

College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University

DigitalCommons@CSB/SJU

Archives History Lessons

Archives

2012

Saint John's Lands & Wetlands: Historical Highlights

Peggy L. Roske

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

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/archives_history_lessons

Recommended Citation

Roske, Peggy L., "Saint John's Lands & Wetlands: Historical Highlights" (2012). *Archives History Lessons*. 78.

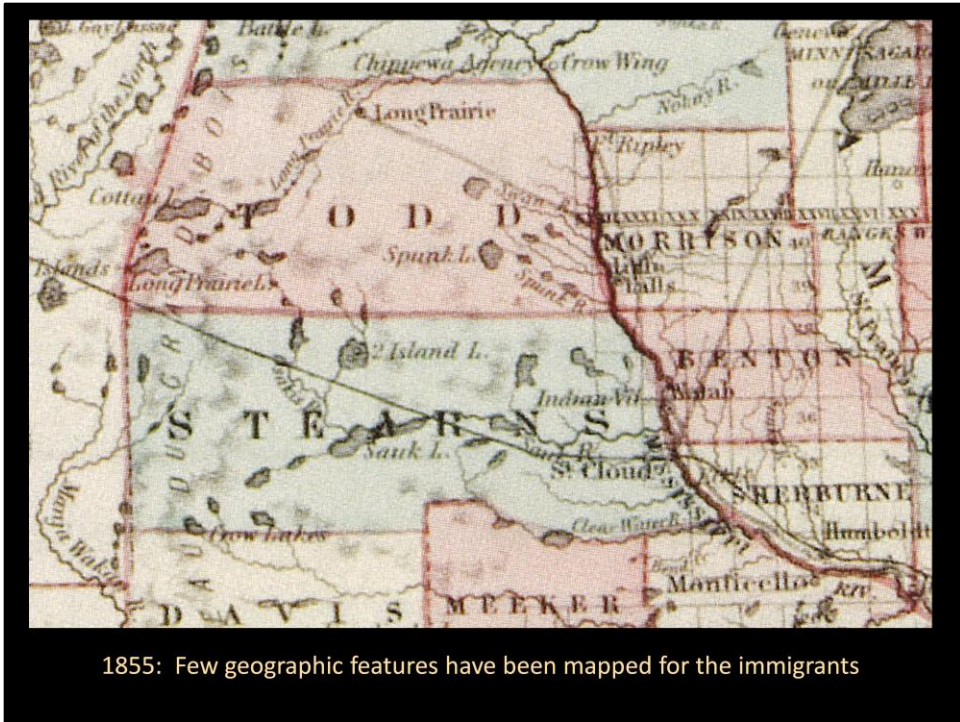
https://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/archives_history_lessons/78

This Presentation is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@CSB/SJU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Archives History Lessons by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@CSB/SJU. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@csbsju.edu.



Ca. 1855 Minnesota Map

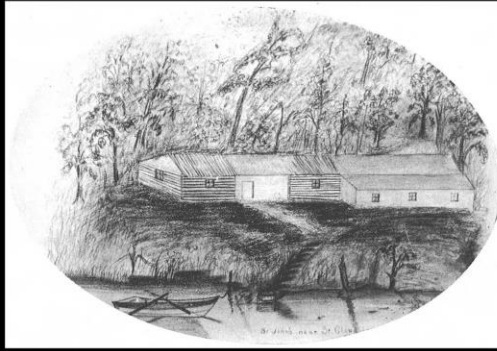
Found on p. 52-53 of: Lanegan, David A. *Minnesota on the Map: A historical atlas*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2008. Alcuin Library G 1426 .S1 L3 2008. Attributed therein to *Colton's Atlas of the World, 1855*, New York: J. H. Colton. Minnesota, no. 49.



