

# COLORADO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## COLORADO STATE REGISTER OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES NOMINATION FORM

**SECTION I**

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**Name of Property**

Historic Name St. Mary School, Convent, Rectory and Church

Other Names St. Mary Church Complex

**Address of Property**

address not for publication

Street Address School: 201 East 7<sup>th</sup> St. / Convent: 726 Russell St. / Church & Rectory: 121 East 7<sup>th</sup> St.

City Walsenburg County Huerfano Zip 81089

**Present Owner of Property**

(for multiple ownership, list the names and addresses of each owner on one or more continuation sheets)

Name Arthur N. Tafoya, Bishop, Diocese of Pueblo

Address 1001 North Grand Avenue Phone 719-544-9861

City Pueblo State Colorado Zip 81003

**Owner Consent for Nomination**

(attach signed consent from each owner of property - see attached form)

**Preparer of Nomination**

Name Ron Harris (additional material by OAHP staff) Date May 31, 2003

Organization Huerfano County Economic Development

Address 6101 County Road 570 Phone 719-746-2120

City Gardner State Colorado Zip 81040

**FOR OFFICIAL USE:**

Site Number 5HF.2162

Nomination Received

Senate # 2 House # 64

8/15/2003 Review Board Recommendation  
 Approval  Denial

9/10/2003 CHS Board State Register Listing  
 Approved  Denied

**Certification of Listing:** President, Colorado Historical Society

Date

**COLORADO STATE REGISTER OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES**

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**SECTION II**

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**Local Historic Designation**

Has the property received local historic designation?

no

yes ---  individually designated  designated as part of a historic district

Date designated \_\_\_\_\_

Designated by \_\_\_\_\_ (Name of municipality or county)

**Use of Property**

Historic Religion: religious facility / church school / church-related residence

Current Religion: religious facility; Domestic: multiple dwelling; Vacant (school)

**Original Owner** Archdiocese of Denver (transferred to Diocese of Pueblo in 1944)

Source of Information All Our Yesterdays: The Story of St. Mary Parish, Walsenburg, Colorado by Howard L. Delaney

**Year of Construction** various – see narrative

Source of Information All Our Yesterdays by Howard L. Delaney

**Architect, Builder, Engineer, Artist or Designer** various – see narrative

Source of Information All Our Yesterdays by Howard L. Delaney

**Locational Status**

Original location of structure(s)

Structure(s) moved to current location

Date of move \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION III**

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**Description and Alterations**

(describe the current and original appearance of the property and any alterations on one or more continuation sheets)

**COLORADO STATE REGISTER OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES**

Property Name St. Mary School, Convent, Rectory and Church

**SECTION IV**

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**Significance of Property**

**Nomination Criteria**

- A** - property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to history
- B** - property is connected with persons significant in history
- C** - property has distinctive characteristics of a type, period, method of construction or artisan
- D** - property is of geographic importance
- E** - property contains the possibility of important discoveries related to prehistory or history

**Areas of Significance**

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Economics                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape                 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture            | <input type="checkbox"/> Education                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Archaeology – prehistoric          | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Law                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Archaeology – historic             | <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment/ Recreation     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Ethnic Heritage               | <input type="checkbox"/> Military                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Exploration/ Settlement       | <input type="checkbox"/> Performing Arts           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Geography/ Community Identity | <input type="checkbox"/> Politics/ Government      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Planning and Development | <input type="checkbox"/> Health/Medicine               | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Science                   |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention                     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social History |
|   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation            |

**Significance Statement**

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

**Bibliography**

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

**SECTION V**

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**Locational Information**

School & Convent / Church & Rectory  
Lot(s) 2-12 / 6-10 Block 53 / 52 Addition Walsenburg (original townsite)

USGS Topographic Quad Map Walsenburg South

**Verbal Boundary Description of Nominated Property**

(describe the boundaries of the nominated property on a continuation sheet)

