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## Old Stone House

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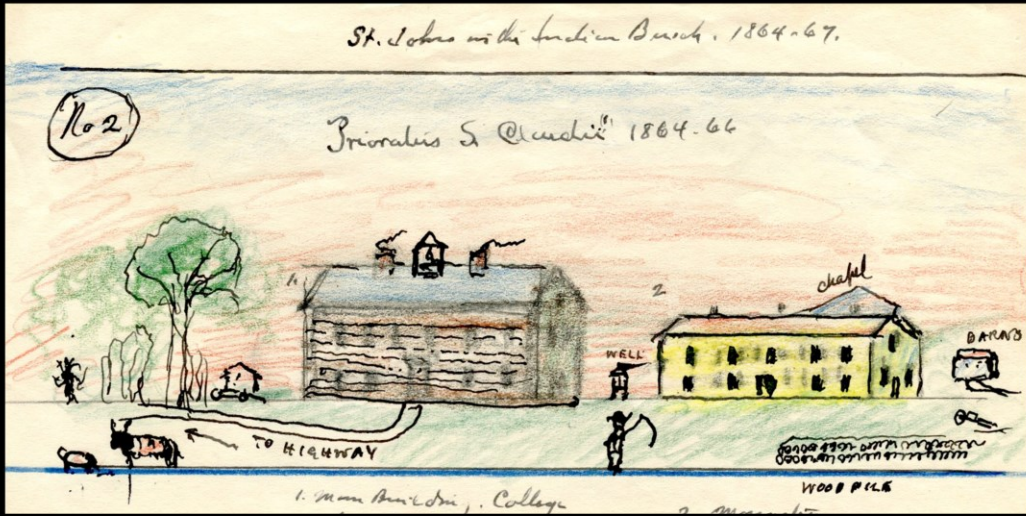
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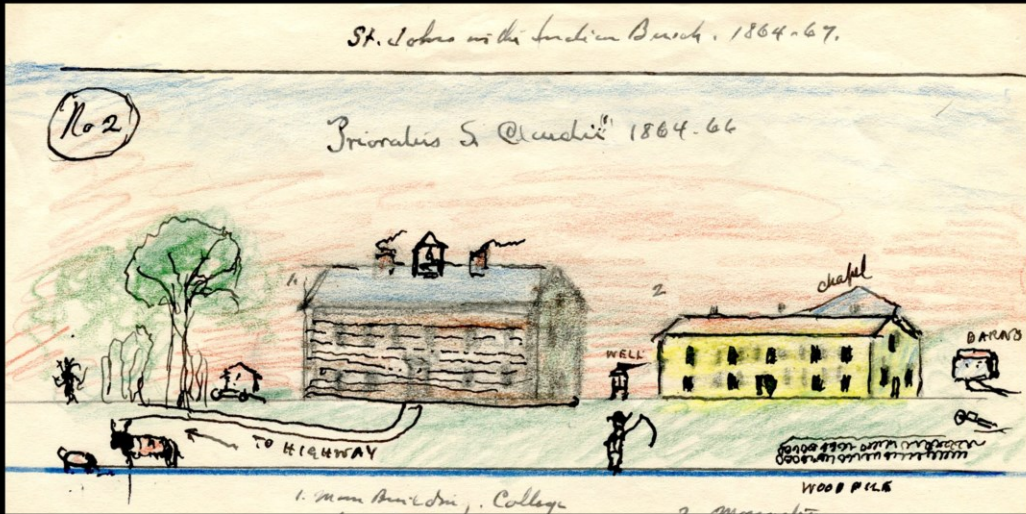
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# 150 years ago On February 1, 1867...



...the St. John's community  
left the "old farm" in Indianbush...



**...for the shores of the lake: ample water, and room to grow.**

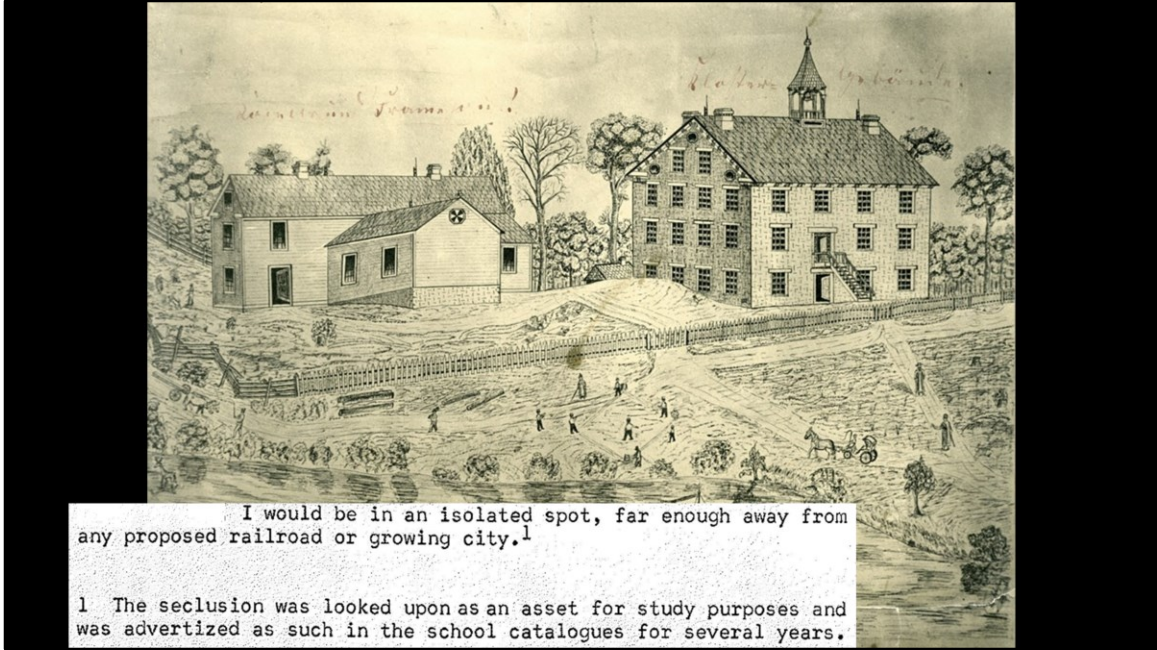


Drawing from SJAA



1867...February 1. The stone house was occupied. The frame house which used to stand at the Collegeville site was moved to a position southwest of the stone house. It must have stood right on what is now the roadway.

