

1-1-1986

St. Anna Marie's Convent: Wichita, Kansas

Dan Himmelberg

Follow this and additional works at: <https://newprairiepress.org/oz>



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

Recommended Citation

Himmelberg, Dan (1986) "St. Anna Marie's Convent: Wichita, Kansas," *Oz*: Vol. 8. <https://doi.org/10.4148/2378-5853.1125>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by New Prairie Press. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Oz* by an authorized administrator of New Prairie Press. For more information, please contact cads@k-state.edu.

St. Anna Marie's Convent

Wichita, Kansas

Dan Himmelberg

Critics: Gene Ernst
Rick Findley
Lew Seibold

Located on a picturesque site on the secluded northern shore of Cheney Lake, St. Anna Marie's serves as the Mother House Convent for the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood. After the existing St. Louis facility was destroyed by fire and because of its diminishing numbers, the congregation elected to merge with its sister convent in Wichita, Kansas. In order to accommodate the increase in the Wichita congregation the Sisters have decided to build a new convent.

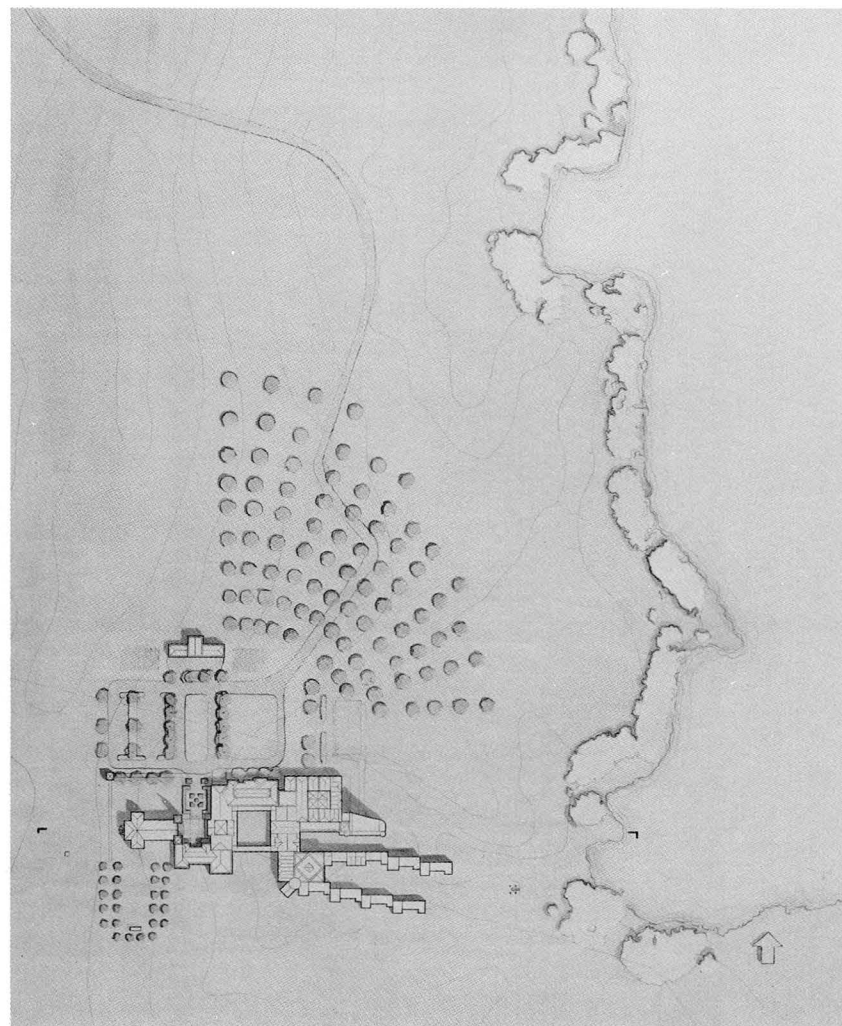
In this project it is extremely important to create a symbolic experience unique to the sisters yet totally different to that of the public. The public is met with great formality which is signified by the spiritual axis formed between the church and the morning chapel. The formal axis representing the strict traditions of the Catholic Church is interlaced with a winding functional circulation path, that begins at the lake and ends with a vast view at the crest of the hill. This path symbolizes the difficulties of daily existence.