1855 Minnesota Map (zoomed in)

Found on p. 52-53 of: Lanegan, David A. *Minnesota on the Map: A historical atlas*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2008. Alcuin Library G 1426 .S1 L3 2008. Attributed therein to *Colton's Atlas of the World, 1855*, New York: J. H. Colton. Minnesota, no. 49.

St. John's first location was on the banks of the Mississippi in St. Cloud (near the present-day Children's Home and the Beaver Island Trailhead near SCSU) in 1856



St. Cloud Priory on the banks of the Mississippi
Top: Henry Emmel sketch; Photo from *Worship & Work* p. 38f

*Go West
Young
Monks*

The main reason why Wimmer had personally come to Minnesota was to look at the claims Father Bruno wanted to establish on land four miles out of St. Joseph. Father Bruno had never been convinced that their St. Cloud site was suitable for a monastery because it lacked both wood and pasture land. He felt the seminary and college should be started there, but that the monastery should be near St. Joseph, along the Watab river where a thousand newly surveyed acres could be claimed. Prior Demetrius would allow Father Bruno only one day a week to explore these prairie and wooded lands, and the latter spent each Monday tramping through the territory with a parishioner as companion.

--from *Worship & Work*



Abbot Boniface Wimmer

1856 Wimmer visit



Fr. Bruno Riess

1856 Wimmer visit

Text from *Worship & Work*, p. 44

Photos <http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/SJUArchives/id/11595/show/10953>



While Wimmer was awaiting the return of Prior Demetrius from St. Paul he went with Fathers Bruno and Cornelius to St. Joseph and thence into the Watab lands. This area was called the 'Indianbush' because it had but recently been the hunting grounds of Sioux and Chipewewa Indians, who still made occasional forays through it. They walked Indian fashion through the area, badly scratching themselves on the dense underbrush, but becoming more excited each hour over the excellent timber and beautiful meadow of wild hay which grew higher than their heads. Wimmer, practical and far-seeing as always, determined then and there that this land must be obtained.

--from *Worship & Work*

Scouting the "Indianbush" with Wimmer

Text from *Worship & Work*, p. 44

Photos <http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/SJUArchives/id/11595/show/10953>



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.

When the Rothkopp claims were contested and the monks were in danger of losing everything, it was the 'Indianbush' claims along the Watab, Bruno Riess' claims, which saved the community.

Credit Bruno Riess for St. John's final location

Text from *Worship & Work*, p. 44

Photos <http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/SJUArchives/id/11595/show/10953>

Early Chronology

1856: Monks arrive in St. Cloud

1858: Monks move to St. Joseph because of St. Cloud land litigation

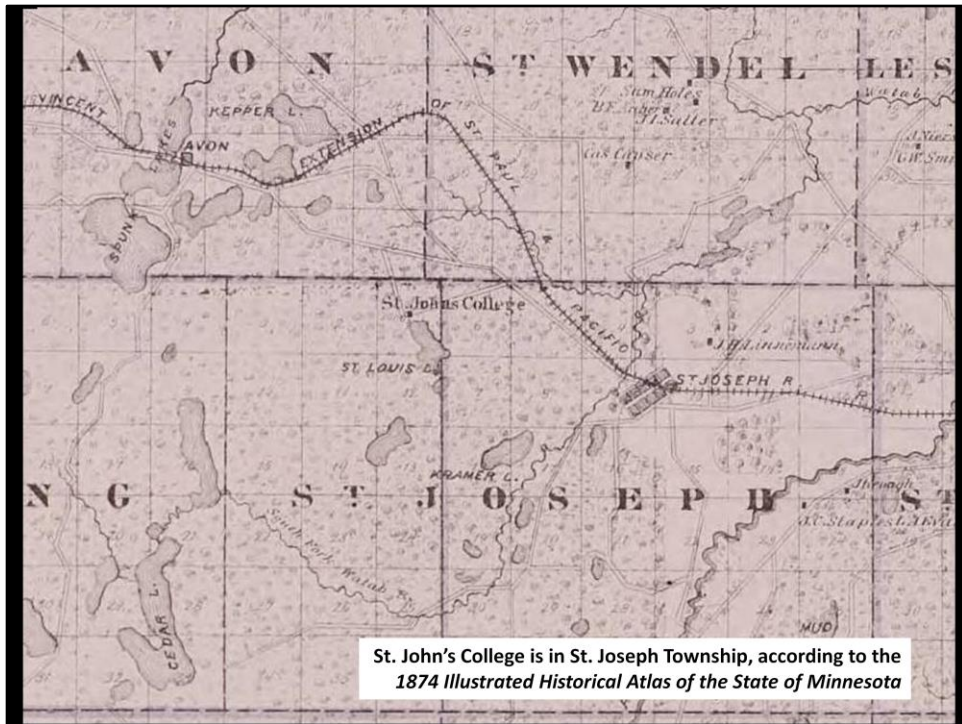
1859: Prior Benedict "did not consider the move expedient" and moves monks back to St. Cloud

