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United States Department of the 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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of PropertyHistoric name: Marist CollegeOther names/site number: Catholic University of America (CUA) Marist Hall

Name of related multiple property listing:

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. LocationStreet & number: 405 Fort Slemmer Drive NE (3875 Harewood Road NE)City or town: Washington State: DC County: Not For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐**3.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 at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide ___ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___A ___B ___C ___D

Signature of certifying official/Title:**Date**

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title :

**State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government**

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ entered in the National Register

___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:) _____

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

☐☐

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Site

Structure

☐

Object

☐

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing

1

Noncontributing

buildings

sites

structures

objects

Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION: college, education-related

RELIGION: church-related residence

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN: Romanesque Revival

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick, Limestone, Terracotta, Slate roof

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

Marist Hall, constructed in 1900, is an imposing Romanesque Revival style building on the crest of a hill on what is now the north side of the main Catholic University campus. Although Marist Hall was not built as a component of the campus, its elevated location provides a commanding view of many of the university's buildings. It also established a line of sight south toward McMahon Hall, a major university building constructed about five years earlier. Although the vast intervening grassy lawns have been partially filled in with other campus buildings, Marist Hall retains a prominent place on the university's skyline with a commanding presence at the top of its hill.

Narrative Description

Beneath its slate roofs, Marist Hall exhibits a highly symmetrical cross-gable plan. The main block of the building runs east-west, with its front façade, which incorporates its formal entrance portico, facing south. At the main block's east and west ends, wings stretch south to north. The building is, however, neither a true "H" or "U" shape, as these wings project further to the main block's north, enclosing a courtyard-like space open on its north side. The building also

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possesses center wings that project north and south from each side of the main block. Each wing's roof gable runs north-south, while the main block's roof gable runs east-west.

As is characteristic of many Romanesque Revival buildings, Marist Hall's façades are highly symmetrical, with bold, massive masonry forms and relatively small fenestration accentuated by a high level of detailing. Its main, or south, façade's three-and-one-half red brick upper stories arise from a base story of white rusticated Indiana limestone that extends one-half story above ground. It is divided into five bays by its center wing, which incorporates its entrance portico. The identical extruded gable end façades of the east and west wings have steeply pitched slate roofs whose front cornice is topped with a fleur-de-lys finial at the gable-ridge. Each bay's uppermost story appears to be a loft level illuminated by a row of three adjoining single window apertures. This window row follows the pattern common to all fenestration in Marist Hall's upper stories on the south and east façades. Each aperture has an inner brick arch beneath an outer eyebrow course of terracotta blocks and is separated from its neighbor by a narrow brick pier. Each eyebrow course links to that of its neighbor at its ends. The windows within are metal-framed replacements for wooden originals, consisting of a lunette above a conventional one-over-one double-hung sash. Although each aperture has a limestone sill, this treatment varies by story. The sill beneath this uppermost row is a continuous limestone band.

The end bays' second and third stories show an identical fenestration pattern, with a set of paired apertures on each side of a single aperture. On the third story, each individual aperture or pair of apertures has a thin limestone sill. The second story windows are arranged similarly, but their sills are incorporated in a continuous limestone cornice band that wraps the east elevation and south façade. The first story varies this pattern. It has a single aperture containing two single windows on either side of the bay. Each aperture has a common inner arch and outer eyebrow course. The windows within it consist of an undivided double-wide lunette and a pair of double-hung sashes. The ends of each aperture's eyebrow course are connected by a broader limestone cornice band that wraps the building. The sills of the first story apertures are incorporated in a limestone cornice band which forms the upper boundary of the limestone block lower story. The section of the band that forms the windowsill is recessed slightly and sits atop a rectangular smoothly finished limestone panel. The panel is framed by the rusticated blocks of the lower story which rise to the level of the cornice band on either side. The lower story is illuminated by a pair of deeply inset rectangular windows centered beneath the apertures on the stories above.

Marist Hall's widest bays are the sections of the main block facade between the end bays and center bay. These bays' gable runs in parallel with the front façade and they hence lack the loft level window row found on the gable-end bays. Their roofline is defined by a protruding cornice of brick arches whose end sections project to form dentes. Several courses below them, a less-articulated string course of bricks defines a second cornice line.

The main block façade repeats the end bays' basic fenestration pattern with adaptations for its greater length. Each set of window apertures on its second and third stories contains an additional aperture, giving each story two sets of triple apertures separated by a set of double apertures. Visual differences are most pronounced on the first floor. On the upper stories each

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aperture contains a single window. Here, two triple-wide apertures each enclose a wide central double-hung sash flanked by half-lunettes and smaller rectangular panes. Between the triple-width apertures is a double-wide aperture that is identical to the double-wide apertures of the end bay. The main block's lower story is also similar to those of the end bays, with the addition of a pair of rectangular apertures beneath the center column of double windows and limestone piers between each pair of windows.

Marist Hall's front façade is dominated by its center bay, which incorporates the type of imposing entrance portico that is typical of the Romanesque Revival style. In form, the central bay echoes the end bays, although it protrudes from main block of the building rather than reaching northward as a separate wing. It is also considerably narrower, not as tall, and does not extend as far south from the façade of the building as the end bays. The center bay's gable end roof is flattened at its ridge to provide a base for a cupola-like tabernacle containing a statue of Mary. The tabernacle is topped by a cross. Like the end bays, the center bay has an upper set of small arched windows that probably illuminate a loft. Its third story has a row of four window apertures separated by narrow brick piers. Its second story has a row of four shorter apertures whose sills are sections of the cornice band that meet the flat roof of the projecting limestone portico which contains the building's formal entrance.

Marist Hall is entered by a limestone staircase that ascends from its grassy lawn in two flights, with an intervening stone landing atop a small swale. The second flight of fourteen steps rises from the swale to the portico entry-arch at the first-floor level. It is bounded on either side by a low wall of smooth finished limestone, which contrasts with the rusticated stone blocks of the surrounding lower level. From the first story up, the portico is faced in smooth finished limestone blocks. Its entrance arch, the largest of the building's many arches, has trimming on its extrados and entados, flanking pilasters, and a double eyebrow course above its arc. Above the top of the exterior arch is an elaborate cornice that incorporates a cartouche with a medallion and center cross against a frieze of carved diamond-shaped blocks. The limestone medallion features the coat of arms of the Society of Mary and the Latin inscription "SVB NOMINE MARIAE" (Under the Name of Mary). The portico encloses a porch-like outdoor room with slender arched windows in its sides. Entry to the building interior is through a set of heavy wooden doors set in an interior frame-trimmed arch whose transom is ornamented with circular panes.

Marist Hall's east elevation repeats many elements from its front facade. Its roofline cornice is a similar arrangement of brick arches and dentes. A few courses beneath it is a secondary cornice line of extruded blocks with broken rows of rectangles above and below it formed from terracotta blocks. The second and third stories are divided into pairs of double apertures by seven narrow brick pilasters that rise from the limestone cornice line that incorporates the second story windowsills. At the top of each pilaster is a pair of metal reinforcement plates decorated with a star emblem. The first story repeats the single-aperture-containing-two-sashes form found on the front façades of the end bays, while the lower story is clad in rusticated limestone blocks with rectangular window apertures.

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Marist Hall was designed to occupy a site where it would be viewed from its east and south, rather than the north and west. Its north elevations are more simplified and less formal, lacking the limestone block facing on their lower stories as well as cornice bands and eyebrow courses above apertures. Each story on the north façade of the east wing has a simple row of three individual arched apertures and a closely spaced uppermost row of three apertures. The rectangular window apertures of the brick-faced lower story have limestone bands as lintels and sills. A metal fire escape rises from ground level to the center aperture on the third story, while the westernmost aperture on its first floor is filled by a double door reached by a flight of concrete steps. The north façade of the west wing appears to be identical in design.

The inward façades of the east and west wings face each other across a courtyard that is covered by a paved parking lot. They are essentially, like the outer, or east, elevation of the east wing, absent its limestone base and eyebrow courses. The inner walls of the courtyard area, which are screened from public view from three directions, accommodate functional areas of the building, including several entrance doors. A tall brick chimney rises above the roofline on the inner wall of the west wing.

The north elevation of the main block differs greatly from the formal and ceremonial south facade. Its center bay is considerably wider than the center wing attached to the front façade. It is flanked by a pair of stair towers with pyramidal roofs. Staggered windows trace the staircases within. There is also a second tall chimney to the east of the center bay. Metal fire escapes, like that on the east wing, are attached to the façade.

The west, or outer, elevation of Marist Hall's west wing is similar to the outer façade of the east wing but lacks some of the east wing's decoration, including the limestone lower story facing and eyebrow courses above the window apertures. The window apertures on its lower level have limestone sills and lintels.

Other than the replacement of the roof and original wooden sashes and installation of steel tie rods at the roofline, Marist Hall has undergone few exterior alterations since its construction in 1900. A pair of decorative stone urns originally stood on the limestone newels of the front entrance stairway, but they were removed in approximately 1997. Because the building has been closed since 2016, it was not possible to view its interior. However, the interior was substantially altered to meet changing needs even before the building was acquired by Catholic University in 1975. A 2011 earthquake reportedly caused damage to the foundation of the west wing, but no damage is readily visible on the exterior of the building. Despite deferred maintenance, wear, and this reported damage, Marist Hall retains a high degree of integrity.

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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 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.)

- ☐ 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

EDUCATION

Period of Significance

1900

Significant Dates

1900

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Lemuel W. Norris, Architect

John S. Larcombe, Builder

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Marist Hall, situated majestically on a ridge overlooking the campus of the Catholic University of America (CUA), is significant as a prominent example of Romanesque Revival architecture as expressed for religious institutional purposes. As Marist College, the building served as the hub of advanced studies for the Society of Mary, one of the earliest religious orders to become affiliated with CUA. In both design and use, it memorializes a significant element of the history of the District of Columbia.

Marist Hall achieves significance under District of Columbia Criterion B as well as similar National Register Criterion A for its “association with historical periods, social movements and patterns of growth that contributed to the heritage and development of the District.” The building is one of two (the other being O’Boyle Hall) that were the first purpose-built seminary buildings for independent Catholic religious orders affiliated with CUA and thus ranks very high among historic buildings on the CUA campus. It embodies the goals and aspirations of the Society of Mary, a missionary religious order, to enhance its mission through advanced education in association with CUA, which had been founded as a national center for such pursuits within the Roman Catholic faith. The Marists were the second order to affiliate with CUA, and their mission typified religious communities which later came by the dozens and settled in and around the Brookland community, earning it the nickname “Little Rome.” In addition, since 1975, Marist Hall has been a major academic building and integral part of the CUA campus, hosting classes and meeting spaces for thousands of students. The building’s educational legacy is highly significant to the heritage and development of the District of Columbia.

The building is also significant under District of Columbia Criteria D through F and similar National Register Criterion C because it embodies distinctive characteristics of the type, period, style, and method of construction associated with late Victorian era dormitories and educational buildings. The architect, Lemuel W. Norris, was exceptionally sensitive and talented, with a diversified body of work both in private practice and later in association with the DC Office of the Building Inspector (1904) and the Office of the Municipal Architect (1911-29). Norris was one of three architects (the other two are E. Francis Baldwin and Albert O. Von Herbulis) who designed the first buildings for CUA and its affiliated orders, setting an imposing and contemplative ambience for the early 20th century campus.¹ Marist Hall’s Romanesque Revival style is distinctive, beautifully executed, and highly representative of the era’s aesthetic ideals. The building’s exquisite siting, on the top of a ridge overlooking the CUA campus, lends an air of dignity and refinement, the expansive views encouraging meditation and spiritual growth. In this way the design and siting of Marist Hall is a notable example of turn-of-the-century institutional structures for Catholic and educational organizations.

