

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name BELMONT ABBEY HISTORIC DISTRICT

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 100 Belmont-Mt. Holly Road (E. side SR 2093) not for publication

city or town Belmont vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Gaston code 071 zip code 28012-2795

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

William S. P... 5-26-93
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State of Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other, (explain): _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Name of Property

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private, public-local, public-State, public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s), district, site, structure, object

Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing. Rows for buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total.

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

1

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

- Education/college, Religion/church school, Religion/religious structure, Religion/church-related residence, Funerary/cemetery

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

- Education/college, Religion/church school, Religion/religious structure, Religion/church-related residence, Funerary/cemetery

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

- Gothic Revival, Other: American Benedictine

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

- foundation Granite, walls Brick, Wood, roof Slate, other Wood, Stone

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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DESCRIPTION:

Belmont Abbey and Belmont Abbey College (known popularly and jointly as "The Abbey") sit on a 540-acre campus on the northern fringe of Belmont township in eastern Gaston County. Parts of the site were used as farmland as late as the 1960s. Today the Abbey is home to a monastery of Benedictine monks and to a Catholic, liberal arts college of 1,000 students. Parts of the grounds (lying east of the Belmont Abbey Historic District) have been used for commercial development; the remainder has been planted with hardwoods. Those parts comprising the historic district lie on the east side of the Belmont-Mount Holly Road. This district consists of thirty-seven and one-half acres on the western edge of the campus including many of the campus's major buildings and sites from the formative years of the monastery and college.

The district was planned as an American expression of the German revival of Benedictinism in the nineteenth century, in which a school often accompanied the monastery. Horticultural planning and native arboricultural growth have linked the Abbey to its Southern location, yet the ambiance is rendered distinctive by its American adaptation of the monastery's ancestral themes. The district holds a number of variations of a single architectural expression. The style, popularly known as "American Benedictine" because of its use and development at Cassinese Benedictine monasteries in the United States, is a vernacular statement of German Gothic Revival, as filtered through the new terrain, poverty, and artistic traditions of these New World cloisters. The style is of particular importance at Belmont because of the residence of the ecclesiastical architect Dom Michael McInerney (1877-1963), a principal proponent of the American Benedictine style.

McInerney perfected the American Benedictine style, and structures throughout the district serve as examples of this perfection. The style calls for straight lines in a box-like construction. The buildings normally have three stories and attic space, but use high interior ceilings to produce an imposing structure of approximately one-sixth greater height than ordinary buildings of comparable stories. Exteriors are invariably brick -- often hand-made from native materials -- and usually in some shade of red. (Early structures in the district were constructed from bricks handmade on the site.) Distinction and sweep are given the buildings by the windows -- seven-foot tall windows are common -- which are often narrow or varied in width, and usually arched. The dimensions and shape of the windows add to the illusion of height and consequently to the overall character of the buildings. Dormers on the attic level are standard; they may cap the vertical lines or set off more elaborate patterns. Variations in the brickwork and "towers" suggested by projections from the body of the "box" also add to the illusion of height or raise the eye of the viewer. Ornamentation, always sparing, is usually restricted to the uppermost levels.

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The Gothic themes are generally united by their appearance at the principal entrance to the building and again on the third story or roof.

The district centers around the German Gothic Revival "Abbey Cathedral" (listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1973) built in 1892-1893 [No. 1]. Its terraced courtyard is dominated by a statue of Saint Benedict (1924) [No. 1A]. The central section of the district suggests a squared "U," used to frame the Abbey Cathedral. The open-ended extensions of the "U," the northern and southernmost wings, stand at a distance of approximately 120 feet from the Cathedral. While these three elements of the "U," occupied by the monastery and the college, have different interior designs and widths, they approximate one another in exterior appearance.

The north wing is comprised of three constructions joined end-to-end (Old Science, Jubilee Hall and the Music Building) known collectively as the Brothers' Building [No. 2]. Extending east to west and facing south, Old Science and Jubilee Hall were built in 1893 and 1897 respectively, and are each about seventy-five feet in length. The Music Building is a square, very plain brick structure appended in 1954. Originally another section, called O'Donoghue Hall, formed the east end of the Brothers' Building and extended southward for about seventy-five feet. Built in 1904, the structure faced west and was razed by fire in 1960.

The Monastery [No. 3] forms the middle section of the "U" and extends behind the Cathedral in wings of seventy-five, sixty and seventy-five feet respectively, going south to north. The sections were constructed in 1880, 1891, and 1894. The south section connects to the College Building [No. 4]. A fountain graces its courtyard [No. 3A].

The southern wing of the "U," the College Building (now known as Robert Lee Stowe Hall, in honor of a local industrialist), was constructed in three stages between 1886 and 1898, going east to west, in lengths of seventy-five, sixty and seventy-five feet [No. 4]. The structure currently houses most of the college's administrative offices and classrooms. The building's main entrance faces south with metal-cast statues of Saint Joseph (1902) and Saint Mary (1902) welcoming visitors [Nos. 4A and 4B].

Saint Leo Hall (1907) stands directly southwest of Stowe Hall, facing north [No. 5]. Saint Leo is an exceptionally pure statement of the American Benedictine style and of McInerney's early period of design.

