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## 1866 Move from "Indianbush" to "St. Louis Lake" (Lake Sagatagan)

Peggy L. Roske

College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University, proske@csbsju.edu

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*150 years ago:*

1866: The monks moved to “St. Louis Lake”



Drawing of the  
“Frame House” (left)  
and the  
“Old Stone House”  
(right)

Drawing from the Abbey Archives.



It is to the foresight and shrewdness of Bruno Riess primarily that St. John's owes its permanent location. He it was who first saw the possibilities of the 'Indianbush,' who pressed for permission to obtain it, and who directed the work of erecting claim shacks on each 360 acres.

Bruno Riess, OSB, 1829-1900

Biography from *Scriptorium* 1956 v. 15 n.1 p. 8-9

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/SJUArchives/id/3811>

Left photo and text (p.44) from *Worship & Work*

Right photo from the Abbey Archives; in *Worship & Work* #9

Saint Vincent → Saint Cloud  
1856

Litigation over the lands on which the Fathers had settled made their tenure uncertain. To escape embarrassments, Fr. Cornelius decided to transfer the institution to St. Joseph, Minn, 9 miles west of St. Cloud, where Fr. Bruno Riss provided adequate room for the professor and the students. The transfer took place early in March 1858.

Saint Cloud → Saint Joseph  
1858

Prior Benedict Haindl considered the transfer made by Fr. Cornelius ill-advised and moved the College back to St. Cloud.

Saint Cloud ← Saint Joseph  
1859

The next prior, Rev. Othmar Wirtz, saw no future for either monastery or college near St. Cloud and resolved to move farther into the County, in fact into the Indian Bush.

Saint Cloud → Indianbush  
1864

Text from a 1923 *St. Cloud Times* article by Alexius Hoffmann OSB

Box 2566:2 SJU and Abbey Article for the *Saint Cloud Times* in Sept. 1923 by Alexius Hoffman

Prior Othmar retired after three years service, in December 1865 and was succeeded, temporarily, by the former prior, Rev. Benedict Handl.

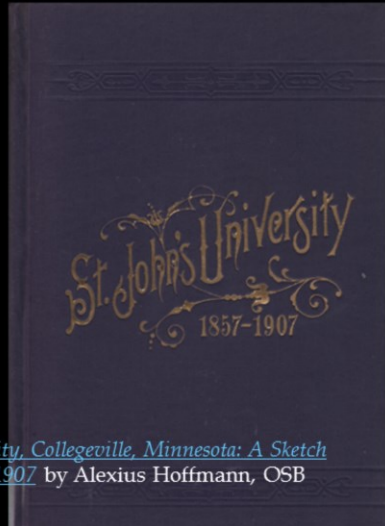
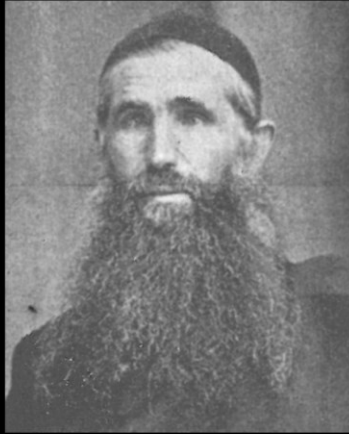
"Prior Othmar retired after three years service, in December 1865, and was succeeded, temporarily, by the former prior, Rev. Benedict Handl."

was the prior of St. Vincent's abbey, Bay, for the past 18 months. During his brief temporary priorship, Prior Benedict chose a new site for the monastery - its present site - about 1 1/2 miles south of Collegeville station and on the shores of a beautiful lake in the midst of a virgin forest.

"...During his brief temporary priorship Prior Benedict chose a new site for the monastery - its present site - about 1 1/2 miles south of Collegeville station and on the shores of a beautiful lake in the midst of a virgin forest."

1907 Hoffmann account in pencil St. John's Abbey Archives D35 f3, p.4

“Prior Benedict had himself chosen the site on which the monastery stood ... – **section 31 of the township of St. Wendel** (also called St. Wendall on maps)...”