The building retains high integrity of materials, form, and association. Aside from the addition of fire escapes at the rear of the building, the addition of star bolts and plates attached to steel tie

¹ Norris’s other contribution to CUA, Albert Hall, was demolished in 1970.

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rods below the cornice, and the removal of ornamental urns from the entrance stairs, few changes have been made to the exterior. The building's period of significance under Criterion C is 1900, the year of its construction. The building has been continuously associated with Catholic higher education since the time of its construction.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The history of Marist Hall (originally Marist College) spans more than 100 years and reflects the development of the Catholic University of America from a fledging institution to a major Roman Catholic center of education and advanced studies. The design and location of the building expressed the commitment of the Society of Mary to its own lasting presence and investment in the Catholic faith in America, as well as the value and significance of the Catholic University. Designed by accomplished architect Lemuel Norris in a Romanesque Revival style that exemplifies the contemplative piety of the Marist order, the building stands as an integral element of both the university and of the Little Rome community of northeast Washington, DC.

History of the Society of Mary (Marist Fathers)

The Society of Mary, a Roman Catholic religious order of men, was first loosely organized in Lyons, France, in 1816 by a group of young, recently ordained priests, including Jean-Claude Colin (1790-1875), who came to be recognized as the founder of the order. The fall of Napoleon the previous year and the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy created political upheaval that inspired the creation of a religious order devoted to piety, obedience, and humility—expressed as devotion to the Virgin Mary. It took a number of years before local diocesan authorities would allow an independent order to be created. In 1836, Pope Gregory XVI officially sanctioned the Society of Mary, and it was tasked with missionary work in Western Oceania, a region of the South Pacific, as one of its main tasks. The order's members were already performing as missionaries in France and would become deeply involved in teaching at Catholic colleges and seminaries in France as well as Oceania and elsewhere.²

The order's French origins and membership suggested an affinity for other French-speaking parts of the world as subjects for missionary endeavors. In 1862, French-born Archbishop Jean-Marie Odin of New Orleans invited the Marists to come to America, and the following year the first two Marist priests arrived—along with some 40 other Catholic missionaries—on a former French warship at the port of New Orleans. The priests, along with others who came later, staffed a nearby French-speaking Parish and taught at Jefferson College, Louisiana's only

² Charles Herbermann, ed. "Society of Mary (Marist Fathers)," *Catholic Encyclopedia*. (New York: Robert Appleton Co., 1913); Wikipedia contributors, "Society of Mary (Marists)," *Wikipedia*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Society_of_Mary_\(Marists\)&oldid=1080344706](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Society_of_Mary_(Marists)&oldid=1080344706) (accessed July 18, 2022).

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college at the time.³ The Marists soon took on other parishes and systematized Catholic education in the New Orleans area. From here, the Marists expanded their work to other parts of the United States, including French-speaking communities in New England, Minnesota, Georgia, California, and Utah.

Fierce anti-clerical sentiment in republican France led in 1880 to the first of several decrees expelling the Catholic religious orders from teaching in French schools. Some Marists forced out of their French vocations came to America to continue their work. The expanding presence led to the official establishment of an American Province (regional organization) of the Marists in 1889.⁴ The following year, the American Province opened its first headquarters in a historic plantation house called Dodon, outside of Davidsonville, Maryland, which had been donated for its use. With new members being recruited locally (in addition to those coming from France), efforts began to establish a central Marist house of studies to train new members. In 1890, the Marist Fathers' first American novitiate opened at Dodon.⁵ It would soon be replaced by a facility near the new Catholic University of America in Washington, DC.

When the Society of Mary was legally incorporated in the District of Columbia in 1896, its official charter succinctly stated the mission of the organization: "The particular business and object of said Society is the training of young men in theology, philosophy, canonical law and history, preparatory to their ordination into the Roman Catholic priesthood, and for the purpose of forming them for missionary work in home and foreign missions."⁶

Establishment of the Catholic University of America⁷

The establishment of a national university for the Roman Catholic faith had been a topic of discussion among the nation's bishops since the early part of the 19th century. Several seminaries and Catholic colleges had been founded, including Georgetown College in Washington, DC, but these institutions were generally focused on undergraduate education. No modern, research-oriented institution existed for graduate-level education of the church's priests and other leaders. "We have no university—no central seat of learning encircled by the halo of great names, to which the eyes of Catholics from every part of the land might turn with pride and

³ Ted Keating, S.M., "U.S. Marists Celebrate 150 Years of Ministry," in *Today's Marists*, Lent 2013. https://www.societyofmaryusa.org/content/uploads/2019/06/S1.-Pt-G_TM-150-Years_Lent2013.pdf (accessed July 22, 2022).

⁴ A third expulsion order, in 1903, would lead to significantly more Marists coming to America to teach.

⁵ Several terms are used to denote educational facilities for Marists and other Roman Catholic orders. A novitiate is a school for training those who are considering joining a religious order, such as the Marists. Minor seminaries, or apostolic schools, offer secondary and undergraduate courses for novice priests, or "aspirants." A scholasticate, also called a major seminary, is devoted to the formal education and training of ordained priests. Following traditional French usage, the term "college" is generally used by the Marists to refer to secondary schools, although Marist College served primarily as a scholasticate.

⁶ Nicholas A. Weber, S.M., *Brooks Mansion: The History of the Marist Houses of Formation in America: The Tentative Years in the District of Columbia 1892-1900* (Washington, DC: Society of Mary, Province of Washington, 1960), 8.

⁷ Some of the material in this section was adapted from previous historic landmark nominations developed by the D.C. Preservation League for Holy Name College and St. Paul's College.

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reverence,” wrote the Reverend John Lancaster Spalding.⁸ Spalding was the nephew of Bishop Martin J. Spalding of Louisville, Kentucky, who had first presented church leaders with the idea of a national university for Catholicism at the bishops’ Plenary Council in 1866. The younger Spalding continued his uncle’s initiative, decrying the “deplorable dearth of intellectual men” among Catholics, which he felt reflected poorly on the credibility of the Catholic Church, particularly as an intellectual institution that should be able to create an “American Catholic Literature” to “deal with all the living problems of the age.”⁹

Not everyone was convinced of the need for such an institution, and debate about its creation continued for decades. Finally, in 1884, at the third Plenary Council held in Baltimore, Reverend Spalding’s efforts bore fruit with the American bishops’ approval of the formation of the university. A decisive factor in the decision was a \$300,000 gift from one of Spalding’s protégés, Mary Gwendolen Caldwell. Spalding had persuaded Caldwell, a 21-year-old heiress, to make the donation “for the purpose of founding a national Catholic School of Philosophy and Theology.”¹⁰

Further debates ensued, particularly about the location of the institution, with Spalding standing firm that Washington, the nation’s capital, should be its home. After Pope Leo XIII indicated privately that he would approve the establishment of the university, organizers purchased the 62-acre former farm of Erasmus J. Middleton (1804-1882), clerk of the DC Criminal Court, from Middleton’s widow, Ellen Middleton. The site was in what had been Washington County, several miles away outside of the L’Enfant-designed Washington City, which ended at Boundary Street (Florida Avenue). This caused some church leaders to object that it was too far out in the country. Nevertheless, the sale was completed, and in 1887 Pope Leo officially established the new Catholic University of America.

The first building, Divinity Hall (soon renamed Caldwell Hall), was designed by Baltimore architect E. Francis Baldwin and constructed between 1888 and 1889. The university formally opened on November 13, 1889, when this imposing building, featuring Romanesque Revival elements, was dedicated. It soon became apparent that the university’s exclusive focus on graduate ecclesiastical students would be unrealistic for the future growth and success of the institution. Accordingly, the first lay students were admitted in 1896, followed by the first undergraduates in 1904.

From the start, the concept of the university was that it would serve as a core institution that would be connected with separate houses of studies established by specific religious orders. In an article published in 1887, the university’s first rector, Rev. John Joseph Keane, invited Catholic orders to affiliate with CUA:

⁸ Robert P. Malesky, *The Catholic University of America* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 9.

⁹ C. Joseph Nuesse, *The Catholic University of America: A Centennial History* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1990), 23.

¹⁰ Nuesse, 28.

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The halls of the university are to be wide open to every one [sic], without limit or distinction, who is able and anxious to profit by the superior courses taught in them.... We look forward with glad expectancy to the day when our divinity college will be surrounded with homes in which students not only of various dioceses or provinces, but also the various religious congregations, will live and study under such discipline as their superiors may determine, and at the same time attend the university courses, thus imbibing at once the spirit of their institute and the noblest streams of sacred learning, and building up a real republic of letters.¹¹

The first to accept this offer were the Paulist Fathers, officially known as the Missionary Society of Saint Paul the Apostle, a group whose mission was to convert non-Catholics in America. In 1889, the university leased the unused Middleton farmhouse to the Paulists, and it became the university's first affiliated house of studies, called St. Thomas College.

The Marists' first building in Brookland

The Marists were the second religious order to affiliate with the new Catholic University. When the Dodon plantation outside Davidsonville, Maryland, proved to be too remote, the Marists sought a new location for their house of studies close to Catholic University.¹² In 1891, the group purchased the landmark Brooks Mansion at 901 Newton Street NE in Brookland¹³ for use as their first permanent administrative center and house of studies (figure 1). The seller was real estate broker Grace M. Thomas, who sold it to the Marists for \$20,000, having purchased it just a few months earlier for \$12,000.¹⁴

¹¹ John J. Keane, "The Roman Universities" in *The Catholic World*, Vol. XLVI, No. 273, Dec. 1887, p. 320.

¹² M.J. McMahon, S.M., "A History of Marist College (Brookland, Washington, D.C.)," typescript dated June 1939 in the Archives of the Catholic University of America, 1-2.

¹³ Entered on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975, the Greek-Revival style Brooks Mansion was constructed in 1835 by Col. Jehiel Brooks, the namesake of the Brookland neighborhood.

¹⁴ Weber, *Brooks Mansion*, 3; "For The Marist Fathers," *Washington Post*, Sep. 2, 1891, 8.

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Figure 1: Brooks Mansion, first site of Marist College (John DeFerrari).

With minor modifications to create a chapel and classroom on the first floor, the Marist opened their Marist College in September 1892. “The interior of the house, which was once resplendent with costly furnishings, is now painful in its simplicity and symbolical of the frugal and temperate lives of the inmates,” the *Washington Post* observed.¹⁵ Among its three faculty members was Reverend Edmund Dublanchy, who was also pursuing graduate studies at CUA and who received one of the first two degrees of Doctor of Theology conferred by the university in 1895.

The new Marist College had just four students in its first year; however, the Marists soon realized that the Brooks Mansion would be too small as the college grew. This was in part due to the influx of Marists who had been forced to leave France because of the French government’s anti-religious decrees.¹⁶ In 1894, the order constructed a new wing at right angles to the original structure that consisted of a refectory and storeroom on the first floor, a study hall and classrooms on the second, and dormitories on the third. An additional wing was contemplated on the opposite side of the mansion, but structural engineers stated that this would not be feasible due to the age and poor condition of the original circa 1840 building. Accordingly, the search for a new home began.¹⁷

Site selection for the Marist College building

While the Brooks Mansion was within easy walking distance of the university, an even closer site was chosen for the Marists’ new college building—a prominent ridge of land immediately to

¹⁵ “The Sacred Order of Mary, *Washington Post*, Jun. 22, 1893, 8.