**COLORADO STATE REGISTER OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES**

Property Name St. Mary School, Convent, Rectory and Church

**SECTION VI**

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**Photograph Log for Black and White Photographs**

(prepare a photograph log on one or more continuation sheets)

**SECTION VII**

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**ADDITIONAL MATERIALS TO ACCOMPANY NOMINATION**

**Owner Consent Form**

**Black and White Photographs**

**Color Slides**

**Sketch Map(s)**

**Photocopy of USGS Map Section**

**Optional Materials**

**For Office Use Only**

Property Type:  building(s)  district  site  structure  object  area

Architectural Style/Engineering Type: Mission Revival; Gothic Revival

Period of Significance: 1912 - 1950

Level of Significance:  Local  State  National

Acreage approximately 5

P.M. 6th Township 28 S Range 66 W Section 9 Quarter Sections N NE SE

UTM Reference: Zone 13 Easting 519640 Northing 4163810

Site Elevation: 6200 feet

Property Name St. Mary School, Convent, Rectory and Church

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## DESCRIPTION and ALTERATIONS

The St. Mary Church Complex is located at the south end of Walsenburg, one block east of Main Street. The complex consists of four buildings—a school, convent, rectory and church. Constructed of red brick in various stages between 1912 and 1925, the school, convent and rectory were designed in the Mission Revival Style. Completed in 1900, the Gothic Revival church had brick walls that were later covered with light colored stucco. The complex occupies portions of two city blocks along East 7<sup>th</sup> Street. Russell Street, running north/south, separates the block on which the school and convent sits from the block that contains the rectory and church. The large, elongated school faces north onto East 7<sup>th</sup> Street, as does the rectory and church, while the convent, positioned south behind the school, faces east onto Russell Street. Mature evergreen trees mark the school's three main entrances and break up the expanse of grass in front of the building. The partially paved area between the school and convent provides a playground for local children. A two-foot high stuccoed wall with a concrete cap runs along the west, south and east edges of the convent yard. Just inside this wall, a tall chain link fence encloses the west half of the yard with its two mature cottonwood trees and children's playground equipment. A low stuccoed wall with capped square piers separates the sidewalk from the rectory lawn. Numerous evergreen and deciduous trees dot the expansive grassy lawn around the rectory. A church parking lot borders the west side of the church.

**School** (1912; 1922 west wing; 1926 east wing)

[previously recorded as 5HF.383]

The largest building in the complex is the school. Two historic additions have resulted in an elongated configuration with a highly irregular plan. The building is two-stories with a raised basement and has walls of red brick with stone and concrete trim. Parapet walls project above the flat roofs, and each section presents its own style of curvilinear parapets. Round arched windows are confined to the original building, while round arched entryways mark all three sections. In the 1980s in an attempt to be more energy efficient, painted plywood boards were installed in the window openings to reduce the amount of glazing. The resulting "heavy-lidded" effect is fortunately easily reversible.

Identified on early Sanborn Maps as Ussel Memorial School, the original (middle) portion of the building was completed in 1912, although it did not open for classes until the following year. The designer or architect for this section, which cost \$25,000, has not been determined. The most elaborate curvilinear parapet framed by two crenelated corners marks this earliest construction. A double straight-reversed staircase accesses the three large round-arched entryways on the symmetrical facade. Plywood sheets conceal the double leaf entryways and their semi-circular transom lights. A small Latin cross forms part of the molding above the middle entry. The building has a combination of round-arched windows with decorative moldings (confined to the upper story) and straight-headed windows with lintels. The variegated brick in the staircase does not match the brick walls and an historic photograph shows a single, straight staircase. It is not known when the original staircase was replaced, however a historic photo taken shortly after the first addition was completed contains the current staircase configuration. There are seven classrooms on the main floor with four additional classrooms and a large assembly room on the second level. The basement has a large assembly room with several storage spaces.

