CHAPTER XVI

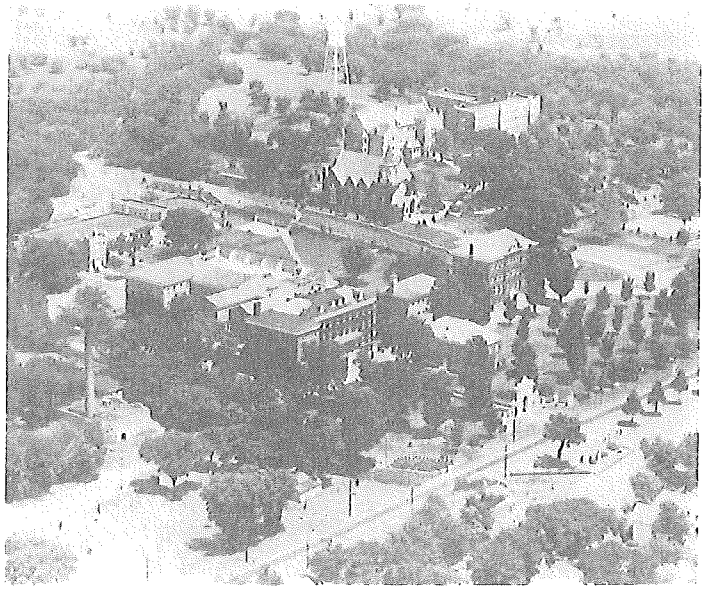
THE SEISMOLOGICAL STATION AT SAINT MARY'S COLLEGE, SAINT MARYS, KANSAS

By James B. Macelwane, S. J.

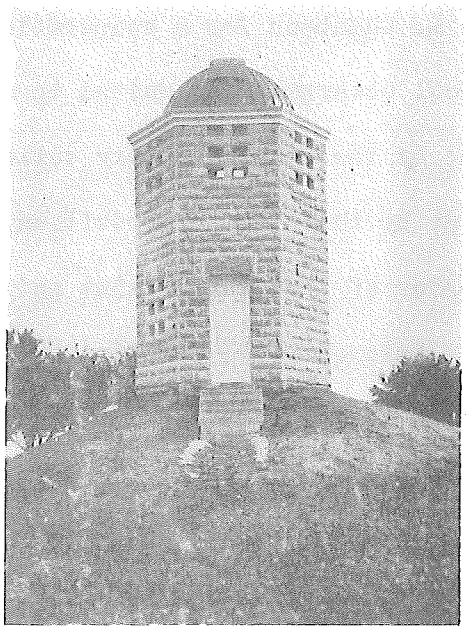
The administrative authorities of Saint Mary's College, Saint Marys, Kansas, were much impressed by the plan of Father F. L. Odenbach for a cooperating chain of Jesuit seismological observatories united in a Jesuit Seismological Service; by the small monetary outlay required to implement the plan; by the strategic position of Saint Marys on the eastern border of the Great Plains and nearly midway between the Jesuit seismological stations at Saint Louis and Denver; and by the prestige that would accrue to the College through earthquake observations announced in the public press.

Accordingly an 80 kilogram horizontal component Wiechert seismograph and a contact clock were purchased from Spindler and Hoyer in Göttingen, Germany. When the seismograph arrived, Father Francis J. Gerst, S. J., then a scholastic, was placed in charge. He unpacked the seismograph and clock and set them up in the astronomical observatory on the bluff of the Kansas River overlooking the college.

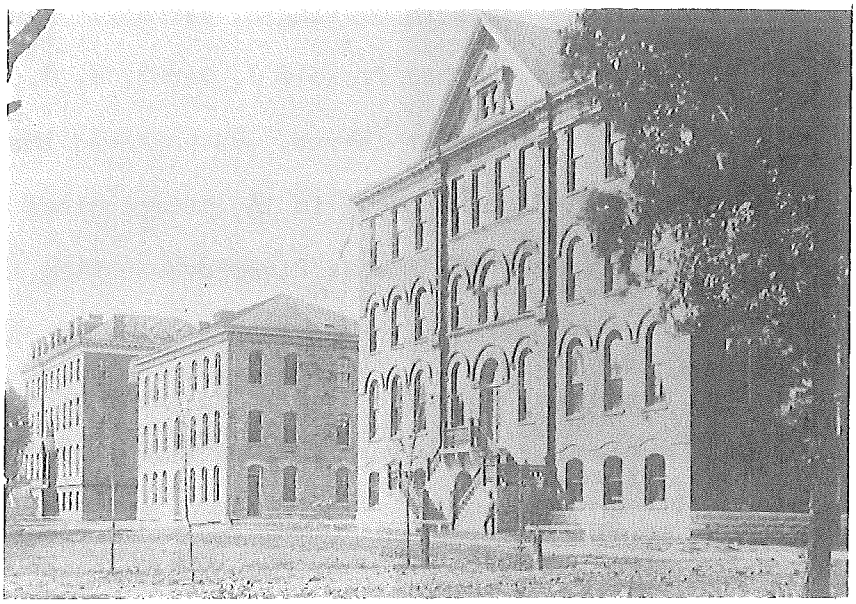
Eventually this location was found unsatisfactory and the seismograph was removed to the basement of the



St. Mary's College Viewed from the Air



The Astronomical Observatory



Science Building,
Second from the Right,
Second Location of the
Seismograph Station

Reverend Francis J. Gerst, S. J.

science building and the contact clock was placed upstairs in the physical laboratory. It was thought that greater accessibility and less exposure to wind would offset the disadvantage of proximity to the Union Pacific tracks.

However, there came an unusually high flood of the Kansas River which inundated the basement of the Science Building, overturned the seismograph, carried away the lighter parts and buried the heavy castings in a thick deposit of mud.

Thus the Saint Mary's College seismological observatory came to an end. Shortly thereafter the Spindler and Hoyer contact clock, being no longer needed for the timing of earthquakes, was sold to the Department of Geophysics of Saint Louis University for use in its Gymnasium vault.