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St. Mary's of the Barrens
Perryville
Perry County
Missouri

HABS No. MO-1558

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ST. MARY'S OF THE BARRENS

HABS No. MO-1558

Location: Perryville, Perry County, Missouri

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

The following information was recorded by Alexander Piaget and Charles van Ravenswaay at the time the photograph was taken:

St. Mary's Seminary was established in what is now Perry County (near Perryville) in 1818, incorporated by the territorial legislature of Missouri, and generally known among the Catholic hierarchy as "St. Mary's of the Barrens," the mother-house and the nursery of many priests and bishops of the Catholic Church of the United States.

Among the priests Bishop Dubourg induced to come to upper Louisiana, Father Felix De Andreis was the most eminent. Before his departure from Italy for America in the winter of 1815, Bishop Dubourg appointed him Vicar-General of his diocese. After a long and arduous journey, Bishop Dubourg and his little party of missionaries met Bishop Flaget at his seminary, St. Thomas, four miles from Bardstown, Kentucky. They remained here until September, when, accompanied by Bishop Flaget...the party departed for St. Louis.

While they were in St. Louis, two members of the parish of St. Mary's of the Barrens, situated about eighteen miles from Ste. Genevieve, came to St. Louis...and requested the Bishop to intercede with Bishop Dubourg to choose their parish as the location for the future seminary.

The site was selected and Father DeAndreis now called Father Rosati and the other members of his order from Bardstown to "the Barrens," to push the work of erecting the new seminary. Father De La Croix, a priest skilled in architecture, was sent there by Bishop Dubourg. In the spring of 1818...some ground had been cleared, log cabins erected, and the foundation for a church laid....

In 1820, this first and oldest collegiate institution of Missouri was well established. (See, Houck, History of Missouri, vol. 2, 315-338).

John Bryan, in his volume, "Missouri's Contribution to American Architecture," (p.10) wrote, "...in 1818, the Vincentians began the erection of a building which was intended to be a replica of their mother church in Rome. But when they realized the stupendous [sic] of such an undertaking out in the wilderness, they cut down the dimensions of their church - retaining, however, the essential features of the Old World design. In 1913, the old elevation was torn down and replaced by a 'modern' front."

Chapel date of 1830 carved in stone. School built 1848, wings later.

PROJECT INFORMATION

The Piaget-van Ravenswaay Survey consists of a number of photographs, primarily of sites and structures in Missouri, which were taken before 1938 by Alexander Piaget and after that by Paul Piaget, both in conjunction with Charles van Ravenswaay. Photographs of buildings were incorporated into the

HABS collection in 1985 by Laura Rupp and in 1986 by Deborah Fulton, HABS historians. A master list is available in the ~~MO-1558~~ records for MO-1800.