Responding to the rapidly increasing enrollment, a west wing was added in 1922 at a cost of \$40,000. Mr. Ghione of Walsenburg was the contractor for this section. A simpler curvilinear parapet wall with a niche below marks the offset main entrance to this portion of the building. A large red tile, gabled-roof hood shelters a large semi-circular arched entryway that contains double doors with multi-light side lights surmounted by a multi-light semi-circular transom. Ornamentation is limited to several encircling

Property Name St. Mary School, Convent, Rectory and Church

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stringcourses and the small diamond shapes framed in contrasting brickwork that highlight the parapet walls at the corners. All the windows are straight-headed. This section has a basement level that contains four large classrooms and a bathroom; the upper level has a large assembly room, a bathroom and a small kitchen.

The east wing, added to accommodate the high school department, was built in 1926 at a cost of \$95,000. The architect for this section was Roy W. Vorhees, with the original plans drawn by Father Liciotti; P.J. Sullivan of Denver served as the contractor. An offset projection with a curvilinear parapet marks the main entrance to this section. Another gabled roof hood (this one clad in asphalt shingles) shelters a semi-circular arched entrance similar to the west wing. Like the earlier addition, all the windows are straight-head, but unlike its western counterpart, a series of pilasters break up the wall expanse and frame the window bays. Two more sections of the parapet receive a simple curvilinear expression, one on the north façade and another on the east end. The basement level contains three classrooms, a large cafeteria, kitchen, two bathrooms, the boiler room and two storage rooms. Seven classrooms, two offices, and a library comprise the first level. The upper level has a gymnasium with a balcony and a stage, dressing rooms, two locker rooms, and a storage room. The gym has a pressed metal ceiling that is still in excellent condition. Each level of the school contains approximately 16,300 square feet.

**Convent** (1914; 1922 addition)

The architect and contractor of the convent was Mr. Ghione of Walsenburg. In 1922, the building almost doubled in length and the new construction continued the Mission Revival design elements. The 7,000 square-foot building is two stories with a basement and has a modified rectangular plan. The elongated asphalt-shingled hipped roof has widely overhanging eaves with exposed rafters. Curvilinear parapet walls extend through the east and south slopes of the roof, and two large brick chimneys pierce the north slope. The walls are red brick, while sandstone serves as lugsills for the main floor windows and an upper story sill course that encircles the building. The majority of the straight-headed, rectangular windows are double hung wood frame sash with 6/1 lights.

The west façade has a central, round-arched, recessed entry. Two columns support the arched portal that is reached by a series of concrete steps with brick side walls. Two large windows flank this entry, while four windows fill the upper story space directly above. A stringcourse of stone and a round-arched niche fill the curvilinear parapet. Atop the concrete coping that caps the parapet wall is a Celtic cross.

Several projections break up the expanse of the south side with two providing second story balconies. There is a large projecting square bay with windows on all three sides of its brick walls. The walls extend upward creating a solid balcony wall with a stone coping at the same height as the upper story sill course. Several windows with semicircular blind arches lead to a half-hipped projecting entrance bay with a glazed and paneled door surmounted by a transom. Beyond this is a two-story projecting bay with a curvilinear parapet wall that breaks the cornice line. Below the curvilinear parapet wall with its decorative coping is a small diamond-shaped window. This projection is incorporated into a porch and balcony. Square brick columns support the flat roof of the porch that serves as the floor of the balcony.

The east end also contains a single-story projection that creates a balcony with a solid wall. The expanse of the elongated north wall is broken by a slightly projecting mid-section that contains entrances marked by wooden decks. The main level has one office, eight classrooms, two kitchens, and 2-1/2 bathrooms. The upper level contains two occupied apartments that are managed by the

Property Name St. Mary School, Convent, Rectory and Church

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church.