¹⁶ McMahon, 2.

¹⁷ Weber, *Brooks Mansion*, 5-7.

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the north of the CUA campus. The Marist College was one of two seminaries built on this ridge at about the same time. The other was the Holy Cross College (1899), designed by Albert Von Herbulis and now, like Marist College, part of CUA. Holy Cross College, situated directly to the west of Marist College, near Harewood Road NE, is now called O'Boyle Hall.

The Marists purchased the ten-acre tract for their college from Lillian E. and George W. Ray in January 1897 for \$28,255.¹⁸ The tract was said to have previously been owned by the John Lynch family.¹⁹ It was a part of Turkey Thicket, a vast estate dating back at least to the 18th century. Samuel Harrison Smith (1772-1845), the pioneering publisher of the *National Intelligencer*, and his wife, Margaret Bayard Smith (1778-1844), purchased a 160-acre portion of Turkey Thicket in 1804. The Smiths built a country farmhouse on the property, which they called Sidney. The Smiths sold the Sidney estate in 1839, and in 1844 Erasmus J. Middleton and his father James purchased a 62-acre portion of it, which included the Smith's farmhouse. The Middleton estate became the Catholic University of America in 1887.²⁰ The portion of Turkey Thicket immediately to the north of the Middleton farm seems to have changed hands a number of times in the 19th century before the Rays finally sold the ten-acre tract to the Marists in 1897.

The Marists chose this site in part because it stood on top of a high ridge and had a commanding view of the surrounding countryside. Rev. Nicholas Weber, a Marist historian who had joined the faculty of Marist College in 1902, observes that the land was admirably suited for the Marists' use:

*It was contiguous to the University and as close as possible to Caldwell and McMahon Halls, the two buildings in which the courses in Theology and Philosophy were held. These were evidently the buildings in which the Marist seminarians would attend most of the lectures. The extent of the land, ten acres, was large enough for the educational endeavors and the recreational facilities of the students. The land did not stretch along any highway, but was close enough to one for easy communication with the outside world. From the intellectual standpoint it stimulated thought and reflection, spiritually it lent itself to fruitful meditation and devout contemplation.*²¹

The ten-acre Marist tract included the land on which Fort Slemmer had been built during the Civil War (the Marist College building itself was constructed just south of the site of the fort). Fort Slemmer was a small earthen redoubt built in 1861 and equipped with four large guns, three 32-pounder seacoast cannons, and one eight-inch howitzer. It was part of the ring of 68 forts and other defensive emplacements protecting Washington City during the Civil War. It was named for Lieutenant Adam J. Slemmer (1828-1868), a Pennsylvania soldier who had held Fort

¹⁸ Deed—Liber 2201—Folio 241, dated Jan. 29, 1897, cited in Weber, *Brooks Mansion*, 9. See also "Transfers of Real Estate," *Evening Star*, Mar. 26, 1897, 3; "Catholic University Notes," *Evening Star*, Sep. 13, 1897, 12.

¹⁹ See correspondence from John Lynch to Rev. John E. Gunn, S.M., June 7, 1897, Box 5, Location A-9-4, Archives of the Society of Mary, U.S. Province, at Atlanta, Georgia.

²⁰ As mentioned above, the university leased the unused Smith/Middleton farmhouse to the Paulists in 1889, and it became known as St. Thomas College. After the Paulists left, it was renamed St. Thomas Hall and used it for a dormitory and classrooms. It was demolished in 1970.

²¹ Weber, *Brooks Mansion*, 9.

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Pickens, Florida, from Confederate attackers early in 1861. The fort saw no combat action; Fort Stevens in Brightwood was the only D.C. fort to be involved in fighting, when Confederate General Jubal Early unsuccessfully attacked Washington from the north in July 1864.²²

Fort Slemmer was one of many fortifications that ran across farmland in Washington County. At the time of the Civil War, this property was part of the 24-acre farm of florist Henry Douglass, just north of the Smith/Middleton farm. The greatest impact of the fort's construction came from the clearing of trees to improve sight lines. Douglass lost 1,970 fruit trees and numerous flowering plants and bushes. Volunteer soldiers from the 1st and 2nd Pennsylvania Heavy Artillery, as well as units from New York and Ohio, were all stationed at Fort Slemmer at various times during the war.²³ The fort's location is now in a heavily wooded area behind Marist College/Hall, north of Fort Slemmer Drive. There are virtually no visible remains of the fort.

Construction of Marist College

Weber notes that "Owing to its uneven configuration and upgrowth [sic] of trees and shrubbery on its soil, levelling, grading and landscaping appeared necessary before building operations could be undertaken."²⁴ The Marists' intention had been to begin work immediately, but due to a lack of funds, nothing was undertaken until 1899.²⁵

In May 1899, James Cardinal Gibbons, Archbishop of Baltimore, authorized the Marists to build their new scholasticate (school of religious studies) near CUA. In July, the Marists hired builder John S. Larcombe and architect Lemuel Norris to design and construct the building.²⁶ An architect's drawing, signed by Norris and in the collection of the Marist U.S. Province Archives, shows what appears to be an early rendering of the front elevation of the proposed Marist College (figure 2). However, the drawing is substantially different from the building that was finally constructed. Most dramatically, a large central tower was eliminated, undoubtedly for cost reasons. In addition, the early drawing shows neoclassical pediments atop pilasters on the façades of the building's two wings. The neoclassical elements were eliminated and the gables lengthened to allow an attic floor to be added above the third floor of the building. Without the neoclassical motifs, the final building has a more cohesive Romanesque Revival appearance. The original, simple pattern of paired arched windows with single windows in the wings was replaced with a greater variety of groupings—sets of three and four windows create pleasing rhythms and new symmetries. Perhaps most striking is that the first-floor fenestrations were entirely reworked with larger windows to illuminate large, light-filled classrooms. The first floor is markedly taller in the final building than the early drawing.

²² Benjamin Franklin Cooling III and Walton H Owen II, *Mr. Lincoln's Forts: A Guide to the Civil War Defense of Washington*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 2010), 193-6; CEHP, Inc., *Civil War Defenses of Washington Historic Resources Study*, (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1998), part I, chap. III, 5.

²³ Cooling and Owen, op. cit.

²⁴ Weber, *Brooks Mansion*, op. cit.

²⁵ McMahon, 2.

²⁶ Contract signed by Norris, Larcombe, and Rev. Onesime Renaudier, S.M., dated July 1, 1899. Box 5, Location A-9-4, in the Archives of the Society of Mary, U.S. Province, at Atlanta, Georgia.

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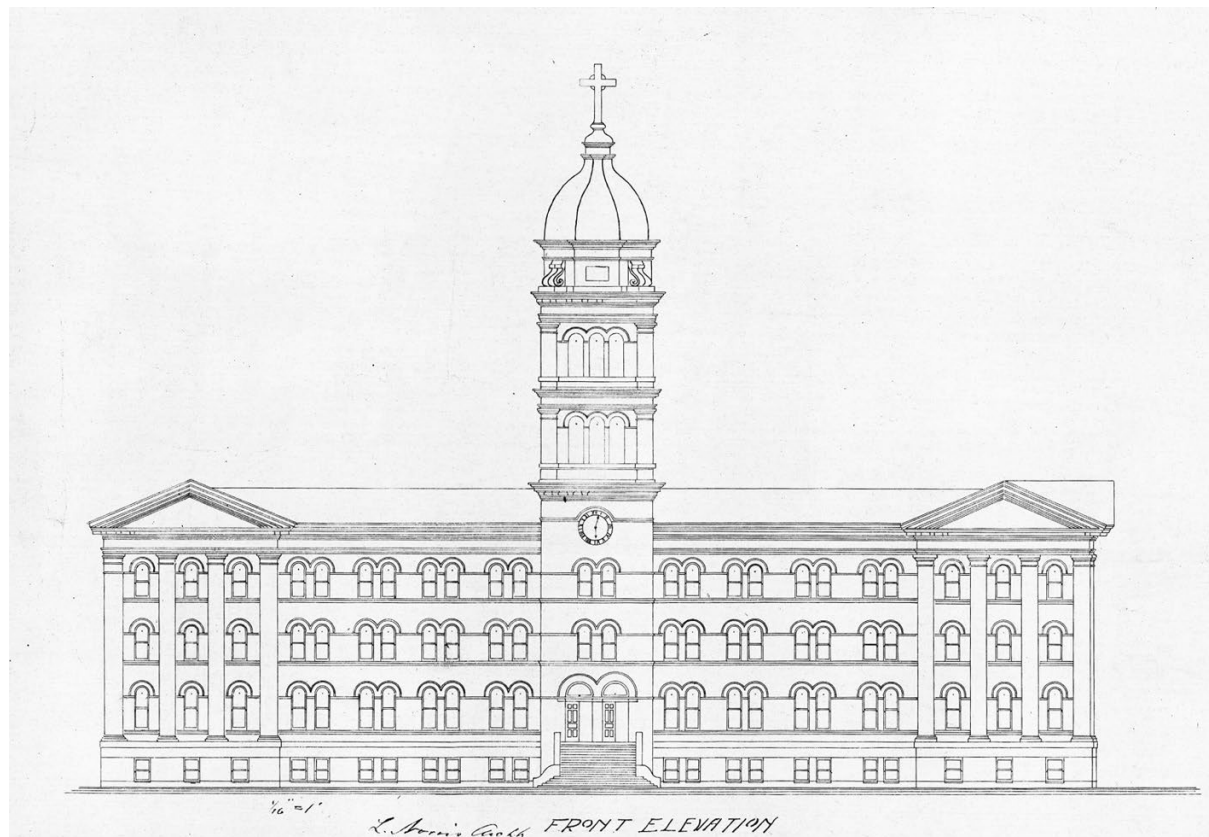


Figure 2: Proposed front elevation for Marist College (unbuilt), signed L. Norris Arch (Archives of the Society of Mary, U.S. Province).

Weber comments that the Marist provincial (leader of the American province), Father Onesime Renaudier, had extensive input into the design of the building and—true to the precepts of the Marists—was “guided by economical and practical considerations rather than artistic ones.” According to Weber, Renaudier, who had a commanding personality, was focused “on promotion of the physical health and the religious and ecclesiastical training of scholastics.”²⁷ Remembering “only too well that he had lost some students [to tuberculosis] apparently through lack of sufficient care... [h]e was determined to give them plenty of space and plenty of air: hence some excessively large living rooms for them, and almost fabulously high ceilings on the first floor, no less than 18 feet in the new building. He was always ready to pay, but he was no less ready to state his demands as to the nature of the building.”²⁸

Around the time that the contract was signed, the *Evening Star* predicted that the new building would “form a notable addition to the group of structures of this character which are about the Catholic University.” The *Star* noted that builder, John S. Larcombe, had begun construction of

²⁷ Nicholas A. Weber, S.M., *The History of the Marist Houses of Formation in America: The Marist College in Brookland, D.C., Its First Twenty-Five Years, 1900-1925* (Washington, DC: Society of Mary, Province of Washington, 1962), 1.

²⁸ Weber, *Brooks Mansion*, 12.