1861: Civil War breaks out

1862: Indian uprising

1864: St. Cloud land litigation goes against St. John's; Monks move to Indianbush

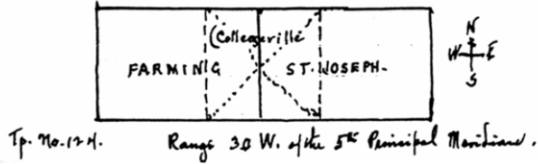
Early Chronology: back and forth between St. Cloud and Indianbush



1874 Atlas: St. John's College is on the map; Lake Sagatagan is sketchy
1874 Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Minnesota –Stearns County, p. 155
<http://reflections.mndigital.org/cdm/ref/collection/mhs/id/1020>

Geography

The Township of Collegeville in Stearns County Minnesota, lies about 45° 30' N. lat and about 94° 18' long west of Greenwich, England. Reference to a map in the Historical Atlas of Minnesota, 1874 by A.T. Andreas (whoever that may have been) shows no Collegeville Tp. That map - of Stearns County - has the 2 townships of St. Joseph and Farming contiguous one to the other, thus:

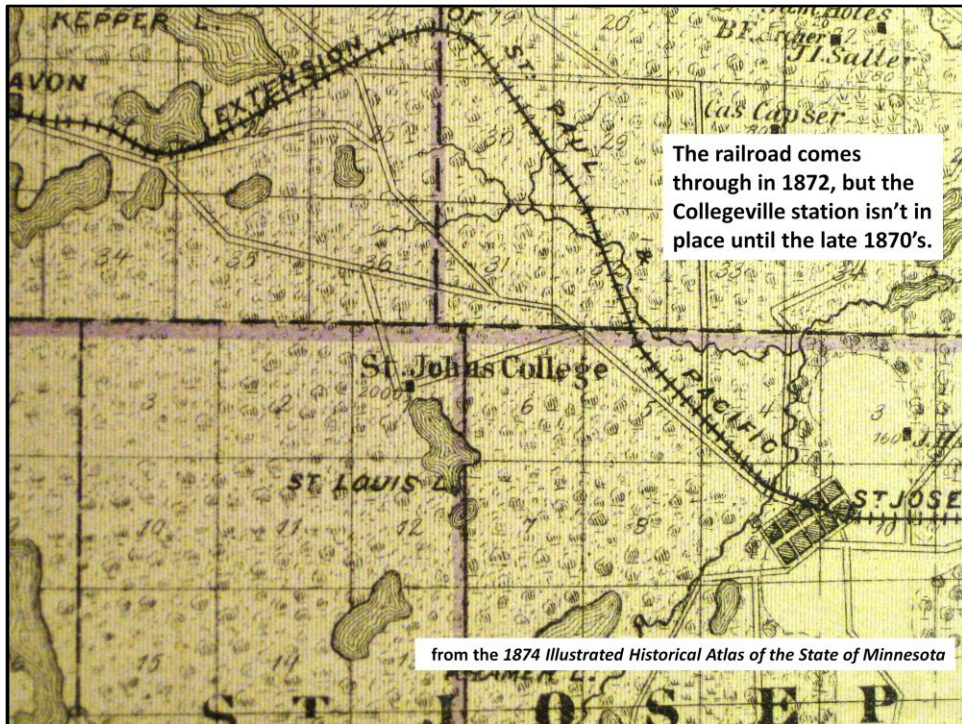


At this time the townships of St. Joseph and Farming had each 54 sections (each 640 acres). Then in 1880 the 18 western sections of St. Joseph Tp and the 18 eastern sections of Farming were welded together to form a normal Tp. of 36 sections and this new unit was called Collegeville, a name selected by Abbot Alexius Edelbrock of St. John's

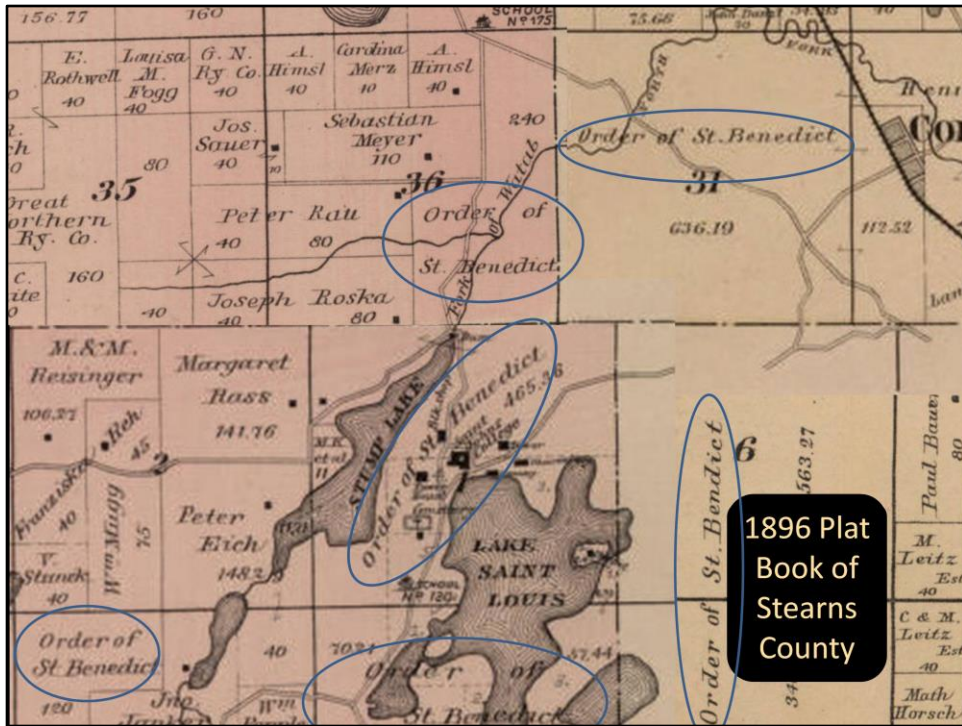
Farming and St. Joseph townships are split to form Collegeville Township

from *Natural History of Collegeville, Minnesota*
by Alexius Hoffmann, OSB

Farming and St. Joseph townships are split to form Collegeville Township from [Natural History of Collegeville, Minnesota](#), p. 4 of the pdf by Alexius Hoffmann, O.S.B. (originally written in 1926, finished in 1934).