**Rectory (1918)**

The rectory is the third building to occupy the site. An 1882 church, built to replace one destroyed in the 1878 flood, was torn down in 1917 to make room for this rectory. Mr. Ghione was also the architect/contractor for this 3,900 square foot building that shares some of the same design elements as the convent. The two-story building has a basement, a rectangular plan, and an asphalt-shingled hipped roof with overhanging eaves. A curvilinear parapet wall extends through the north roof slope marking the primary façade, while a brick chimney pierces the east slope. The walls are red brick with dark brick forming decorative trim, window lugsills, and an upper-story stringcourse that encircles the building. The rectangular, straight-headed windows vary in sizes, but most are double hung sash with 6/6 lights.

The north façade has a full-width brick porch and balcony. The series of large, round-arched openings creates an arcade look to the porch. The porch walls, highlighted by four Latin crosses created from the contrasting brick, culminate in a dark red brick coping. A series of concrete steps with brick side walls leads to the covered porch with its central entrance flanked by two windows. Directly above in the balcony, this configuration repeats itself with a central door flanked by two windows. A pilaster-framed wall framing the upper story door extends through the cornice line to form a curvilinear parapet wall with a small, round-arched niche. There is an at-elevation door on the west side, and a full-width, one-story hipped roof extension off the rear (south end). The main floor contains six offices, a kitchen, dining room, and a bathroom. The second floor consists of three bedrooms, three offices, and two bathrooms. There have been no modifications to this building and all its original interior wood trim and moldings and hard wood floors are in excellent shape.

A small flat-roofed building with brick walls and a wooden overhead door is located at the southeast corner of the lot. This one-story, rectangular plan building was a one-car garage that is now used for storage. Not present on the 1919 Sanborn map, the building is visible on the 1930 map.

**Church (1900)**

[previously recorded as 5HF.604]

Although not an example of the Mission style, the church is the oldest building in the complex and is the reason the other buildings eventually were built around it. Construction began in 1892 on Our Lady of the Seven Dolors (now known as St. Mary Church), and it opened for services in 1900. Designed by Pueblo architect Patrick P. Mills in the Gothic Revival style, the building has a cross-shaped plan, stuccoed walls, and intersecting steeply-pitched gable roofs clad in metal. The building faces north onto 7<sup>th</sup> Street and its main entry is located at the base of the centrally positioned narthex/bell tower. This square tower rises above the ridgeline and culminates in a crenelated parapet wall. A short, metal, eight-sided pyramidal steeple with a large cross rises from the top of the tower. Other Gothic Revival elements seen in the building include pointed-arch windows, lancet widows, and corner buttressing.

Major changes to the church occurred since its construction. In 1931, high winds toppled the original tall wooden steeple. A smaller steeple behind a crenelated parapet wall was installed as a replacement. Other alterations include the partial in-filling of the bell tower's louvered openings, the replacement of the original tile roof with metal, and the construction of small extensions off the transept entrys. In the 1940s, the original brick walls that were fired in a local kiln at a low temperature began eroding and were subsequently stuccoed. Ironically, a stuccoed-covered wall surface is a characteristic of the Mission style.

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Sanborn Maps (1912 at left and 1930  
below) graphically illustrate the  
growth of the school building

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St. Mary School

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St. Mary Convent

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St. Mary Rectory

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St. Mary Church

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## SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT

St. Mary Church Complex is eligible under criterion C for its architectural significance as it possesses the distinctive characteristics of Mission Revival, a style not well represented in Walsenburg. The school, convent and rectory form an impressive collection of the best-preserved example of this style in town. The three buildings exhibit the character-defining features of the Mission Revival style as seen in the various curvilinear parapet walls, the round-arched windows and entrys, the arcade-like rectory porch, the overhanging roof eaves with exposed rafters, and the limited wall surface ornamentation that includes stringcoursing. The complex is also eligible under criterion A for its contributions to the social history of Walsenburg. These buildings played an important role in the social and educational activities of families within, and outside, the parish.

