

Schools: Catholic

FLORIDA MASTER SITE FILE
HISTORIC ST. AUGUSTINE PRESERVATION BOARD
HISTORIC PROPERTIES INVENTORY FORM

I. LOCATION & LEGAL DESCRIPTION

FDAHRM _____ 802== Site No. _____ 1009==
Site Name: old St. Joseph's School 830== Survey Date: 7811 820==
Address: 79 Sanford Street, St. Augustine, Fla. 32084 905==
Instructions for Locating: _____
_____ 813== County: St. Johns 808==
Location: Dumas Tract D 868==
(subdivision) (block) (lot)
_____ 868==
Owner of Site: Name: St. Benedict Church and School ;
Address: 79 Sanford Street
St. Augustine, Fla. 32084 902==
Occupant or Manager: S.O.S. 904==
Type of Ownership: Institutional 848== Zoning: RS2
NR Classification Category: Building 916== Recording Date: _____ 832==
UTM: 17 469510 3306020 890== Location: T07S R30E N19 812==
(zone) (easting) (northing) (T) (R) (S)
Map Reference: USGS St. Augustine 7.5 MIN 1956 (PR 1970) 809==
Recorder: Name & Title: Nolan, David (Historic Sites Specialist) ;
Address: H.S.A.P.B. 818==

II. SITE DESCRIPTION

Condition of Site:		Threats to Site:	
() Excellent	863==	() Zoning	878==
() Good	863==	() Development	878==
(x) Fair	863==	() Deterioration	878==
() Deteriorated	863==	() Borrowing	878==
		() Transportation	878==
		() Fill	878==
Integrity of Site:		() Dredge	878==
(x) Altered	858==	() Other	878==
() Unaltered	858==		
(x) Original Site	858==		
() Restored - Date:	858==		
() Moved - Date:	858==		

II. SITE DESCRIPTION, continued.

Original Use: Religious/Educa. 838== Present Use: Religious/Educa. 850==
Date: +1898 844== Period: 19th Cent 845== Culture: American 840==
Architect: _____ 872==
Builder: Mr. Leonard 874==
Style: Masonry vernacular 964==
Plan Type: T-shape 966==
Exterior Fabrics: Brick _____
_____ 854==
Structural Systems: Masonry brick 856==
Features of Structure: (942)
Window Type: DHS, 6/6, attic louver 942==
Foundation: Brick wall 942==
Roof Type: Gable, intersecting 942==
Secondary Roof Structures: Pyramid tower 942==
Porches & Balconies: _____
_____ 942==
Chimney Location: Ridge, offset, offset, lateral slope 942==
Materials: (882)
Chimney: Brick 882==
Roof Surfacing: Composition shingles, diamond 882==
Ornament Exterior: Decorative brickwork _____
_____ 882==
Quantitative Data: (950-954)
Chimneys: 3 952== Dormers: _____ 954== Stories: 2-3 950==
Other: _____ 956==
Surroundings: Residential/institutional 864==
Relationship to Surroundings: On corner lot. _____
_____ 859==

III. PHOTOGRAPHY

Photographic Records Numbers: _____ 860==
Contact Prints

IV. SIGNIFICANCE

Areas of Significance: Architecture, Blacks, Religion, Politics/Government,

Women

920==

Statement of Significance: (911==)

ARCHITECTURE

The two to three-story Masonry Vernacular school at 79 Sanford Street is the old St. Joseph's School, also called St. Benedict the Moor School, and is one of the oldest brick buildings in the city of St. Augustine having been built in 1898 by a Mr. Leonard at a cost of \$7,500. Its other distinctions are that it is the oldest surviving Black school building in St. Augustine, and has one of the few surviving towers left in town. The old maps show the building with a one-story porch wrapping around all sides, which has been removed over the years.

The western part of Dumas Tract was a late Victorian development on previous orange grove lands. In the late 19th century streets were cut through the area and a number of large houses were built along Central, Bridge, Sanford and Weeden Streets. It is a fairly consistent Victorian neighborhood, within walking distance of downtown. Among buildings in the area of particular interest are the old orange grove house at 115 Bridge Street, which is partly built of coquina; and the former St. Benedict School, which is one of the oldest brick buildings in town. There is an infill of smaller homes in the area from a later period of development, particularly along Riberia Street. The area is threatened generally with traffic problems along Riberia, Bridge and Central. There is also a problem of housing deterioration--though this is a neighborhood where many older homes have been fixed up in recent years.

HISTORY

In the mid-18th century, the western section of Dumas Tract Subdivision was the location of a redoubt and one of the three late colonial San Sebastian River ferry crossings, both sites being at the end of present-day Bridge Street. The area also is in the vicinity of the 18th century Indian village of Palica. The section formed by Central Avenue, Riberia, Bridge and DeHaven Streets corresponds with the early 19th century Spanish land grants of Juan Bousquet, a Spaniard and one of the royal physicians, and Gaspar Papy, a Greek and prosperous merchant who came to St. Augustine in 1777 from the ill-fated New Smyrna colony. Both men developed some of the first commercial orange groves in Florida on their properties.[1] Peter Sken Smith, St. Augustine's most ambitious land speculator in the

[over]

V. BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Antonio de Arredondo, "Plan de la Ciudad de San Agustin de la Florida", May 15, 1737; Pablo Castello, "Plano del Presidio de San Agustin de la Florida", July 21, 1763; Mariano de la Rocque, "Plano General de la Plaza de San Agustin de la Florida", December 24, 1791; St. Johns County Courthouse, Deed Records, Book K, p. 34; Book B and L, p. 75.
2. Deed Records, Book N, pp. 131, 543; Book O, p. 244; Book P, pp. 43, 48; Book Z, pp. 48, 114, 182; Book NN, p. 110; Book OO, p. 291; Misc. Book E, p. 474; Map Book 1, p. 96.
3. HPI Research File.