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

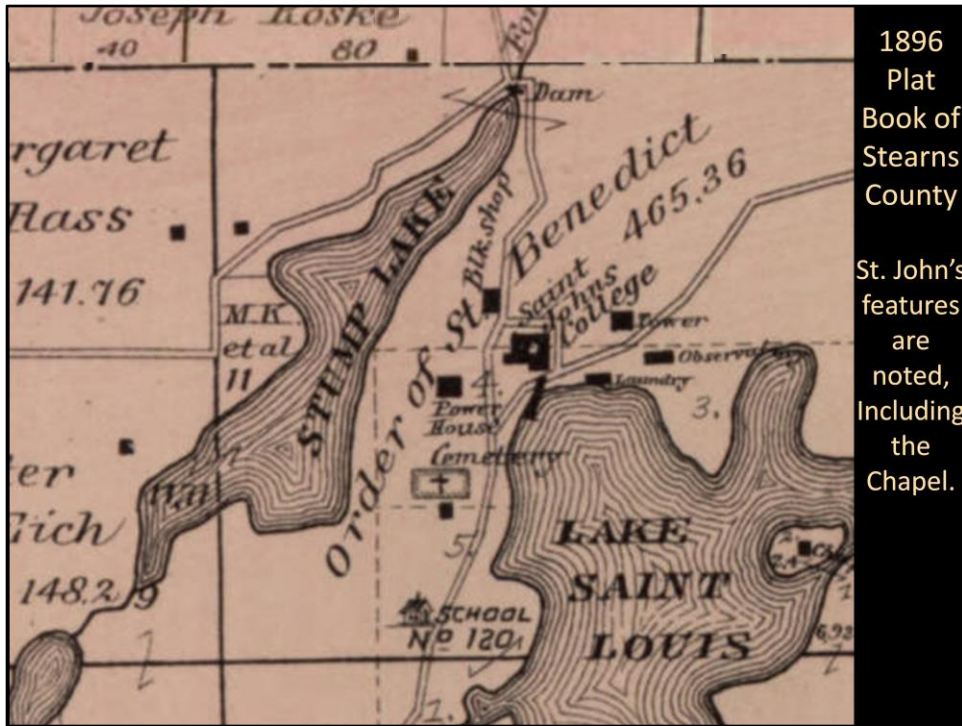


1896 plat book maps, with OSB land holdings noted

1896 Plat maps\Collegeville Township NE 1896 cropped; 1896 Plat maps\St Joseph Township NW 1896

<http://reflections.mndigital.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/stearns/id/389/rec/1>

p. 27, Avon Township; p. 43, Collegeville Township



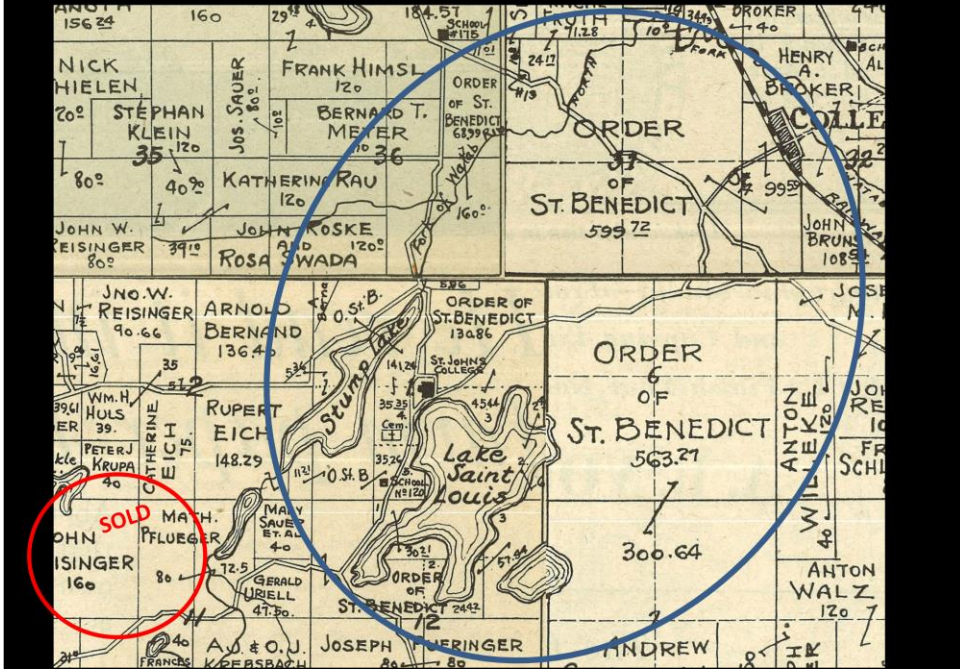
Close-up of features noted in the 1896 Plat book