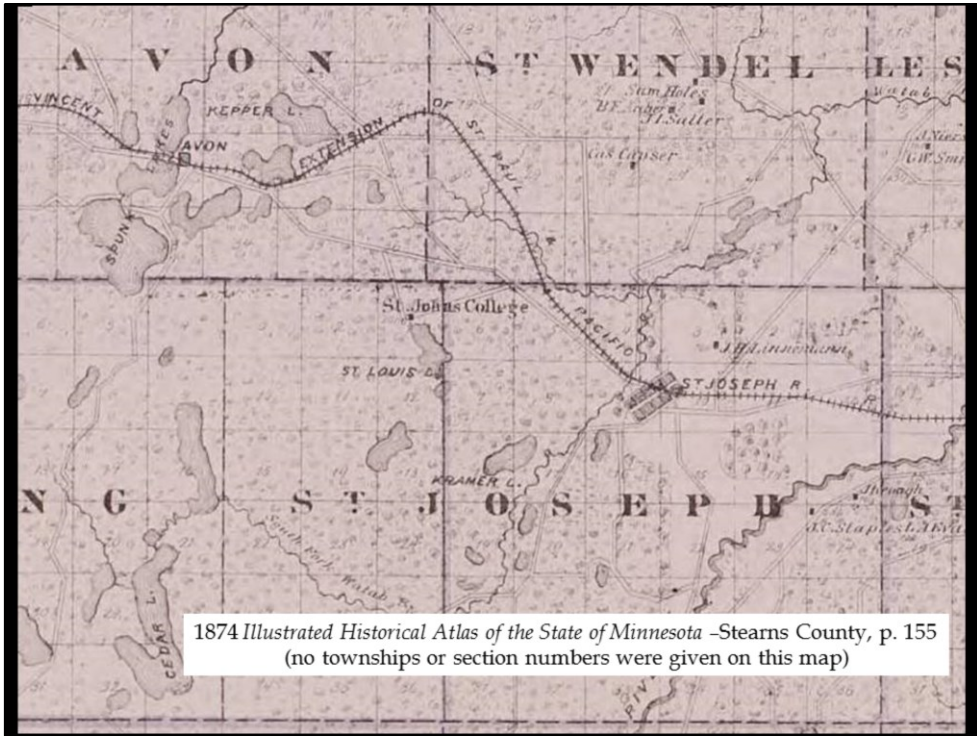


*Saint John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota: A Sketch of Its History, 1857-1907* by Alexius Hoffmann, OSB

[Saint John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota: A Sketch of Its History, 1857-1907](http://www.csbsju.edu/sju-archives/sjuhistory/booksaboutstjohns/hoffmannbook/hoffmannchapter1) by Alexius Hoffmann, OSB, Chapter 1

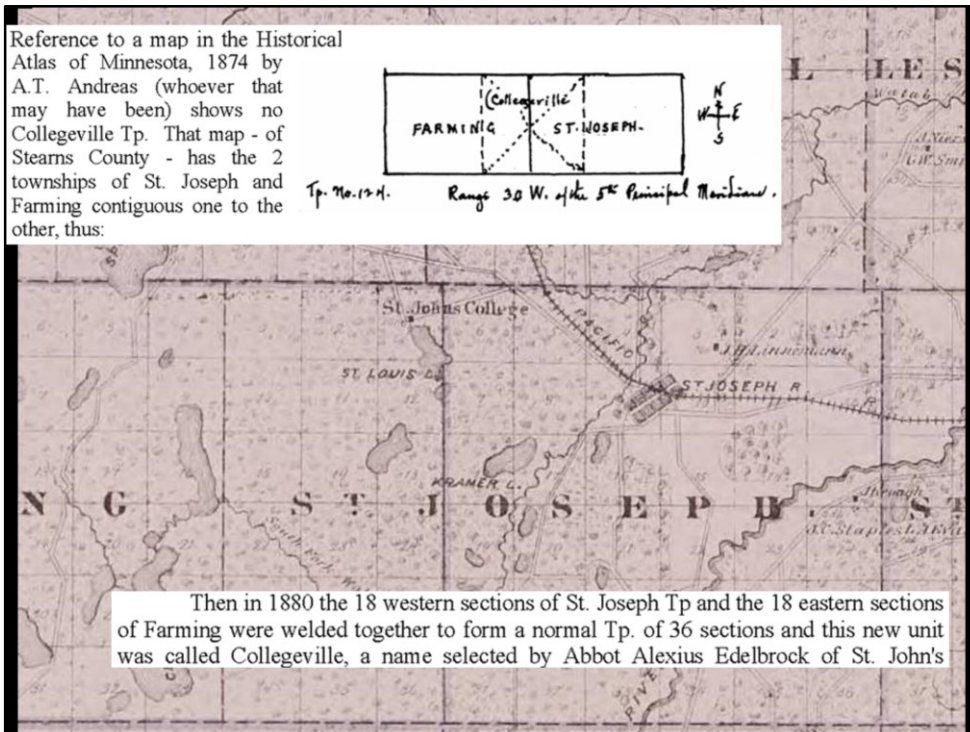
<http://www.csbsju.edu/sju-archives/sjuhistory/booksaboutstjohns/hoffmannbook/hoffmannchapter1>