A tree-lined avenue known as "Abbey Lane" [No. 6] extends from the center of the College Building's south facade southward toward Belmont. This was the public road from the town until 1885, and is now the Abbey's central promenade. School buildings line it on the east; the west is open, visible from the present Belmont-Mount Holly Road.

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North to south along Abbey Lane are The Haid (1929) and The Abbot Vincent Taylor Library (1957), both designed by McInerney, and both facing west. The Haid [No. 7] is a Gothic-inspired structure originally designed as a gymnasium. Immediately south of The Haid, the Abbot Vincent Taylor Library [No. 8] shows modernist influences. The Library was the last McInerney structure at Belmont and its presence, along with that of the College Building, permits Abbey Lane to testify to the expanse of McInerney's six-decade architectural career.

On the eastern edge of the district, directly east of the monastery, the monks built the Grotto of Maria Lourdes (1891) in a recessed cove [No. 9]. The Grotto is the only Catholic Pilgrimage Shrine in North Carolina. On the south border of the cove, a belvedere was erected (1891) to house a statue of Saint Walburga of Eichstatt [No. 10]. South of the Walburga shrine stands a brick storage house erected under the supervision of McInerney [No. 11]. On the northern border of the Grotto, McInerney designed a brick well house (1922) [No. 12]. This wholly utilitarian structure was set into the embankment and the shade of surrounding magnolias.

Several other structures cluster around the Grotto area. South of the Grotto and behind the monastery stands a service house dating to the 1880s that now houses storage facilities and the postal services of the institution [No. 13]. North of the Grotto in a wooded area stands a frame storage house built in the 1880s [No. 14] and a small brick well house built in the 1930s [No. 15]. North and east of the Grotto stands a boiler house [No. 16] constructed in 1952, an adjacent metal storage shed [No. 17], and a water tower [No. 18] located on its north side.

Directly north of the Brothers' Building and diagonal to the tower stands a frame structure once called the Stables (before 1930) which now serves as garages for housing equipment for maintenance of the grounds [No. 19]. Located on the western perimeter of the district and immediately in front of the Cathedral stand two brick Gothic Revival barns designed by McInerney [Nos. 20 and 21]. Both have been adapted for use as fraternity houses.

At the extreme northeast end of the district, the Abbey Cemetery [No. 22], established in 1888, stretches over the knoll. Several stones were designed by McInerney, including the imposing bas-relief for the tomb of Bishop Leo Haid, a Roman Count and the first abbot of the monastery and first president in residence of the college. McInerney is also buried here.

Today the Belmont Abbey Historic District is composed of fourteen contributing buildings, three non-contributing buildings, three contributing sites, one contributing structure, three non-contributing structures, and three contributing objects, totalling twenty-one contributing and six non-contributing resources.

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INVENTORY LIST:

1. BELMONT ABBEY CATHEDRAL. 1892-1893. Contributing building. (NR 1973) Belmont Abbey Cathedral, the Abbey Church of Mary Help of Christians, is a Gothic Revival structure of hand-made brick at the center of the campus. Of particular note are the stained-glass windows which were part of the gold-medal winning exhibit of Francis Meyer & Company (the Royal Bavarian Institute) in stained-glass art at the Colombian Exhibition, the World's Fair of 1892, in Chicago.

1A. SAINT BENEDICT STATUE. 1924. Contributing object. A stone statue made in Italy, it was originally imported for the Brothers' Building courtyard and was later moved to its present location in front of the Cathedral.

*Destroyed
Summer
1993*

2. BROTHERS' BUILDING. 1893, 1897, 1904. Contributing building. A long rectangular building on an east-west axis, composed of two sections -- Old Science (1893) and Jubilee Hall (1897). A third section, O'Donoghue Hall, was added in 1904, creating an "L" shaped building, but this section was destroyed by fire in 1960. The structure is of hand-made brick and was designed without ordinary institutional corridors; rather its two stories were served by the entrances which pepper the south facade and the stairwells these doorways serve. The American Benedictine styling is evident, but simple. The building today houses an arts and crafts center, offices and storage areas.

2A. MUSIC BUILDING. 1954. Non-contributing building. Constructed as an appendage or annex to the Brother's Building, the Music Building is attached to the older structure's west end. A squared, steel frame cinder block building with brick exterior, its austerity contrasts to the American Benedictine style of the Brother's Building. Originally serving as an annex for science courses, it now houses fine and liberal arts courses, the Archives, and faculty offices.

3. MONASTERY. 1880, 1891, 1894. Contributing building. A three story, single loaded structure of bricks made on the property, the design is American Benedictine. The original section of the structure was laid out by Dom Placidus Pilz, O.S.B., and monks experienced in carpentry supervised the less experienced monastic brothers and priests in the construction work initiated in 1880. The subsequent sections merely continued the original concept. Evidence of the lack of architectural and engineering expertise is found in the considerable variation in window widths and in the progressive decrease in the building's width. The structure has a full basement, slight trim, and minimal ornamentation that increases at the summit. A porte-cochere was added to the main entrance in 1902 and a veranda runs the length of the building's north and east ends. The Monastery is the private residence of the Benedictine Monks of Belmont Abbey. The public is permitted some access to the first floor, but the two upper floors

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lie within the monastic clausura. Admittance is restricted accordingly. Renovation of the structure in 1976 won the architects, Freeman-White Associates, the 1978 Honor Award of the North Carolina Chapter of the A.I.A. Except for the replacement windows, the removal of the shutters, and two bricked-in doorways, the exterior is as it was when the last portico was added in 1902.