Drawing from SJAA; text from green notebook in the SJU Archives



Drawing from SJAA

Text from "[The Old Stone House](#)," *Scriptorium*, 1954, Vol14 No.1 , p.19.

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/SJUArchives/id/3428> (p. 24 of the pdf)

When the contents of the cornerstone were reached, among others the following important document bearing on the history of the building was found.

A. D. Nostri JESU CHRISTI 1866 die 19 Julii hujus aedificationis lapis primus positus est a Reverendissimo THOMA LANDON GRACE, Episcopo S. Pauli, Regnante Pio IX Papa, Reverendissimo BONIFACIO WIMMER, O. S. B., Abbate ad montem S. Vincentii Praeside Congregationis Americano Cassinensis, Reverendo BENEDICTO HAINDL, O. S. B., Priore hujus monasterii, ANDREA JOHNSON Praeside civitatum confoederatarum.

On the 19th day of July A. D. 1866 the first stone of this structure was laid by the Rt. Rev. Thomas L. Grace, Bishop of St. Paul, during the Pontificate of Pius IX., Right Rev. Boniface Wimmer, O. S. B., Abbot at Mount St. Vincent (Pa.), being Praeses of the American-Cassinense Congregation; Rev. Benedict Haindl being Prior of this Monastery; and Andrew Johnson being President of the United States.

***St. John's Record* September 1893**



<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/SJUArchives/id/241>

"The Stone House," *St. John's Record* v. 4-6, September 1893, p.186-187



## THE OLD STONE HOUSE

Most of the information on the building of the stone house was found in a copy made by the Reverend Alexius Hoffmann, O.S.B., of part of an old account book of Prior Benedict.

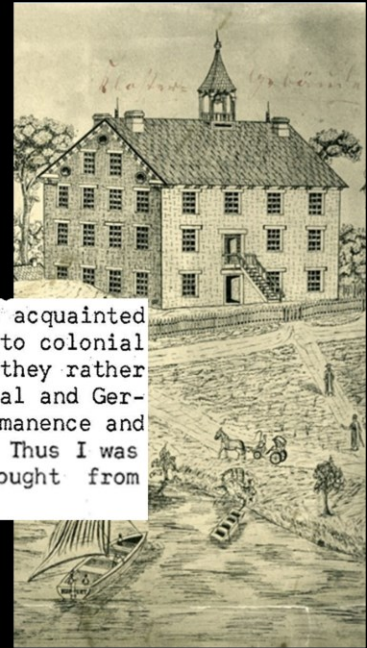
*Scriptorium*, 1954, Vol14 No.1 , p.19-33



Text from "[The Old Stone House](#)," *Scriptorium*, 1954, Vol14 No.1 , p.19-33  
<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/SJUArchives/id/3428> (p. 24-38 of the pdf)  
The graphic is from p.19 (p. 24 of the pdf); footnote 2 is on p. 20 (p. 25 of the pdf)



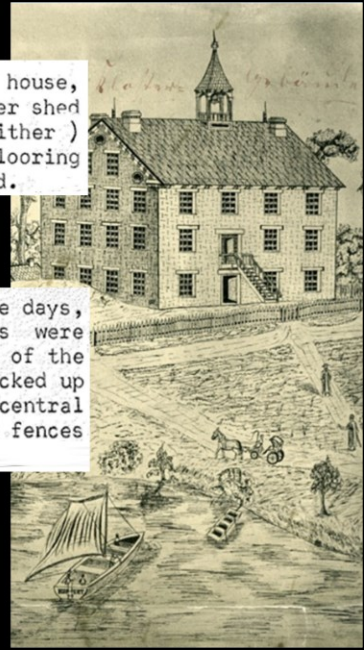
The early monks of Minnesota were acquainted with the stone houses in Pennsylvania which dated back to colonial times. Although the monks here were not architects, they rather successfully copied the order and simplicity of colonial and German-American architecture. To this they added the permanence and stability gained by building with the granite boulders. Thus I was built according to a contemporary style which was brought from Western Pennsylvania to the new Minnesota frontier.



Text from "[The Old Stone House](#)," *Scriptorium*, 1954, Vol14 No.1 p.23 (p. 28 of the pdf)

It isn't the easiest thing in the world to build a stone house, especially not under frontier handicaps. There was no lumber shed to which the general contractor (there wasn't one of these either) could go for some badly needed boards. All the beams and flooring had to come by horse and wagon from the sawmill at St. Cloud.

The Cold Spring Granite Company wasn't in existence in those days, nor was Cold Spring itself, so neatly cut granite blocks were never even considered. Consequently my exterior was built of the easiest obtainable stone, native or rough field boulders picked up in the vicinity. There were enough of them available on central Minnesota soil, I assure you, to build all the houses and fences needed for many a year.