Photo LP096 Fr. Benedict Haidl, in the Ascheman Sesquicentennial collection



1874 *Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Minnesota* –Stearns County, p. 155  
<http://reflections.mndigital.org/cdm/ref/collection/mhs/id/1020>





Map from 1874 *Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Minnesota* –Stearns County, p. 155

<http://reflections.mndigital.org/cdm/ref/collection/mhs/id/1020>

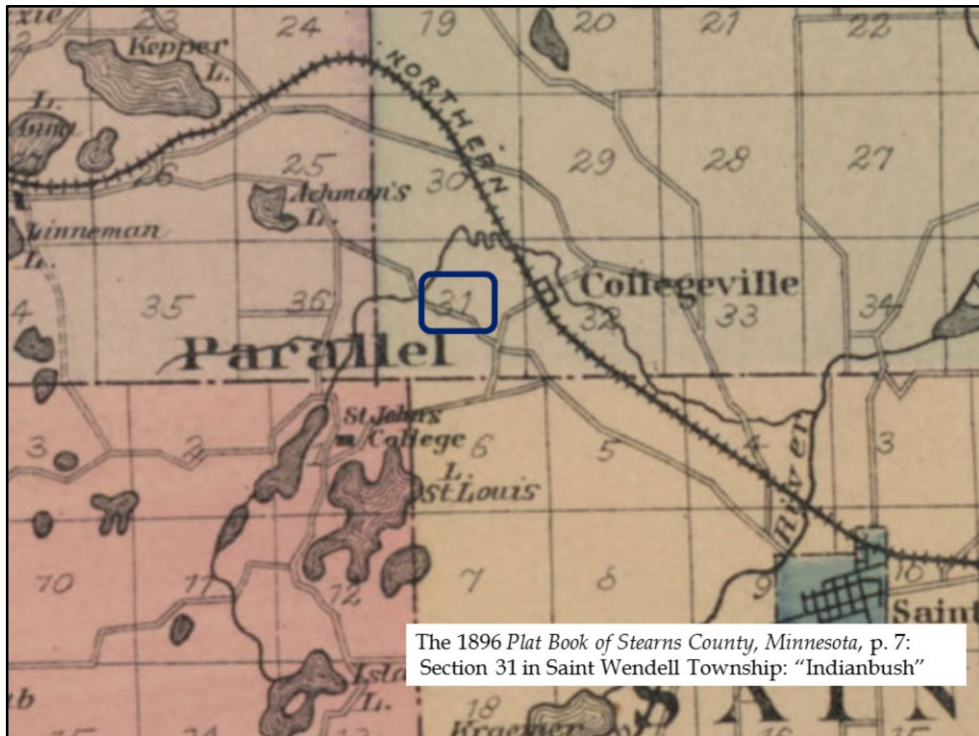
Text from [Natural History of Collegeville, Minnesota](#), p. 4 of the pdf by Alexius Hoffmann, O.S.B. (originally written in 1926, finished in 1934).





