two separate buildings. Only the Maria Angelorum Chapel is included in this nomination.

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PHOTOGRAPH DESCRIPTIONS

The following information pertains to all photographs:

Maria Angelorum Chapel,  
901 Franciscan Way, La Crosse, Wisconsin  
Photographer: Eric J Wheeler, September 2005  
Negatives are held in the collection of the Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

Photograph 1 of 20  
View of southeast façade, looking northwest

Photograph 2 of 20  
View of northeast façade, looking southwest

Photograph 3 of 20  
Street view, looking northwest

Photograph 4 of 20  
Street view, looking north

Photograph 5 of 20  
Street view, looking north-northeast

Photograph 6 of 20  
Street view, looking northeast

Photograph 7 of 20  
Close-up of central tower, looking northwest

Photograph 8 of 20  
Close-up of south transept, looking north

Photograph 9 of 20  
Close-up of main exterior entrance, looking north

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Photograph 10 of 20  
View of auxiliary exterior entrance, looking north

Photograph 11 of 20  
View of interior entry to chapel from convent, looking south

Photograph 12 of 20  
View of interior of narthex, looking south

Photograph 13 of 20  
View of interior of chapel, looking east

Photograph 14 of 20  
View of interior of chapel, looking west

Photograph 15 of 20  
View of interior of nave, looking north

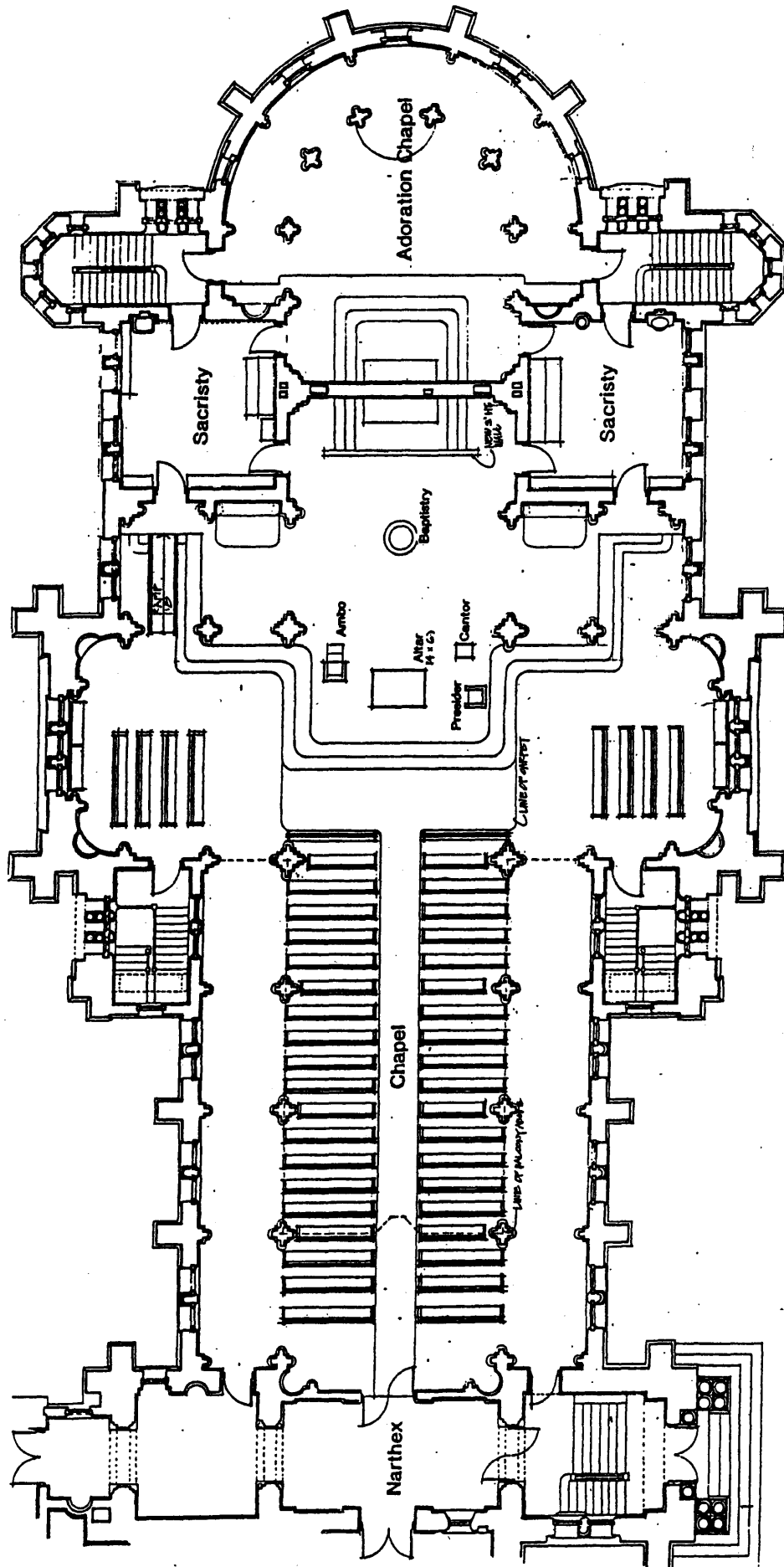
Photograph 16 of 20  
View of interior of south transept, looking south