1896 Plat Book of Stearns County, Minnesota by C.M. Foste – p. 43, Collegeville Township, Saint John's College

<http://reflections.mndigital.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/stearns/id/389/rec/1>

p. 27, Avon Township; p. 43, Collegeville Township

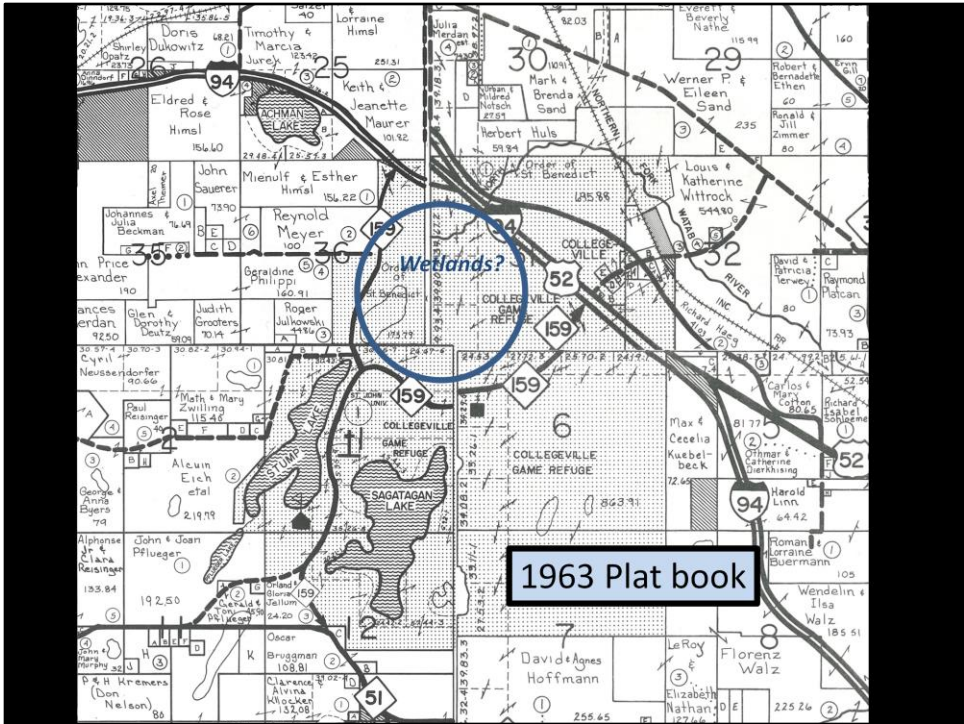
1925 Plat Book – Stearns County



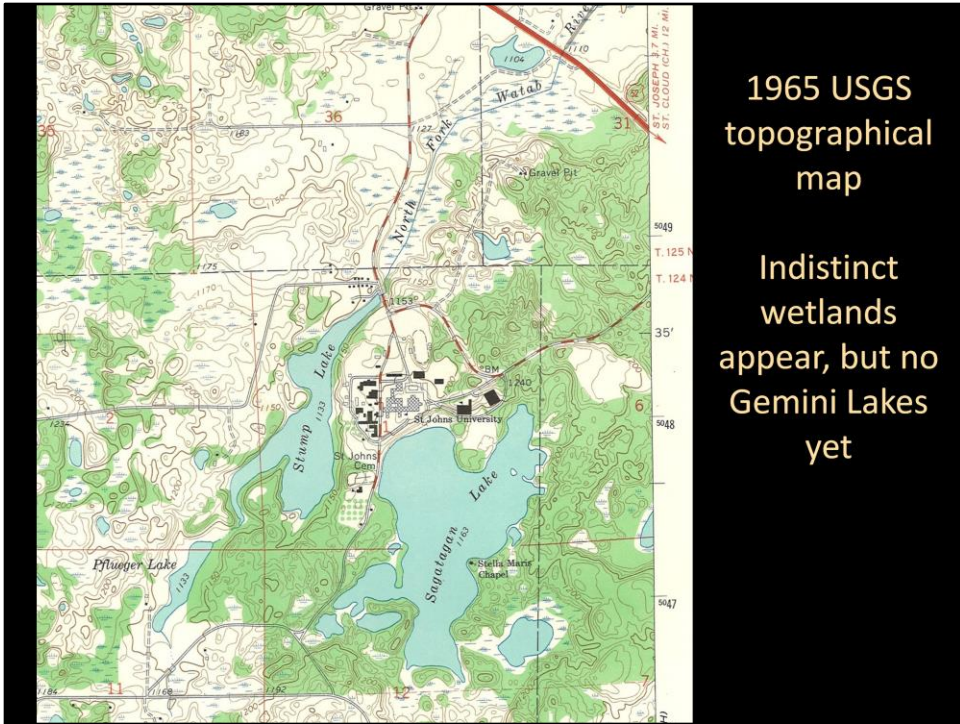
By 1925, the southwest plot has been sold.
1925 Plat Book Stearns County, Minnesota
Alcuin Library G 1428.S6 F27



1938 aerial photos: crops and pasture



1963 Plat book: wetlands?



1965: Indistinct wetlands appear, but no Gemini Lakes yet