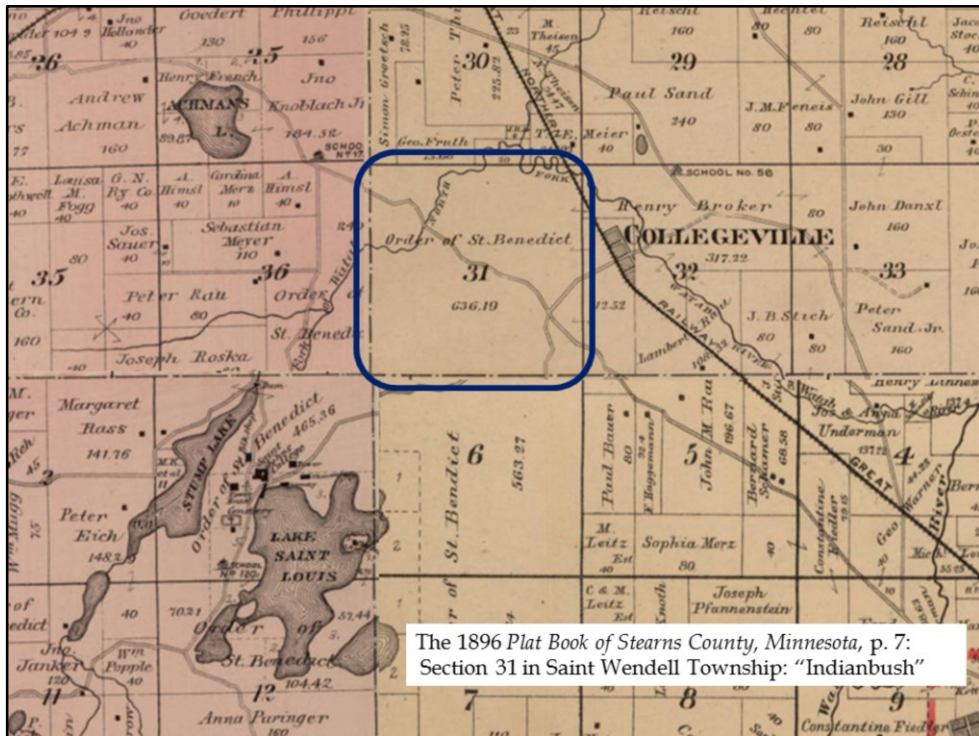
The 1896 *Plat Book of Stearns County, Minnesota*, p. 7 shows how St. John's is split between four townships

1896 Plat Book of Stearns County, Minnesota, p. 7, Stearns County  
<http://reflections.mndigital.org/cdm/ref/collection/stearns/id/301>



The 1896 *Plat Book of Stearns County, Minnesota*, p. 7:  
Section 31 in Saint Wendell Township: "Indianbush"

1896 Plat Book of Stearns County, Minnesota, p. 7, Stearns County  
<http://reflections.mndigital.org/cdm/ref/collection/stearns/id/301>



The 1896 Plat Book of Stearns County, Minnesota, p. 7:  
Section 31 in Saint Wendell Township: "Indianbush"

1896 Plat Book of Stearns County, Minnesota

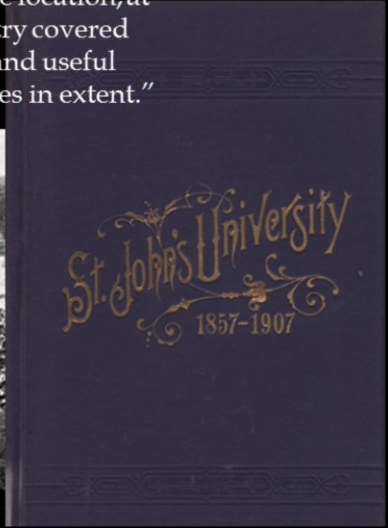
p. 26, Saint Wendel <http://reflections.mndigital.org/cdm/ref/collection/stearns/id/320>

p. 27, Avon <http://reflections.mndigital.org/cdm/ref/collection/stearns/id/321>

p. 43, Collegeville <http://reflections.mndigital.org/cdm/ref/collection/stearns/id/337>

p. 44, Saint Joseph <http://reflections.mndigital.org/cdm/ref/collection/stearns/id/338>

“Prior Benedict had himself chosen the site on which the monastery stood . . . – section 31 of the township of St. Wendel (also called St. Wendall on maps) – **but less than two miles to the southwest** there was what appeared to him to be a still more desirable location, at least for the buildings. It was rolling country covered with dense woods and its most attractive and useful feature was a delightful lake about 400 acres in extent.”



[Saint John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota: A Sketch of Its History, 1857-1907](http://www.csbsju.edu/sju-archives/sjuhistory/booksaboutstjohns/hoffmannbook/hoffmannchapter1) by Alexius Hoffmann, OSB, Chapter 1

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"Prior Benedict had himself chosen the site on which the monastery stood . . . – section 31 of the township of St. Wendel (also called St. Wendall on maps) – but less than two miles to the southwest there was what appeared to him to be a still more desirable location, at least for the buildings. It was rolling country covered with dense woods and its most attractive and useful feature was a delightful lake about 400 acres in extent. Without delay, he prepared for the fourth transfer.