Photograph 17 of 20  
View of interior of sanctuary ceiling, looking east

Photograph 18 of 20  
Close-up detail of pew, looking north

Photograph 19 of 20  
Close-up detail of statue, looking east

Photograph 20 of 20  
View of interior of adoration chapel, looking east



Maria Angelorum Chapel

**FLOOR PLAN**



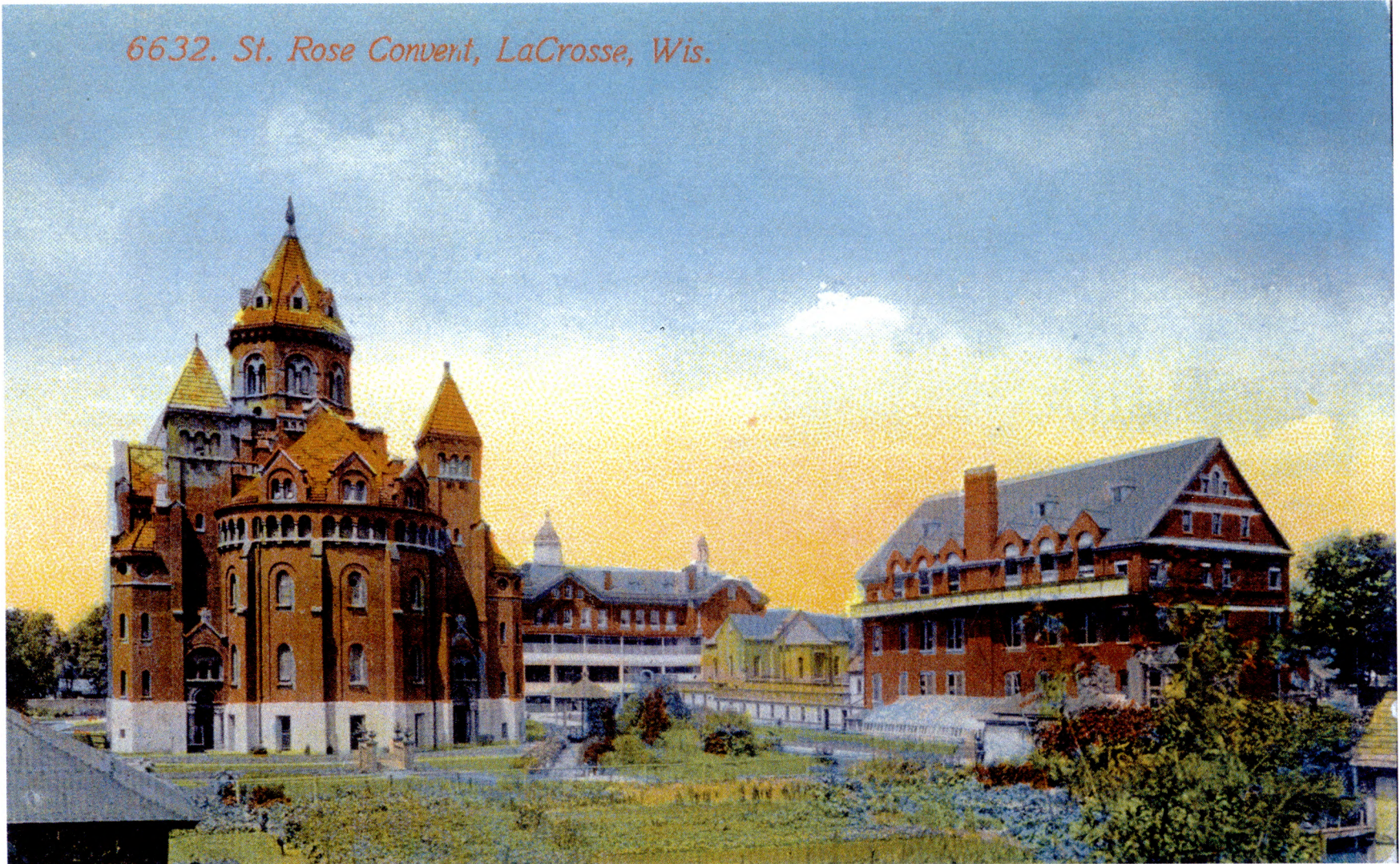
LA CROSSE, LA CROSSE COUNTY, WI



Maria Angelorum Chapel  
La Crosse, La Crosse County, Wisconsin  
Black and White photograph circa 1904  
Maria Angelorum Chapel under construction - looking east