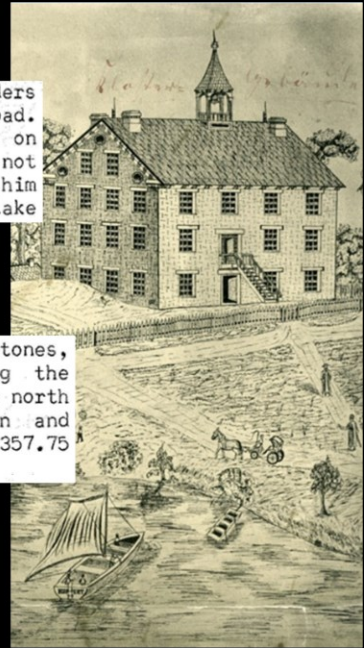
Text from "[The Old Stone House](#)," *Scriptorium*, 1954, Vol14 No.1 p.20 (p. 25 of the pdf)

Text from "[The Old Stone House](#)," *Scriptorium*, 1954, Vol14 No.1 p.21 (p. 26 of the pdf)

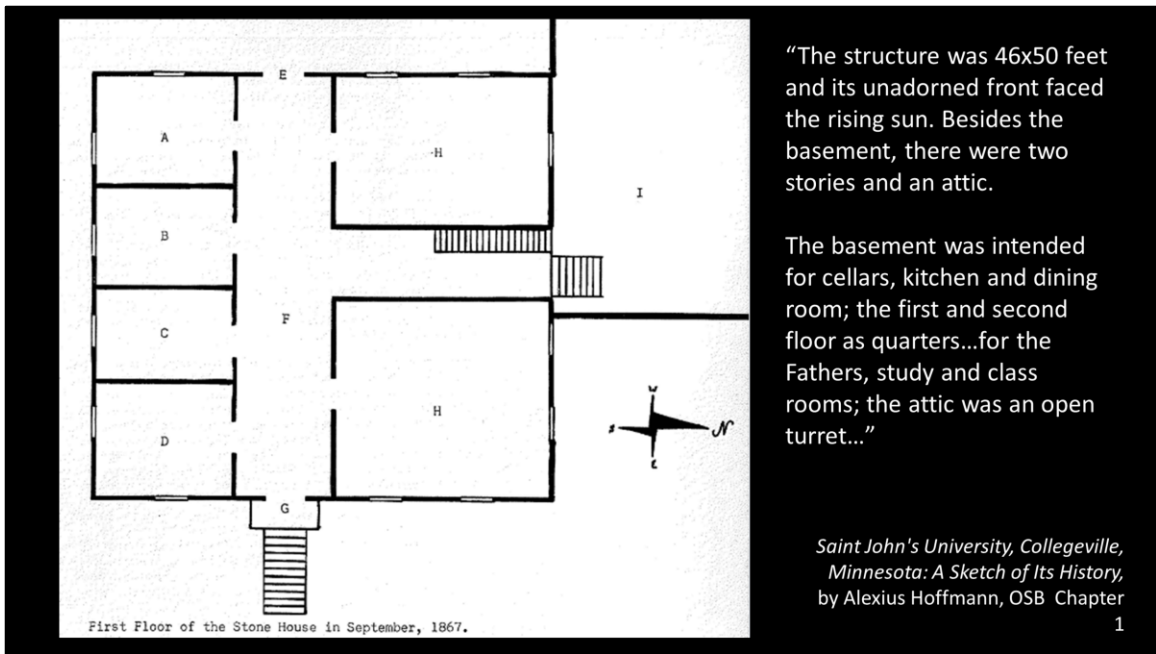
The contract for gathering the boulders was let out to Theodore Pierz (or Beirz) for \$4.50 per ox-cart load. He had to gather all the stones and see to it that they were on hand at the construction site on time so that the masons would not be delayed. The monks had two picks and two crow-bars made for him and also built or repaired a boat for him in a shanty on the lake

The boat was a scow or a barge of some kind. The stones, none larger than two men could carry, were picked up along the shore as far as Chapel Island and ferried on the boat to the north shore. They were then transferred to a wagon drawn by oxen and hauled up the hill to the building. Theodore Pierz earned \$357.75 by the time I was built.

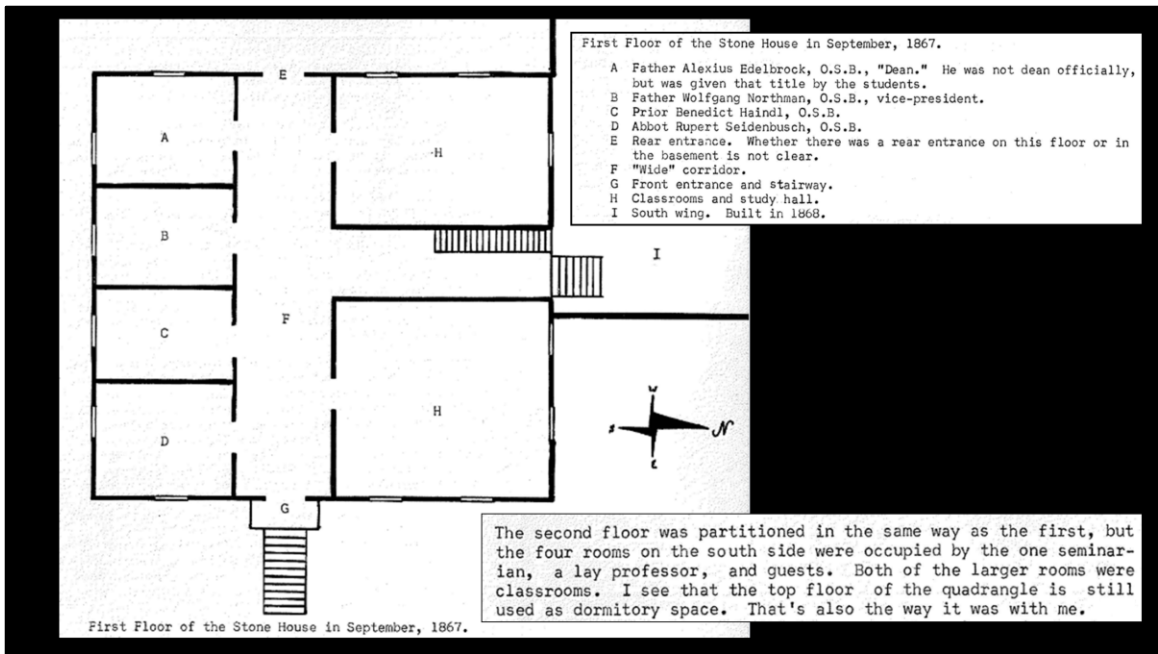
i.e. approx. 80 cartloads)