**In January 1866** a site on an elevation on the northern shore of the lake was selected for the buildings; trees were cut down and as soon as spring set in, excavations for the basement were begun."

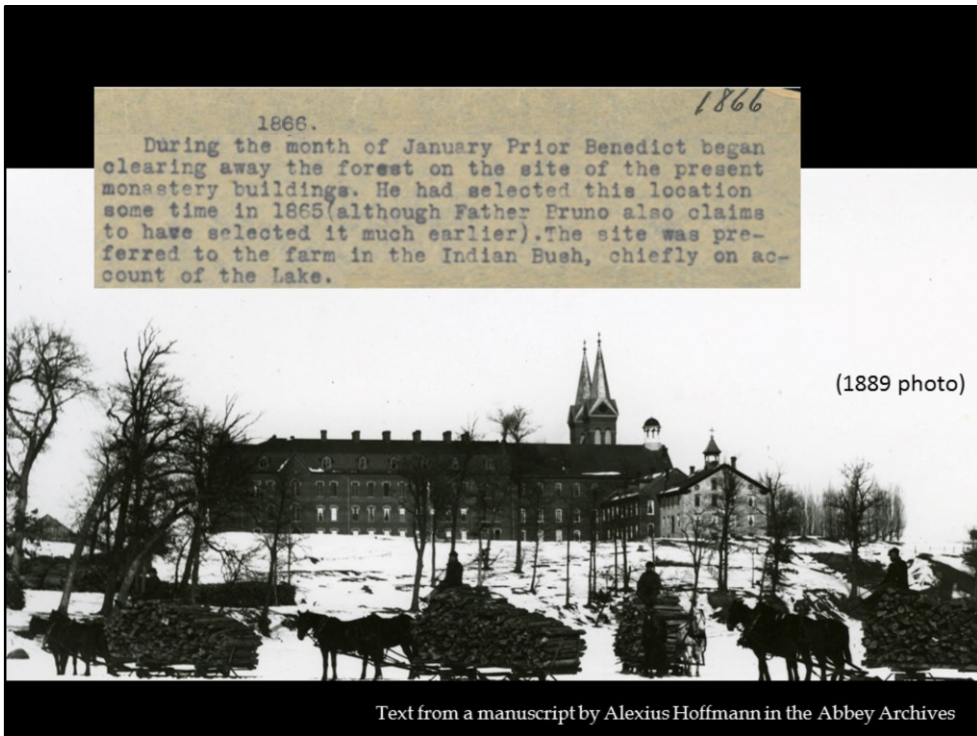


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Typed document by Alexius Hoffmann in SJAA, on legal paper (SJUA digital filename "Page 1 top from 1866 Legal Length Document by Hoffmann")

Photo from the Ascherman Collection -LP012.WoodCords February 1889

Indianbush → Saint Louis Lake  
1866

For several reasons the location was considered unfavorable. Early in 1866 it was decided to make section 1 in what is now the township of Collegeville the permanent abode of the institution. In this section, which was entirely covered with woods, there was a most beautiful lake--we call it Sagatagan, an Indian word meaning tinder--and a small stream, one of the forks of the Watab river. Trees were cut down on the north shore of the lake to make a clearing for the buildings and as soon as the snow had gone, work was begun on the new home.



The material was stone, i.e. boulders picked up on the building site or along the lake shore. The house was 46 X 50, and its plain front faced towards the east; it had a basement, two full stories and an attic. Upon the ridge of the roof was a small turret in which hung the silvery bell that had pealed for matin-song from the belfry of the Priory on the Mississippi ever since 1857 and had accompanied the community throughout its sylvan Odyssey. It still occupies an honored place in the college tower.

