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## Saint John's First Cemetery

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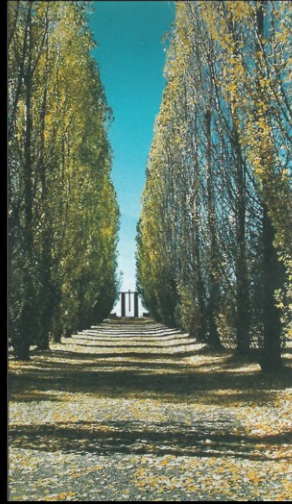
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## Historical Tidbits Concerning the Saint John's Cemetery



[\*Saint John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota: A Sketch of Its History, 1857-1907\*](#) by

Alexius Hoffmann, OSB, Chapter 1

[http://www.csbsju.edu/sju-](http://www.csbsju.edu/sju-archives/sjuhistory/booksaboutstjohns/hoffmannbook/hoffmannchapter1)

[archives/sjuhistory/booksaboutstjohns/hoffmannbook/hoffmannchapter1](http://www.csbsju.edu/sju-archives/sjuhistory/booksaboutstjohns/hoffmannbook/hoffmannchapter1)

Poplars photo by Tim Backous, OSB; published in: Klingeman, David, OSB. "[The Cemetery Hill of Collegeville.](#)" *Abbey Banner*, v. 3, no. 1, Spring 2003, p. 4-5.

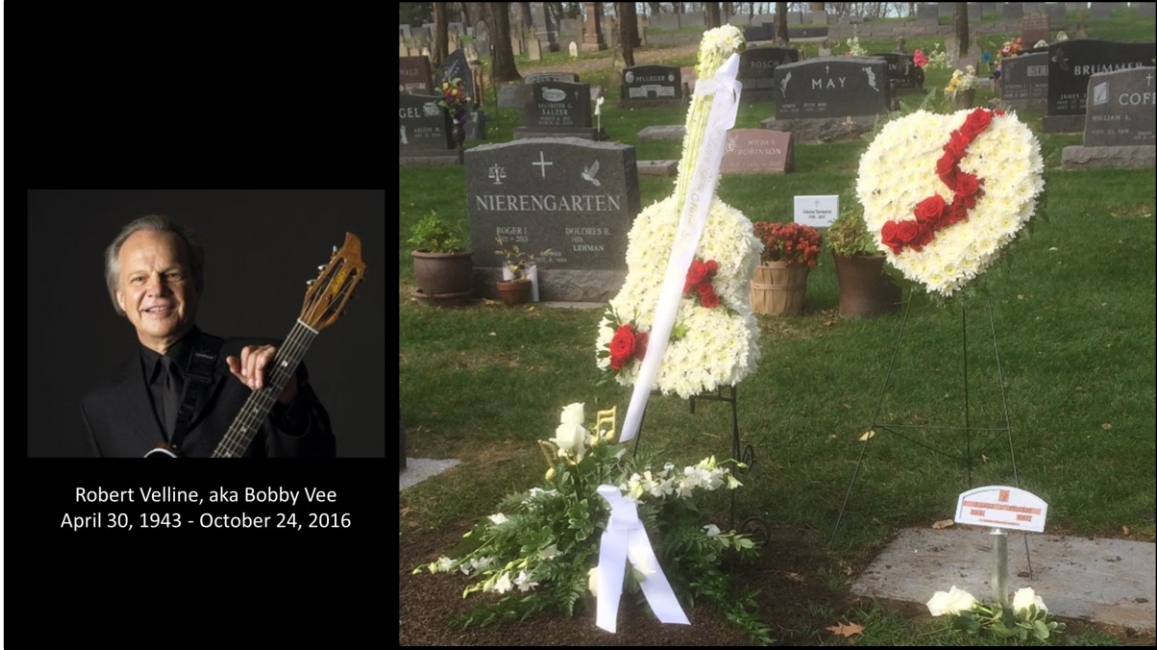
[http://www.saintjohnsabbey.org/files/6413/7272/1161/ab\\_spring\\_2003.pdf](http://www.saintjohnsabbey.org/files/6413/7272/1161/ab_spring_2003.pdf)

Lower left photo from the Aschman photo collection, LP240.Cemetery.jpg, lower right LP137.CemeteryEntry.jpg

Other photos by the archivist, Nov. 7, 2016

Reasons for this history lesson on the St. John's Cemetery:

- Halloween/All Saints/All Souls were just celebrated
- There have been some recent high-profile burials:  
    Jacob Wetterling (October)  
    Bobby Vee (November 2)
- Recent "investigative work" about the cemetery's history
- Recent political developments that have some feeling gloomy and depressed



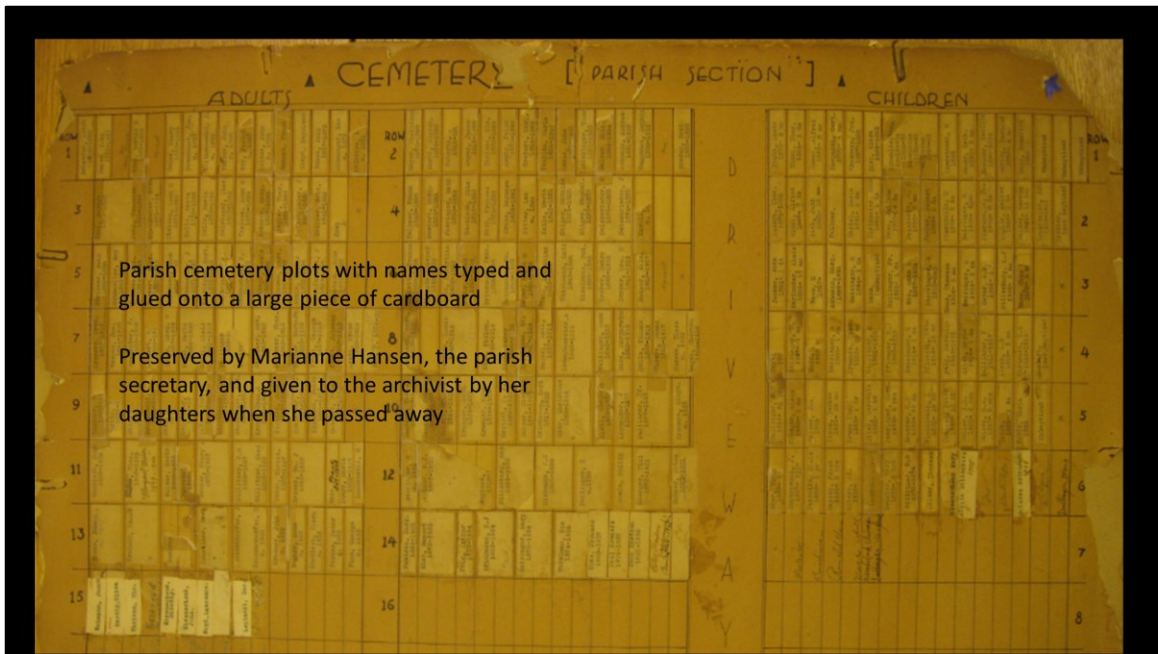
Bobby Vee photo from <http://www.saintjohnsabbey.org/old-news-and-events/bobby-vee-and-his-brothers/>  
Cemetery photo courtesy of David Wuolu, November 4, 2016.