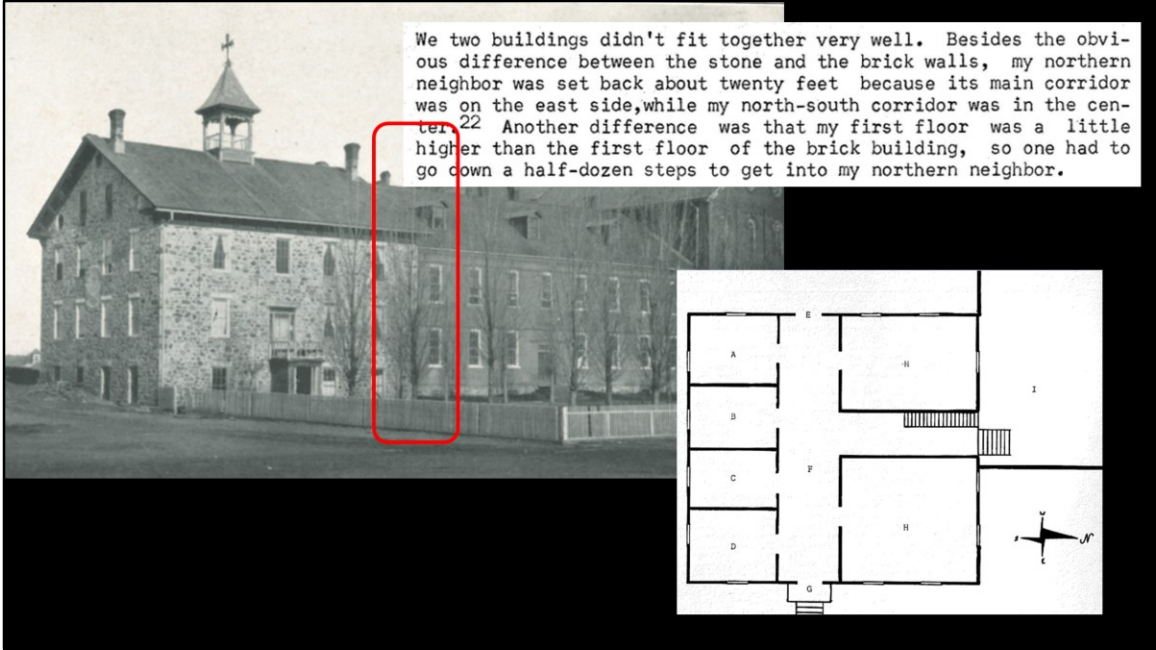
Text from "[The Old Stone House](#)," *Scriptorium*, 1954, Vol14 No.1 p.21 (p. 26 of the pdf)



From "[The Old Stone House](#)," *Scriptorium*, 1954, Vol14 No.1 p.27 (p. 32 of the pdf)



From "[The Old Stone House](#)," *Scriptorium*, 1954, Vol14 No.1 p.27 (p. 32 of the pdf)



We two buildings didn't fit together very well. Besides the obvious difference between the stone and the brick walls, my northern neighbor was set back about twenty feet because its main corridor was on the east side, while my north-south corridor was in the center.<sup>22</sup> Another difference was that my first floor was a little higher than the first floor of the brick building, so one had to go down a half-dozen steps to get into my northern neighbor.

Photo from Alexius Hoffmann's [Saint John's University: A Sketch of Its History, 1857-1907](#), 1907, on the page opposite p. 32, captioned "St. John's 1868-1873"

Floor plan from ["The Old Stone House," Scriptorium](#), 1954, Vol14 No.1 p.27 (p. 32 of the pdf)

Text from ["The Old Stone House," Scriptorium](#), 1954, Vol14 No.1 p.029 (p. 34 of the pdf)