3A. FOUNTAIN. Non-contributing structure. A gift of North Carolina poetess Grace DiSanto in 1979, the fountain originally graced her home "Casa Delle Scale." It is a circular pool featuring a rising cylinder at its center. On the cylinder rests a ribbed, contoured body that rises to a floral design at the top from which water flows rather than shoots.

4. COLLEGE BUILDING, now known as ROBERT LEE STOWE HALL. 1886, 1888, 1898. Contributing building. Constructed in three stages of seventy-five, sixty and seventy-five feet in length, the structure is in the American Benedictine style. Construction occurred in a fashion similar to that of the monastery. The building is three and a half stories in height and is double loaded. It has a partial basement and boasts a Gothic-inspired tower with an unusually ornate capital at the west end. The "tower" was added in the months immediately following the building's completion in 1898 and was intended to serve as the college's "landmark." Like the Monastery, the building has slight trim, little ornamentation, and a portico added at the main entrance in 1902. The Monastery and the College Building connect to form an "L" shape. In 1900 two thirds of the College Building was destroyed by fire, but rebuilt immediately according to the original design. Michael McInerney helped supervise this construction. Burnt timbers from the fire are still beneath the building. The College Building once housed all the offices and functions of the college. The first floor now hosts offices and meeting facilities; the second floor is used exclusively for instructional services, and the third story is used as part of the Benedictine monastery. The attic level is used for storage, but its past employments ranged from rifle range to workshops. Portions of the building's interior were renovated from 1978 to 1983. The exterior -- with the exception of replaced windows, removed window shutters, and railings added at the main entrance -- remains as it was when the portico was added in 1902.

4A. SAINT JOSEPH STATUE. 1902. Contributing object. A metal-cast statue made in Italy, it is a traditional pose with the lily symbolizing purity.

4B. SAINT MARY STATUE. 1902. Contributing object. Posed as "Our Lady of Grace," the statue is metal-cast and of Italian origin.

5. SAINT LEO HALL. 1907. Contributing building. This brick structure is a superior example of the American Benedictine style of architecture. It is further distinguished as the first major design in the South by Michael McInerney. The exterior shows the classic elements of McInerney's art as well

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as the American Benedictine style. McInerney heightened the building in its visual effect even more than the style ordinarily demanded, by intimating Gothic characteristics -- developed primarily with arches on the third floor windows. The roof juts, is a bit too high, and seems to focus in four directions. In addition, the dormers are smaller than they could have been, giving the illusion of being dwarfed by their surroundings. The square dormer windows bear a wooden design that suggests an arch. McInerney implanted restrained ornamentation -- two standard crosses and two Celtic crosses. He also used pointed, fluted capitals to crown each of the building's ascending lines. The restrictions of the box design are minimized by the use of a layered effect in the brick, protruding vertical brick columns, ornamental brick patterns on the upper level, buttressed projections at the entrances, a row of granite trim, and Neo-Gothic double doors for the north and south ends. A 5'1" extension at the center of the east and west walls, stretching over 18' 8 1/2", impressively breaks the conventional box-like lines and provides another vertically ascendant projection. Originally housing a gymnasium, orchestra hall, dramatic hall, music studios, classrooms, and student recreational facilities, its use has varied over the years to include service as a dormitory and the college library. Today the building houses the college's bookstore, faculty offices, and an auditorium. The interior was carefully rehabilitated in 1988, but the exterior was unchanged. The structure's position on a prominent site overlooking a major road makes it one of the College's most recognized landmarks.

6. ABBEY LANE. Contributing site. The main route to Belmont from the town's founding, this road was converted to the private use of Belmont Abbey in 1885. It is now a paved walkway bordered by trees and benches.
7. THE HAID. 1929. Contributing building. A brick Gothic Revival structure designed by McInerney, the building is distinguished by turret-like capitals, granite trim and minor embellishments. Originally designed as a gymnasium, it was converted to use as a student center with only minor renovations in 1970. At that time a patio area and an entrance on the west side were added. The structure is characteristic of McInerney's styling. High, narrow windows with Gothic arches dominate this unusual gymnasium. Projecting bays with pinnacles break the conventional lines of the walls. The exterior is of brick except for the granite trim. The building displays McInerney's "signature" -- a long-shafted cross -- with unusual prominence. These elements unite to form a remarkable concept in basketball arenas. McInerney was entering the national phase of his career when this building was erected, creating for his home Abbey a striking statement of his creativity in architectural design in spite of the paucity of church funds. The building underwent extensive interior renovation and the addition of a post-modern portico in 1987, and it continues to serve as a student center and theatre of the dramatic arts.
8. THE ABBOT VINCENT TAYLOR LIBRARY. 1957. Non-contributing building. A squared two-level building of brick, it is designed without interior supporting

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walls to permit adaptation of usage. It is also designed to carry an additional story when needed. The structure completes the cycle of Michael McInerney's buildings at Belmont Abbey and displays his adaptation of modernist design influences in the last stages of his career. Sketched in his last working days, the library is unusually simple. It hosts, however, a moderate amount of his characteristic brick work and is signed with the long-shafted cross. The structure also includes vaults as well as ordinary library facilities. Although uses have changed in minor ways, the interior and exterior of the structure are as originally executed.