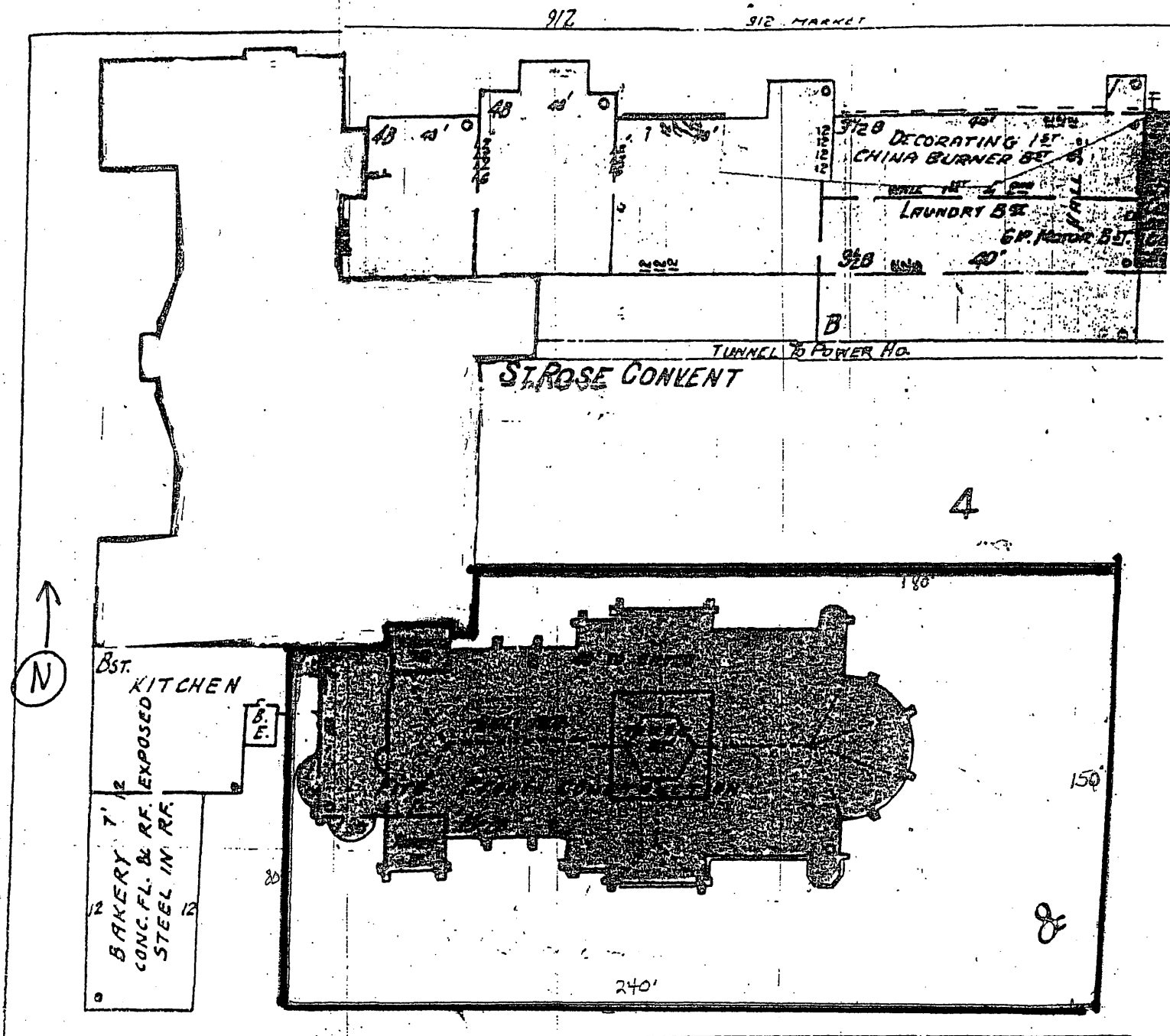


6632. *St. Rose Convent, LaCrosse, Wis.*



Maria Angelorum Chapel, La Crosse, La Crosse County, Wisconsin  
Post card circa 1916  
St. Rose Convent grounds looking west

# Site Map



MARIANGELORUM CHAPEL  
LA CROSSE, LA CROSSE COUNTY  
WISCONSIN

Approximate site  
dimensions

NOT TO SCALE

boundary

916

928

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