The building's programmatic requirements include a great degree of privacy and intimacy in the sister's areas while other areas should be totally accessible to the public. Symbolically, the Convent creates an enriched experience for both the sisters and the lay people; yet at the same time, it provides a connection to the traditional and present day Catholic Church.

Orientation is also a strong symbolic ordering principle in the convent design. The entire complex is oriented lengthwise from east to west. The baptismal, positioned in the east, represents the birth of the complex and is bathed in the light of the rising sun. The cemetery, positioned in the west and terminating the convent, lies in the long shadows of the setting sun. This use of natural light is symbolic of God as it enhances the gathering places of the sisters. The east-west alignment is also appropriate for the convent's facade development. To the west the traditionally designed church represents the completion of the traditional era, while the contemporary chapel in the east, signifies the dawn of the new beginning. Thus, the Convent's facades are representative of the gradual changes in today's Catholic Church since the Vatican II.

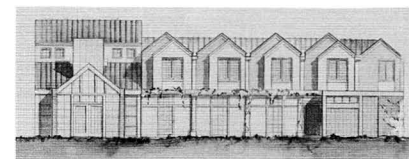
The complex is arranged around three exterior courts which diminish in formality as they become more private. The major rooms between the outdoor spaces, the refectory and the library, form transitional thresholds to more private areas of the Convent. These thresholds indicate the important layering of the privacy gradient and provide a clear ordering element for the complex design.

The design of St. Anna Marie's Convent provided a challenge in the complex planning of everyday spaces such as the