1965 USGS 1965 C02 01



In 1985, Fr. Paul Schweitz was named land manager of the school's 2,400 acres. Before his untimely early death, he spearheaded the prairie and wetland restoration project, which reintroduced many species of wild flowers, prairie grasses and over 45 species of wildlife.

Fr. Paul Schweitz spearheaded the prairie and wetland restoration project

Text from *The Record* Sept. 28, 2000

<http://cdm.csbsju.edu/cdm/ref/collection/CSBArchNews/id/34456/show/34445>

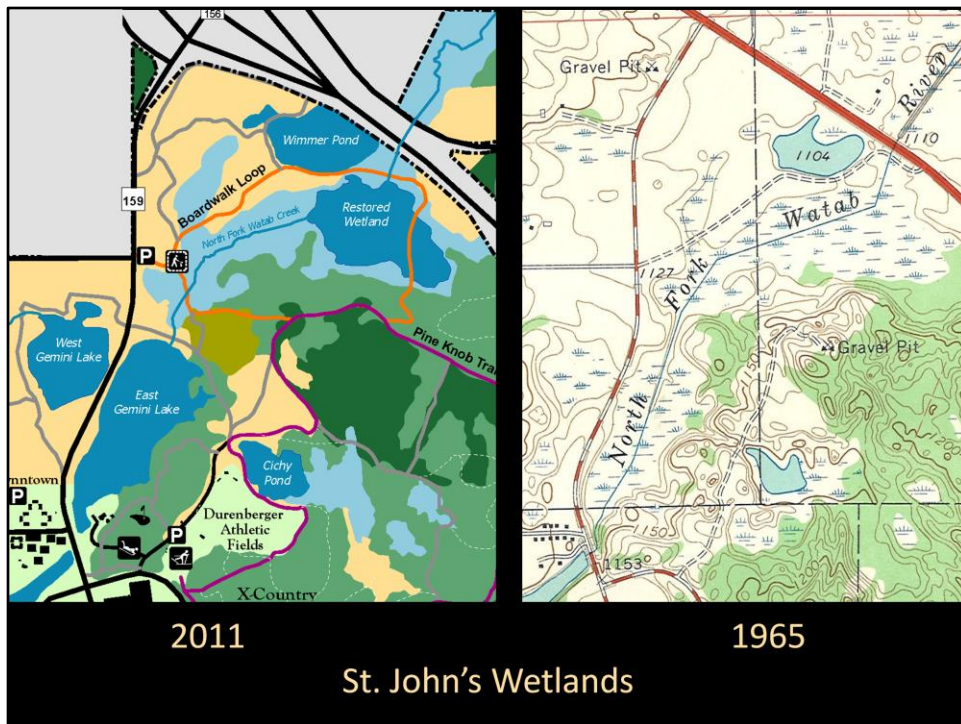
Photo from O:\Institutional Advancement SJU\Advancement Photo