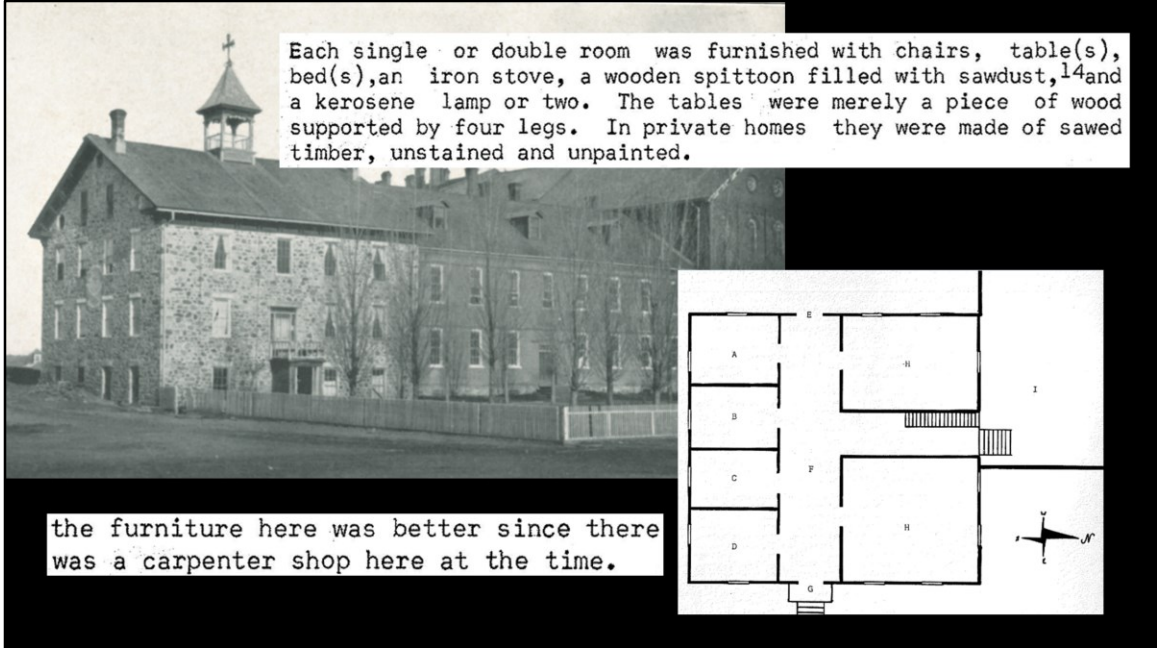
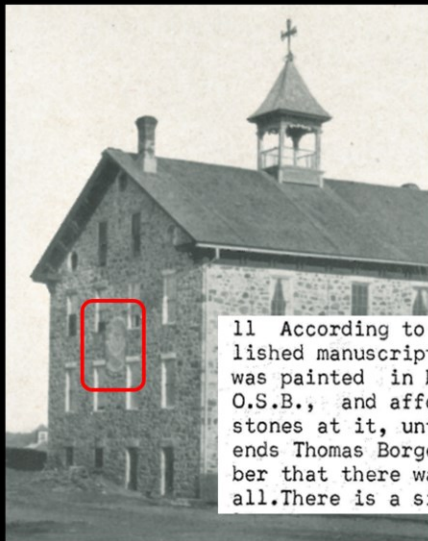


Photo from Alexius Hoffmann's [Saint John's University: A Sketch of Its History, 1857-1907](#), 1907, on the page opposite p. 32, captioned "St. John's 1868-1873"

Floor plan from ["The Old Stone House," Scriptorium](#), 1954, Vol14 No.1 p.27 (p. 32 of the pdf)

Text from ["The Old Stone House," Scriptorium](#), 1954, Vol14 No.1 p.25 (p. 30 of the pdf)

There was a sundial painted on my south wall after the fashion in Germany.<sup>11</sup>

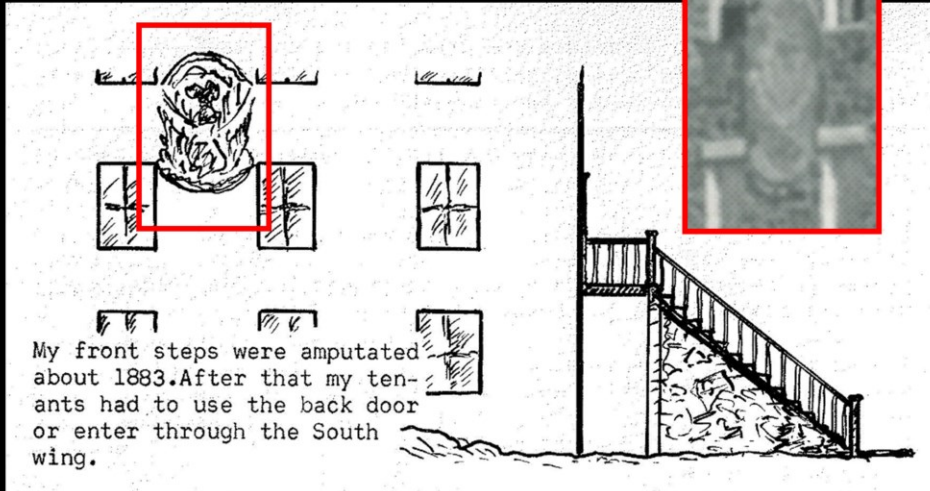


<sup>11</sup> According to Alexius Hoffmann, O.S.B., "Varia Notes" (Unpublished manuscript in the Archives of St. John's Abbey), the sundial was painted in bright colors by the Reverend Vincent Schiffrer, O.S.B., and afforded a target to the students, who used to throw stones at it, until finally the hands were broken off. The Reverends Thomas Borgerding, O.S.B., and Roman Homar, O.S.B., both remember that there was a design around the sundial, but that is about all. There is a similar painting on the stone rectory in St. Joseph.

Photo from Alexius Hoffmann's [Saint John's University: A Sketch of Its History, 1857-1907](#), 1907, on the page opposite p. 32, captioned "St. John's 1868-1873"  
Text from "[The Old Stone House](#)," *Scriptorium*, 1954, Vol.14 No.1 p.24 (p. 29 of the pdf)

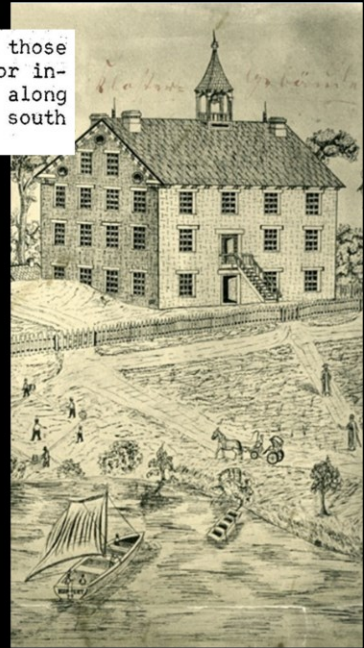


(The Sun Dial, presumably)



Text from "[The Old Stone House](#)," *Scriptorium*, 1954, Vol14 No.1 p.23 (p. 28 of the pdf)

I wasn't the only stone building put up in Stearns County in those days, and there are still some examples around St. John's, for instance, the church and rectory at St. Joseph, the farmhouse along the road south of Lake Sagatagan, and the foundations of the south wing and the quadrangle.



