St. John the Baptist Catholic Church

2361 Highway 18 (River Road), Edgard, Louisiana

St. John the Baptist Church reflects the strong ties between church and state in early Louisiana. The ecclesiastical parish was established in 1772 in the political jurisdiction of Second German Coast. Religious affiliations prevailed, however, and in 1807 the name St. John the Baptist was selected when the parish separated from St. Charles and St. James parishes.

The present church was constructed in 1922 after a fire destroyed the earlier building. (That church included four or five Mayer/Zettler windows, installed in 1909.) An area landmark with its tall twin towers that can be seen from the river, it is an imposing Roman Renaissance structure, enhanced by patterned brickwork.

All the stained glass windows, most of which follow the theme of the Mysteries of the Rosary, were installed at the time of construction. Their color and clarity are remarkable. Saints and gospel scenes are depicted in the rich and detailed style characteristic of Munich windows. They are American however, as one of them bears the signature of the Daprato Stained Glass Company (Chicago and New York).

In the choir loft beneath an outstanding rose window is a Hinners tracker pipe organ that is on the list of historic organs of the United States. (See the next page.)

The church cemetery documents some of the history of this west bank congregation, which has nurtured German farmers, enslaved and free African Americans, Acadians, and others for over two centuries.

**Windows**

Apse

St. John the Baptist

St. Stephen St. Peter Claver

Altar

St. Vincent de Paul St. Francis and the Crucified Christ

Annunciation Sacred Heart Revealed to Mary Margaret

Visitation Wedding Feast at Cana

Nativity Joan of Arc at the Stake

Presentation Crucifixion

Finding Jesus in the Temple Carrying of the Cross

Resurrection Crowning with Thorns

Ascension Scourging at the Pillar

Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles Agony in the Garden

Assumption of Mary Crowning of Mary

Baptistry

Naming of John

Over entry

Rose window

Historic Pipe Organ of St. John the Baptist Church

The organ in St. John the Baptist Church of Edgard is a rugged and powerful instrument. Built by the Hinners Organ Company of Pekin, Illinois, it is likely one of the last tracker, or mechanical, action organs installed in our area (excluding the more recent tracker-revival organs). Some may consider its eight ranks of pipes on two manuals small, yet its ability to fill the room with music is impressive and a tribute to the firms voicing skills.

John L. Hinners (b. 1846) opened his company in 1879 but specialized in reed organs until 1890. By the time the factory closed in 1930, it had completed about three thousand pipe organs. Hinners products were sold primarily to small rural midwestern congregations, which could order from a catalog, making organ shopping comparatively simple for an isolated community. Hinners used fine materials and crafted them well. Many of these organs are still in use, bearing witness to the quality of this little-known companys work.

*Susan Levy and Dan Baudier*

*Toured, March 1998*

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