

LA CROSSE COUNTY HISTORIC SITES COMMISSION
c/o LA CROSSE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
112 South 9th Street
La Crosse, Wisconsin 54601 Courthouse File

LA CROSSE COUNTY SITES SURVEY NOMINATION FORM

NO. _____

1. NAME of the site (also original name, if known) or property nominated:

VILLA ST. JOSEPH - RT 1, LA CROSSE, WIS 54601

2. LOCATION:

T 15 N, R 6 W

GREEN FIELD TOWNSHIP

Sec. 12

SO. $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$, SE $\frac{1}{4}$

LA CROSSE COUNTY

3. CLASSIFICATION of site or property to be nominated:

CATEGORY:	OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY:	STATUS OF PROPERTY:	PRESENT USE:
<input type="checkbox"/> legend	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agricultural
<input type="checkbox"/> geology	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> historic event	<input type="checkbox"/> both		<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> archeology			<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> historic district			<input type="checkbox"/> government
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)			<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
<input type="checkbox"/> site			<input type="checkbox"/> military
<input type="checkbox"/> object(s)			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> theme:			<input type="checkbox"/> park
(describe) _____			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

3. OWNER of property to be nominated:

Name: Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, Inc.

Street and number: 912 Market

City: La Crosse

State: Wisconsin

Zip: 54601

4. PHOTO

&/or

SKETCH:

5. SIGNIFICANCE of the site, property or event to be nominated:
Include date of construction, builder/architect, all specific dates.

Statement of Significance: State why the site, property, or event is significant: what significant events occurred there, who was associated with the property, what features the property has that make it significant, etc. Document all statements of alleged fact with full and complete footnotes. Use additional sheets if necessary.

See the attached sheets.

6. DESCRIBE the present and original (if known) appearance or condition of the property or site to be nominated:
Include your opinion of National Register eligibility.

The original appearance and condition of the building is described in #5 above. The building presently is in excellent condition, structurally sound, and is kept in constant repair. It provides independent living quarters for some retired sisters and for others who serve as staff in the adjoining nursing home.

7. MAJOR bibliographical references &/or collections:

Preserved in the FSPA Archives:

Diary of Villa St. Joseph, 1899 to the Present.

"Villa St. Joseph, an Historical Sketch, 1898 - 1942," by
Sister Eustace Kuhlmann.

Diary of St. Rose Convent, 1895 to the Present.

Records, FSPA Archives.

8. NOMINATION submitted by:

Name: Sister Helen Esther Lueck, FSPA

Organization: Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration

Street: 912 Market St.

City: La Crosse

State: WI

Zip: 54601

Telephone: 608-782-5610

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5. Significance of the site, etc.

The first connection of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration with St. Joseph's Ridge dates back to 1873 when the sisters opened the parochial school in St. Joseph's Parish. In 1895, the superiors of the Franciscan Sisters at St. Rose Convent in La Crosse became concerned about having land on which to produce food for St. Rose Convent, as well as for St. Francis Hospital. Mother Ludovica Keller and her Council preferred land near St. Rose Convent, but none was available. They therefore considered purchasing some land in the St. Joseph Ridge area.

They found property known as Pleasant Home Farm available for purchase from a Mr. Mehren for \$5,000 in 1895. The total acreage approximated 200 acres on the north side of the highway on St. Joseph Ridge. Legal description is contained in the records of the FSPA Archives.

That same year, 1897, John Miller of La Crosse was given the contract to build a convent on the property for \$6,400 for the purpose of providing accommodations for the sisters who would reside on the farm and supervise the farm workers. The structure which resulted is the subject of this nomination. It was constructed of stone quarried on the property under the direction of the stone mason contractor, Mr. Witte. The house consisted of a ground floor, two spacious upper floors, and an attic in which a water tank was placed. A 300-foot well was drilled by Ed Roessler who erected a windmill to pump the water into the tank in the attic. The following firms and individuals from La Crosse assisted in the construction: Gutzie and Stark Brothers, carpentry, Ed Schomer, stairways, the Taylor Lumber Company, door and window sashes, and the Tausche Hardware Company, the hardware fittings and the gutters.

The building was completed in early November, 1898, and dedicated on November 10 by the Right Reverend James Schwebach, Bishop of La Crosse. He as well as priests, sisters and altar boys arrived from La Crosse in horse-drawn carriages. They were greeted by a group of Rough Riders in uniform, the United States flag, and band music. A dinner was served to all those who took part in the dedication. The convent needed a name, and at the suggestion of one of the sisters, Villa St. Joseph was chosen.

Significance of the site, continued, p.2.

The house was to serve not only as a convent for the sisters who managed the farm, but also as a place for sisters to find rest, recuperation from illness, and/or relaxation when needed. As early as the summer of 1899, Mother Ludovica offered the faculty of St. Rose Normal School, as well as the teachers of the La Crosse parish schools, a vacation at Villa St. Joseph. About thirty teachers availed themselves of this opportunity between June 12 and August 23. At various times the postulants of the community also used the Villa for picnics and various forms of relaxation. As the years progressed, sisters needing a place to recuperate from illness spent time in the country where fresh air and fresh farm produce were available.

Approximately ten years later, between 1908 and 1912, the needs of the community necessitated more adequate living quarters and an addition was built on the east end of the original stone house. In harmony with the first structure stone was procured from the same quarry down the hill. The addition provided for a chapel and more room for the sisters of the convent, for the sisters who taught in the St. Joseph Ridge parochial school, and for the grade school children who boarded at the convent while attending the parish school. Steam heating was installed at this time, the total cost of the project amounting to \$12,000.

In 1939 and again in 1964, as the retirement and convalescent needs of the Community increased, two additional brick structures were built. The first is attached to the west side of the stone house. It is only the original stone structure, however, which is the subject of this nomination. It is interesting to note that the original purpose of the stone house - a convent for the sisters who supervised and did some of the farm chores mainly for the purpose of providing food for St. Rose Convent and St. Francis Hospital, evolved into a convalescent and nursing home for the ill and elderly members of the Community.