9. GROTTO OF OUR LADY OF LOURDES. 1891. Contributing site. Designed in imitation of the Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes in France by one of the Belmont monks in 1891, this area was blessed as a pilgrimage shrine, the only one ever designated in North Carolina, and has been in continual use for over a century. It consists of an embankment of stones imported for this purpose, encasing a Marian statue on a marble-fronted base, an altar, and surrounding area.

10. SHRINE OF SAINT WALBURGA. 1891. Contributing structure. The Walburga Shrine on the south edge of the Grotto area is a belvedere housing an image of the eighth century Abbess Walburga, who is the secondary patroness of the monastery. Walburga's crozier and vial were replaced and the statue repainted in 1981.

11. STORAGE HOUSE. 1910s. Contributing building. A one-room brick building erected under McInerney's supervision featuring a small window above the door and in the rear. Still used for storage, the structure has wooden ornamental trim in a scallop design.

12. WELL HOUSE. 1922. Contributing building. A utilitarian structure, the brick building was designed by McInerney to sit in an embankment. In a design typical of McInerney, but atypical for a pump or well house, the structure is rendered distinctive with a gabled roof, both squared and rounded windows, and designs and projections in the brickwork. The entrance is hidden on the north side, leaving the house with the appearance of a child's playhouse.

13. SERVICE HOUSE. 1880s. Contributing building. The structure consists of a single row of rooms, each with its own entrance from the exterior. The exterior is brick, and there is a dirt-floored basement area accessible from the rear. Employed in a variety of uses since construction, the rooms now serve as a storage facility and house the institution's postal services.

14. STORAGE HOUSE. 1880s. Contributing building. A utilitarian wooden structure of one room, used for storage, featuring small windows on three sides and a door on the west side.

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15. SMALL WELL HOUSE. 1930s. Contributing building. A single-room brick structure without windows, but with vents on the north and south sides and a door on the east side. Its flat roof is of metal and its moldings are wood.
16. BOILER HOUSE. 1952. Non-contributing building. A simple rectangular brick building, the structure has no particular distinction. The building is used to house heating facilities and controls.
17. STORAGE SHED. 1963. Non-contributing structure. A small metal storage shed, this structure houses maintenance equipment.
18. WATER TOWER. 1966. Non-contributing structure. Located in an area adjacent to the Boiler House, the tower stands eighty feet high and boasts a 50,000 gallon tank.
19. STABLES/ABBEY PRESS. Before 1930. Contributing building. Now used as maintenance and groundskeeping garages, this one-story brick structure with a slate roof and large wooden doors was originally stables. It later housed the Abbey Press, a publishing business operated for over fifty years.
20. BARN. 1917. Contributing building. A brick Gothic Revival building designed by McInerney, the structure originally served as a barn and was one of two [with No. 21] built to replace wooden structures destroyed in a tornado. The structure now houses a campus fraternity.
21. BARN. 1917. Contributing building. The brick building is a Gothic revival structure designed by McInerney. Originally used as a barn, the structure now houses a campus fraternity. This structure was rehabilitated and enlarged after it was damaged by fire in 1964.
22. BELMONT ABBEY CEMETERY. 1888 - . Contributing site. The principal Catholic burial ground in North Carolina, the four-acre cemetery is centered around a massive two-story, fifteen foot crucifix on a mound. At its feet, the graves of the Abbots of the Belmont monastery encircle the basemound. The monks' graves extend behind the crucifix; the sisters' graves and those of the laity and diocesan clergy stretch before it. The variety of stones on the secular graves contrasts with the simplicity and uniformity of the stones for the monks and sisters. Several stones were designed by McInerney, including the imposing bas-relief for the tomb of Bishop Leo Haid, a Roman Count and the first abbot of the monastery and college. The cemetery's plots also include McInerney; early missionaries such as the Reverend Dr. Jeremiah J. O'Connell, who, after the Civil War, purchased the five hundred acre "Caldwell Place" that formed the basis for the Abbey; and historian Thomas Oestreich. The cemetery has been enlarged several times since it was originally plotted.

*do-imp
summer
1995*

Name of Property

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Religion

Architecture

Period of Significance

1876-1942

Significant Dates

1876

1892

1907

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Haid, Abbot Leo Michael

McInerney, Rev. Michael

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

McInerney, Rev. Michael

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Archives of Belmont Abbey, Belmont, N.C.