Text from "[The Old Stone House](#)," *Scriptorium*, 1954, Vol14 No.1 p.24 (p. 29 of the pdf)

At about this time the community planned to build another stone house just like me on the north end of the east wing, where the church is now. This plan, however, was dropped, but not before it was advertized as already completed.<sup>27</sup> In 1875 the Reverend Alexius Edelbrock, O.S.B., was elected abbot, and he had bigger building plans.



27. Catalogue of St. John's College for the Academic School Year 1876-77 (St. Paul, 1877), frontispiece.

Text from "[The Old Stone House](#)," *Scriptorium*, 1954, Vol14 No.1 p.031 (p. 36 of the pdf)

Image from 1876-77 *Catalogue*, p. 2,

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/SJUArchives/id/281>

Also in the 1877-1878 and 1878-1879 editions.

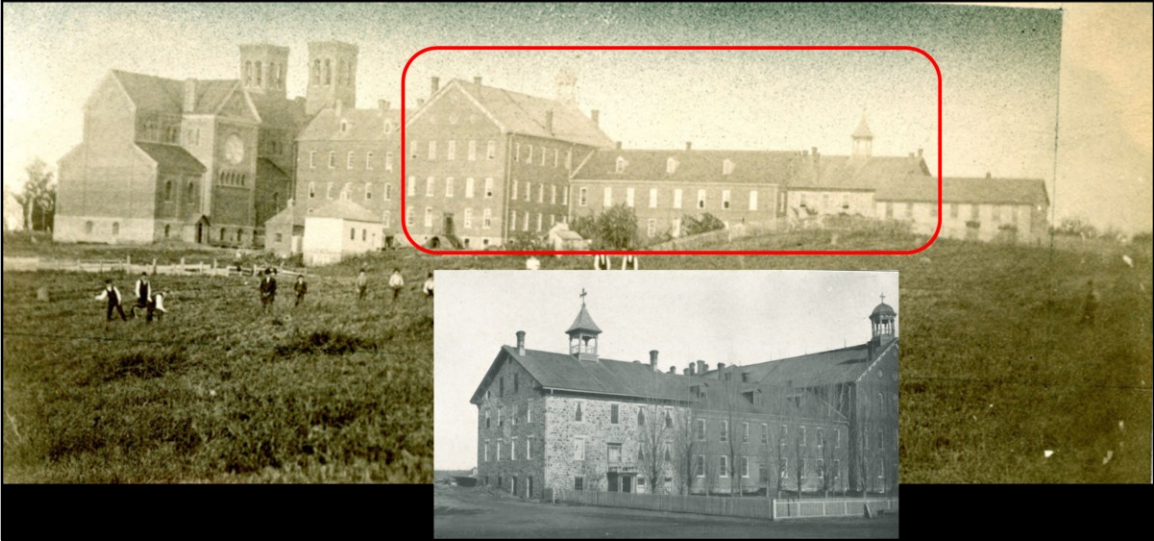
“Potato Field, 1881”



Potato Field 1881

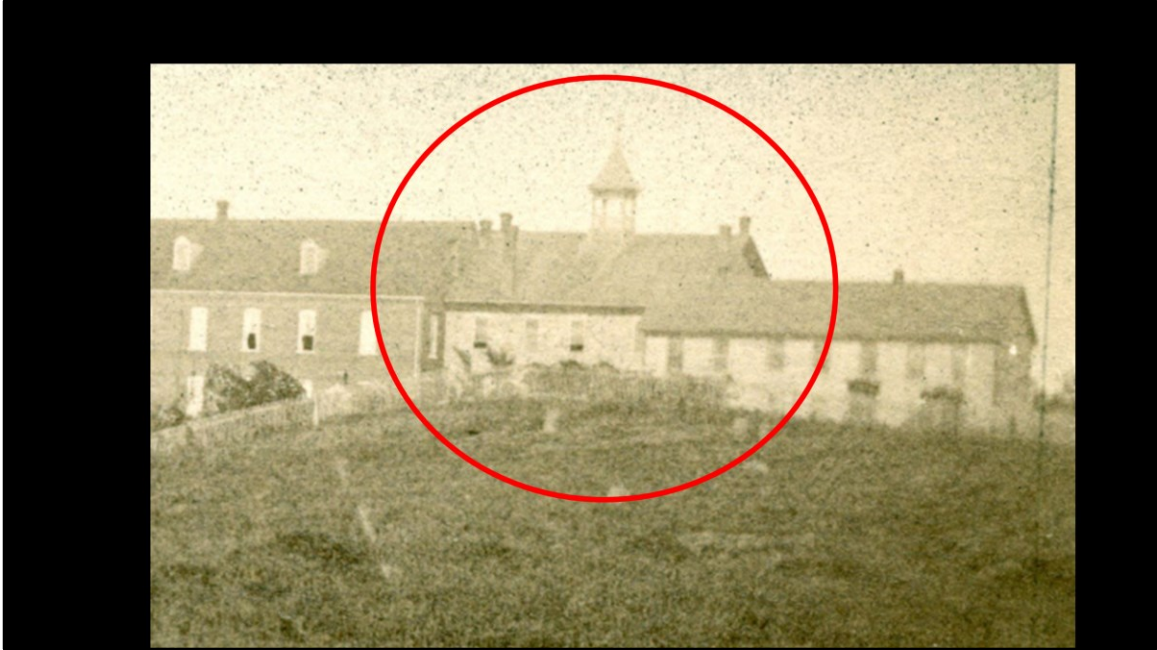
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"Potato Field, 1881"