Text, by Alexius Hoffmann, from O:\Archives\SJUArchives\Digital Archives\Hoffmann documents\SJU and Abbey Box 2566 f2  
Photo from the Abbey Archives



The first monastic building of 1865–66, later called the 'Old Stone House,' was 46x50 feet, with basement, two levels and attic. Facing the east, and placed two hundred feet from the lake shore, this Old Stone House was a frontier adaptation of the simple colonial stone houses and Pennsylvania Dutch gabled structures which the Minnesota monks had known around St. Vincent in the foothills of the Alleghenies. Although the building was unadorned, its severe austerity was functional and blended with the natural surroundings of frontier life. Father Valentine painted a picturesque sundial with baroque corona in bright Bavarian colors on the south wall. It soon became a favorite target for stones, aimed with curves or straight on, by students, until the style gave way before the onslaught of pioneer student recess periods. On the ridge of the roof was an open stylized turret in which Brother Benno's bell was hung. This bell, a gift from relatives in Germany, had arrived at the St. Cloud Priory in 1857. It accompanied the community in all its wanderings, and now announced, in the key of C, the hours of the Divine Service and the school schedule from early morning Matins until Compline officially ended the day's worship and work.<sup>31</sup>

Regarding the bell  
atop the  
Old Stone House

Its fate is  
mentioned in a  
footnote in *Worship  
& Work*

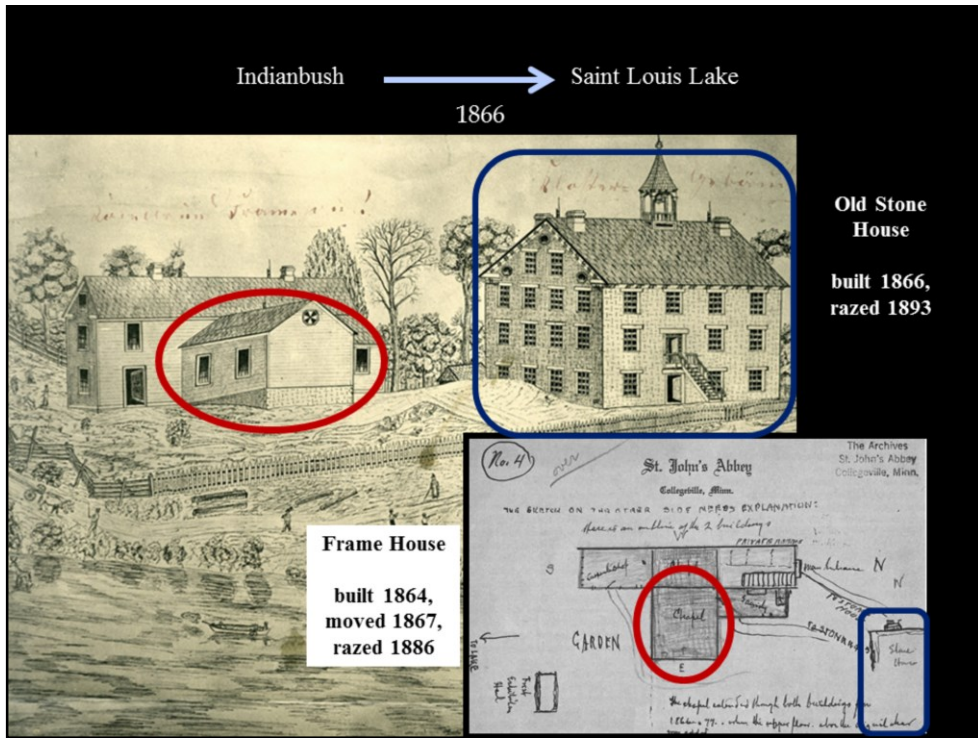
<sup>31</sup> After Abbot Alexius had built the main quadrangle Brother Benno's bell was hung in the north turret of the college buildings, and served as class bell for years. It was stored in the museum with the advent of the first electric bell system, but again came into its heritage in 1948, when Abbot Alcuin gave it to St. John's foundation priory in Humacao, Puerto Rico. There today it rings forth again as of old.

*Worship & Work*, excerpt from Chapter 3, p. 83,

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/SJUArchives/id/11009>

footnote 31 is on p.533,

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/SJUArchives/id/11521>



Drawing from the Abbey Archives.

Floor plan by Alexius Hoffmann, OSB, from *Saint John's Furniture 1874-1974*, p.9

Top drawing from the Abbey Archives.



Drawing from the Abbey Archives

Photo from the Ascherman Collection - LP068.1883.Quad.StoneHouse

The Old Stone House had a fire in 1877, was torn down in 1893, and a tornado struck the adjacent building in 1894.