Jacob Wetterling  
February 17, 1978 - October 22, 1989







From the SJU Archives O:\Archives\SJUArchives\Images\Buildings\Cemetery, from Marianne Hansen's archives.

ADULTS		CEMETERY		PART	
1		ROW 2		Kalla, Maria 1835-1890	Tawanamot, Jos. m. 1890
3		4		Kalla, Maria 1875-1890	Abitawanamot, J. m. 1899
5		6		Reisinger, Ther. 1855-1890	Parker, John m. 1888
7		8		Theisen, Anna M. 1872-1890	Roy, Joseph m. 1887
9		10		Achmann, Marg. 1827-1890	Heinen, John m. 1886
11		12		iegler, Ther. 1801-1889	Bomont, Frank
13		14		Deisenrieder, J. 1841-1888	Ciepd, Napoleon
15		16		Stiller, Robt. 1841-1881	Bonne, John 1857-1872
				Hoel 18	Schmoeger, Max m. 1870
				X	McIntire, A. m. 1871

From the SJU Archives O:\Archives\SJUArchives\Images\Buildings\Cemetery, from Marianne Hansen's archives.

FEATURE



Fifty-three poplar trees line the driveway of the abbey cemetery.  
photo by Timothy Backous, OSB

### The Cemetery Hill of Collegeville

by David Klingeman, OSB

The first cemetery at Saint John's in 1809, a plot of about thirty square feet, was located in front of the present Abbot Peter Engel Science Center.

In 1875, Wolfgang Northman, OSB, drew up plans for a new cemetery on an acre of a hill lying a quarter mile south of the monastery. In the winter of 1873-74, Abbot Alexis Edelbrock, OSB, ordered the hill cleared of timber and a cemetery laid out for the members of the community and the local parish of Saint John the Baptist.

Initially, Wollgung died on February 8, 1876, at the age of 33, and was the first to be interred in the new cemetery. On February 10, following a solemn Requiem Mass, a procession led by the

musical sounds of the Saint John's College Band accompanied a large number of monks and novices to the cemetery to bury Wollgung.

On September 12, 1876, a large white cross was raised on the hill and on November 2 the monks buried in the original cemetery were reinterred. Demetrius de Marogna, OSB, the first prior of Saint John's, Placid Brunn, OSB, a carpenter who helped build the first convent for the Benedictine Sisters at St. Joseph and Othmar Witt, OSB, the prior who oversaw the move of the monastery from St. Cloud to Collegeville.



From 1890-93 this stately horse-drawn hearse carried the remains of deceased monks to the cemetery.  
photo from Abbey Archives

#### Statistics from the abbey's necrology

400 monks have died.  
23 monks are buried elsewhere,  
11 in the Bahamas (*The Body of Lander Hoerig, OSB, who drowned at sea in the Bahamas on September 15, 1955, was never recovered.*)

Year of most deaths: 1985 (70)  
Months of most deaths:  
January, November (12)

Days of most deaths:  
February 22 (6)

Abbey Banner  
Spring 2003

Published resources on the cemetery's history

Abbey Banner  
Spring 2016

### Saint John's Abbey Cemetery

Josie Stang

Located on the western shoreline of Lake Sagatagam, Saint John's Abbey Cemetery is the final resting place of more than 1,230 individuals, all with connections to Saint John's. The cemetery is home to the founding fathers and the deceased monks of Saint John's, to some of the first students of Saint John's, to parishioners of Saint John the Baptist Parish, and most recently to alumni and friends.

Father Alexis Hoffmann, O.S.B., provides the earliest information about the cemetery in his book *Saint John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota: A Sketch of Its History*, published in 1909. He relates that the cemetery was located three hundred feet northeast of the abbey's first buildings and "was about 10 feet square surrounded by a picket fence, painted white; the 6 crosses made of wood."

The first burial at Saint John's was for Father Demetrius de Marogna, O.S.B., the abbey's first prior, who died on 27 March 1869, thirteen years after the community's founding. The others buried in the first cemetery were Brother Placid Brunn, O.S.B. (1871), a carpenter who helped build the first monastery for the Benedictine Sisters of Saint Joseph, Minnesota; Father Othmar Witt, O.S.B. (1874), the prior who oversaw the move of the Benedictine community from Saint



Cloud in Collegeville, and three college students: Max Schweger (1876), Martin McIntire (1871), and John Boime (1872).

By 1875 the monks recognized that a cemetery so near to the campus buildings would stand in the way of an expanding monastery. Abbot Alexis Edelbrock, O.S.B., asked Father Wolfgang Northman, O.S.B., to draw up plans for a new cemetery to be located on a hill just south of the monastery and overlooking Lake Sagatagam. In the winter of 1873-74 the hill was cleared of timber, and a cemetery was

laid out for members of the community. To the east of the monks' burial area, land was designated for members of the local community and parish. Initially, Father Wollgung was the first to be interred in the new cemetery. He died on 8 February 1876 at the age of 33. On 12 September 1876 a large white cross was raised on the hill and on 2 November the bodies of the monks and students in the original cemetery were reinterred in the new cemetery. A week later, two monks, Father Benno Muckenhauer (1879) and novice Gail Kederly (1864), who had been buried in the Saint Joseph Parish Cemetery, were moved to the Saint John's cemetery.

On the north side of the parish section of the cemetery is the baby section, with small markers for headstones, often with lambs or angels attached. In December 1878 six-week-old Lucia Frash passed away and is the first baby buried at Saint John's. From then until 1916, 111 infants and young children were placed to rest here. The cause of death ranged from the high infant mortality rates of the time to epidemics of the era. Why weren't these children buried in family plots? A number of theories have been put forth.

Just as in life, we believe that in death the human body deserves to be treated with respect and dignity. We foster a manner of remembering that is brightened by faith and that views death as a bridge to the Communion of Saints. Our Sacred with God's people is not broken by death.

Monks of Saint John's Abbey Cemetery

Klingeman, David, OSB. "[The Cemetery Hill of Collegeville.](#)" *Abbey Banner*, v. 3, no. 1, Spring 2003, p. 4-5.

Stang, Josie. "[Saint John's Abbey Cemetery.](#)" *Abbey Banner*, v. 16, no. 1, Spring 2016, p. 18-19.



See also <http://www.csbsju.edu/sju-archives/sjuhistory/sjubuildings/sjuceemetery>

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### Cemetery



From left: the Cemetery, 1990s; Cemetery Road, 1990s; the Cemetery, 2007 (click thumbnails for larger images)  
For more images, click [here](#).

The first cemetery at Saint John's (c.1869), a plot of about thirty square feet, was located, according to Alexius Hoffmann, approximately 300 feet northeast of the SE corner of the Great Hall, which would place it in the vicinity of the (Breuer) Abbey church's steps and baptistry.

