St. Anne Catholic Church, Napoleonville

Set back in a spacious lawn surrounded by mature live oak trees, St. Anne Church is the pride of Napoleonville Catholics. Like many churches in the area, it began as a mission of the Plattenville church, Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

At first the faithful met in a private home, beginning probably in the 1840s. The land for a church was donated in 1870 by Marcelite Blanchard Foley, widow of Arthur M. Foley, as the couple attributed their survival during the historic 1856 hurricane that destroyed Isle Dernière to their prayers. Not until 1872, after more than two decades of appeals, did the Archdiocese of New Orleans grant their request to organize as an independent parish.

The new church was named in honor of St. Neopolus, a third-century Egyptian martyr also known as St. Napoleon. St. Neopolus was the patron saint of Archbishop Napoleon Joseph Perche, who had authorized the founding of the parish. (Many assume that the church was named for Napoleon Bonaparte, but he never attained sainthood. It is possible, however, that the *town* was named for the emperor when it incorporated in 1878.)

The first St. Napoleon Church was a wooden structure, built in 1874. The community also built a presbytery the same year to welcome their first priest. The present brick church was dedicated in 1909, after four years of planning and building. At that time the parish was renamed in honor of St. Anne, to whom residents had prayed during a yellow fever epidemic.

The facade and triple-arched entrance of the church are Moorish in feel, but the architect also incorporated a cupola and other features of eclectic styles. The interior, with its light walls and large windows, is beautiful. The designin five-aisle basilica layoutis unusual. The choir loft includes a Wicks pipe organ.

In the 1950s the church underwent extensive renovation, and the Italian marble altar and side altars were installed. A detailed list of the work accomplished during this work does not mention the windows.

Since many of the stained glass windows are dedicated to people who died during or returned from war in the 1940s, we guess that the windows may date to the late 1940s. The archives of the Emil Frei Studios include a reference to St. Anne Church, with no date. Although the Frei document does not indicate whether they just prepared a bid or actually executed the work, stylistic considerations, such as the attention to detail, hint that most of these are in fact Frei windows. Fifteen represent all the Mysteries of the Rosary. The Visitation and Assumption windows are of a superior craftsmanship.(particularly the shading) and may have been installed before the other thirteen Mysteries of the Rosary windows. If so, presumably the designers of the church anticipated completing the set as funds became available.

In 1996 the church was meticulously repainted by the Conrad Schmidt Studios, and 24-karat gold leaf as well as gold gilt were applied, duplicating original designs.

*Visited April 2005*

**Windows of St. Anne Church, Napoleonville**

Altar

Annunciation\* Crowning of Mary\*\*\*

Visitation\* Assumption\*\*\*

Nativity\* Descent of the Holy Spirit\*\*\*

Presentation\* Ascension of Christ\*\*\*

Finding Jesus in the Temple\* Resurrection of Christ\*\*\*

Agony in the Garden\*\* Crucifixion\*\*

Scourging\*\* (in reconciliation room) Carrying the Cross\*\*

Our Lady of Fatima (over door to belfry)

Crowning with Thorns\*\* (in tower room)

St. Peter (over door to porch)

Entrance Doors

St. Elisabeth St. Francis of Assisi St. Theresa

 of Hungary the Little Flower

 Choir Loft

 St. Cecilia

 St. Michael the Archangel Sacristy/Cry Room

(over door) 1874 Church of St. Napoleon

 1909 Church of St. Anne

(Top) St. Joachim & St. Anne

(Bottom) Finding the Statue

 of St. Anne, 1625

*Mysteries of the Rosary*

\* Joyful Mysteries

\*\* Sorrowful Mysteries

\*\*\* Glorious Mysteries

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