

Benoit House

MaristLand



By 1967, the housing of student brothers was changing from large group common dormitories such as the one in the old Fontaine Building, to smaller group housing. Marist College agreed to underwrite the mortgages for two smaller buildings to be located on the grounds owned by the Marist Brothers north of the water works road. Maintenance, interest and amortization costs would be borne by the Brothers.

To effect this plan, the campus north of the water works road was deeded to Marist College by the Marist Brothers. The agreed price was \$1,000,000 for the acreage and buildings, to be paid in 40 annual installments. When the auditors present valued these 40 payments of \$25,000 per annum, the amount was listed in the college books as \$232,000.

Paul Canin designed two houses, to be named Benoit House after Brother Francis Xavier Benoit, long time teacher of history and philosophy at Marian College and Brother Joseph Gregory Marchessault, recently deceased teacher of physics at Marist College. Each house was circular in design, with sixteen rooms each holding two occupants. (Gregory House is visible at the far right of Benoit in the photo, and seems smaller, but both houses were identical.

The original plan was never completely implemented. Benoit House was used for student Brother housing for only one year. Gregory House was used for faculty Brothers' housing for two years. The houses were then converted into regular student housing, and were used until both buildings were demolished to make room for the Hancock Building.



Prior to establishing the Scholasticate in Poughkeepsie, student brothers were housed at Saint Ann's Academy in Manhattan along 76th Street. By 1911, the Scholasticate had been moved to Poughkeepsie, with the student Brothers living quarters in this wood frame house next to Gemstone. The house appears in early photos of Greystone, so it antedates the purchase by the Marist Brothers. The complex of buildings including this, Greystone, the Gatehouse, and Saint Peters was nicknamed *Central* and was used chiefly by the student brothers and working brothers. When student brothers lived there, the building was nicknamed *Pullman*, presumably because each bed and dresser was separated from the others by curtains, similar to those in use in Pullman railroad sleepers.

The MacPherson/provincial house was used as a Juniorate for high school students until 1942, when it was moved to the newly acquired property in Esopus NY. At that time the student Brothers moved into the provincial house dormitories vacated by the juniors. The student Brothers already used the provincial house for their chapel and dining room.



While the photo of the MacPherson house seems elegant, the structure was wooden frame and its western additions (below) were uninspiring but functional. The dormitories for the student Brothers were on the upper floor. (I remember looking out of the round windows at the upper left which were part of one of three floor dormitories.) In short, the building was a fire hazard. The tiny blockhouse at the upper right of the front roof contained a water tank, needed because the entire property was fed by a 1/2 inch line from the water works, and over 100 people needed water for their morning ablutions. The additions can be glimpsed behind the statue and ugly smokestack the the right of the building.



The rectangular additions at the back of the MacPherson house were added by three Marist Brothers who spent almost two decades working on the MacPherson and Bech properties to modify structures.

It was not until 1957 that the student brothers dormitories were shifted to a new building called Fontaine Dormitory after Brother Paul Ambrose Fontaine, located next to the Fontaine study hall/dining room.



The Fontaine Dormitory is the block building with the abstract panels. The dark building at the right was the power plant which headed Greystone, the wooden building next to it, the Fontaine study hall/dining area and the Dormitory.

A decade later the housing pattern was shifting, with experimenting with small group living in several locations in Poughkeepsie. One major part of this experiment was the construction of Benoit and Gregory dormitories.

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