In 1875, Wolfgang Northman, OSB, drew up plans for the layout of a new cemetery to be located on an acre of a hill lying a quarter mile south of the monastery. In the winter of 1875-76, Abbot Alexius Edelbrock, OSB, ordered that the hill be cleared of timber, and a worthy cemetery laid out on its eastern slope for the members of the community and the local parish of Saint John the Baptist. Ironically, Wolfgang died on February 8, 1876, at the age of 33, and was the first to be interred in the new cemetery. On February 10, following a solemn Requiem Mass, a procession lead by the mournful sounds of the Saint John's College Band, accompanied a large number of monks and mourners to the cemetery to bury Wolfgang.

On September 12, 1876, a large white cross was raised on the hill and on November 2, the monks buried in the original



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***Welcome Alumni/ae, Oblates, and  
Friends of Saint John's***

"A sense of place" ... Over the years, these words have been used by many to describe their feelings about the Saint John's campus and about their experiences here. With these words in mind, the monks of Saint John's took special care in designing the Saint John's Abbey Cemetery for alumni/ae, oblates, employees and friends.



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*History*

**Saint John's Abbey Cemetery**

A sense of place is something and personal bond with a local feeling one experiences when church, the cloister, the university unique for each individual, but closeness to God that inspires exception.

Like most of the abbey's many first burial sites used by the Benedictines, this site is located just east of Saint John's University.

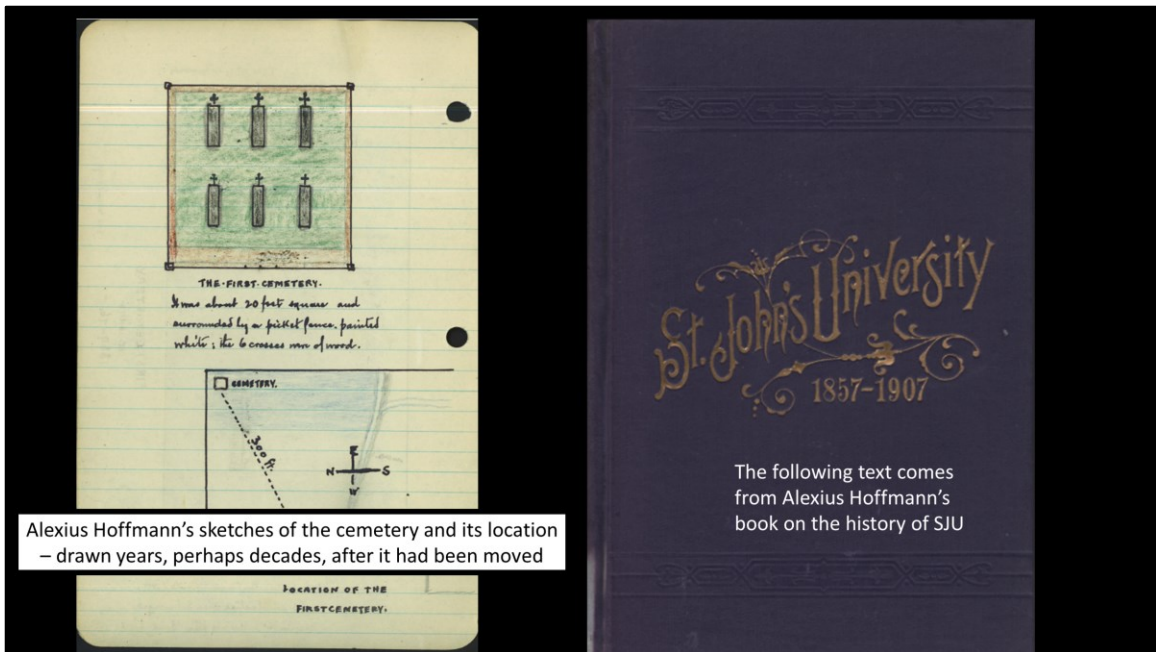
*Explore The Cemetery*

-  SEARCH FOR INDIVIDUALS
-  OPEN LOTS



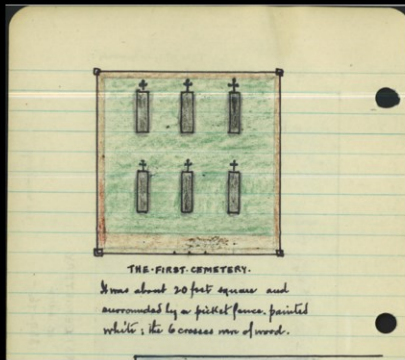
- ◊ [Alumni Friends Cemetery East Side](#)
- ◊ [Alumni Friends Cemetery West Side](#)
- ◊ [Courtyard Columbarium](#)
- ◊ [Hillside Columbarium](#)
- ◊ [Monastery Cemetery North Side](#)

<http://www.saintjohnsabbeycemetery.org/>

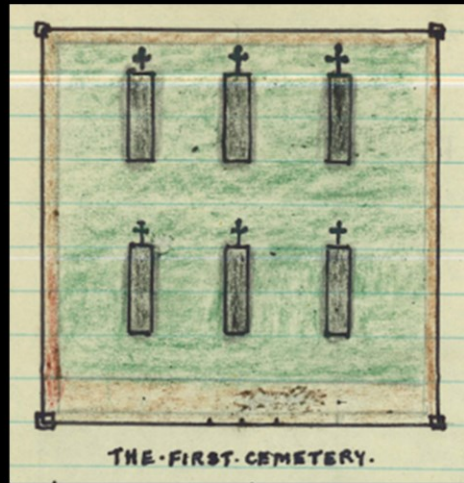
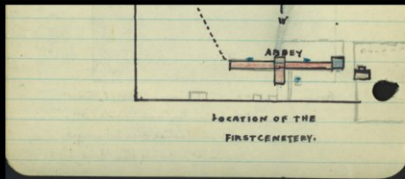


Alexius Hoffmann's sketches of the cemetery and its location – drawn years, perhaps decades, after it had been moved

Sketches by Alexius Hoffmann, OSB, in the SJU Archives (Images\Buildings\CAMPUS SITES\Hoffmann Sketches ca 1800s)  
[Saint John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota: A Sketch of Its History, 1857-1907](#) by Alexius Hoffmann, OSB



*"It was about 20 feet square and surrounded by a picket fence, painted white; the 6 crosses were of wood."*



1869-1875  
6 graves

Sketches by Alexius Hoffmann, OSB, in the SJU Archives (Images\Buildings\CAMPUS SITES\Hoffmann Sketches ca 1800s)





1

Father (Count) Demetrius di Marogna, the first prior of the monks of Minnesota

Di Marogna photo from the Abbey Archives  
Cemetery photo by the archivist, Nov. 7, 2016



2

Othmar Wirtz, OSB, the prior who oversaw the move of the monastery from St. Cloud to Collegetown

Wirtz photo from the Abbey Archives and *Worship & Work*, photo 10  
Cemetery photo by the archivist, Nov. 7, 2016

Placid Brixius, OSB, a carpenter who helped build the first convent for the Benedictine Sisters at St. Joseph

3



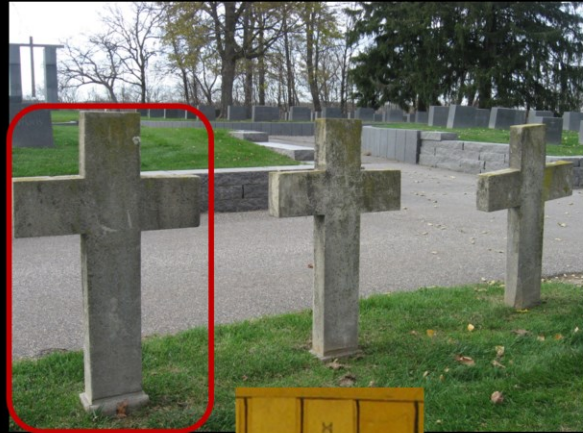
Photos by the archivist, November 7, 2016.