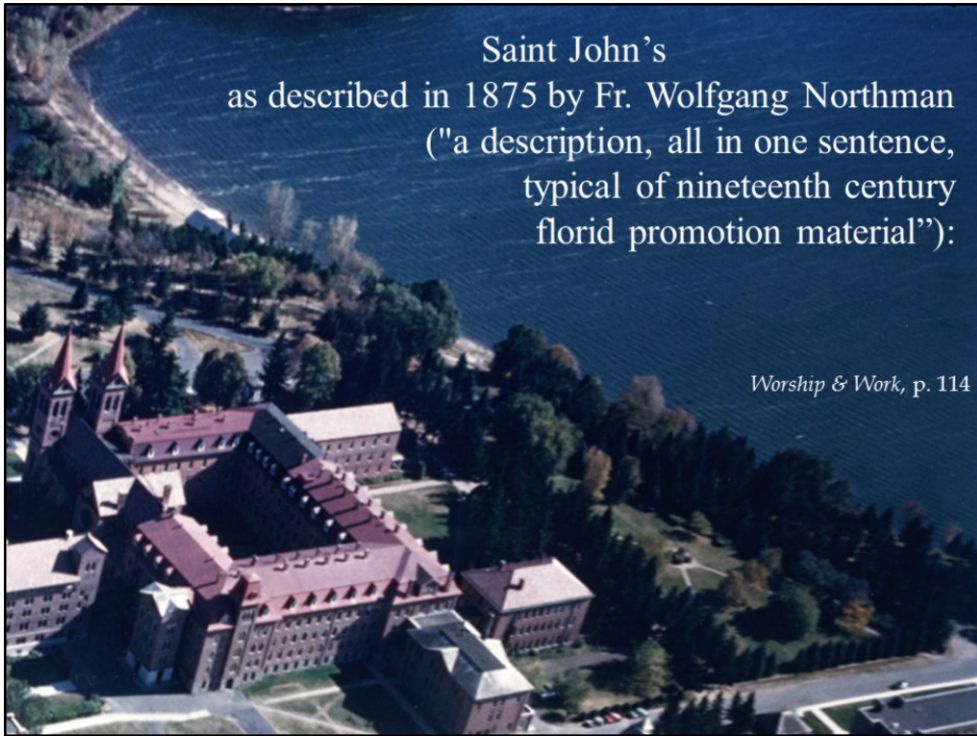
1866.

1866

Feb. 20. The frame buildings on the Rothkopp farm at St. Cloud were burnt to the ground. Part of them had been occupied by an organ-builder (Stoeckling?), and the fire is said to have started in a defective chimney in his shop. The buildings were not insured. Thus the last temptation to return to the farm was removed.



Typed document by Alexius Hoffmann in SJAA, on legal paper (SJUA digital filename "Page 1 top from 1866 Legal Length Document by Hoffmann")

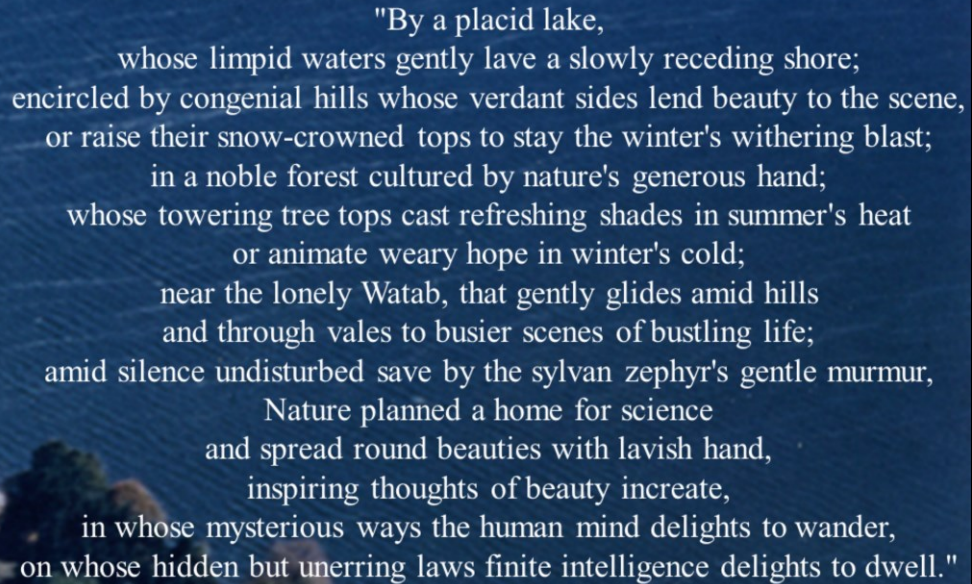


Saint John's  
as described in 1875 by Fr. Wolfgang Northman  
("a description, all in one sentence,  
typical of nineteenth century  
florid promotion material"):