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the three-story, 174-foot-wide Romanesque building, the “simple outlines” of which “will give the additional dignity which a building of such a size should have.” Further, “All the details will be plain, the effect produced being from the well-proportioned masses and the graceful outlines.”²⁹ The interior would include classrooms, dormitory rooms, a chapel, and a gymnasium.

After foundation preparations were completed, a cornerstone laying ceremony was held in September 1899, led by the Marists’ ranking prelate, Rev. James Blenk, S. M., Bishop of Puerto Rico. *The Washington Times* noted that the new building would have about 100 apartments and provided a detailed description of it:

*Indiana limestone will be used for the construction of the ground story and hand-made red brick will be used for the rest of the building. In the basement will be found the eating apartments, recreation rooms, and a large gymnasium taking in the entire east wing of the building 30 by 180 feet in dimensions. The first floor is devoted to half a dozen parlors, two chapels, a sacristy, and several large class and study rooms. On the second are to be found a dormitory for the Sisters who will have charge of the household, the infirmary and library, and about a dozen dormer rooms for the students. The third floor provides for additional dormitories almost exclusively.*³⁰

Echoing language used by the *Star* in July, the *Times* noted that “The architecture of the building is the Romanesque style, very modest and plain in appearance.” It is likely that both articles reflect public relations materials provided by the Marists, who clearly wished to convey that their new building, however commodious it might appear, was not an expensive or lavish structure. Similarly, a brief *Washington Post* article noted that the September cornerstone laying was conducted “with very simple ceremonies” at a private event attended by members of the university’s affiliated orders.³¹

Marist College was the fifth major building project associated with the fledgling Catholic University of America. The university itself had constructed three buildings: Caldwell Hall, designed by E. Francis Baldwin and completed in 1889; McMahon Hall, also designed by Baldwin and finished in 1895, and Albert Hall (demolished in 1970), a dormitory designed by Lemuel Norris and completed in 1897. The fourth was the previously mentioned Holy Cross College, designed by Albert Von Herbulis and dedicated in October 1899, while construction of Marist College was underway immediately to the east. Marist College was seen as rivaling these in elegance and prestige. In November 1899, the *Washington Times* stated that the new building “will be of the Romanesque style, and is expected to excel in beauty the other Catholic institutions surrounding it.”³²

²⁹ “Real Estate Gossip,” *Evening Star*, Jul. 29, 1899, 13.

³⁰ “New Catholic Buildings,” *Evening Times*, Sep. 2, 1899, 3.

³¹ “Marist College Structure,” *Washington Post*, Sep. 26, 1899, 9.

³² “The Marist Fathers,” *Washington Times*, Nov. 6, 1899, 5.

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The Romanesque Revival style in Washington, D.C.

Determining where and when the Romanesque Revival came to prominence depends on the criteria by which it is defined. Early descriptions of the style reference walls of rusticated natural stone, castellar features like towers and turrets, and asymmetrical massing suggesting a pre-machine age building assembled over time. However, as the style evolved, it incorporated buildings with a wider range of elements, built of brick as well as stone, with bold massing and masonry forms including pronounced cornices and corbelling, and complex gabling and rooflines. Romanesque Revival buildings were distinguished by arches, ranging from a grand arch that accentuated the building's formal entry to smaller arches above window apertures. As with Marist Hall, these structural elements were often arranged in patterns that established a decorative rhythm that unified the building as a whole. Romanesque Revival elements were often combined with Gothic or Byzantine Revival features in complex buildings, such as large churches.

Though the style became popular for a wide range of building types during the later decades of the nineteenth century, Washington had several important Romanesque Revival buildings even before the Civil War. One early Romanesque Revival building is James Renwick's Smithsonian Castle (1846), which also shows the influence of other styles. Other early examples included such Roman Catholic churches as St. Aloysius Church, constructed on North Capitol Street in 1859, and the original St. Stephen the Martyr Church, built at 24th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue NW in 1868. The Healy Building at Georgetown University, begun in 1877, is predominantly a Romanesque Revival structure, although its architects also adapted features from other revival styles.³³

The 1880s began Romanesque Revival's heyday in Washington. Early in the decade, it became a style of choice for grand Washington houses through the influence of H.H. Richardson, who gave his name to one branch of the Romanesque style and is considered one of the greatest American architects. Of his four Romanesque Revival mansions along the 16th Street NW corridor, three were built in red brick with extensive use of cut stone for trimming, as was Marist Hall. The fourth, the Benjamin Warder House, was built of sandstone.³⁴ Richardson's influence continued after his early death in 1886, as these masterpieces were joined by such notable Romanesque mansions as the Lucius Tuckerman House (1886), Dedman House (1886), and Susan Shields House (1888).³⁵

³³ Hardy George, "Georgetown University's Healy Building." *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (Oct. 1972), pp. 208-216 contains a detailed architectural analysis of this building.

³⁴ Marc Friedlaender, "Henry Hobson Richardson, Henry Adams, and John Hay," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Third Series, Vol. 81 (1969), pp. 137-166 contains descriptions of these houses and their construction. The Warder House was originally built at 15th and K Streets NW and later moved to 16th Street NW near Euclid Street.

³⁵ Sue Kohler and Jeffery Carson. *Sixteenth Street Architecture* (Volume 2) Commission of Fine Arts, 1988, 73-91 and 265-288 provides details about other Richardsonian Romanesque houses.

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At the same time, the Romanesque Revival's monumentality and sense of permanence made it a favored style for churches and other ecclesiastical buildings. The building of the First Baptist Church at the corner of 16th and O Streets NW in 1889, designed by W. Bruce Gray, attracted much attention in the city press. This landmark building was distinguished by a soaring campanile whose construction with brick without a stone foundation was considered a daring architectural experiment. Built in the same year, the Church of the Covenant at 1225 Connecticut Avenue NW was another large Romanesque Revival church whose campanile was a landmark in the city skyline.³⁶ In addition to these, as previously mentioned, Catholic University's Caldwell Hall, designed by E. Francis Baldwin, was also completed in 1889 and included Romanesque Revival elements. Baldwin's McMahon Hall (figure 3), another imposing Romanesque Revival structure, was finished in 1895.



Figure 3: Early postcard view of CUA McMahon Hall.

By the 1890s, Romanesque Revival was a popular style for commercial and public buildings. Among the city's most prominent examples are the National Union Building at 918 F Street NW (1890), the Washington Loan & Trust Company Building at 9th and F Streets NW (circa 1900), and the Warder Building at 527 Ninth Street NW (1890). The Gales School at 65 Massachusetts Avenue NW (1881) was an early municipal example. James G. Hill's Auditors Building at 14th Street and Independence Avenue SW is an early Romanesque Revival federal office building. He also designed the stately Government Printing Office Building at North Capitol and G Streets NW (1903). Perhaps the most prominent representative of the style is the Old Post Office at 12th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue NW. Begun in 1892 and completed in 1899, Supervising Architect of the Treasury Willoughby James Edbrooke's building is a dramatic presence near the meeting of the downtown business district and the National Mall.

³⁶ "New Baptist Church," *Washington Post*; Jan. 11, 1890, 7; "The First Baptist Church" and "The President's Church," *Evening Star*, Mar 23, 1889, 8.

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By 1900, Beaux Arts classicism, as reflected in the 1902 MacMillan Plan for the City of Washington, was becoming the style of choice for large civic buildings. However, notable buildings continued to be built in the Romanesque Revival style for the first three decades of the twentieth century.

Opening of Marist College

The contract with builder John S. Larcombe set April 15, 1900, as the target date for completion of the building, and it was turned over to the Marists only a few months late, in August 1900. Weber notes that Fr. Renaudier conducted an unpublicized, private ceremony on August 19 to dedicate the building and individually bless all of its rooms, an event the rest of the Marist Fathers only heard about after the fact. Nevertheless, the Marists in residence at the Brooks Mansion immediately began to move into the new building, and classes for the new academic year began in September 1900.³⁷ Twenty-four students were enrolled in the first academic year in the building.

The *Catholic University Bulletin* marked the occasion of the opening of Marist College with this description:

*The building occupies the central portion of the College property, which adjoins the University grounds on the north. It is solidly constructed in brick, with stone trimmings, and is provided with every convenience to secure the health and comfort of the occupants. From the upper stories the view is extensive and beautiful, sweeping over the city in the south, long stretches of woodland, dotted with villages and farms, in the north and east. The grounds about the building are now being laid out in terraces and walks; eventually, the entire plot of ten acres will be used for purposes of recreation.*³⁸

Weber's commentary implies that the spacious building with its imposing, high-ceilinged classrooms and large number of dormitories may have been a bit of an embarrassment for the relatively small number of students who first took up residence there, but the Marists' investment proved farsighted.³⁹ The Marists would eventually fill the building and even build an annex behind it to fill pressing needs.

The Marist College originally comprised two academic programs, a novitiate (program of studies for entry into a religious order), and a scholasticate (program of religious studies for ordained priests). The novitiate was based on a six-year plan of studies that focused on philosophy and theology. Successful completion of the course of studies led to ordination in the priesthood as a Marist. In addition, successful completion of certain courses at the Marist College enabled

³⁷ Weber, *Brooks Mansion*, 12-13. The Brooks Mansion was retained for a few years as a minor seminary for high school and junior college students and then sold in 1904 to the Benedictine Sisters.

³⁸ "The Marist College," *Catholic University Bulletin*, Vol. VI, No. 4, (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America, Oct. 1900), 552.

³⁹ See the commentary about the building and its size on page 1 of Weber, *The Marist College in Brookland*.

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students to become eligible for degree programs at CUA, if they chose to pursue them. The novitiate continued until 1914, when a centralized Marist novitiate, St. Mary's Manor, was opened in Pennsylvania to support the entire American province. After that point, Marist College was devoted exclusively to graduate studies.

The interior layout of the building included a refectory and kitchen, storerooms, and furnace room in the basement, as well as living quarters for the building's engineer. On the eastern side of the basement was also a classroom and a large recreation room that was used as an auditorium for performances. The first floor featured a large central lobby and staircase to the upper floors, with parlors adjoining on either side. In the west wing stood the College Chapel, which was "renovated and artistically decorated by studio artisans from Milwaukee" in the summer of 1927.⁴⁰ On the east side of the first floor stood two classrooms and a small library for students' use.

The second floor of the Marist College building included space for a small convent of Sisters to provide domestic services to the college, including cooking, cleaning, and caring for the sick. Initially, the Sisters of Divine Providence of St. Jean de Bassel filled this role, but their primary mission was education, and they left in 1904. They were replaced in 1906 by the Little Sisters of the Holy Family, a Canadian order, which continued to provide domestic support for the rest of the time that the Marists occupied the building. Originally an infirmary was established on the second floor for the care of the sick, but within a couple of years it became clear that the treatment of serious illness, including contagious diseases, should be left to established hospitals and other medical care facilities, and the infirmary was discontinued.

In addition to the infirmary, the west wing's second floor also housed a library for the Marist fathers (separate from the students' library on the first floor). The east wing had a recreation room, classrooms, and some student bedrooms. The third floor was devoted exclusively to bedrooms.

The west wing of the building contains a full stairway from the basement to the third floor, designed to provide housekeeping access for the Sisters to each of the floors they serviced. The east wing did not have a corresponding stairway.⁴¹

The large, wooden-beamed, full attic became a vast storage space for countless miscellaneous items. At some point (approximately 1939), concerns were raised about the ability of the brick walls to continue to support the weight of the large gabled roof structure. Accordingly, steel rods were installed across the building below the roofline to strengthen the structure. Pairs of steel plates with star bolts can be seen at intervals beneath the cornice, marking the spots where the supporting steel rods are anchored to the walls.⁴²

⁴⁰ McMahon, 3.