On March 4 [1871] died the scholastic Martin McIntire after an illness of twenty weeks. At 7 a.m. of March 7 the Office of the Dead was recited by the community, after which there was a solemn Requiem Mass, followed by a sermon by Father Alexius.



Photos by the archivist, November 7, 2016. Text from Alexius Hoffmann's book:  
<http://www.csbsju.edu/Documents/SJU%20Archives/Hoffmann.pdf>

On the 7th [of April 1872] the scholastic John Bonne died and was buried... When two days later the name day of the Abbot was celebrated, there was no music, in token of respect for the memory of the deceased.



Photos by the archivist, November 7, 2016. Text from Alexius Hoffmann's book: <http://www.csbsju.edu/Documents/SJU%20Archives/Hoffmann.pdf>

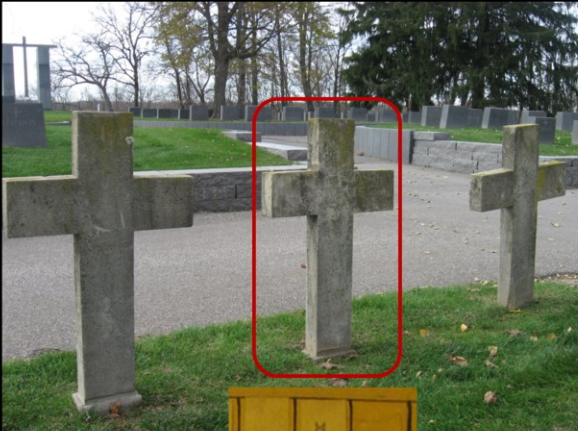


Max Schmoeger was enrolled  
in the fall of 1867.

New Year's Day 1870 was saddened by  
the death of Max Schmoeger, one of the  
most exemplary and popular students of  
the classical course.

From a brief obituary written for the  
press, it appears that Schmoeger was in  
the 22<sup>nd</sup> year of his age when he died.

He had left his parents and home in  
Europe in February 1869 with the  
intention of becoming a religious and a  
priest, but a short and severe illness cut  
him off in the flower of his youth.



Photos by the archivist, November 7, 2016. Text from Alexius Hoffmann's book:  
<http://www.csbsju.edu/Documents/SJU%20Archives/Hoffmann.pdf>



# M. SCHMOEGER

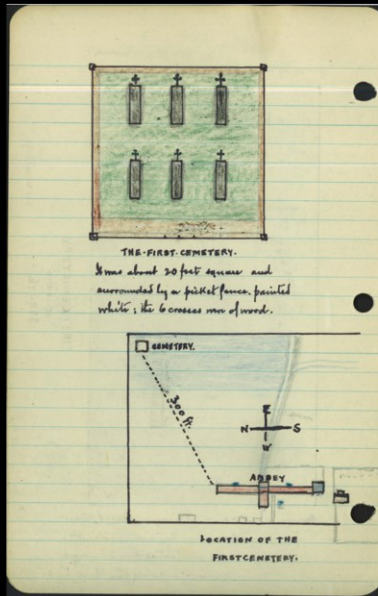
Many years later his aged mother begged that a flower or some dust from the grave be sent her, that she might have some remembrance of her child that slept in a far distant country.



