St. John Bosco Chapel, Hope Haven

1101 Barataria Boulevard, Marrero

First-time travelers on Barataria Boulevard are rightly surprised to pass two large complexes of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture on their way south from the Westbank Expressway. Madonna Manor, on the right, is completely closed now. At the time of our tour, Hope Haven (on the left) housed a culinary program for at-risk youth, and Catholic Charities hoped to re-open a center for the elderly.

Both facilities were the creations of the energetic Father Peter M. H. Wynhoven, who served as the priest of St. Josephs Church in Gretna at the same time. Earlier, he had founded a home for unemployed men in New Orleans (St. Vincents Hotel, in the Pontalba Building), and he saw the need to educate youth to lead productive lives. With donations from Catholics and non-Catholics alike, he set out to make this goal a reality. Beginning in 1925 and 1930, respectively, Hope Haven (for boys) and Madonna Manor (for girls) opened their doors to provide shelter and education through high school. They continued this mission until 2008.

In 1934 the Salesian Society took over the challenges of running Hope Haven. St. John Bosco, founder of this order, grew up impoverished in nineteenth-century Turin, Italy, and as a youth he sometimes performed as a juggler, magician, or acrobat to attract crowds for prayer services. Later, as a priest, he sheltered homeless boys, finding apprenticeships for them so that they could succeed in life. It was appropriate that this order should become involved at Hope Havenand that they should dedicate the chapel to Don Bosco.

The spectacular Spanish Colonial Revival chapel, dedicated in 1941, reflects the architectural taste of Father Wynhoven and the architect, William Richard Burk. St. Josephs Church in Gretna, Father Wynhovens church, is of the same exuberant style. (Burks love of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture is also obvious at Harahan Elementary School.)

The interior, now lacking the pews and religious furniture of a functioning chapel, is spacious and sunny, ready for its future elderly population. The doors from the confessional have been used in the wall dividing the two large rooms. Dont miss the beautiful ceiling with inlaid beams.

The stained glass comprises three distinct styles, but the dates and artists are unknown. Two round windows in the smaller room are brightly colored, portraying the life of St. John Bosco and the daily activities at Hope Haven and Madonna Manor. The windows in the choir loft, of the apotheosis of St. John Bosco, is reminiscent of the nineteenth-century Munich style, with an elaborate background and realistic shading. Another eight windows depict the roles that St. John Bosco played during his years as a priest. These pastel windows are of a delicate and detailed style.

Both the architecture and the stained glass of this chapel are memorable, and Catholic Charities is to be thanked for their efforts to reopen the chapel.

**Windows**

Choir Loft

Apotheosis of St. John Bosco

St. John Bosco

St. John Bosco, Missionary St. John Bosco, Artisan

St. John Bosco, Confessor St. John Bosco, Writer

St. John Bosco, Preacher St. John Bosco, Educator

Activities at Hope Haven Life of John Bosco

St. John Bosco, Prophet St. John Bosco, Priest

*Visited May 22, 2016*

When citing information from this document, please acknowledge the Preservation Resource Center of New Orleans, 2021.