⁴¹ Interview with Fr. Thomas E. Ellerman, S.M., August 17, 2022.

⁴² Interview with Fr. Thomas E. Ellerman, S.M., August 17, 2022.

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In 1924, the Marists decided to divide their growing American province into two, one centered in Washington and the other in Boston. At this point, Marist College had trained 115 priests, who had served in a wide variety of functions since graduation, including five who were chaplains in World War I, eight who became permanent missionaries to small islands in Oceania, and many others who became teachers or missionary priests in America.⁴³ Some became teachers at CUA. Historian Nicholas Weber was the first Marist appointed to CUA staff, in 1909.⁴⁴

Prompted by the disastrous Our Lady of the Angels School fire in Chicago in 1958, which killed 92 pupils and 3 teachers, the Marists sought a fire safety assessment of Marist College. A fire detection system was subsequently installed, as were fire escapes on the rear of the building, and steel fire doors on the interior to seal each floor.⁴⁵

By the early 1960s, increasing enrollment led to overcrowding of Marist College's living quarters. Rev. Thomas E. Ellerman, who was enrolled as a student from 1961 to 1965, recalled being assigned to a dormitory room he had to share with three other students. All other bedrooms were also filled to capacity, and most of the previous classroom space had been converted to dormitory use. For example, the Fathers' library on the second floor had been converted, as had the former philosophy classroom, which was split into three long, narrow bedrooms. This left only one classroom on the second floor. The only other remaining classroom was in the basement. Fewer classrooms were needed because students took many classes at CUA in subjects, such as philosophy, that had previously been taught at Marist College.⁴⁶

Transfer to Catholic University

The overcrowding at Marist College would not last. Like many other religious orders, the Marists experienced a significant decline in new applicants in the late 1960s and early 1970s. As a result, as students graduated, Marist College rapidly emptied out, to the point that such a sizeable building was no longer needed by the mid-1970s. Further, CUA was continuing its steady growth and looked to expand its campus to the north. The Marists and CUA agreed to a trade: Marist College would be transferred to CUA, and CUA would deed the Marists title to property further to the north, between Taylor Street and Hawaii Avenue NE.⁴⁷ The agreement stipulated that the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary, located in the cupola atop the center gable of the building, would be returned to the Marists, along with the contents of the cornerstone, should the building ever be demolished by CUA.⁴⁸

⁴³ Weber, *The Marist College in Brookland*, 18.

⁴⁴ Weber, *op. cit.*, 11.

⁴⁵ Receipts from 1960 and 1961 in records of the Archives of the Society of Mary, U.S. Province, Atlanta, Georgia; interview with Fr. Thomas E. Ellerman, S.M., August 17, 2022.

⁴⁶ Interview with Fr. Thomas E. Ellerman, S.M., August 17, 2022.

⁴⁷ "University acquires Marist," *The Tower*, Apr. 4, 1975.

⁴⁸ The Marists subsequently acquired two small former convent buildings: the former St. Francis House of Studies at 815 Varnum Street NE and the adjacent former Our Lady of Angels House of Studies at 4408 8th Street NE. Both convent houses are located on the campus of the former Catholic Sisters College, which was absorbed into CUA in the early 1960s.

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After the Marists moved out, the building was rechristened Marist Hall and used to support a variety of university programming. In addition to several sizable classrooms on the first floor, the building provided room for 70 to 80 offices. The sociology department was the first to move in, along with the Boystown Center, a center for the study of youth social issues, which temporarily occupied the second floor while its separate dedicated facility was being constructed.⁴⁹ Soon, additional programs moved in, including the English and Politics departments. Other programs that eventually moved into Marist include the School of Library and Information Science, the Anthropology department, the Early Christian Studies program, Comparative Literature program, and other smaller projects and research entities.

2011 Earthquake Damage

The university installed a new roof on the building in 1992 and a new boiler in 1996. By the early 2000s, more extensive renovations were seen as sorely needed to make better use of the available space. Regarding its historic significance, an undated university assessment from that era states: “Marist Hall by virtue of its age and architectural distinction is an important part of the campus. It retains its original appearance and has continued to contribute to national Catholic culture and education for over a century, making it one of the more significant structures on the campus.” Further, in its 2012 Campus Master Plan, which remains in effect until 2027, the university identified Marist Hall as one of 13 buildings that “have particular architectural and historical merit.”⁵⁰

On August 23, 2011, a powerful 5.8 magnitude earthquake centered in Mineral, Virginia, shook buildings across Washington and the eastern half of the United States.⁵¹ While two stone chimneys on nearby McMahon Hall were dislodged and had to be removed, there was no immediate indication of damage at Marist Hall. Classes continued to be held in the building until an engineer reported that the southwest wing of the building had sustained cracks and movement as a result of the quake. On September 1, the university announced that it would vacate the building “out of an abundance of caution” until repairs could be made.⁵² Repairs were undertaken, funded by earthquake insurance, but it wasn’t until two years later, in 2013, that the entire building was reopened.⁵³

The reopening of Marist Hall proved to be short-lived. In 2016, cracks became visible in several load bearing walls in the west wing of the building. Engineers did not believe the damage presented a safety threat to occupants of the building. However, the university closed the west

⁴⁹ *The Tower*, op. cit.

⁵⁰ Catholic University of America, *2012 Campus Master Plan* (Washington, DC: Dec. 2011), 96. Marist Hall is listed as a building to remain in place (page 64).

⁵¹ “Earthquake jolts D.C. area,” *Washington Post*, Aug. 24, 2011, 1.

⁵² Sam O’Mahony, “Marist Hall a Hazard, Closed Indefinitely,” *The Tower*, Sep. 16, 2011, 1; “Marist Earthquake Damage,” CUA press release, Sep. 1, 2011. See <https://communications.catholic.edu/news/2011/09/marist-earthquake-damage.html> (accessed Jul. 29, 2022).

⁵³ Drake Starling, “Work on Marist Complete,” *The Tower*, Aug. 30, 2013, 1.

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wing for further engineering analysis.⁵⁴ Subsequent investigations led to a determination in April 2017 that the building was unsafe, and it was evacuated. Engineers concluded that settling and resulting cracks had occurred that may have been the result of changes in the water table under the building, rather than simply as a result of the earthquake. The building has remained closed since that time.⁵⁵

Additional related buildings: The Marist Seminary and the Sisters Convent

In addition to the College, the Marists constructed two other nearby buildings, the Marist Seminary and the Marist Annex. This nomination does not propose landmark designation for either of those buildings. However, brief descriptive information is provided about them for purposes of historical context.

The Marist Seminary (figure 4), at 220 Taylor Street NE, was constructed in 1903 as a minor seminary for aspirants to the Marist order. The new building replaced the Brooks Mansion, which the Marists had continued to use as a minor seminary after Marist College opened in 1900. The seminary complemented the educational program offered at Marist College, which focused on advanced studies for ordained priests. The sizable red-brick-faced building, which still stands, is 131 feet long on its main (east) façade and 77 feet deep and, according to the Marists, was the first building in the District to be made of poured concrete.⁵⁶ It was designed by prominent ecclesiastical architect Albert O. Von Herbulis, (1860-1928) and features Gothic Revival elements in its top floor dormers.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Stephen Calandrino, "Structural Damage to Marist Hall Calls for Unexpected Closures," *The Tower*, Oct. 10, 2016, 1.

⁵⁵ Liz Friden, "Why is Marist Hall Still Empty? Two Years of Stagnation," *The Tower*, Feb. 23, 2018, 1.

⁵⁶ Paul Carr, "The Marist Mission in America: 150 years of Helping Build An American Church," in *Today's Marists*, Lent 2013, 7.

⁵⁷ "The New Marist College," *Catholic University Bulletin*, Vol. IX, (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America, 1903), 171-72.

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Figure 4: Early postcard view of Marist Seminary.

The Marist Seminary served its original function until 1918, when the Spanish Flu pandemic forced its closure as a school. After that, the building provided offices for administration of the Marist American Province, residence space for Marists studying at CUA, and classrooms for the preparation of teachers. After the Marist College building was traded to CUA in 1975, the College moved to this building, where it remained until 1998, when it moved again to its current location in the former St. Francis House of Studies at 815 Varnum Street NE. Since 1998, the Marist Seminary building has been used by DC charter schools. The current occupant is the Washington Yu Ying Public Charter School.

The other building constructed by the Marists is the Marist Annex (figure 5), immediately behind Marist College. From its opening in 1900, the second floor of Marist College's west wing had been used by a small convent of Sisters for domestic support functions, including housecleaning, meal preparation, and laundry.⁵⁸ However, as the Marists recruited more new members, including prospective teachers for the Society's various schools, the increasing numbers of students required more space in Marist College. Several potential alterations were considered, such as adding an additional story to the main building or adding a fourth wing across the rear to form a complete quadrangle. These concepts were rejected as infeasible, however. In 1931, the decision was made to build a separate convent immediately to the north of the main building for the Little Sisters of the Holy Family, who would move out of the main building. This would allow repurposing the Sisters' living space on the second floor of the main building as dormitory rooms.

⁵⁸ McMahon, 4.

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Figure 5: Marist Annex (John DeFerrari).

Ground was broken for the new convent in May 1931, and the building was completed by September. The simple two-story brick Colonial Revival-style building was designed by accomplished local architect Michael Heister (1870-1948) of the firm of Milburn, Heister & Co., and was built by Hugh Connelly. The building provided dormitory rooms and community spaces for approximately 12 Sisters, as well as a laundry facility in the basement.⁵⁹ A tunnel was constructed underground, connecting the refectory in the basement of Marist College with the basement of the new convent.⁶⁰ The convent building is now known as the Marist Annex. After being turned over to CUA, along with the Marist College building in 1975, it was used for office space for the CUA Office of Alumni Affairs for many years. It currently houses the CUA English Department.

Lemuel W. Norris, Architect (1848-1930)

Lemuel Watson Norris was born in 1848 in Leesburg, Virginia, the son of John and Hannah Birkby Norris. A skilled carpenter, John Norris (1811-1905) moved to Leesburg from Maryland with his family in the 1820s and eventually opened a planing mill. He became one of the town's leading construction suppliers, selling such milled items as blinds, window sashes, and doors.⁶¹ Three of John Norris's other sons also became carpenters, inheriting the family business and

⁵⁹ McMahon, 4.

⁶⁰ Interview with Fr. Thomas E. Ellerman, S.M., August 17, 2022.

⁶¹ Susan Keller, "The House That Norris Built in Leesburg," *Loudoun Times-Mirror*, May 16, 2012. Retrieved from: https://www.loudountimes.com/real_estate/the-house-that-norris-built-in-leesburg/article_4fcf52fb-a66c-5bc9-ade9-b1f1f7dc33de.html.

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continuing to run it in the 1880s as Norris Brothers, a construction company known for its excellent craftsmanship.

Meanwhile, Lemuel Norris attended the Virginia Military Institute, studying architecture and other subjects beginning in 1868 and graduating in 1870. The 1880 census shows that the 31-year-old Lemuel was working as a surveyor in Leesburg. He was in charge of the architectural and engineering activities of Norris Brothers, which designed and built a number of houses in Leesburg as well as the Leesburg Courthouse.⁶² He worked in Leesburg in this capacity for almost 20 years.