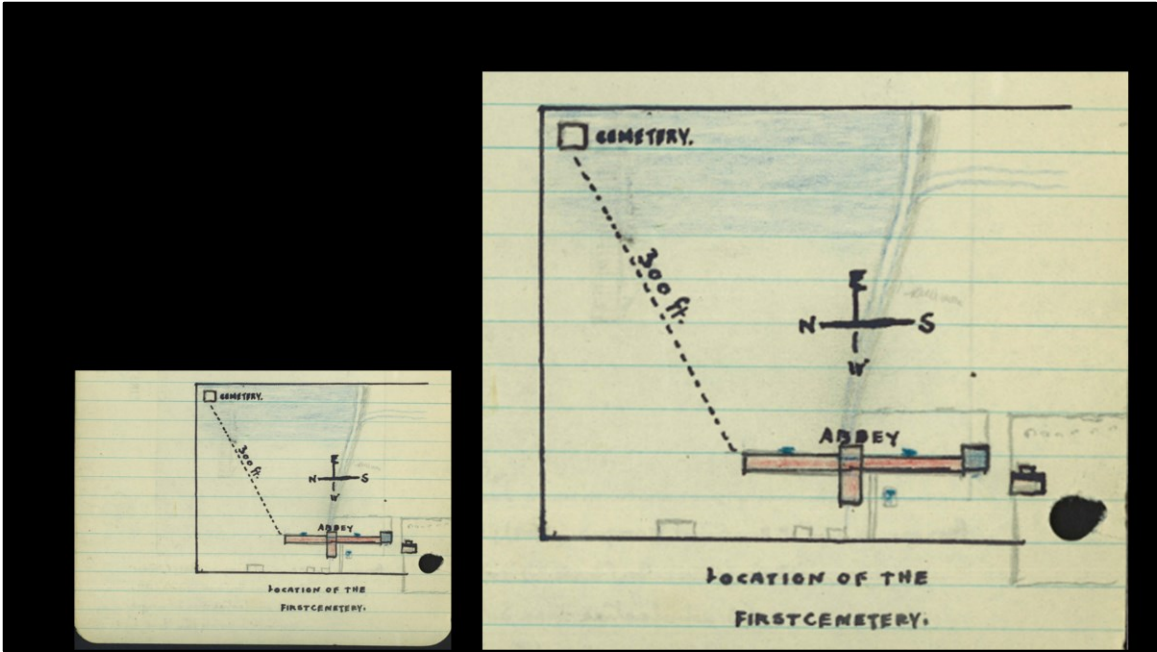
From Google Earth

## The First Abbey Cemetery

*Where was it, exactly?*



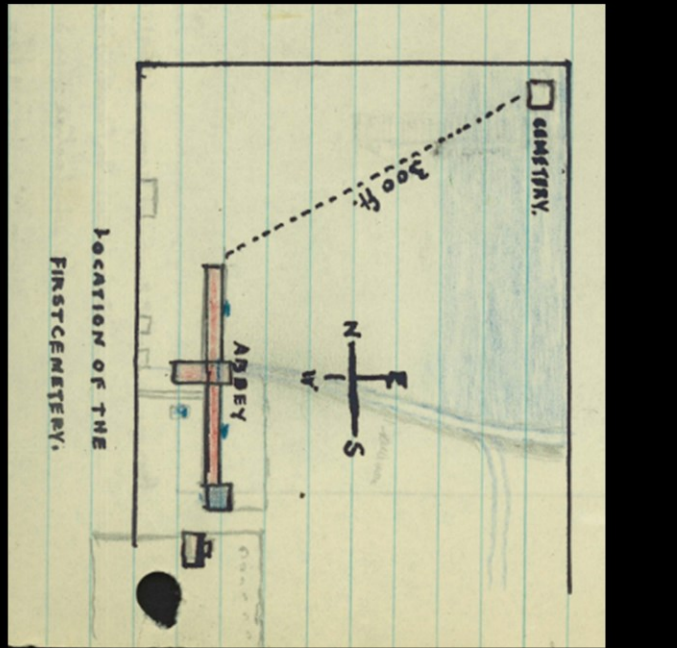
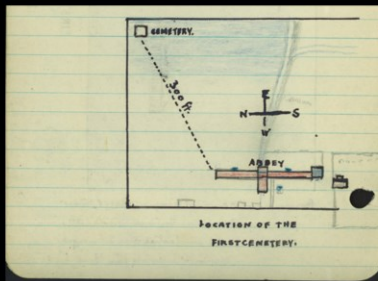
Sketches by Alexius Hoffmann, OSB, in the SJU Archives (Images\Buildings\CAMPUS SITES\Hoffmann Sketches ca 1800s)



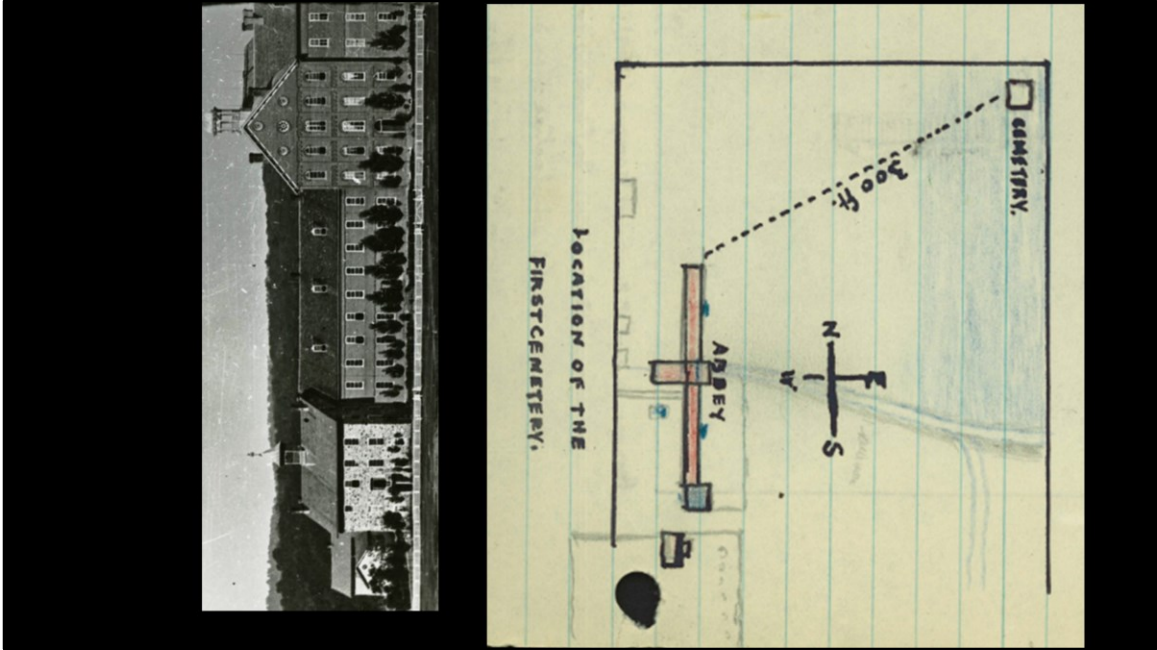
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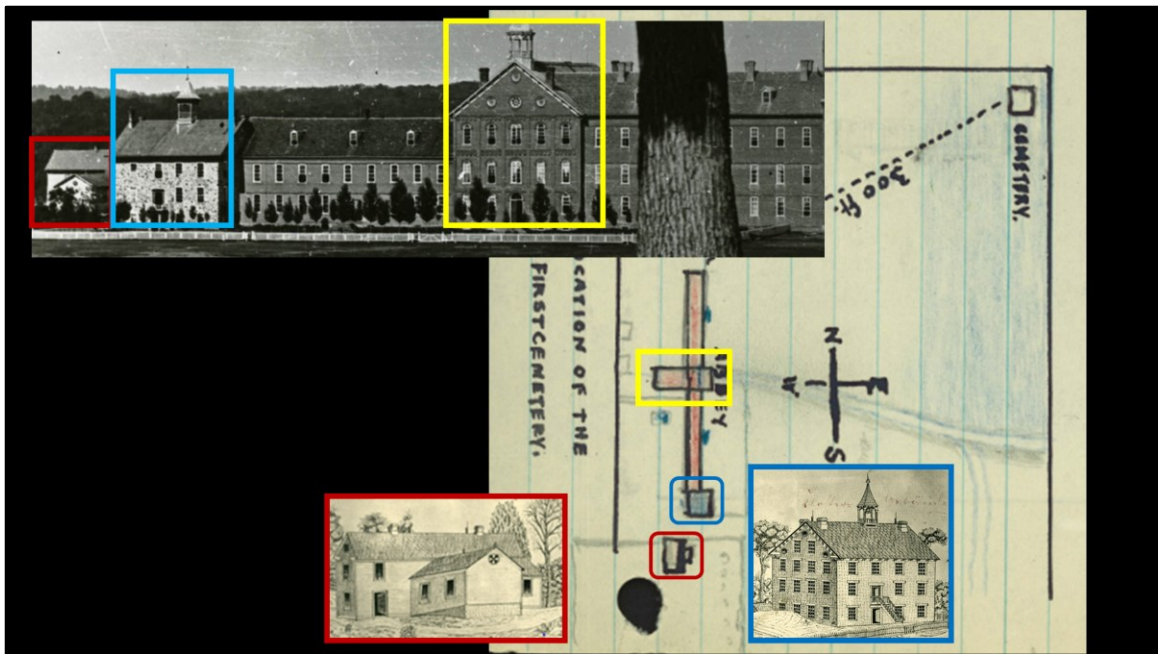
Re-oriented with  
North at the top



Sketches by Alexius Hoffmann, OSB, in the SJU Archives (Images\Buildings\CAMPUS SITES\Hoffmann Sketches ca 1800s)