Archive\Advancement Photo Archive_Main Folder\Arboretum

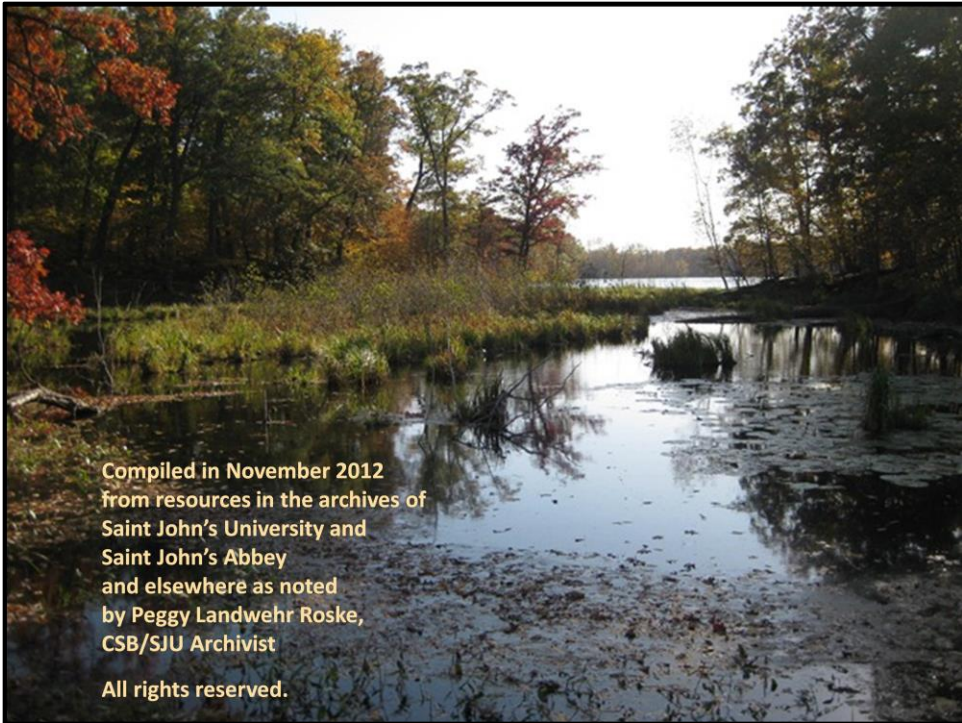


Google
Maps 2012:
Gemini
Lakes,
Wetlands,
and lots of
forest

2012 Google Map of Collegeville: Gemini Lakes, Wetlands, and lots of forest
https://www.google.com/mapmaker?ll=45.579505,-94.385347&spn=0.0322,0.065918&t=k&z=14&q=Collegeville,+MN&utm_source=mapseeditbutton_normal&gw=30&lyt=large_map



2011 Trails map and 1965 Topographical map compared
http://www.csbsju.edu/Documents/Arboretum/land_steward/Maps/2011TrailMap.pdf



Compiled in November 2012
from resources in the archives of
Saint John's University and
Saint John's Abbey
and elsewhere as noted
by Peggy Landwehr Roske,
CSB/SJU Archivist
All rights reserved.