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The Belmont Abbey Historic District encompasses the core campus of one of the oldest and most distinguished Roman Catholic institutions in the southeastern United States. Founded in 1876 by Benedictine monks of Latrobe, Pennsylvania, as a monastery and school, the institution was elevated to the rank of abbey -- first called Maryhelp Abbey -- in 1884, and was the first abbey established by the Catholic Church in the south. The college, originally named St. Mary's College, was officially opened in 1876 and chartered in 1886. Under the leadership of the Right Reverend Abbot Leo Michael Haid (1849-1924), who served as abbot from 1885 until his death, the institution saw an extraordinary period of growth, and it became the mother institution of monasteries and schools that Haid established in Virginia, Georgia, and Florida. In 1910 Belmont Abbey was made Abbatia Nullius Diocesis (an abbey that administers its own independent diocese), a distinction never bestowed before or since in the United States. The campus is centered on Belmont Abbey Cathedral (1892, NR), and owes much of its character to the presence of monk and architect Dom Michael McInerney (1877-1963). McInerney was one of the most prolific and talented architects of what has been called the "American Benedictine" style, a functional variation of the Gothic Revival characterized by restrained use of ornament and harmonious proportions that emphasize the verticality of structures. McInerney designed scores of buildings for Catholic institutions across the United States; his work is known in at least thirteen states and the District of Columbia. St. Leo Hall (1910) at Belmont Abbey is perhaps the purest expression of his work. The Belmont Abbey Historic District is eligible for the National Register at a national level of significance under criterion A for its role and influence in the growth of Catholicism in the southeastern United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; under criterion B as for its associations with The Right Reverend Leo Michael Haid and Dom Michael McInerney, both of whom resided here during their long careers and exerted important influences on the growth of Catholic institutions in the United States; and under criterion C for the architecture of the campus, which contains important examples of the American Benedictine style exemplified by the work of McInerney.

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Historical Background and Context: Belmont Abbey and Catholicism in the South-eastern United States

Few Catholics lived in North Carolina in the nineteenth century, but Catholicism established an important presence in the western Piedmont of the state in 1843 with the creation of St. Joseph's Church (NR), which served Italian and Irish miners in that part of Lincoln County that became Gaston County in 1846. In 1871 Father Jeremiah O'Connell, who served at St. Joseph's, acquired the former site of the family residence and farm of Captain Samuel Caldwell, a Revolutionary War hero. At the behest of James Cardinal Gibbons, the Benedictine monks of Latrobe, Pennsylvania, took charge of the farm in 1876 with the intention of erecting a school. The Right Reverend Archabbot Boniface Wimmer, who established the Benedictine monastic order in this country and was the first man in America raised to the rank of abbot and then archabbot, founded the monastery and school now referred to as Belmont Abbey on the site of this farm. A school, first called St. Mary's, opened in the fall of 1876 with four students.

In 1884, the foundation was granted its independence from the Pennsylvania motherhouse and elevated in rank from "priory" to "abbey" -- the first abbey established by the Catholic Church in the South. The growth of Catholicism in the state became centered in Belmont and remained so until well into the twentieth century.

The "work in the South" was entrusted to The Right Reverend Abbot Leo Michael Haid in 1885. Haid reigned as abbot for 39 years until his death in 1924. Appointed Vicar Apostolic of North Carolina in 1887, he was consecrated Catholic bishop in 1888. Haid reigned longer over the Catholics of all North Carolina than any other prelate; moreover, he holds the distinction of being the only man in this country ever to simultaneously rule and persevere in office over three ecclesiastical jurisdictions in the Catholic Church with "ordinary power" (abbot, abbot-nullius, bishop/vicar-apostolic). Consequently, it is under Haid's reign that the Abbey and the Church in the region experienced its greatest development. An eloquent and much-travelled speaker, Haid literally shaped Catholic missionary work in the South and influenced the founding of numerous monasteries and educational institutions throughout the region.

Under Haid, Belmont Abbey rose from the ranks of a missionary venture to the unprecedented distinction of an Abbazia Nullius Diocesis (an abbey that administers its own independent diocese), causing the influence of the monks of Belmont to stretch far beyond the Abbey's walls. From 1888 until 1924, they served as administrators of the Catholic Church in North Carolina by special commission of Rome (1888-1924); founded two monasteries in Virginia (Bristow, 1893 and Richmond, 1885 and reorganized in 1924), one in Florida (St. Leo, 1888), and one in Georgia (Savannah, 1902); and founded founded academies or schools associated

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with those monasteries: Saint Leo Military Academy in Florida (1891), Benedictine High School in Savannah (1902), and Benedictine Military Institute (1911) and Saint Joseph Institute (1894) in Virginia. At Belmont, enrollment at St. Mary's College grew steadily and it was officially renamed Belmont Abbey College in 1913.

The unusual growth began not long after the arrival of Haid. Within the first twenty-five years of his reign the Abbey opened a seminary at the College, the only one of its kind in the region (1890); erected and blessed the Grotto of Lourdes as a pilgrimage shrine, the only Catholic Pilgrimage Shrine in the Southeast (1891); built the Belmont Abbey Cathedral (1892) which houses the first Zimmer organ built in this country and is the only monastery church in the United States to be given cathedral rank (1910); and was designated an Abbatia Nullius Diocesis, a distinction held until 1977. From 1960 to 1977 Belmont Abbey's grounds comprised the world's smallest diocese within the Catholic Church.