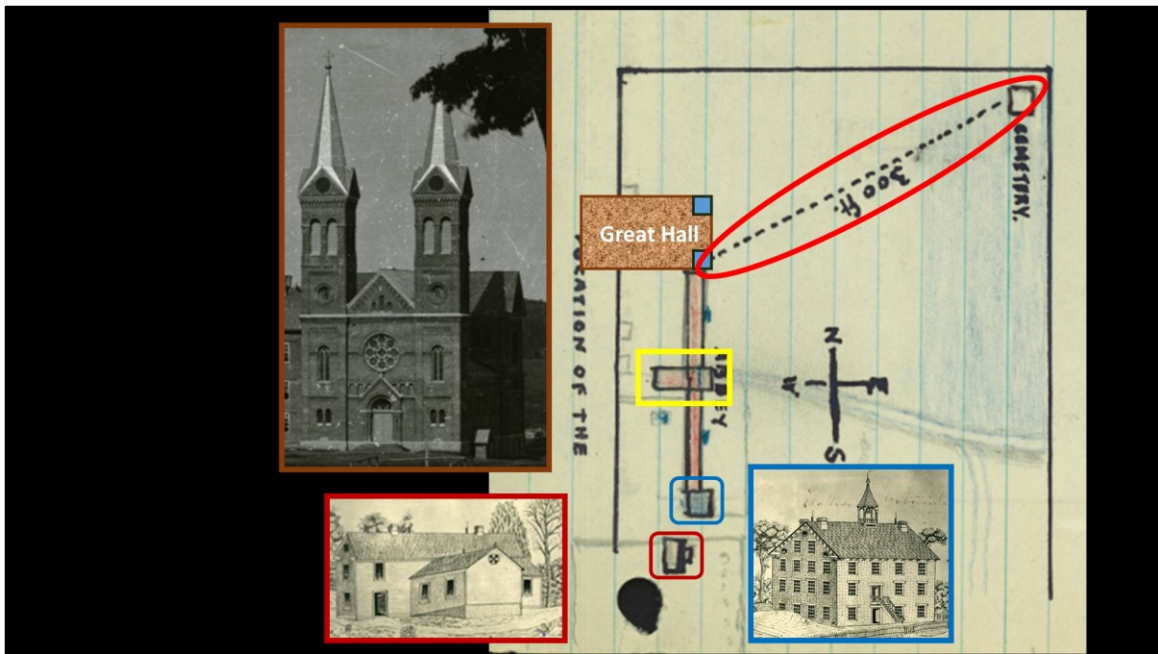


Sketches by Alexius Hoffmann, OSB, in the SJU Archives (Images\Buildings\CAMPUS SITES\Hoffmann Sketches ca 1800s)  
Photo from the Ascheman Collection - LP068.1883.Quad.StoneHouse



Sketches by Alexius Hoffmann, OSB, in the SJU Archives (Images\Buildings\CAMPUS SITES\Hoffmann Sketches ca 1800s)

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

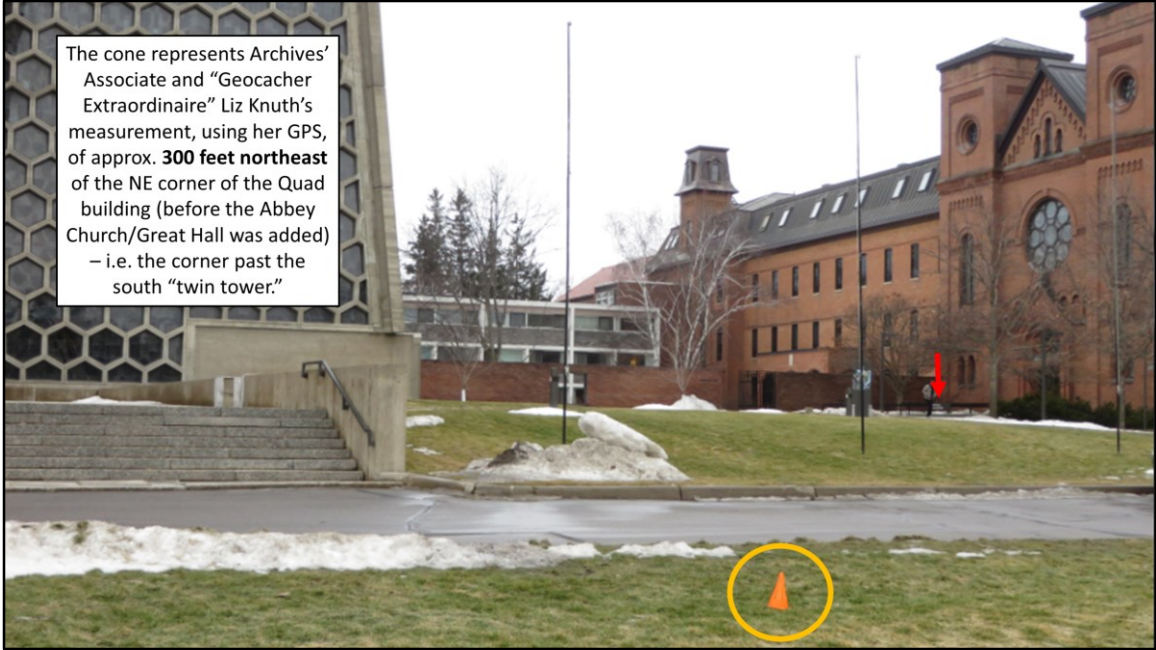


Photo by Liz Knuth Feb. 23, 2016.



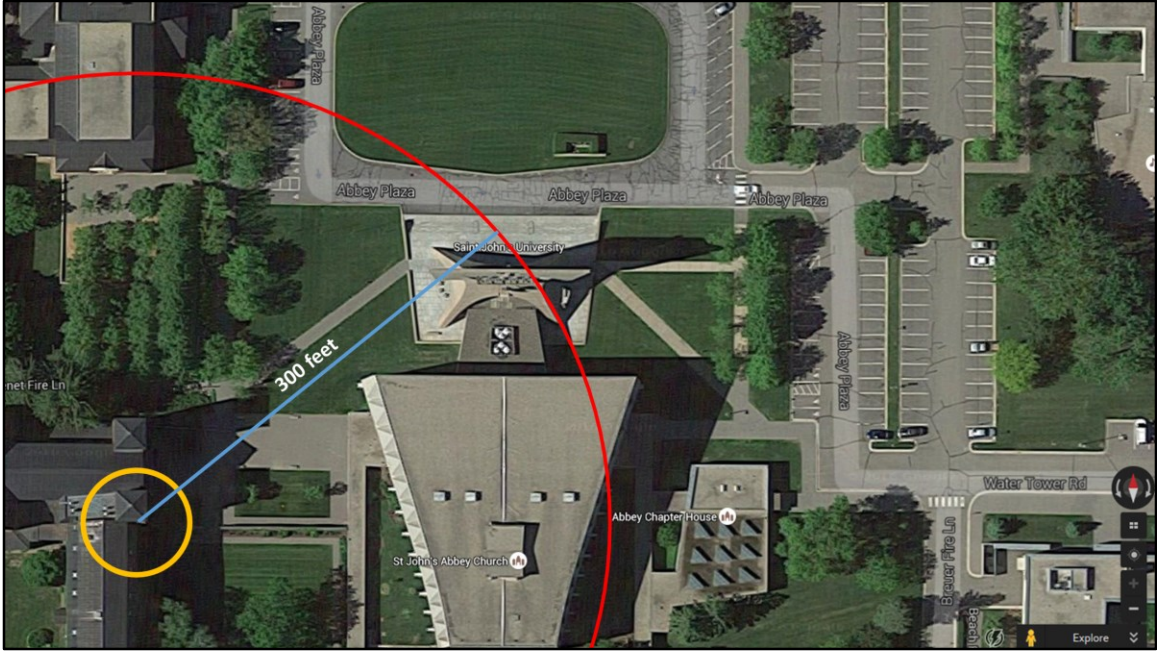


Image from Google Earth Feb. 25, 2016.