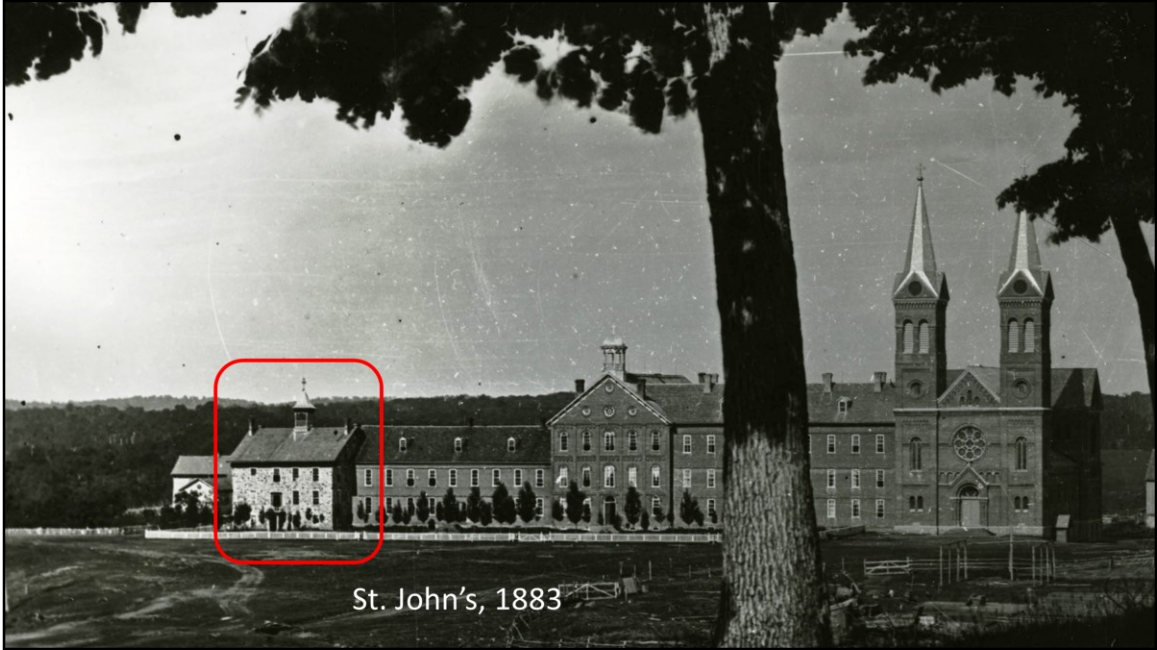
Potato Field 1881

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Potato Field 1881

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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.



St. John's, 1883

Ascherman Collection - LP068.1883.Quad.StoneHouse

After the construction of the Quadrangle Building, the Frame House was razed in 1886.

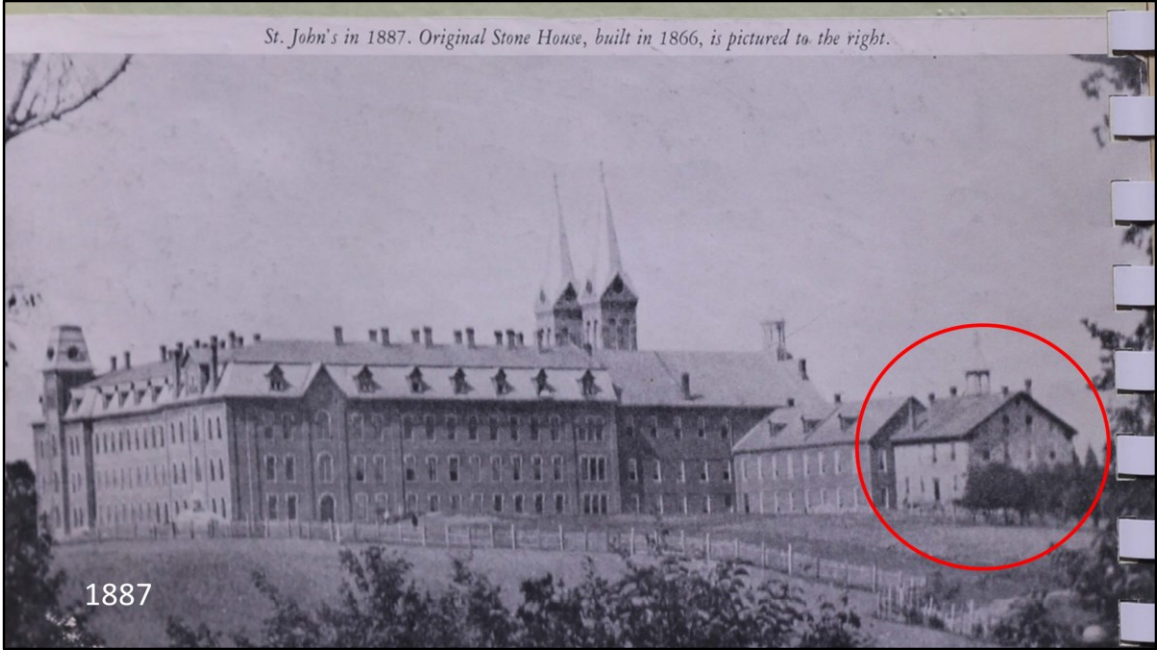
The Old Stone House had a fire in 1877, was torn down in 1893, and a tornado struck the adjacent building in 1894.



