Brothers Chapel, Holy Cross School

4950 Dauphine Street

Holy Cross Schoollike the University of Notre Damewas founded by brothers from the Congregation of the Holy Cross, a French order. In 1849, five brothers and three Marianite nuns arrived in New Orleans to run St. Marys Orphanage in a city where they encountered an unpleasant climate, yellow fever, and soon thereafter the privations accompanying the Civil War. Four years later, Holy Angels Academy was established to care for girls.

The brothers and their successors persisted, and after the Civil War they purchased a plantation downstream from the city center as the home for St. Isidores College, a day and boarding school licensed in 1879 to grant bachelors and masters degrees. The picturesque administration building, its central structure designed by James Freret, dates to 1895, the same year the college was renamed Holy Cross College. Almost twenty years later the school became a secondary school, a function it continues to fulfill. Over time the school added several new buildings, and in 1972 the boarding school closed and a middle school was added.

During the years of expansion, a chapel for the brothers was constructed, under the direction of the Blitch/Kneval architectural firm. Though a small, modest structure, the chapel included figurative stained glass windows. The Polloni studio of Florence, Italy,which was represented in the U.S. by ARS Liturgica of Morris Plains, New Jersey, created the windows. These two companies collaborated on the religious art in about a dozen churches in the New Orleans area, installing stained glass at the Chateau de Notre Dame, St. Anns Church and. Shrine, St. Edward the Confessor, St. Charles Borromeo in Destrehan, St. Joan of Arc in LaPlace, and Hotel Dieu.

Hurricane Katrina was not kind to Holy Cross School, and the devastation was so extensive that the administrators chose to abandon the historic campus. Its new locationon Paris Avenueis on the former site of St. Frances Xavier Cabrini Church and School, which were destroyed in the aftermath of the storm. The stained glass windows, though in good condition, remain in storage until funding allows the construction of a new chapel.

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