Territorial period, purchased both tracts in 1838, renaming the groves Yallaha, the Seminole word for orange, and subdividing the land the same year. His scheme failed and in 1845 Yallaha was sold to Rose B. Dumas, wife of Peter Dumas, then county clerk and one of the leaders of the Florida Radical Republicans after the Civil War. The Dumas' soon built their extant plantation home, which at 115 Bridge Street is the oldest structure in the southwest peninsula and one of the few surviving pre-Civil War buildings in the city. In 1890, their daughter, Stella, sold Block D to the Catholic Church which within the next twenty-five years constructed a school and church complex for the Black Catholics of Lincolnville. With the exception of several lots along Central Avenue and the family homestead, Stella Dumas sold the estate in 1895 to J. H. Slater, a local real estate developer, who subdivided the grove the same year. Development proceeded rapidly along Sanford and Weeden Streets, the later having been extended south of Bridge Street, and the area became a White neighborhood for Florida East Coast Railway workers, merchants, and building contractors. Construction along Riberia occurred in the 1920's when the area was becoming a Black neighborhood.[2] Weeden Street was named after Dr. Frederick Weedon, mayor of St. Augustine in 1855, Osceole's physician and decapitator of the Seminole Chief. Sanford Street was named after General Henry S. Sanford, founder of the Central Florida city bearing the family surname, Florida's biggest land developer before Flagler, and, through his Florida Land and Colonization Company, a real estate promoter in the area north of Dumas Tract.[3]

The school at 79 Sanford Street has had a long and productive history. A Catholic School under the supervision of the Sisters of St. Joseph was in existence shortly after the Civil War with its first location being the present site of St. Joseph's Academy and later located on Cathedral Street at the present site of the Barnett Bank. The colored Catholics received the necessary ministrations from the Sisters as well as from the Catholic Clergy. In 1890 Dumas Block was deeded to Bishop Moore by Mlle. Stella Dumas, a wealthy French lady originally from Charleston, South Carolina and whose parents, Peter B. and Rose Dumas, were responsible for the development of what is today called Dumas Tract in the southwestern section of the city.[4]

Bishop Moore wanted to "erect a church and a school and to use the rest of the property, covering one whole square, as a site for the erection of dwellings, the income of which would help toward the support of a resident priest." The school cost \$7,500 to build. Of this, \$5,000 was donated by Mother Catherine Drexel, who came from a wealthy Philadelphia family. In 1898 the colored school was built by a Mr. Leonard on the southwest corner of Dumas Block; bounded on the east by Central Avenue, on the west by Sanford Street, on the north by St. Francis, and on the south by DeHaven Street. In 1899 the school opened with 90 pupils being taught by three Sisters of St. Joseph and, by 1923, the enrollment was up to 100 students, half of them being non-Catholic. As of 1936 the building was being used as a school as well as a nursery for the church and it is said that "from its portals have emerged many converts to the Church".[5]

Several different names have been used for the school over the years: St. Benedict and St. Cecilia among them. Josephite Fathers as well as the

Sisters of St. Joseph were involved with it. After it closed as a school it was used by the Ministerial Alliance for a social service project called S-O-S.[6]

Currently the Old St. Joseph's School is being used as the headquarters for the Northeast Florida Community Action Agency with Jane Cohan as the coordinator. The agency is under the Community Services Agency of the Federal Government and is subsidized by a \$57,000 yearly grant, from which Mrs. Cohan is responsible for organizing services for transportation, emergency services--such as eye and dental care, electricity and water--and weatherization for protection from the weather and safety. She describes the agency as being a "training structure, teaching low income persons to avail themselves of services available" in the community.[7]

4. Church of St. Benedict the Moor, n.p; St. Augustine Diocese, Brief History, Part 2, pp. 26-28.

5. Ibid.

6. Sanborn Maps; 1930-1957; Historic Properties Inventory Research File.

7. St. Augustine Record, July 10, 1979; Ibid., December 22, 1979, p. 2-A.

Schools: Named; St. Benedict the Moor (aka St. Cecilia)
St. Cecilia School
Sister Mary Thomasine, Principal
N.E. corner Sanford & De Haven
(Pt. A. City Dir 1911-12)

on 13-16
closed sometime between 1916 & 1917
not listed in 1916-17 City Directory

1890 - Dumas block deeded to Bishop Moore
by Mlle. Stella Dumas, "an elderly
French lady" from Charleston, S.C.
Bishop Moore wanted to erect a ~~school~~
church & school & to use the rest of the property,
covering one whole square, as a site for the
erection of dwellings". . .

1898 - Colored school built on SW corner
of Dumas Block at cost of \$500⁰⁰
Block: E Central W. Sanford W St. Francis
S De Haven

1899 - school opened w/ 90 pupils taught by 3
sisters of St. Joe

1923 - 100 students w/ 1/2 being non-catholic
Later name changed to St. Benedict's School

"Jew" Javia of the Plaza" start at O.H.
10 - Cap Jack
22 - Art Assoc