Norris married Mary Catherine Turner (1855-1904) in 1888 and moved to Washington, DC around the same time. His daughter, Hannah, was born in the District in 1889. He worked alternately as an engineer and architect, opening his own architectural practice at 808 17th Street NW in 1895. In 1896, he designed Keane Hall (later Albert Hall) as the first residence hall for the fledgling Catholic University of America's newly admitted lay students. The five-story dormitory was of pressed red brick trimmed with Seneca sandstone and featured a steeply gabled roof with striking Flemish Revival gables.⁶³ It was only the third major building constructed for Catholic University, and the *Washington Times* noted that it was "pointed to with some pride as one of the many proofs of the continuing success and expansion of the university."⁶⁴

Undoubtedly it served to showcase Norris's talents for the Marist fathers, who would subsequently commission him to design the Marist College.

Norris is listed as an architect in Washington, DC, from 1897 to 1910. Throughout this period, he lived with his family in a rented house at 1441 U Street NW. In later life, Norris held a variety of architectural and engineering positions with the DC government. He was briefly employed in the Office of the Building Inspector in 1904, when he designed the Nathaniel Parker Gage School at 2035 2nd Street NW, a D.C. Inventory and National Register historic landmark. That same year, Norris's wife, Mary Catherine, died at just 41 years of age, an event that undoubtedly affected the architect deeply.⁶⁵ He continued his private practice for the next six years, to 1910, when he was 62 years old.

Norris, who was said to be "a very quiet, reserved man," seems at this point to have decided to retire from the demands of private commissions; he subsequently received several short-term appointments in the District government's newly created Office of the Municipal Architect. Between 1911 and 1929, he is listed in directories at various times as "chief draftsman, District," "architect, District," and "structural engineer, District." His titles included Superintendent of Construction; Heating, Ventilating and Sanitary Engineer; Chief Draftsman for the Office of the Municipal Architect; and Engineer.⁶⁶

⁶² Sue A. Kohler and Jeffrey R. Carson, *Sixteenth Street Architecture*, Vol. 2 (Washington, DC: Commission of Fine Arts, 1988), 357-8.

⁶³ "Real Estate Gossip," *Evening Star*, Jul. 25, 1896; "Prelates in Baltimore," *Evening Times*, Oct. 23, 1896, 5.

⁶⁴ "Honors to a New Rector," *Morning Times*, Jan. 18, 1897, 6.

⁶⁵ "Mrs. Lemuel Norris," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, Jul. 12, 1904, 5.

⁶⁶ Kohler and Carson, 358.

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Snowden Ashford, the Municipal Architect from 1909 to 1919, described him as “an architect of long experience and a civil engineer with a practice extending over 25 years. He was formerly employed as a civil engineer and computer in the inspector of buildings’ office.”⁶⁷ In 1918, at age 70, Norris resigned from the DC chapter of the American institute of Architects, writing that his modest DC government salary was not enough for him to afford continuing his membership.⁶⁸

Despite a low-key government career in his later years, Norris was dynamic and highly successful in his private practice, landing important residential and institutional commissions in the 1890s and 1900s, and showing a considerable range in styles and approaches to his varied projects. As the Gage School nomination states, “Lemuel W. Norris, was an exceptionally sensitive and talented architect, with a diversified body of work both as an architect in private practice and in the Office of the Building Inspector (1904) and the Office of the Municipal Architect (1911-29).”⁶⁹

Norris’s residential commissions included elegant mansions for prominent owners in exclusive neighborhoods, such as Dupont Circle and Kalorama. Examples include the home of businessman J. Maury Dove at 1738 New Hampshire Avenue NW (1898), which he designed in a restrained Romanesque Revival style like that of the Marist College. That same year he designed the Colonial Revival style Mary D. Heyl House at 2009 Wyoming Avenue NW, located in the Kalorama Triangle Historic District. For the “gold king,” Thomas F. Walsh, Norris designed the distinctive Walsh Stable (1903), a DC Inventory and National Register historic landmark near Dupont Circle.⁷⁰ He also designed two large townhouses for Major General Henry C. Corbin, one at 1701 22nd Street NW (1901) and another at 2139 R Street NW (1907). Among his other residential commissions was the distinctive Dr. Charles L. Marlatt House at 1521 16th Street NW (1908), which has been called a “rare gem of Washington domestic architecture.”⁷¹ The handsome, red brick and brownstone mansion features exquisite Arts and Crafts style interior decorations, including carvings of insects and animals that reflect Dr. Marlatt’s profession as an entomologist for the Agricultural Department.

In addition to Albert Hall and the Marist College on the CUA campus, Norris designed at least two other facilities for local Roman Catholic organizations, and all four were completed within a few years of each other. They include a convent and chapel for the Sisters of Perpetual Adoration (1899) at 1419 V Street NW, located a block north of his own home in what is now the U Street Historic District. Now the Gingras Ecumenical Center of St. Augustine’s Catholic Church, the restrained Gothic Revival building is of pressed red brick with limestone trim.⁷² Norris also

⁶⁷ Kim Williams, *National Register of Historic Places* nomination for the Nathaniel Parker Gage School, 2008.

⁶⁸ American Institute of Architects membership file for Lemuel Norris, retrieved from: <https://content.aia.org/sites/default/files/2018-09/NorrisLemuel.pdf>.

⁶⁹ Williams, op. cit.

⁷⁰ Judy Robinson and Julie Mueller, *National Register of Historic Places* nomination for the Walsh Stable, 1986.

⁷¹ Kohler and Carson, 334.

⁷² “Plans for the Convent,” *Washington Times*, Oct. 9, 1899, 8; “Work Begun on Convent,” *Washington Post*, Sep. 28, 1899, 10.

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designed St. Catherine's Home (1900) at 101 North Carolina Avenue SE on Capitol Hill. Operated by the Sisters of Mercy, the home provided shelter and support to single working women who were new to the city. That building, now the Carolina on the Hill condominium, is also finished in pressed red brick with limestone trim and reflects some of the same stylistic elements Norris used for Albert Hall and Marist College.⁷³

Norris died at his longtime home in Washington in 1930 (age 82) and is interred at the Union Cemetery in Leesburg.⁷⁴

John S. Larcombe, Builder (1850-1930)

A native Washingtonian, Larcombe was the son of John and Catharine Smith Larcombe. After finishing his education at public and private schools in the District, Larcombe first found employment at the Riggs Bank. After eight years, he founded his own real estate brokerage and construction business. His offices were at 808 17th Street NW, the same address as architect Norris's, and the two were frequent collaborators. Most of Norris's major commissions, including the Albert Hall at CUA as well as the Marist College, were built by Larcombe. Larcombe married Mary Alice Griffith in 1876, and the couple lived with their three children in a townhouse at 1817 H Street NW.⁷⁵ The success of Larcombe's business is indicated by the fact that he left an estate worth \$400,000 upon his death in 1930.⁷⁶

⁷³ "New Home Dedicated," *Washington Post*, Oct. 15, 1900, 9; "The Working Girls' Home," *Washington Times*, Oct. 15, 1900, 5.

⁷⁴ "Leesburg Funeral Held to District Architect," *Washington Post*, Nov. 27, 1930, 5.

⁷⁵ Allan B. Slauson, ed., *A History of the City of Washington, Its Men and Institutions*. (Washington, DC: The Washington Post Co., 1903), 232-33.

⁷⁶ "\$400,000 Estate Left by John S. Larcombe," *Washington Post*, Nov. 15, 1930, 3.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ 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 # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

☐ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.27

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 38.938594 Longitude: -77.000267

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2. Latitude: Longitude:

3. Latitude: Longitude:

4. Latitude: Longitude:

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☐ NAD 1983

1. Zone: Easting: Northing:

2. Zone: Easting: Northing:

3. Zone: Easting: Northing:

4. Zone: Easting : Northing:

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Marist College (also known as Marist Hall) is located on the campus of The Catholic University of America (CUA). The main campus of CUA corresponds with Square 3821 Lot 0044. This nomination only pertains to Marist College, the contributing building that is referenced in this nomination. Marist College sits on approximately 0.27 acres within the northern section of the main campus. The building is surrounded by green space on its eastern, southern, and western boundaries, and a parking area and driveway on its northern boundary. Thus, Marist College is a building within Square 3821 Lot 0044, but its boundaries are not coterminous with that square and lot boundary.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

These boundaries correspond with Marist College (also known as Marist Hall), which was constructed in 1900 and sits on approximately 0.27 acres within the northern section of the main campus of CUA. These boundaries match the footprint of the building.

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title: John DeFerrari and D. Peter Sefton, DCPL Trustees; Zachary Burt (DCPL Staff)
organization: DC Preservation League
street & number: 641 S Street NW, Suite 300
city or town: Washington state: DC zip code: 20001
e-mail: info@dcpreservation.org
telephone: (202) 783-5144
date: November 14, 2022

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

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Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 12. Marist College as seen from the southwest, around the time of its construction. (*Special Collections, The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC*).

2 of 12. Marist College as seen from the southeast, shortly after its construction. Note the active farmland. (*Archives of the Society of Mary, U.S. Province, Atlanta, Georgia*).

3 of 12. Undated early postcard view of Marist College from the south. (Collection of John DeFerrari).

4 of 12. Marist College, south elevation, early 20th century. Note residents sitting in chairs on the front porch. (*Clinedinst Studio, courtesy of Archives of the Society of Mary, U.S. Province, Atlanta, Georgia*).

5 of 12. Marist Hall south elevation, circa 1975. (*Special Collections, The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC*).

6 of 12. Front (south) elevation. (Photographer: John DeFerrari, Jun. 17, 2022).

7 of 12. East elevation. (Photographer: John DeFerrari, Aug. 3, 2022).

8 of 12. West elevation. (Photographer: John DeFerrari, Aug. 6, 2022).

9 of 12. Rear (north) elevation. (Photographer: John DeFerrari, Aug. 6, 2022).

10 of 12. View from the south showing open ground in front of Marist Hall. (Photographer: John DeFerrari, May 10, 2022).

11 of 12. Detail of the tabernacle containing a statue of Mary mounted on top of the center bay of the main façade. (Photographer: John DeFerrari, Aug. 3, 2022).

12 of 12. Detail of the entrance portico and center bay of the main façade. (Photographer: John DeFerrari, Aug. 6, 2022).