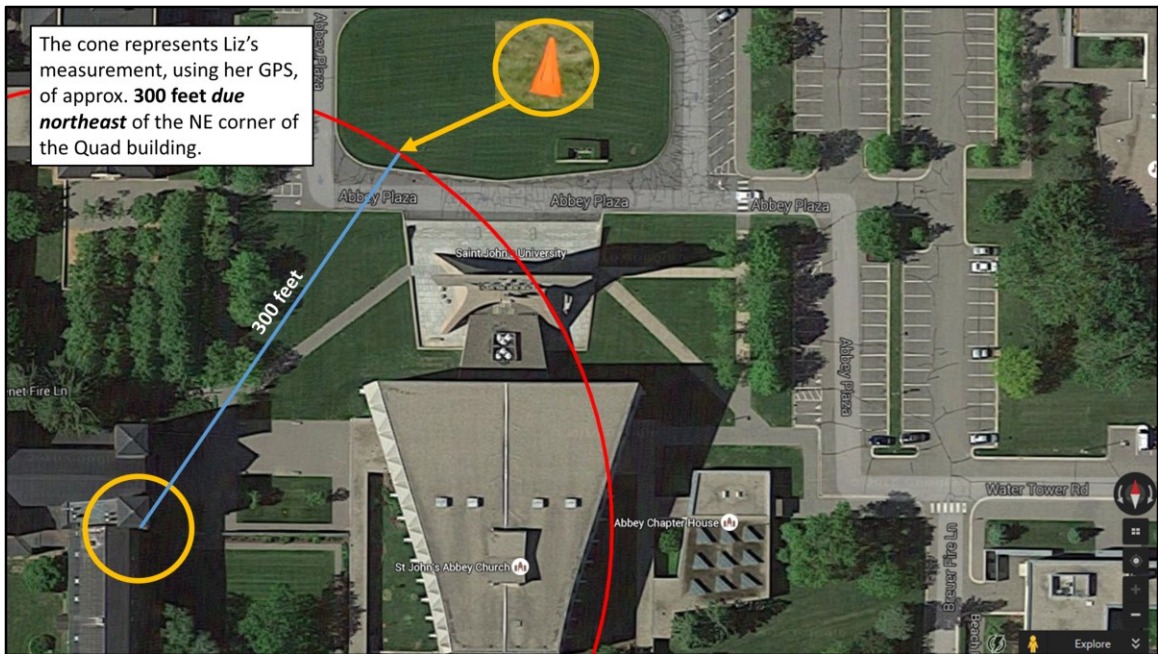


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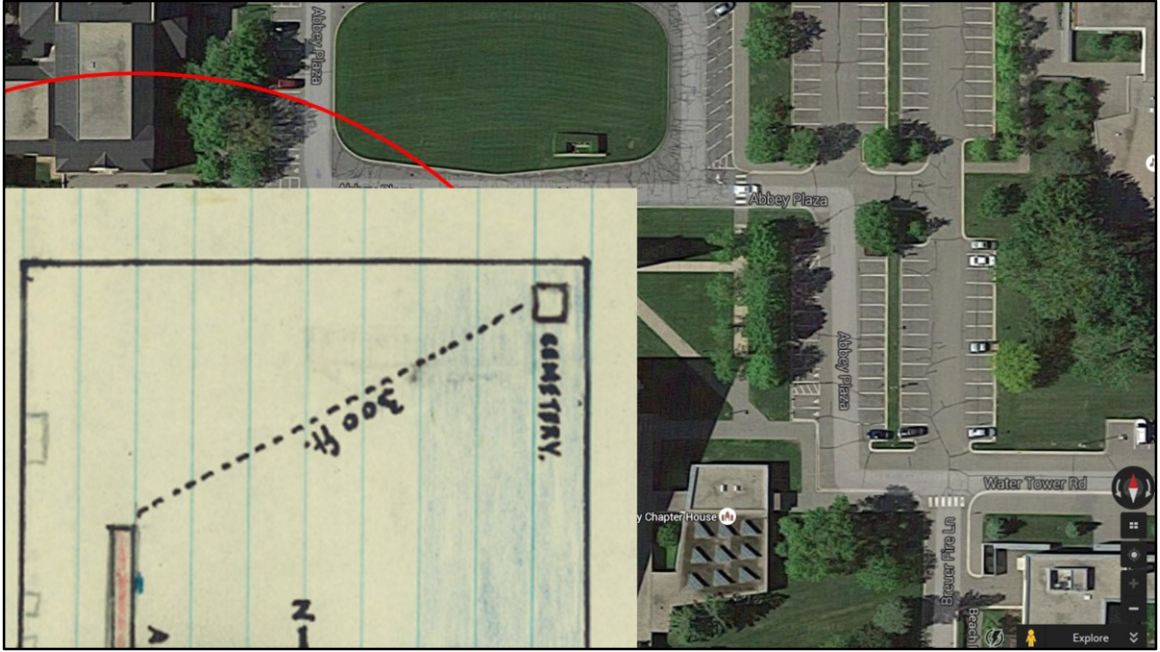


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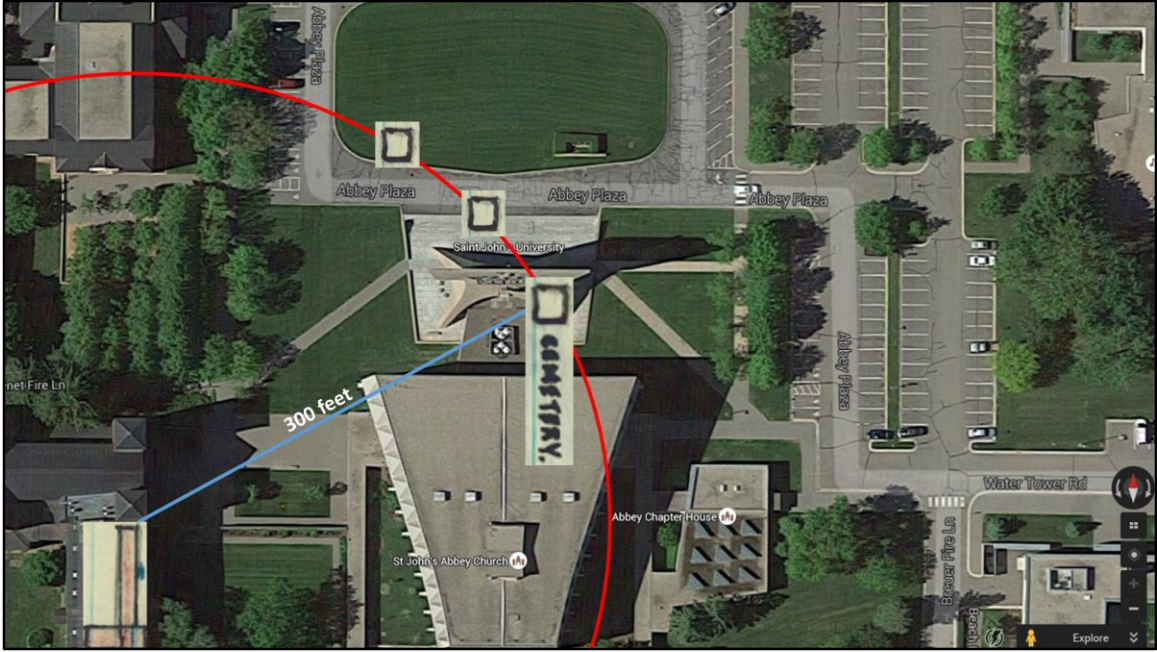


