Jackson Avenue Evangelical Church

2221 Chippewa Street

Since its birth, this church has seen many changes, both in denomination and architecture. Although the current congregation dates officially to 1968, it traces its roots back to the Lafayette German Evangelical Church, starting in 1845.

The original church, around the corner from the present building, at the corner of Chippewa and Philip streets, was a frame structure. A two-story parochial school building was added, but the fast-growing parish required larger worship accommodations. The cornerstone for todays building was laid in 1874, and it was dedicated two years later. By 1902 all services were conducted in English in order to reverse the decline in congregation membership.

Designed by Charles Silver in Romanesque Revival style, the red brick exterior features a semicircular arched opening with an over-arch molding and a wall buttress tower frame. Lombard arches under the roof line reflect a Northern Italian influence. The church sustained damage during Hurricane Betsy in 1965, when a lightning strike to the bell tower required the removal of the spire and pinnacles. During Katrina in 2005, the edge of a tornado battered the front of the church and ruined the 1930s organ.

Many of the windows combine American glass and European stained glass. The Louisiana Glass and Mirror Co. of New Orleans (owned by the Lips family) and the A. Henry Lips Glass Company of New Orleans were actively involved in the installation of these windows, as they were at many other churches in Southeast Louisiana. The family has been active in the church for generations, and they designed and created at least one window here.

Often, as a means to economize by avoiding import tariffs, churches imported just the central figures and hired a local glass studio to add the surrounding glass and then install the windows. (These have been termed semi-European windows.) Here, this may be the case for the Good Shepherd, the Agony in the Garden, and the Ascension windows. A man who worked with the Mayer studio owners for over fifty years wrote to a member of the Stained Glass Art in Sacred Places tours in August 2009, saying he was unaware that the Mayer or Zettler firms had ever exported simply the painted central figures for windows. Other companies, however, did so, and numerous New Orleans churches, such as Ss. Peter and Paul, include windows with this history.

The principal sanctuary windows at Jackson Avenue Evangelical Church were installed between 1902 and 1960and are mainly in the Munich pictorial artistic tradition, although at least one was American made. The order books for the Franz Mayer studio in Munich do not mention any windows from this church, but a representative of the firm confirmed thatbased on the similarity of design to a drawing in their archivesMayer did provide the window portraying the young Jesus with the Scholars. The glass above the dark crossbar, however, is a replacement by an unknown artist, perhaps after Hurricane Betsy, which seriously compromised the roof.

Church records show that Mayer created the Easter Sunday window in 1904 and the Nativity window sometime between 1910 and 1920. Church records for this period were destroyed in a fire, and the Mayer order books for 1917-1919 are also missing. Signatures are lacking throughout the church.

An 1865-1866 wood engraving of Jacobs Ladder by Gustave Doré may have inspired the back right window. The Mayer representative stated that his studio did not create this window, which appeared to him to be cold painted, rather than having the colors fired into the glass (that would explain the flaking paint). The borders incorporate opalescent glass, a material not used by European studios. This window is unusual because the faces, some of the arms, and Jacobs leg are of a superior quality to the rest of the window; probably they were reused from other windows.

In the narthex, depictions of the Evangelical Lutheran Crown and Cross were created by the Lips Company between 1940 and 1989. The archives of the Emil Frei Studio of St. Louis indicate that its studio designed and executed Stained glass memorial windows . . . series of two projects in 19561960. One was the Christ, the Alpha and Omega window behind the altar, and the other was the Palm Sunday window along the stairway to the choir loft. The Frei records say that artist was for the latter was Emil Hofmann of their Munich Studio, while church records attribute the design to the Lips company, which installed them. Do admire the beautiful red flash (sandwich) glass of Christs robes.

Damage from Hurricane Katrina to the windows and the front façade has been repaired. The history of this venerable church stands out as a testament to the fortitude of the people of New Orleans and this congregation.

**Windows**

Dates and studios from church records

Behind the Altar Christ, the Alpha and Omega

1957 (Frei + Lips)

Jesus and the Little Children (1902) Rock of Ages

Easter Sunday at Christs Tomb (Mayer 1904) Good Shepherd (European central figure)

Nativity (Mayer 1910-1920) Agony in the Garden (European central figure)

Young Jesus and the Scholars (Mayer 1910-1920) Ascension (European central figure)

Jesus Knocking at the Door (European) Jacobs Ladder (around 1915)

Vestibule, left stairway Vestibule, right stairway

Palm Sunday Procession (Frei + Lips, 1956-1960) Jesus Lifting Peter from the Water (European)

Above side entrance

Evangelical Lutheran Cross and Crown (Lips 1940-1989)

Transom windows (Haro Glass of New Orleans)

*Visited*

*March 21, 1993*

*September 20, 2009*

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