### Historical Background

Huerfano County and its local settlements including Walsenburg (called *Plaza de los Leones* at that time) consisted of only a few families during the 1860s. In spite of the scarcity of individuals living in these communities, the Catholic church was present through the perseverance of church leaders. In 1869, Bishop Machebeuf established the parish of Our lady of the Seven Dolors at Walsenburg and a series of pastors began serving the community. Father Ussel, pastor from 1876 until his death in 1909, had a plan to secure a place in which Sisters could live, so that a school could open as soon as possible. Although Father Ussel dreamed and schemed for it, the school was never realized during his lifetime. In his will he bequeathed \$2,000 and some real estate, stipulating that it be used for the erection of a school. Father Lefebvre was able to comply with this last wish and a school was at long last built in 1912. However, Father Lefebvre died before the building opened for classes. Father Liciotti confronted the task of completing the school and readying it for classes by securing teachers. Father Liciotti was pastor of St. Mary Church from May of 1913 through 1941. The convent, rectory, and two additions to the school were erected during his pastorate.

In the fall of 1913 the school opened and three Sisters headed by Sister Petronella took charge of soliciting postulants to assist in teaching the 500 students ranging between 7 and 19 years of age. Six women responded and were to receive the "religious habit" during the Christmas season that year. However, Bishop Matz, who was to officiate the ceremony, received word from the Apostolic Delegate in Washington D.C. that the community did not have the ecclesiastical authority and he was ordered to dismiss them from Walsenburg. Bishop Matz wrote Reverend Mother Aloysia, superior of the Atchison community of Benedictines in Kansas requesting that she send experienced sisters to teach at St Mary's school. After much discussion concerning the lack of experienced teachers available, Mother Aloysia sent six sisters to Walsenburg. They arrived on January 3, 1914, and classes resumed. The school had an enrollment of about three hundred students during its first year. When the Sisters arrived, the convent had not yet been built. A house was rented across the street from the church and they lived there until August before taking up quarters in the school building. In October, the Sisters moved into the new convent.

The years of 1913 and 1914 were marred by violence that erupted between striking mine workers and the Colorado National Guard, culminating in the 7<sup>th</sup> Street Massacre on April 14, 1914. Several deaths occurred in and around Walsenburg as a result of the strike. One day in the spring of 1914 a particularly violent battle was in progress at the west end of town. Word came from the sheriff's office that the children were to be kept in the school until their parents came for them, and about ten children were kept overnight in the school by the Sisters.

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The school grew rapidly and in a few years more room was needed to accommodate the increased enrollment. A wing was added to the west of the original building in 1922. Four years of high school had been incorporated into the curriculum in the meantime and by 1925, plans were underway to add another wing to the building to provide more adequate facilities for the high school students.

With the addition of the east wing in 1926, St Mary was the largest and most complete parochial unit in the diocese with accommodations for 1,250 students. The impact on Walsenburg was not only felt by the large Catholic populace, it also alleviated the community of a significant financial burden. The yearly cost of educating a student at St Mary's in 1926 was \$21.45 whereas the cost of sending a student to the public school was \$88.52. If the 765 students who were attending St Mary's School at that time were to have been turned over to the public school system, the community's taxes would have doubled.

Walsenburg and Trinidad were the two main population centers anchoring the southern Colorado coal-mining industry. In the 1880s, company-owned coal-mining towns began dotting the landscapes of Las Animas and Huerfano counties. The need for coal companies to erect towns was initially less acute in Huerfano County as Walsenburg sat atop a large coal seam that stretched for fifteen miles on either side of the town. Religion was an important part of a mining family's life. Company-sponsored religious activities generally failed with most miners and their families seeking religious guidance in Walsenburg. The schools in Huerfano County reflected the diverse ethnic makeup of the population and the schools in Walsenburg were true melting pots. Many mining families spoke little or no English until their children started attending school.