*Worship & Work*, p. 114

Airview1950Color from SJAA,  
<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/SJUArchives/id/39337>





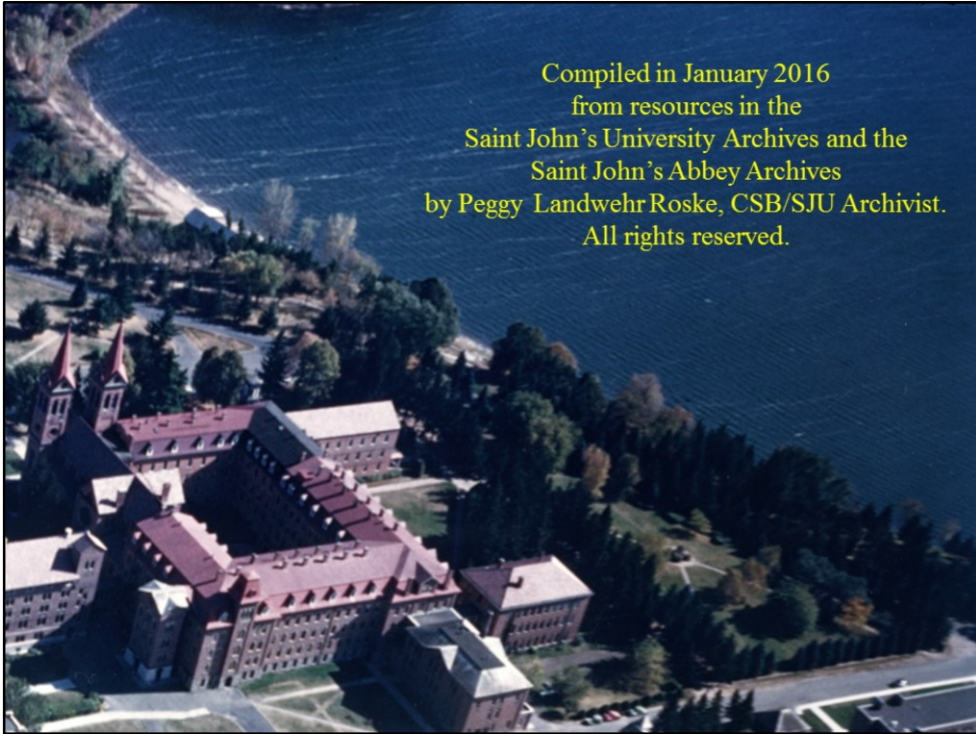
"By a placid lake,  
whose limpid waters gently lave a slowly receding shore;  
encircled by congenial hills whose verdant sides lend beauty to the scene,  
or raise their snow-crowned tops to stay the winter's withering blast;  
in a noble forest cultured by nature's generous hand;  
whose towering tree tops cast refreshing shades in summer's heat  
or animate weary hope in winter's cold;  
near the lonely Watab, that gently glides amid hills  
and through vales to busier scenes of bustling life;  
amid silence undisturbed save by the sylvan zephyr's gentle murmur,  
Nature planned a home for science  
and spread round beauties with lavish hand,  
inspiring thoughts of beauty increate,  
in whose mysterious ways the human mind delights to wander,  
on whose hidden but unerring laws finite intelligence delights to dwell."

Background clipped from *airview1950Color* from SJAA,  
<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/SJUArchives/id/39337>

Text quoted in *Worship & Work*, Chapter 2, p. 113-114

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/SJUArchives/id/11040>

Quote by Fr. Wolfgang Northman in *Sixteenth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the State of Minnesota for the Year Ending September 30, 1875* (St. Paul, 1876), pp. 57-59. Footnoted on p. 541 of *W & W*,  
<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/SJUArchives/id/11529>



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