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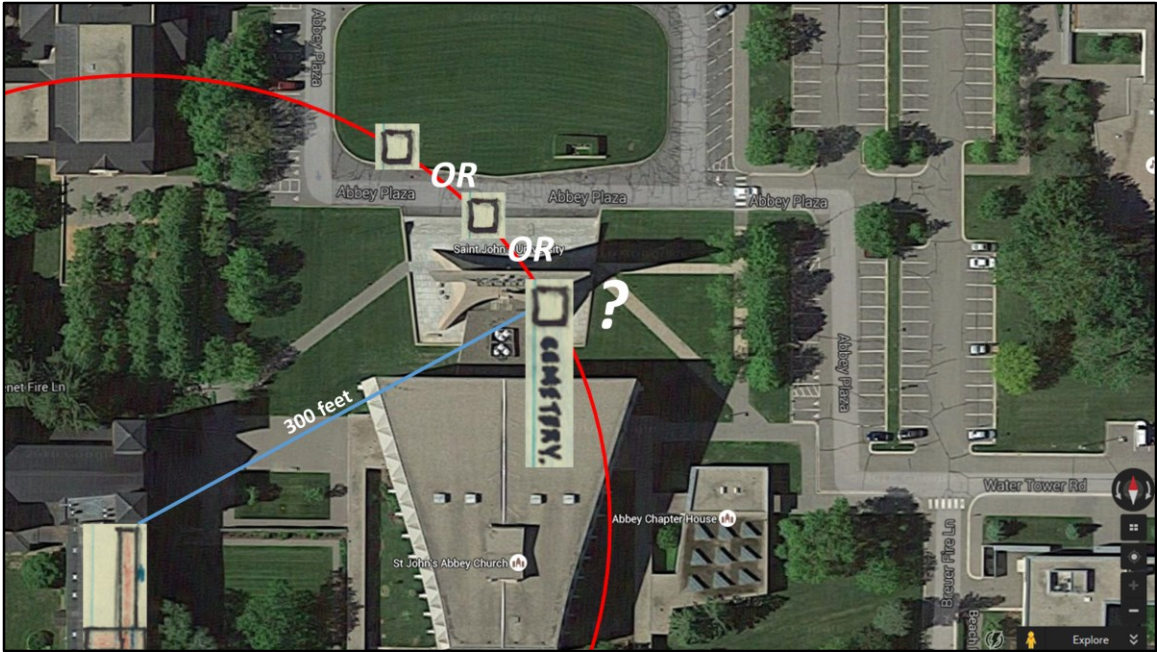


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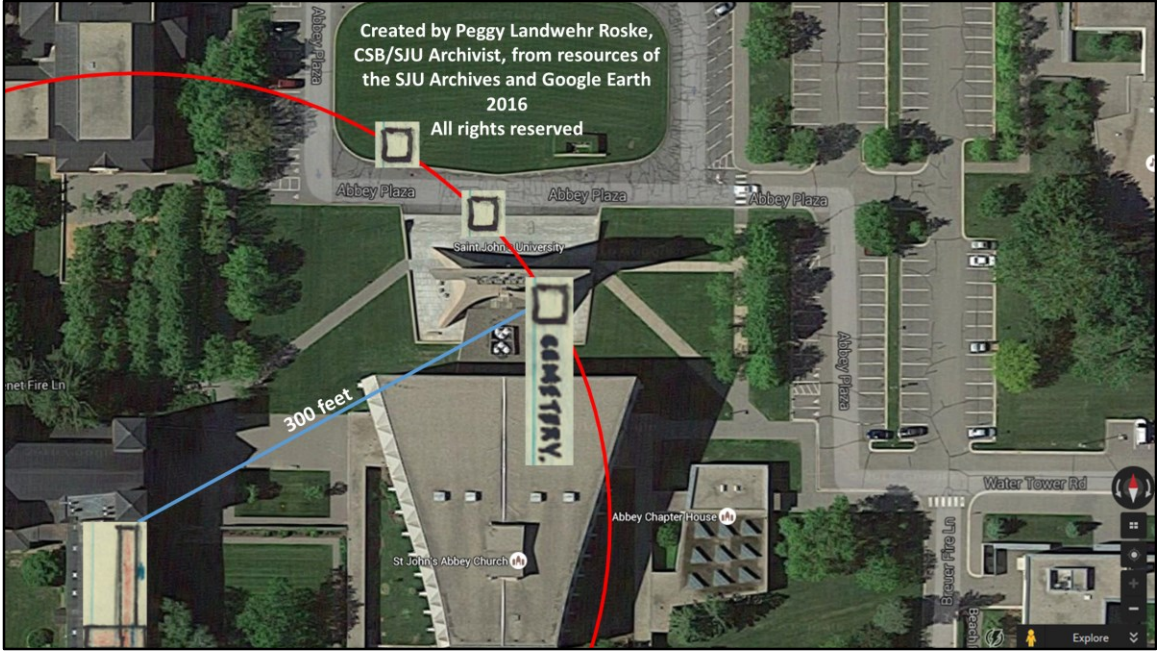


Image from Google Earth Feb. 25, 2016.

Cemetery Milestones, from Josie Stang's article,  
"Alumni Served by Abbey Cemetery Expansion":  
*Saint John's Magazine*, Winter 2009, p. 18.

THE SAINT JOHN'S CEMETERY

1869: Saint John's Abbey's first cemetery is established on land ~~in front of the present  
Simons Hall~~ [300 feet northeast of the existing brick buildings](#)

1875: Plans are made to move the cemetery a quarter mile south of the monastery across  
from Lake Sagatagan.

1953: Monastery's cemetery is renovated; Frank Kacmarcik, Obl.S.B., designs the distinctive  
Saint John's granite markers and cross.

2007: Saint John's Abbey approves addition of new alumni and friends cemetery section.

2008: Alumni and Friends section, just to the south and east of the monastery cemetery  
section, is officially opened and blessed.