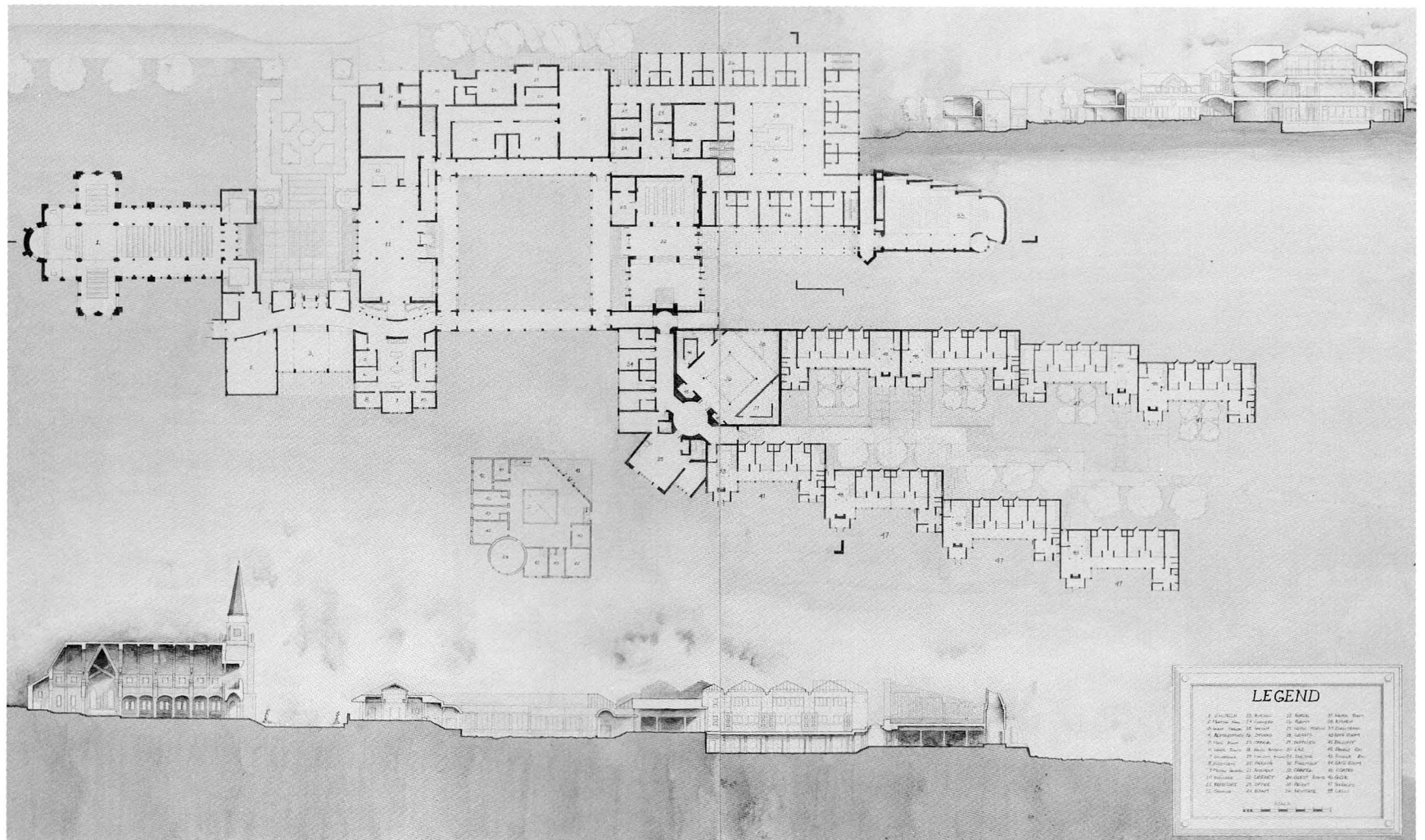


Site plan.

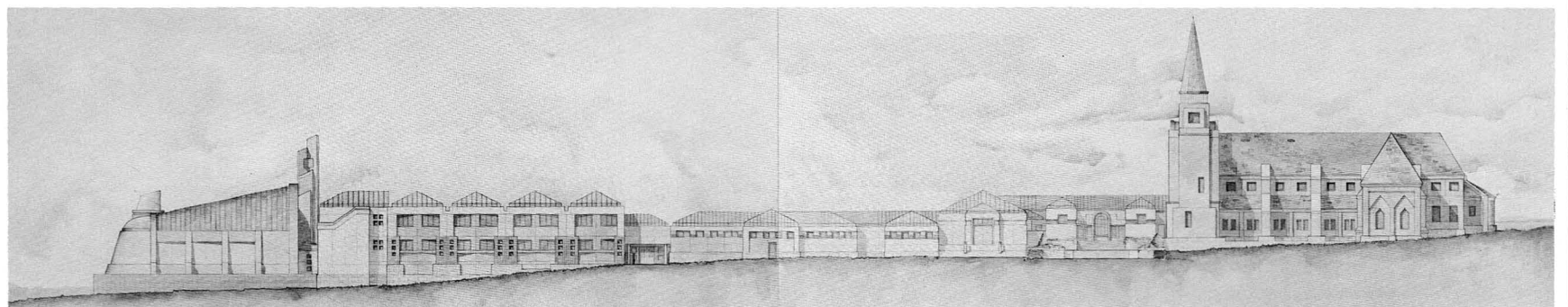
refectory, infirmary, and living units. The incorporation of symbolism as an underlying theme throughout the convent design further emphasized the experiential and spiritual qualities of these spaces.



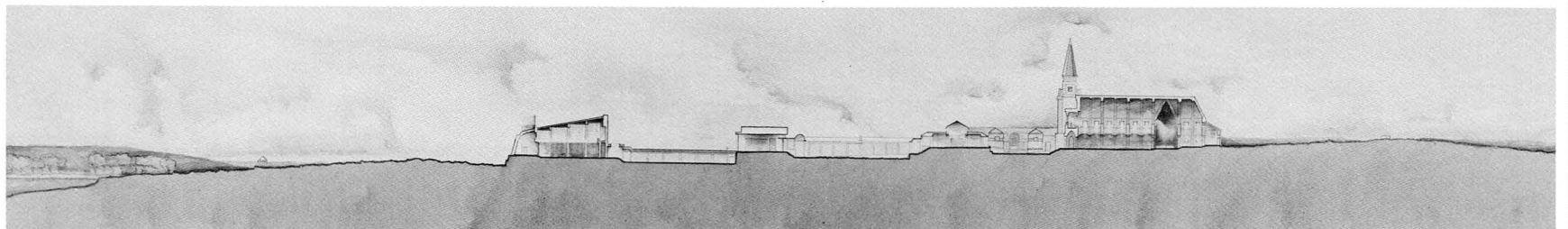
Living units elevation.



Plan and section.



North elevation.



Site section.