Today the monks of Belmont Abbey emphasize the monastic life, its sacred liturgies, and the monks' vows of poverty, chastity, obedience, conversion of life, and stability to a single monastery. They have limited their "active" life to the operation of Belmont Abbey College on the grounds of the monastery. Only two other monasteries with colleges attached exist in the eastern seaboard states (New Hampshire and Florida); Belmont Abbey is older than both and is the motherhouse of the Florida project.

Architectural Context: The Life and Work of Dom Michael McInerney, Architect

It was during the reign of Abbot Leo Haid that the work of Dom Michael McInerney (1877-1963) began to flourish. Indeed, much of McInerney's work came as an offshoot of Haid's missionary and expansionary vision. A native of Pennsylvania and the son of Irish Catholic immigrant parents, McInerney early assisted in the work of his stone contractor father¹. As a high school student in Pittsburgh, he was accepted by W.A. Thomas, a former professor of architecture at King's College (London), as an apprentice architect. During their eight-year association, Thomas supervised McInerney's technical training and eventually made him a partner in his firm. In 1900 McInerney left the firm to enroll in the classical course sequence at Saint Mary's College (later Belmont Abbey College).

Shortly after McInerney's arrival, two-thirds of the school's College Building was destroyed by fire on May 19, 1900, leaving only a brick shell. When school authorities discovered McInerney's background in architecture and design, he was appointed to the task of directing the rebuilding. At the age of twenty-three, he had become an architectural designer in his own right and his profession for the next sixty years began.

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After completing his degree in classics, McInerney entered the monastery as a novice and was professed as a monk in 1903. He was granted solemn (life-long) vows on August 21, 1906. During this time he unveiled plans for his first free-standing building on the grounds, Saint Leo Hall, which was his first major, independent design. (He had previously designed a small school on South Tryon Street in Charlotte, North Carolina, O'Donoghue Hall, in 1905 which no longer stands².) Saint Leo stands as an extraordinary primary statement of McInerney's artistic values. It represents his gift for turning the German Gothic Revival style into a fresh artistic statement, one that in this country would acquire the popular name "American Benedictine" for its use and development at Cassinese Benedictine monasteries in the United States. The style is a vernacular interpretation of the German Gothic Revival as filtered through the new terrain, poverty, and artistic traditions of these New World cloisters.

McInerney believed that all good architecture was functional, but just because it was practical it did not have to look cold or institutional.³ He embellished his utilitarian and institutional buildings in decorative brickwork, windows, and unique roofs and doors. While operating within a minimal budget he created barns with Gothic arches, a wellhouse with dormer windows, and simple wooden churches with towers and borders. He signed each with a long-shafted cross, sometimes conspicuously and sometimes hidden in brick patterns.⁴ Saint Leo Hall is the classic statement of this style--solid, durable, interesting to the eye without compromising function. The building represents the deceptively simple style he used in all his buildings. A straightforward box in plan, it appears more complex to the eye. With facilities for the physical, commercial, musical, photographic and dramatic arts, the building also represented his unflinching diversity.

That diversity coupled with the influence of Abbot Leo Haid took McInerney's work beyond the confines of Belmont Abbey monastery to the surrounding area and state. His work throughout the region was often hampered by the economic constraints of the times and the relative poverty of the Catholic Church in the South. Therefore much of his work in North and South Carolina centered on small projects. His larger projects were out-of-state. Some of his work during this early phase of his career may be seen in: Victory Hall, designed in 1922 to house an auditorium and small museum, and the 1928 Administration Building, both on the campus of the now closed Sacred Heart College in Belmont, NC; Saint Joan of Arc Church, Asheville, NC (1927); Saint Leo Church and Rectory, Winston-Salem, NC (1928); Saint Helen Church, Spencer Mountain, NC (1917); Holy Trinity Church, Kinston, NC (1921); Sacred Heart Church (1919) and Visitor's Home (1927), Pinehurst, NC; Saint John Church, Tryon, NC (1911), now razed; and various structures on the grounds of Belmont Abbey. [See Appendix for inventory of McInerney designs.]

By 1929, he had established a national reputation and entered into the middle period of his career, which extended through 1945. The Haid (1929) at Belmont

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Abbey best represents this phase, the most prolific and artistically fruitful one of his career. Of particular note are his rectories for Saint Benedict (1932) and Saint Francis (1934) parishes in Baltimore, Maryland; Mercy Hospital in Charlotte, NC; and Saint Joseph's Hospital in Asheville, NC. During this phase of his career, he emphasized the use of stone instead of brick and imposed the Romanesque arch on simple facades.

McInerney worked primarily in North and South Carolina, Maryland, and West Virginia, and although his architectural fees kept the Belmont Abbey monastery and college solvent during the Depression, he did not limit his work to buildings. He also designed pews, candelabra, sanctuary lamps, chalices, and other furnishings for his buildings. A standing lampstand of his design was commercially manufactured. McInerney also lent his talents to the design of cemetery stones, examples of which are in the Belmont Abbey Cemetery and St. Mary's Cemetery in Richmond, Virginia.