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations 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.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
Tier 2 – 120 hours
Tier 3 – 230 hours

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Tier 4 – 280 hours

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The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

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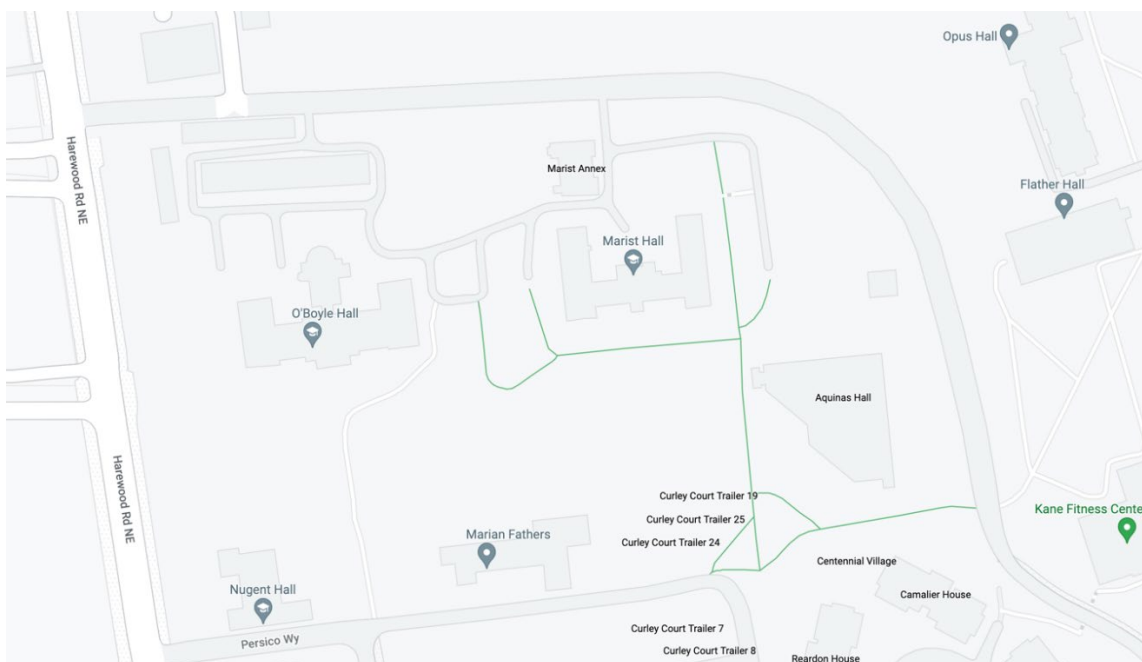
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Map 1a: Location of Marist Hall (center right, outlined in red) with Marist Annex immediately to the north. O'Boyle Hall and Harewood Road NE are to the west (DC Gov't OCTO).



Map 1b: Location of Marist Hall (center) with Marist Annex immediately to the north. O'Boyle Hall and Harewood Road NE are to the west (Google Maps).

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Map 2: Aerial view from the north showing rear elevation of Marist Hall (DC Gov't OCTO, Apr. 1, 2015).

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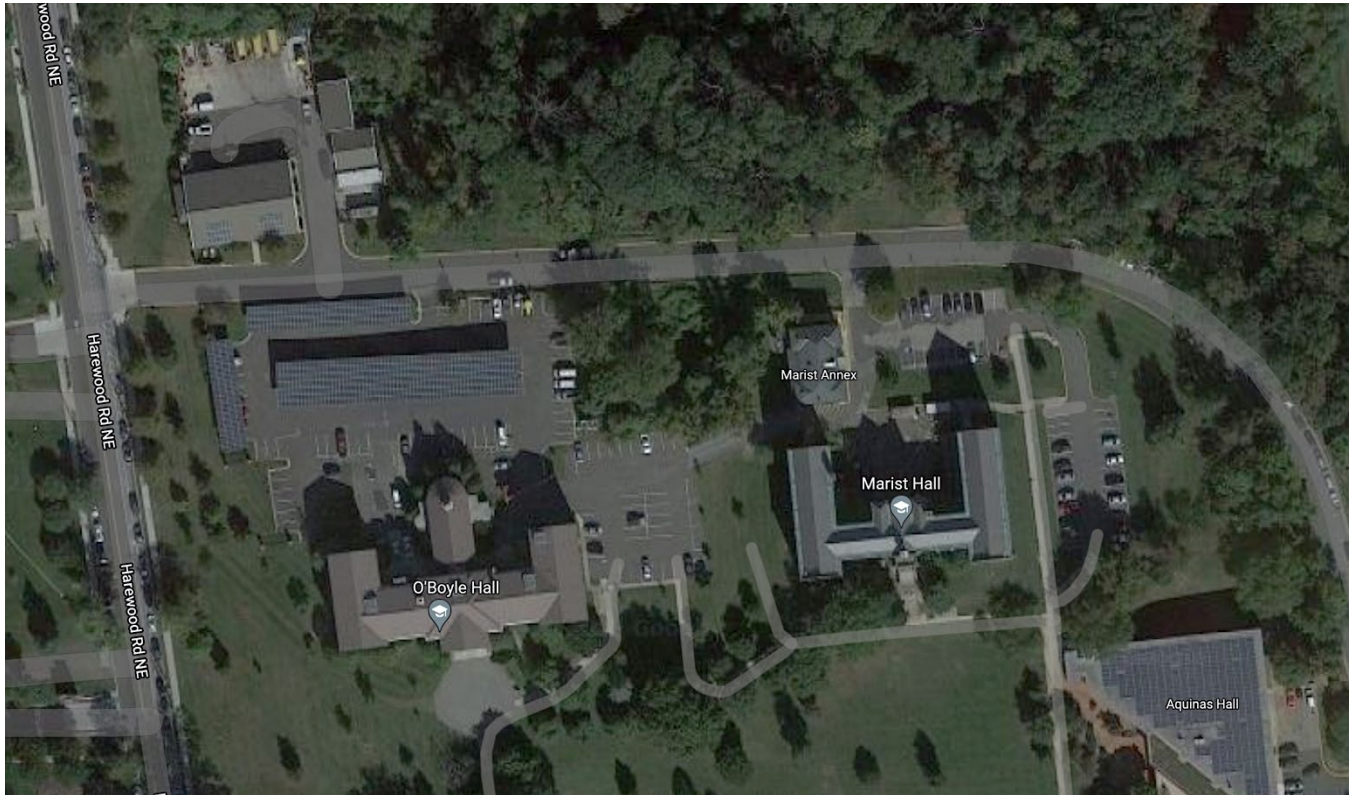
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Map 3: Aerial overhead view of Marist Hall on the CUA main campus (Google Maps).

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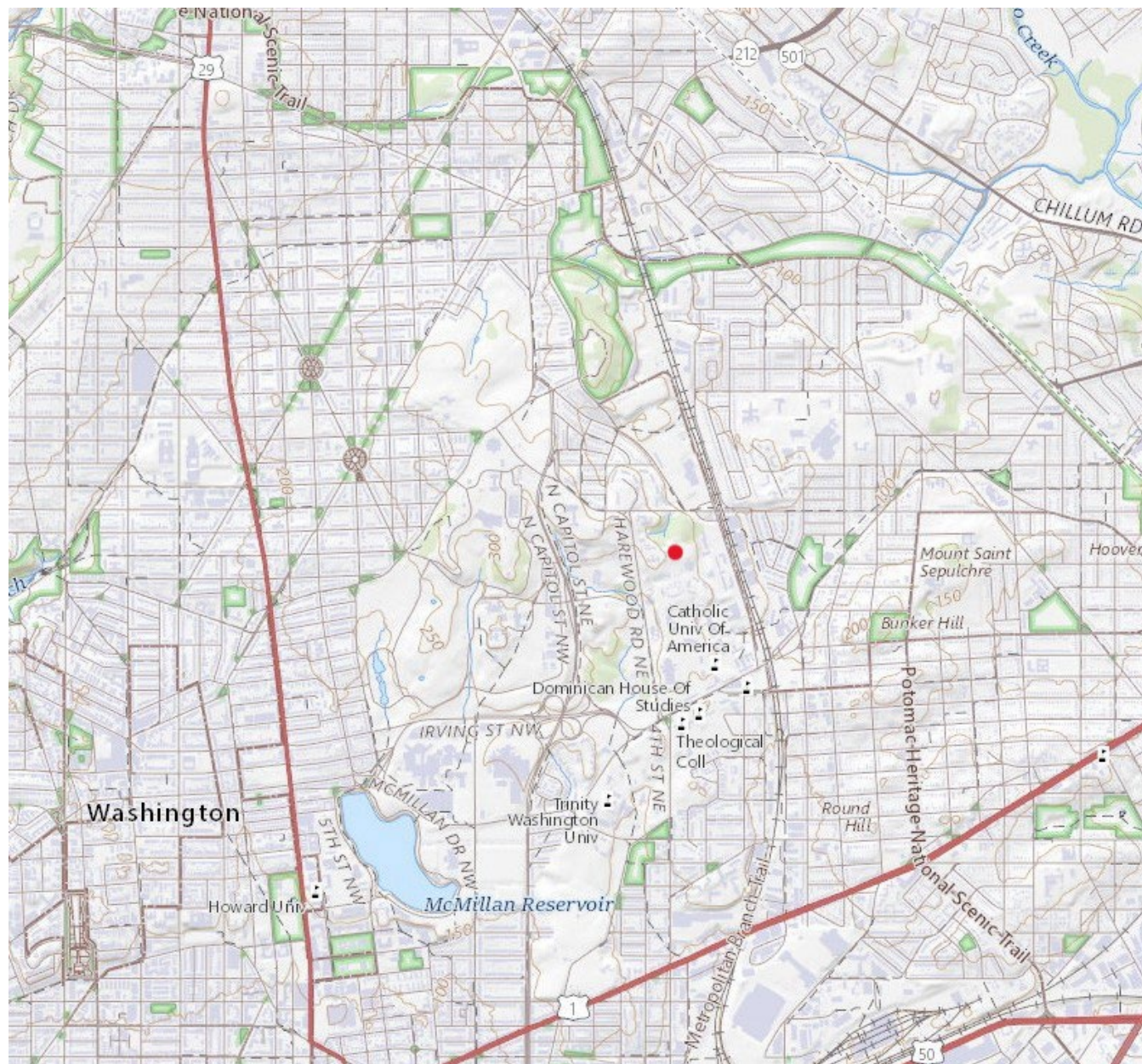
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Map 4: Marist Hall's location within Washington, DC, as indicated by a red dot (USGS).

