

Volume Five: January 1, 2024

Transition into the Twentieth Century

From its foundation in 1879 to 1912 Holy Cross School was under the direction of the Holy Cross priests. The president at the turn of the century was Father Daniel Spillard who served from 1897 until 1912 when he was succeeded by Brother Engelbert Leisse. It is during the last decade of the nineteenth century that the campus on Dauphine Street began to look more like a school. The faculty and administration of the school urged the congregational leadership to build a new building which would be more traditional and efficient for educational purposes. The Provincial Council at Notre Dame approved the new building on April 16, 1895. The Main Building would soon stand as a solid legacy. Only the central section of the building was completed for \$15000 and was blessed by the Archbishop of New Orleans, Francis Janssens, on September 8, 1896. It was then that the archbishop suggested that the name be changed from St. Isidore's to Holy Cross College.

The Main Building included tall ceilings, outside gallery doors and transoms into the corridors to take advantage of the breezes coming off the river. The two wings were not added to the building until 1912, though they were part of the 1895 plans. The new building included classrooms, dorms, a chapel and a dining room.



The Silver Heart... worn by the Marianites following vows. It is the symbol of Our Lady of Sorrows.

Marianite Ministry

Making a Difference in Louisiana

St. Mary's Boys Asylum

St. Mary's Industrial School

Academy of Holy Angels

St. Peter and Paul

St. John (*Plaquemine*)

St. Francis de Sales (*Houma*)

Opelousas Catholic (*Opelousas*)

Our Lady of Holy Cross/

University of Holy Cross

St. Cecilia

St. John Elementary (*Franklin*)

Hanson Memorial (*Franklin*)

Sacred Heart (*Ville Platte*)

St. Edmund (*Eunice*)

St. Margaret (*Lake Charles*)

Immaculate Conception

(*Lake Charles*)

St. Louis Catholic High School

(*Lake Charles*)

St. Mary of the Angels

Holy Name of Mary

Incarnate Word

Little Flower

Holy Cross Elementary

(*Morgan City*)

Central Catholic High School

(*Morgan City*)

St. Rita

St. Christopher

St. Andrew

St. Joseph

Christ the King

St. Philip

St. Rita (*Alexandria*)

Resurrection of Our Lord

Opelousas General Hospital

Prompt Succor Nursing Facility

(*Opelousas*)

East Carroll Hospital

(*Lake Providence*)

The city was expanding at this time in the direction of the school and a streetcar line was built along the levee complementing the line that serviced the school. With this new access available to get into the city, a friend of the school built a gazebo to serve as a streetcar shelter at the Dauphine Street gate.

When Father Spillard ended his long tenure as director in 1912, the brothers assumed total responsibility for the school. Although brothers across America had been primary school teachers for half a century, at the beginning of the twentieth century they found themselves being replaced by sisters. Thus, the brothers educated themselves to teach in high schools. As Holy Cross priests had taken care of the secondary teaching and the brothers taught the lower grades, times were changing, and the brothers gradually assumed teaching positions in upper grades. Brother Engelbert Liesse was

the first brother president of Holy Cross. He served in that capacity from 1912 to 1919 and returned for another term in 1927, retiring after one year because of poor health.

By the 1890's and into the twentieth century academic programs, extra-curricular activities, athletics, band and glee club became a significant part of the school program which was typical in all Holy Cross schools as initiated by the founder in the first Holy Cross school established in LeMans.

Holy Cross Main Building circa 1920

Center section completed in 1896; wings added in 1912.



Original Holy Cross Gym

Circa 1955



The first gym was erected in 1911 at the cost of seven thousand dollars. Besides use for basketball and "indoor baseball," the gym was used for band and drama club. The proscenium of the stage was 30x15 feet, equipped with four complete sets of scenery, a cyclorama, several drops and all lighting effects needed for a modern production. Tennis courts were added on the side of the gym and a lawn tennis club appears for the first time in the 1911-12 school catalogue.

Graduation for the school year 1906 was held at the Lyric Theater with six students in the graduating class; it was the

twenty-seventh commencement. In 1910 commencement was held for eight graduates at Tulane Theater; eight degrees were awarded, all commercial. Graduation numbers fluctuated in those years. On June 23, 1915, six boys graduated from the high school department and thirteen from the commercial department, but in 1916 there were but six graduates: three for Master for Accounts, one Bachelor of Arts, and one certificate for high school.

Preparing Teachers

To prepare teachers for the many schools the Marianites opened in South Louisiana, the Louisiana State Board of Education in 1916 granted the Sisters the right to open a Normal School, which functioned as Holy Cross Normal. The instruction received at this school assured the young students would be prepared according to the Louisiana State Norms of Education.