

1990-2

OUR LADY OF HOLY CROSS COLLEGE

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Prepared for the Conference on the
History of the Congregations of Holy Cross
in the United States

June 15 - 17, 1990
New Orleans, Louisiana

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Our Lady of Holy Cross College is and has been for me a very important part of the history of the Marianites of Holy Cross and their ministry in the south, particularly in Louisiana.

The College has undergone many changes in name, all of which have a connectedness with its history, but the goal of each era has been the same - the furtherance of Christian education. That goal is being attained today just as it was in the early and intervening years of its existence.

The story of the College begins with the coming of the Marianites to Louisiana in 1848 from Lebanon, Kentucky, where curiously enough they were attached to an institution of higher learning, not in the guise of educators, but in the indispensable role of domestic duties of a college directed by secular priests. Arriving in New Orleans they were assigned by Archbishop Blanc to St. Mary's Orphanage. This story has been already told. From St. Mary's the reputation of the dedication of the Sisters became known in the city and they were asked to take care of, rather to establish, an industrial school for young girls. That story, too, has been related, but both have a bearing on the foundation of Holy Angels Academy from which grew Our Lady of Holy Cross College.

The Industrial School begun as a six-month trial soon developed into a successful apostolate directed towards preparing less privileged young women to earn a livelihood through the art of sewing. Their education, secular and spiritual, was not neglected as the chronicles of that period note, and from those educational endeavors the sisters were asked to begin an academic institution to be operated separately from the Industrial School.

The heroism of the Sisters during the Civil War is another page in the history of their dedication to the advancement of education. The General

Chapter of 1860 had approved the plans for the academy building and even though Louisiana had seceded from the Union in 1861 and a blockade had been imposed on southern ports, the sisters were determined to continue and even to advance the work of education by the construction of the Academy of the Holy Angels. The cornerstone was laid on the feast of the Finding of the Holy Cross, May 3, 1862, and the building was completed before the end of the same year. Thus began the long history of an academy which would one day be the foundation of an institution of higher learning.

The incorporation of the Academy under the laws of the state of Louisiana on February 2, 1866, empowered the school to issue high school diplomas and the first graduation exercises were held in 1867. From this time until 1910, little mention is made in the chronicles of the professional formation of the Marianites, although it is noted that the sisters coming to the provincial house for the annual retreat spent some time improving themselves by following various courses under the tutelage of the superiors and lay professors who were brought in by the superiors to instruct the sisters in the subjects that they were to teach the following academic year. And it was from these elementary efforts that their educational background developed. In 1909 Mother Mary Raphael, the Provincial Superior, inaugurated classes in practice teaching and educational courses which would meet standards today. Following her example, Mother James went farther and took steps to secure the approval of the state legislature to offer college courses at the Academy. This act empowered the Academy of Holy Angels to confer degrees in its "College Department."

Thus the Marianites of Holy Cross could confer literary honors and degrees and grant such diplomas as conferred and granted by any college, university or

seminary of learning in the United States and Europe. It is generally accepted that due to the small number of Marianites attached to schools in New Orleans and the immediate area, the classes of the Holy Angels College Department operated only on Saturdays and during the vacation months. It must have been, however, of great satisfaction to the Marianite educators of the era to know that they could be qualified according to the state laws.

The conferring of degrees required a qualified faculty and it was in this that the Marianites were ably assisted by the Jesuits of Loyola of the South. With this association the two-year courses followed by the sisters became known as the "Normal School" which was in keeping with the courses accepted by Loyola University in fulfillment of requirements for obtaining Bachelor degrees at the University. In 1931, in filing applications for state certification of some of the sisters it was brought to the attention of the then Provincial, Mother Mary Liguori, that the application was not in accord with the latest regulations. This led to greater efforts on the part of Mother Liguori to have the status of the Normal School firmly established. After many personal visits and correspondence with the State Superintendent of Education, T.H. Harris, Holy Cross Normal School was approved as a two-year teacher-training institution on September 8, 1931. Mother Liguori's successor, Mother Mary Xavier, took steps to petition the State Department to approve a four-year college curriculum. All details, improvements and revisions being worked out the four-year course was approved by the State Board of Education.

This approval made it necessary to distinguish the four-year program from the teacher-training course of a Normal School. Again the State Board of Education was petitioned for a change in the name of the College. On Jan-

uary 3, 1941, the following communication was received:

The fact that the title "Academy of the Holy Angels, College Department" and the title "Holy Cross Normal College" mean one and the same college will make it easy for the State Board of Education to take the action you request.

As I interpret the facts in the case, the State Board of Education can effect the result desired by making formal change in the name of the institution without otherwise altering the records showing the approval of your college. (Correspondence J.E. Lombard, October 31, 1940)

The Academy of the Holy Angels had reached the status of a four year college, but this is not the end. Generous friends of the Marianites gave a piece of property of forty acres to the Congregation, and plans were begun by Mother Xavier's successor, Mather Mary Adrian, to construct a novitiate, retirement home and a college on the property. Mother Adrian, with an optimistic spirit, initiated plans, sought the necessary permission and with the generous and concerted efforts of the sisters raised the seed money for the beginning of the construction of the complex. Sister Mary Hilary, who became Provincial in 1958, supervised the construction which took two years. With the move to the new location, which was known as Our Lady of Holy Cross, once again the college title had also to be considered for a change. The necessary procedures were initiated and in a letter to Mother Hilary from Wade Martin, Secretary of State, it was pointed out that the power to confer degrees had been vested in the Sisters Marianites of Holy Cross and the college had become known as Holy Angels College. This misnomer could be traced back to a communication from the Secretary of State who addressed Mother Hilary as President of Holy Angels College. Evidently the State Department did not want to appear unprofessional in incorrectly addressing the president of an institution that it had approved, for little effort was necessary for the final change in the name of the college. Immediately after moving to the new site

Curtis L. Johnston, Supervisor, State Department of Education addressed Sister Mary Alphonsus, Dean, Our Lady of Holy Cross College.

The college was now completely independent from Holy Angels Academy, but could trace its beginnings back to no other institution than that of the Academy of the Holy Angels.

References:

The one direct quote is identified in the paper.

General information came from the Chronicles of Marianites of Holy Cross and the Chronicles of St. Mary's Orphan Boys Asylum.

The above form the primary and secondary sources of "A History of Our Lady of Holy Cross College New Orleans, Louisiana" by Betty L. Morrison, Ph.D.