



**Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador
Building Report – St. Bride’s College, Littledale**



Artist's concept of St. Bride's College, Littledale, 220 Waterford Bridge Road, 1965

Researcher: Deborah O’Rielly
Date: December 15, 2006
City: St. John’s, Newfoundland and Labrador
Address: 220 Waterford Bridge Road
Building Name: St. Bride’s College, Littledale

Building Information

Date of Construction: 1965-1967
Architect: Bolton, Ellwood and Aimers, Montreal
Design: Horwood and Guihan, St. John’s
Engineering Works: Wiggs, Walford, Frost and Lindsay, Montreal
Concrete Design: Kursbatt and Associated, Montreal
Builder: J. L. E. Price and Company Ltd., St. John’s
Name of Original Owner: Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy
Building Use: College campus for girls



Chapel and bell tower, south facade



central courtyard east, administration office at center, gym at left, classrooms at right

History



Historic Image, Littledale Academy, circa 1890
City of St. John's Archives

St. Bride's College, commonly known as Littledale, was founded in 1884 as a Catholic girls' boarding school run by the Sisters of Mercy. In 1883 the Sisters purchased Littledale, the former estate of Philip Francis Little, on Waterford Bridge Road, St. John's. At that time the Sisters converted the three-storey house and with the addition of a classroom and dormitory, the school opened as St. Bride's Academy on August 20, 1884.

Added to the original building were the Talbot Memorial Wing in 1902, a five storey west wing in 1912 and a three storey center wing in 1919. Around this same time the school was raised to college status and enjoyed an expanded curriculum, facilities and teachers. The success of the college continued as it educated young women, and moved into training female Catholic teachers with the cooperation of Memorial University College in 1942. These successes lead to more expansion in 1944 with the addition of St. Augustine's Hall. In 1952 St. Bride's was accredited as a two year junior college formally affiliated with the University.

In 1964, due to increased enrollment and crowded conditions, plans were unveiled for a new St. Bride's Junior College on the Littledale grounds to the west of the original buildings. The new college opened in 1966 before being fully completed and enrollment continued to increase until 1971 when the numbers began to drop rapidly. Due to the drop in enrollment the principal, Sister Nellie Pomroy, requested to have the status of junior college suspended in 1974.

The ensuing years saw the facility leased as St. Augustine's Elementary School, used for private music lessons, as a retreat, as a residence for nursing students and eventually as its present incarnation as a conference center and retreat building.



central courtyard NW , residence and dining hall



central courtyard SW, dining hall and mother house

The Buildings



Front façade, south side,
Chapel and bell tower at far left



rear façade, north side

The St. Bride's College complex, completed in 1967, sits on a large parcel of land set back from the main road, accessed by winding roadways near the convents. The complex consists of ten buildings grouped around a quadrangle and interconnected so faculty and students could move between buildings without having to go outside. The buildings climb the gently sloping hill at the back, on the north side, so to allow sunlight and a view for those in that side of the complex.

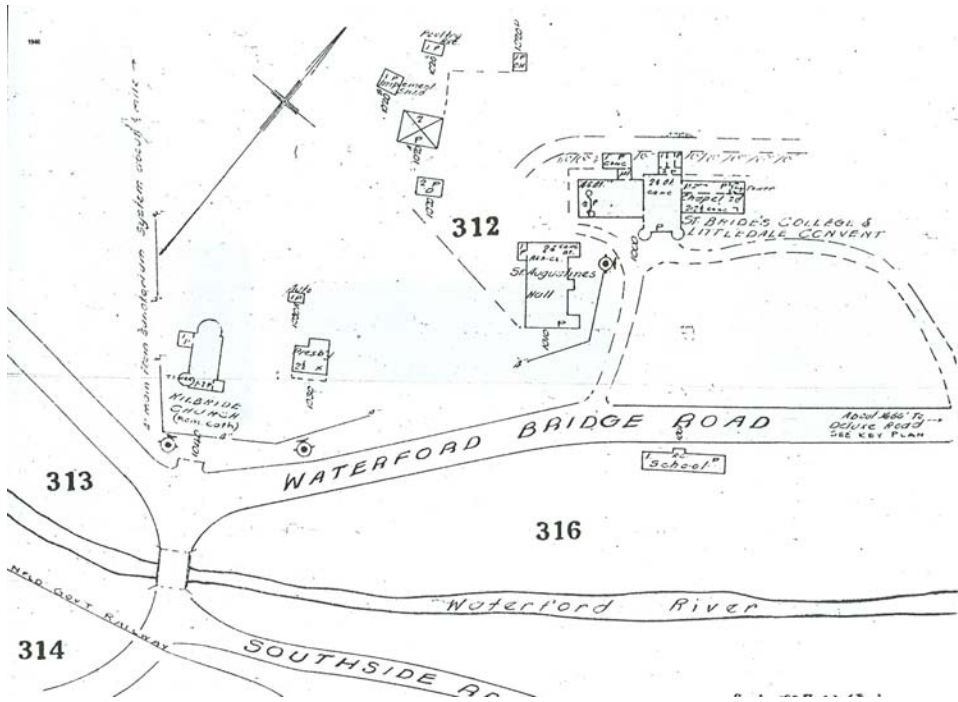
The college included, besides academic buildings, two residences, a library, chapel, cafeteria and an administration building. The academic wing contained classrooms, project rooms, an audio-visual center, language lab, science lab, music studio and a small curriculum library in addition to the main library. There was also a large gymnasium and a swimming pool. A system of tunnels was connected via the gymnasium, the chapel, the mother house, and the residences.