The demand for coal from southern Colorado mines began to wane after the first World War with petroleum products eclipsing coal as America's primary fuel by the 1920s. Walsenburg and Trinidad absorbed many of the mining families after company towns closed. This could explain the need for the 1922 and 1926 additions to school. Although the industry saw a brief revival during World War II, the general decline resumed after the war.

Due to the impoverishment of Huerfano County, the church's outreach program was extremely significant to the growth and well being of the county. Sisters traveled to outlining towns including Tioga, Gardner, LeVeta, DelCarbon and the numerous mining communities to teach English as a second language and provide health care needs to those families that were unable to travel into Walsenburg. The outreach efforts were expanded in the 1930s and 40s when the mines began to shut down leaving most of Huerfano county unemployed. The church established agreements with local merchants to provide food, shelter and gas to assist displaced workers and their families. Furthermore, those Sisters who had nursing experience volunteered at the local hospital, which was severely understaffed. (The addition to the Convent in 1922 was initially an infirmary that cared for the numerous cases of tuberculosis that haunted the convents in the region.) The Church's outreach effort continues today through the collaboration with the Salvation Army and other local organizations.

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**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Blumenson, John J.-G. *Identifying American Architecture*. Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1977.

Clyne, Rick J. *Coal People: Life in Southern Colorado's Company Towns, 1890-1930*. Denver: The Colorado Historical Society, 1999.

Delaney, Howard L. *All Our Yesterdays: The Story of St. Mary Parish, Walsenburg, Colorado*. Consolidated Publishing Company, 1944.

*Denver Catholic Register*. 6 January 1927, p.1 & 7.

Hays, Sister Alice Marie. *A Song in the Pines*. Colorado Springs: Bennet Press, 1975.

Jones, William H. *History of Catholic Education in the State of Colorado*. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1955.

Pearce, Sarah J. *A Guide to Colorado Architecture*. Denver: The Colorado Historical Society, 1983.

Schuster, Sister Mary Faith. *The Meaning of the Mountain*. North Central Press, 1963.

Interviews with former teachers and volunteers at St. Mary Parish. Benet Hill Academy, Colorado Springs. 12 July 2003:

Sister Elizabeth Cogan  
Sister Jan Ginzkey  
Sister Ernestine Lopez  
Sister Josie Sanchez

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**GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

Lots 6-10, Block 52, and Lots 2-12 of Block 53, Original Townsite of Walsenburg.

1930 Sanborn Map

**Property Name** St. Mary School, Convent, Rectory and Church

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**PHOTOGRAPH LOG**

The following information pertains to photograph numbers 1-19 except as noted:

Name of Property: St. Mary School, Convent, Rectory and Church  
Location: Walsenburg, Huerfano County  
Photographer: Ron Harris  
Date of Photographs: February and March 2003  
Negatives: in photographer's possession

Photo No.                      Photographic Information

- 1 School – main entrance of original 1912 portion; facing SE
- 2 School – main entrance of 1922 west wing; facing S
- 3 School – northeast corner of 1926 east wing; facing SW
- 4 School – east wing entrance; facing SW
- 5 School – rear (south side); facing NE
- 6 School – rear; facing NW
- 7 School – rear; facing NE
- 8 School – entrance to west wing; facing SW
- 9 Convent – front entrance; facing E
- 10 Convent – one of the south side balconies; facing NE
- 11 Convent – southwest corner; facing NE
- 12 Convent – southeast corner; facing NW
- 13 Convent – rear (north side); facing SW
- 14 Rectory – front entrance; facing SE
- 15 Rectory – east side; facing NW
- 16 Rectory – west side; facing NE
- 17 Church—north face & west side; facing SE
- 18 Church – west & south (rear) sides; facing NE
- 19 Church – south (rear) & east sides; facing NW

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**USGS TOPOGRAPHIC MAP**

Walsenburg South Quadrangle, Colorado

7.5 Minute Series