McInerney also found the time to lecture at St. Louis University in 1942 on hospital planning and architecture; write an article for the Catholic Encyclopedia (1936 recension) entitled "Church Architecture in Modern Times," and write a number of articles and pamphlets on hospital architecture and stained glass (see bibliography). In 1934 the North Carolina Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) elected him to membership.⁵ He also held an associate membership in the Stained Glass Association of America. While continuing to meet the demands of his monastic life, he insisted on personally supervising his construction activities. For example, in 1937 he supervised projects in six states at once.⁶

The final period of McInerney's work, 1945 to 1963, is reflected in Saint Michael Church in Gastonia, North Carolina (1957) and Saint Michael Church in Wheeling, West Virginia (1952). His work in this period varies from an emphasis on flat roofs, squared towers, and the box design to a return to the style of his earlier works -- Gothic aspirations with unornamented interiors, whose art and expression came not from decoration but from the design alone.

The Abbot Vincent Taylor Library (1957) at Belmont Abbey is one of the last structures designed by McInerney before his death in 1963. Its presence at Belmont Abbey completes within his own home a collection of structures representing every phase and aspect of the architect's remarkable career. McInerney died in 1963 at Mercy Hospital in Charlotte, for which he had designed the original complex of buildings, including its nursing school and convent. He is interred in the Belmont Abbey Cemetery, surrounded by examples of his genius.

McInerney's career spanned six decades and produced more than five hundred buildings and structures. His diversity never failed him. There were major hospitals like Mercy in Charlotte, North Carolina and Saint Joseph's in

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Asheville, North Carolina. General institutions included the Catholic Orphanage in Nazareth, North Carolina, the Horse Creek Valley settlement buildings in South Carolina, and the laundry and chapel for Saint Stanislaus Orphanage in Nanticoke, Pennsylvania. Schools of various sorts include the Cathedral Academy in Raleigh, Benedictine Military College in Richmond, and Wheeling Hospital Nursing School in Wheeling, West Virginia. There were chapels for the Charleston Naval Yard and Virginia Polytechnic Institute. His gymnasias are found in Belmont, Charleston, New York, and throughout the Northeast; and his churches range from the magnificent (Saint Benedict Church in Baltimore), to the severe and monumental (Saint Michael Church in Wheeling), to the charming (Sacred Heart Church in Pinehurst, North Carolina). In all there were more than two hundred educational buildings (dormitories, schools, etc.), one hundred large churches, over one hundred smaller churches and chapels, twenty-seven hospitals or infirmaries, eighteen convents or monasteries, ten gymnasias or recreation centers, and countless residences, barns, storage and mechanical facilities, renovations, and consulting jobs. The exact total cannot be clearly established as McInerney never bothered to keep records and often reused the same design.⁷ Yet they are all gifts from one of North Carolina and the nation's most unique and most accomplished architects.

FOOTNOTES

(1) McInerney was born Joseph Vincent McInerney. He was given the name "Michael" upon entering the monastery at Belmont Abbey.

(2) Archives of the Abbey of Maryhelp (AAM). Stowe, W. R., Mrs. M91, #2: "Newspaper Coverage." Three page typescript, p. 2. Later published in the Charlotte Observer and the Georgia Bulletin.

(3) "A Church Should Make People Mindful of God." The Abbey Message, XII: 5 (October, 1951), p. 1.

(4) Paschal Baumstein, "A Divine Practice," North Carolina Architect, July-August 1983, p. 17.

(5) AAM, M91, #2, op cit., p. 2.

(6) AAM. B5, #1: "Michael McInerney, OSB, RP -- Career Review." Two page typescript. p. 2.

(7) "Salute to Our Master Builder." Abbey: News, Views, I: 2 (Spring, 1957), p. 1.

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10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 37.5

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 117 49581610 39020610
Zone Easting Northing
2 117 49164715 390211010

3 117 4962100 39015310
Zone Easting Northing
4 117 4958510 39015410

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Reverend Paschal Baumstein, O.S.B.
organization Southern Benedictine Society of N.C., Inc. date October 14, 1992
street & number 100 Belmont-Mt. Holly Road telephone 704/825-6677
city or town Belmont state NC zip code 28012-2795

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Southern Benedictine Society of North Carolina, Inc.
street & number Belmont Abbey telephone 704/825-6677
city or town Belmont state NC zip code 28012-2795

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Verbal Boundary Description:

Beginning at point on the east side of the CSX Railroad right-of-way 500' north of the north side of the I-85 right-of-way, follow the west line of the CSX right-of-way 400' until it intersects the east side of the right-of-way of the Belmont-Mt. Holly Road (SR 2093); then north along the east right-of-way line of the Belmont-Mt. Holly Road until it intersects the road to the Belmont Abbey Cemetery; then east along the north side of the Belmont Abbey Cemetery Road to the cemetery; then around the boundary of the cemetery; then down the service road south of the cemetery to the headwaters of the creek separating the old and new portions of the campus; then south along the creek to a point due east of the beginning point; then due west 750' to the beginning.

Boundary Justification:

The district boundary encompasses the sections of the campus developed before the mid-twentieth century along with associated landscaping, open spaces, and the Abbey cemetery.

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Photographs

All photographs taken September 29, 1992 by Michael T. Southern. All negatives are accessioned in North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, N.C. 27601-2807.

A. View looking southeast across west face of campus. Left to right: Belmont Abbey Cathedral (#1), Saint Benedict Statue (#1A), College Building (Robert Lee Stowe Hall, #4), St. Leo Hall (#5).