Located at the extreme west of the complex and attached to the academic building are the administration and faculty offices. When initially built, the two residence halls accommodated one hundred and fifty students; the cafeteria was one of the most modern and well-equipped in the province and the dining room was able to accommodate two hundred and fifty diners at one sitting.

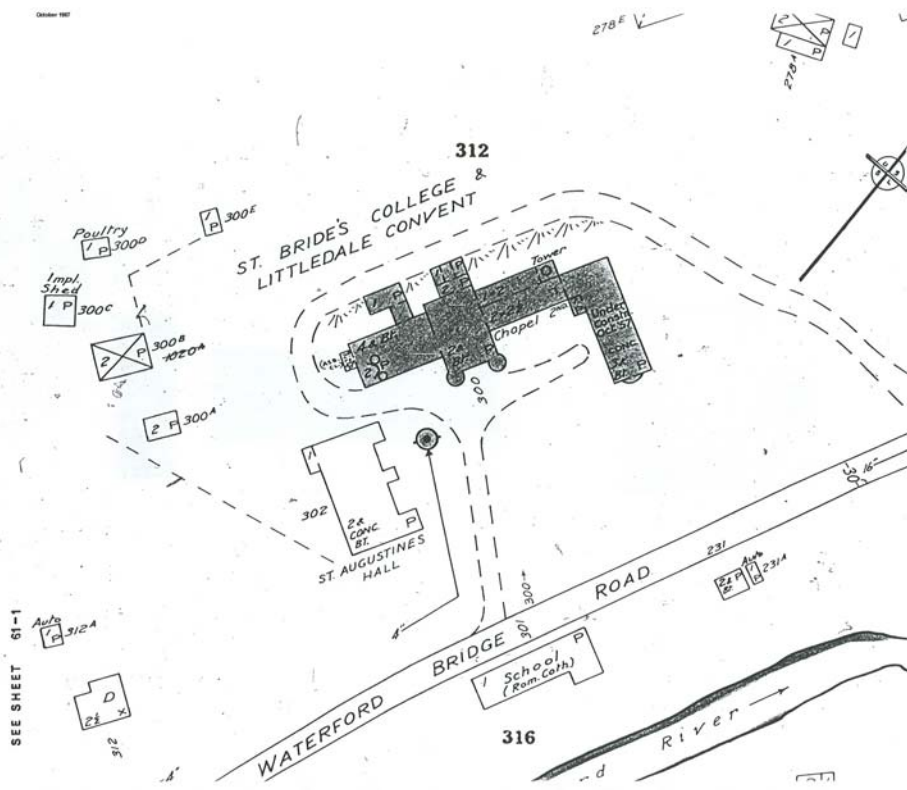
The spacious chapel occupies a central place on campus, standing on the south side of the quadrangle, and was meant to play a pivotal role in the lives of the college-goers; the liturgy was celebrated daily. The chapel and its associated bell tower were similarly constructed in concrete but stand out from the other buildings in their size and shape. Its rounded roof eaves complement the rounded windows found in the first floor windows of the surrounding buildings.

Made entirely of concrete, the complex is constructed in the Brutalism style of architecture, marked by raw and exposed materials, weighty textured surfaces and massiveness created by patterns of concrete. The linear texture of the exterior façade gives interest and variety to the stark concrete and draws the eye upwards. The design motifs repeat in each building, though the chapel is unique in scale and proportion.

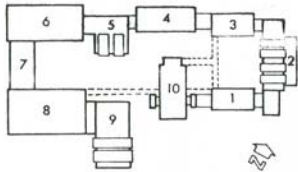
Today the buildings appear to have changed little since their construction. They seem to be in excellent condition and all structures remain in their original locations. The courtyard is accessed through an iron gate by the bell tower though some other iron structures seem to have been lost, such as light poles, etc. and mature foliage grows in the green areas. The buildings represent an excellent extant example of mid-century construction and the trend towards modern architecture. It is worthwhile to note that these buildings were designed by the same architectural firm as the Memorial University College Shop Annex in 1955.



Tax maps, 1946 (top) and October 1957 (bottom) showing the Littledale area. Note St. Bride's Convent and College near the top right of the map; St. Augustine's Hall (now demolished) near the center. Located on the present site of St. Bride's College were outbuildings: one barn, one poultry shed, one implement shed and two other sheds.



Littledale Map, December 19, 2006
St. Bride's College, 220 Waterford Bridge Road



KEY PLAN

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| 1 MOTHER HOUSE | 6 CLASSROOM |
| 2 DINING | 7 ADMINISTRATION |
| 3 RESIDENCE "A" | 8 GYM |
| 4 RESIDENCE "B" | 9 POOL |
| 5 LIBRARY | 10 CHAPEL |

Sources:

City of St. John's Archives, blueprints 1964; and Tax maps

City of St. John's Map Center

"Daily News", May 29, 1967

Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador, St. Bride's College

"Evening Telegram", Wednesday, April 12, 1967

"The Monitor, Newfoundland's Catholic Journal", 32nd year, No. 5, May 1965

Photos taken by Deborah O'Rielly, Assistant Registrar for the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador, December 2006