The Old Stone House and the Frame House,  
which had been moved up from Indianbush  
(and which was razed in 1886)



Frame House, next to the Old Stone House – photo from St. John's Abbey Archives  
After the construction of the Quadrangle Building, the Frame House was razed in  
1886.



P. 41 of the Abbey (green) notebook

O:\Archives\SJUArchives\Digital Archives\Abbey Notebook - green, in SJUArchives



P. 41 of the Abbey (green) notebook

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Completed Quad, ca. 1889



Quad photo from SJAA, ca. 1889 (?)

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/SJUArchives/id/209>

*Saint John's Abbey Quarterly* January 1986, p.6



ca. 1889

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/SJUArchives/id/209>  
*Saint John's Abbey Quarterly* January 1986, p.6

THE STONE HOUSE.

THE original college building erected in 1866 and familiarly known to our day as the "stone-house" has been removed and the student of twenty five years ago will regret the disappearance of the homely old pile which in its day did service as the only college in Northern Minnesota. The weak condition of its walls necessitated its removal. It will be replaced by a handsome structure.

From '67 to '70 it served as college and monastery — only the chapel and shops were in the frame building which stood about 40 feet to the rear of it. We well may marvel how all could be accommodated, yet those who dwell there say it was comfortable even if primitive. At a later date it contained shops and rooms connected with the Industrial school. After the fire in 1877, which gutted it partly, the interior was renovated

and some repairs were made on the outside three years ago. The quaint old sun dial on the south wall is with the debris also.

When the contents of the corner-stone were reached, among others the following important document bearing on the history of the building was found.

B. & D.

A. D. Nostri J. die 19 Julii huius pie primus positus dissiMO THOMA Episcopo S. Pauli IX Papa, Reveren- WIMMER, O. S. B. tem S. Vincentii I. tioneis Americano verendo BERNARD B., Priore huius DREA JOHNSON P. confederatarum Nomina Patris

**St. John's Record  
September 1893**

THE original college building erected in 1866 and familiarly known to our day as the "stone-house" has been removed and the student of twenty five years ago will regret the disappearance of the homely old pile which in its day did service as the only college in Northern Minnesota. The weak condition of its walls necessitated its removal. It will be replaced by a handsome structure.



<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/SJUArchives/id/241>

"The Stone House," *St. John's Record* v. 4-6, September 1893, p.186-187

Despite frequent repair work the end came during the summer of 1893. I had to be demolished because my beams were rotting. In 1866 the monks had neglected to put any preservative, pitch was used in those days, on them. My demise was scarcely recorded.

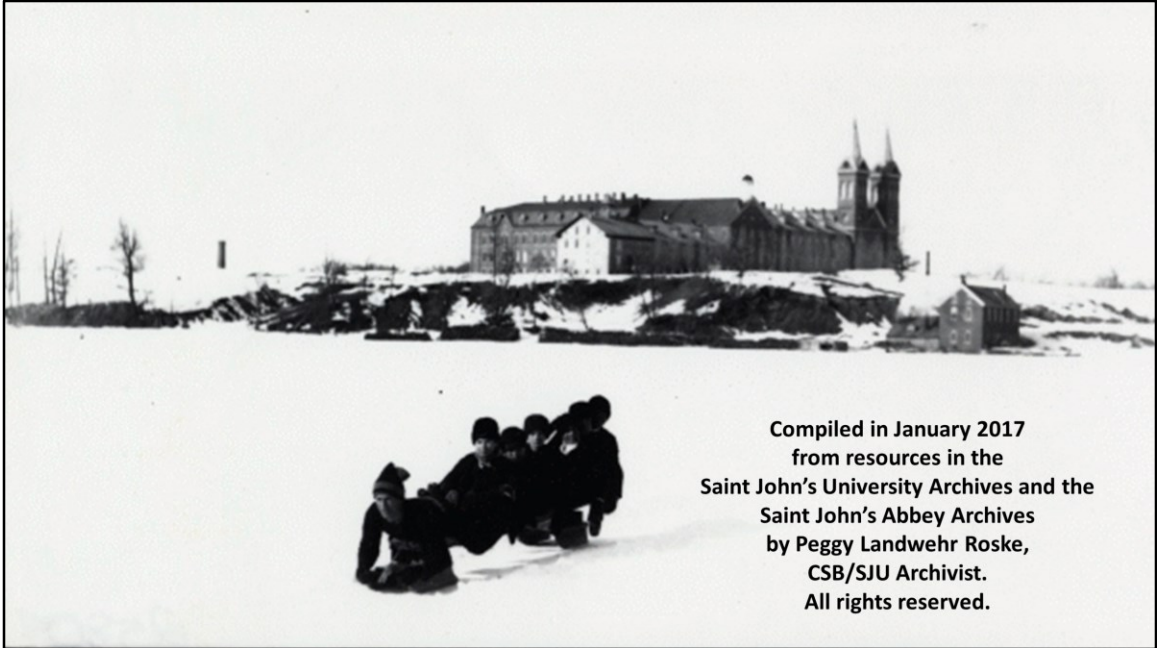
It wasn't until May, 1894, that the job was completed.

My exterior was a simple beauty, which did not hinder my construction nor add to my upkeep--functional is, I suppose, what you would call me

My severe austerity matched the circumstances of frontier life. I blended with my natural surroundings.



Text from "[The Old Stone House](#)," *Scriptorium*, 1954, Vol14 No.1 p.32 (p. 37 of the pdf) and p.23 (p. 28 of the pdf)



Compiled in January 2017  
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Saint John's University Archives and the  
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