B. View looking east to west entrance of the Monastery (#3), with the fountain #3A) in the foreground.

C. View looking north down Abbey Lane to south entrance of the College Building (Robert Lee Stowe Hall, #4).

D. View looking northeast from Abbey Lane with the College Building (#4) on the left and The Haid (#7) on the right.

E. View looking east from Abbey Lane to the Abbot Vincent Taylor Library (#8).

F. View looking north to the south facade of the Brothers' Building (#2).

G. View looking northwest to St. Leo Hall (#5) and the west tower of the College Building (Robert Lee Stowe Hall, #4).

H. View looking north along the east elevation of the Monastery (#3).

I. View looking northeast to the Service House (#13).

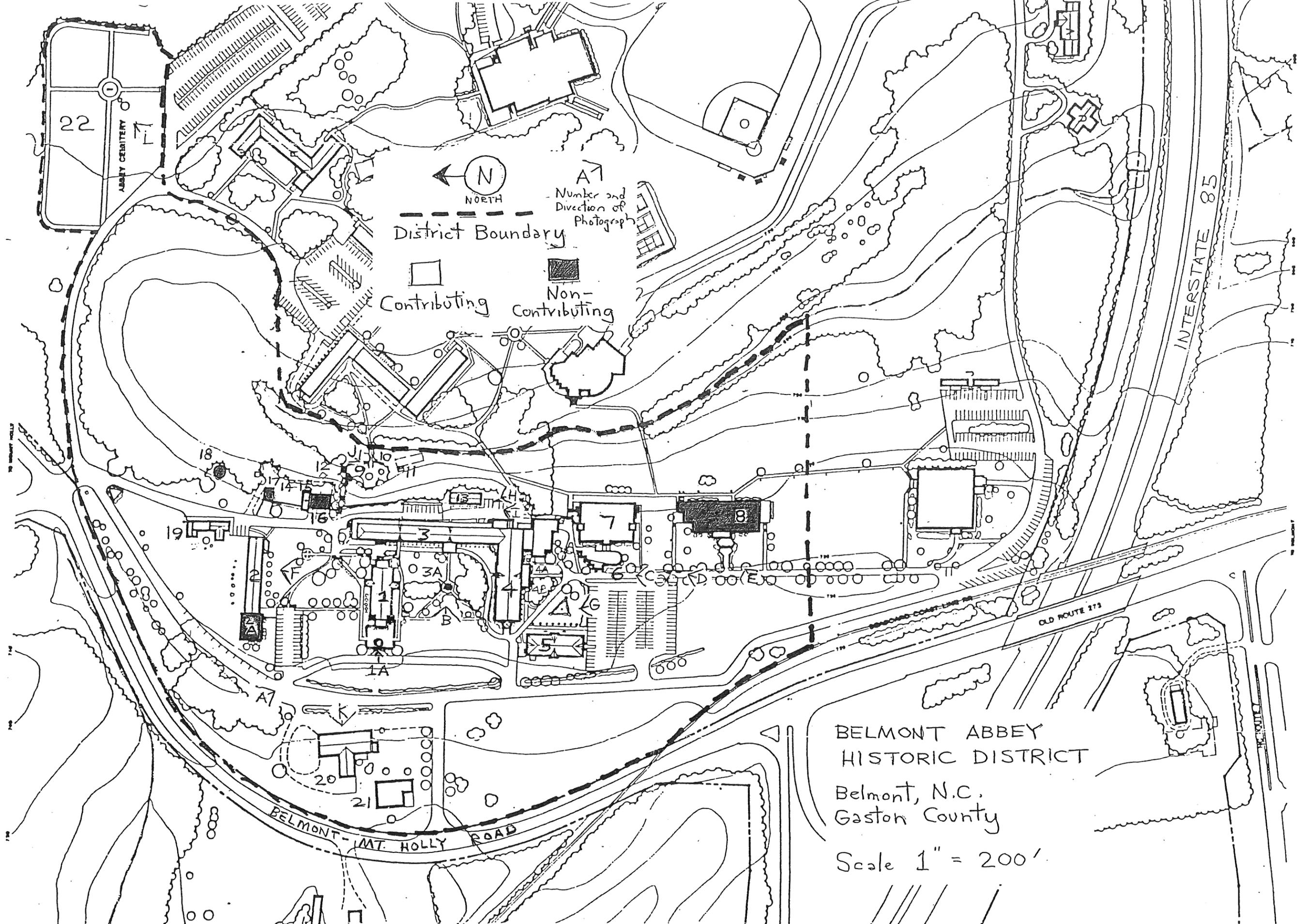
J. View looking southwest to the Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes.

K. View looking west to the (former) Barn (#20, now a fraternity house).

L. View looking northeast across Belmont Abbey Cemetery (#22).

M. Auditorium in third floor of St. Leo Hall (#5).





N
 NORTH
 A7
 Number and
 Direction of
 Photograph
 District Boundary
 Contributing
 Non-Contributing

BELMONT ABBEY
 HISTORIC DISTRICT
 Belmont, N.C.
 Gaston County
 Scale 1" = 200'