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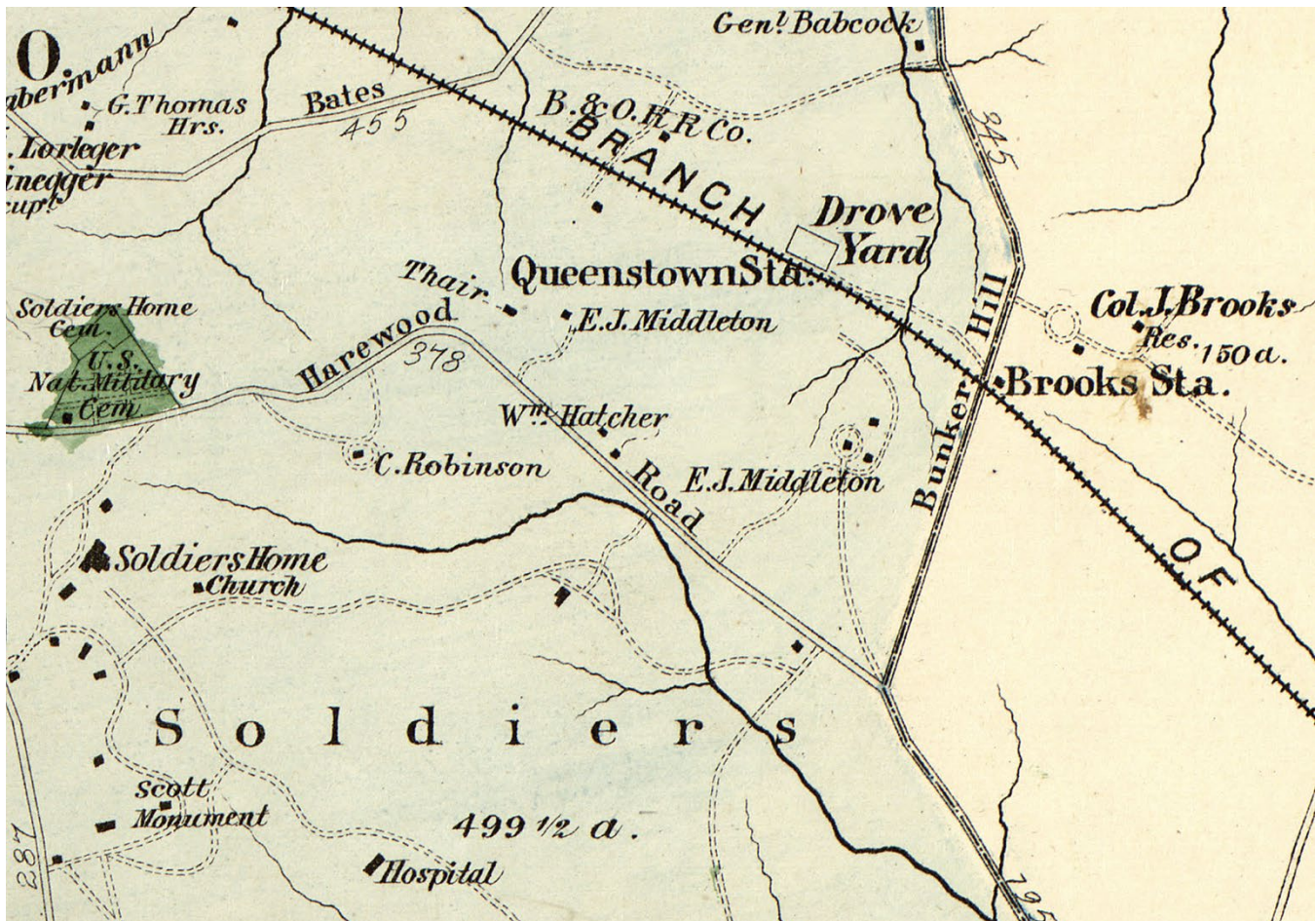
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Map 5: Detail from G. M. Hopkins, *Atlas of fifteen miles around Washington, including the county of Montgomery, Maryland*, 1879, Part of Second District. The Marist College site is at the center, just to the northeast of the Wm. Hatcher label (Library of Congress).

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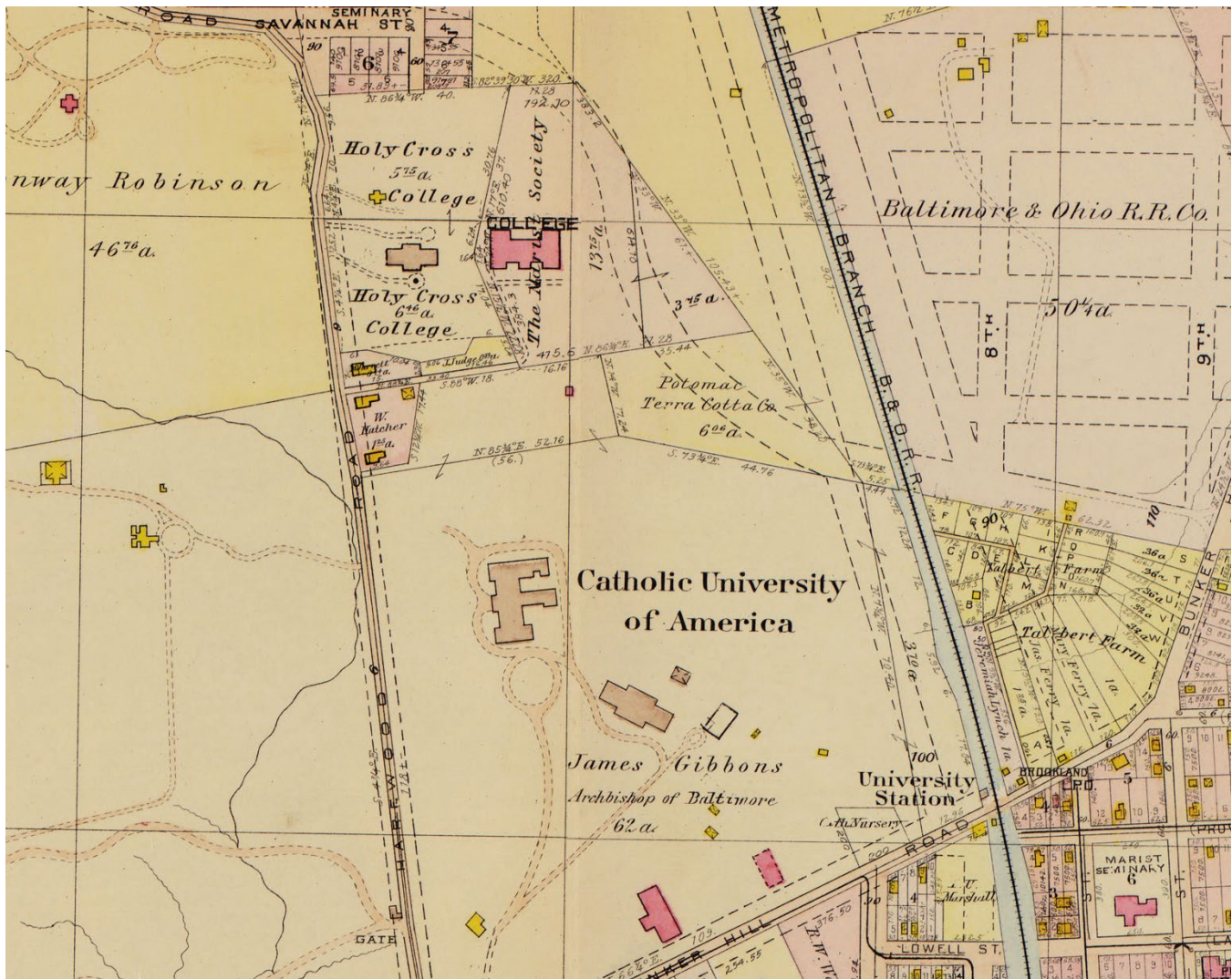
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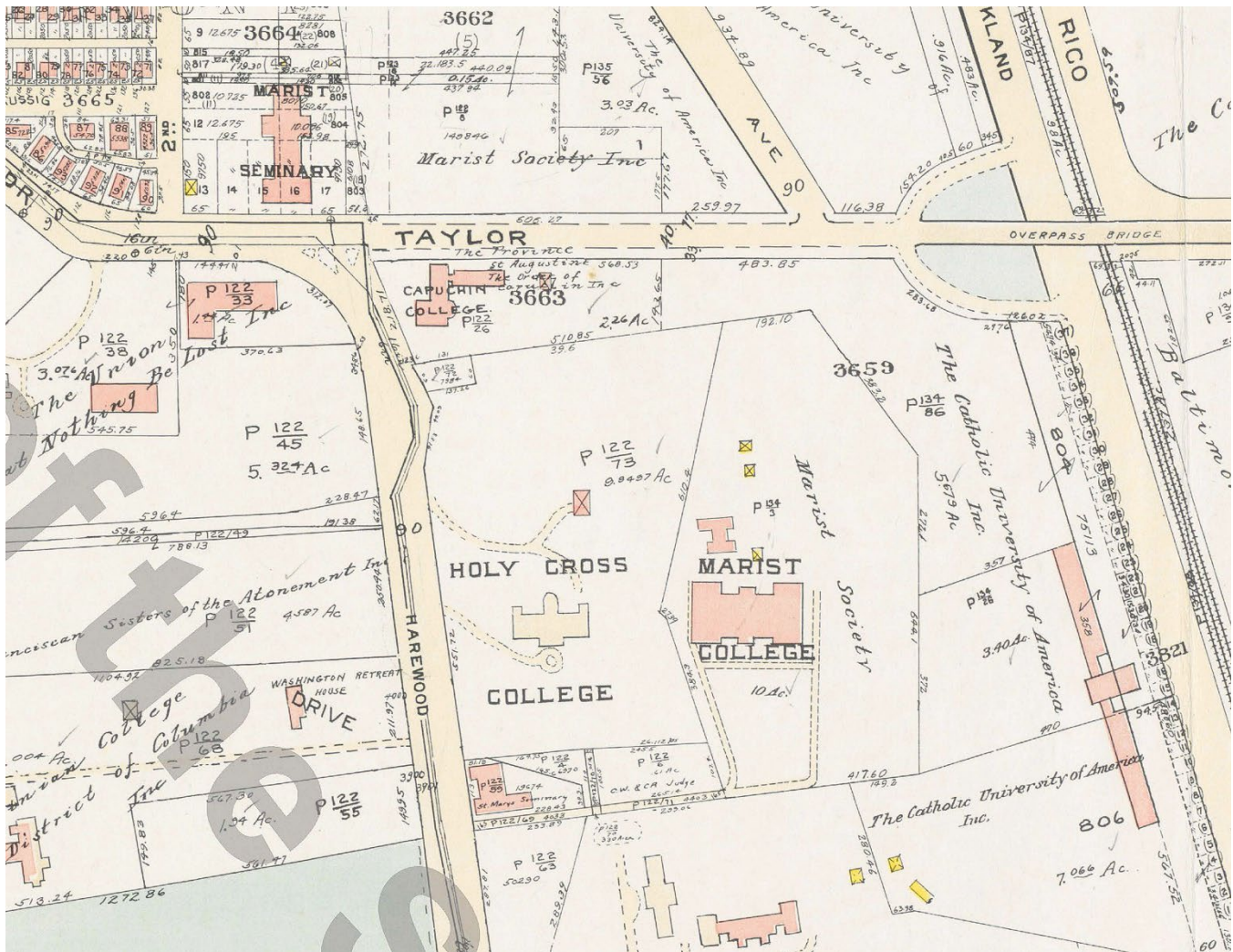


Map 6: Detail from *Baist's Real Estate Atlas of Washington, D.C.*, 1903, Vol. III. Plat 27, showing the Marist College building in the upper center (Library of Congress).

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Map 7: Detail from *Baist's Real Estate Atlas of Washington, D.C.*, 1959, Vol. IV. Plat 7, showing the Marist College building in the lower center and the nearby Marist Seminary building on Taylor Street NE in the upper left (DC Office of the Surveyor).

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Photo 1: Marist College as seen from the southwest, around the time of its construction. (*Special Collections, The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC*).

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Photo 2: Marist College as seen from the southeast, shortly after its construction. Note the active farmland. (*Archives of the Society of Mary, U.S. Province, Atlanta, Georgia*).

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Photo 3: Undated early postcard view of Marist College from the south. (John DeFerrari).

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Photo 4: Marist College, south elevation, early 20th century. Note residents sitting in chairs on the front porch. (*Clinedinst Studio, courtesy of Archives of the Society of Mary, U.S. Province, Atlanta, Georgia*).

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Photo 5: Marist Hall south elevation, circa 1975. (*Special Collections, The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC*).

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Photo 6: Front (south) elevation. (John DeFerrari, 2022).

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Photo 7: East elevation. (John DeFerrari, 2022).

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Photo 8: West elevation. (John DeFerrari, 2022).

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Photo 9: Rear (north) elevation. (John DeFerrari, 2022).

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Photo 10: View from the south showing open ground in front of Marist Hall. (John DeFerrari, 2022).

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Photo 11: Detail of the tabernacle containing a statue of Mary mounted on top of the center bay of the main façade. (John DeFerrari, 2022).

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Photo 12: Detail of the entrance portico and center bay of the main façade. (John DeFerrari, 2022).