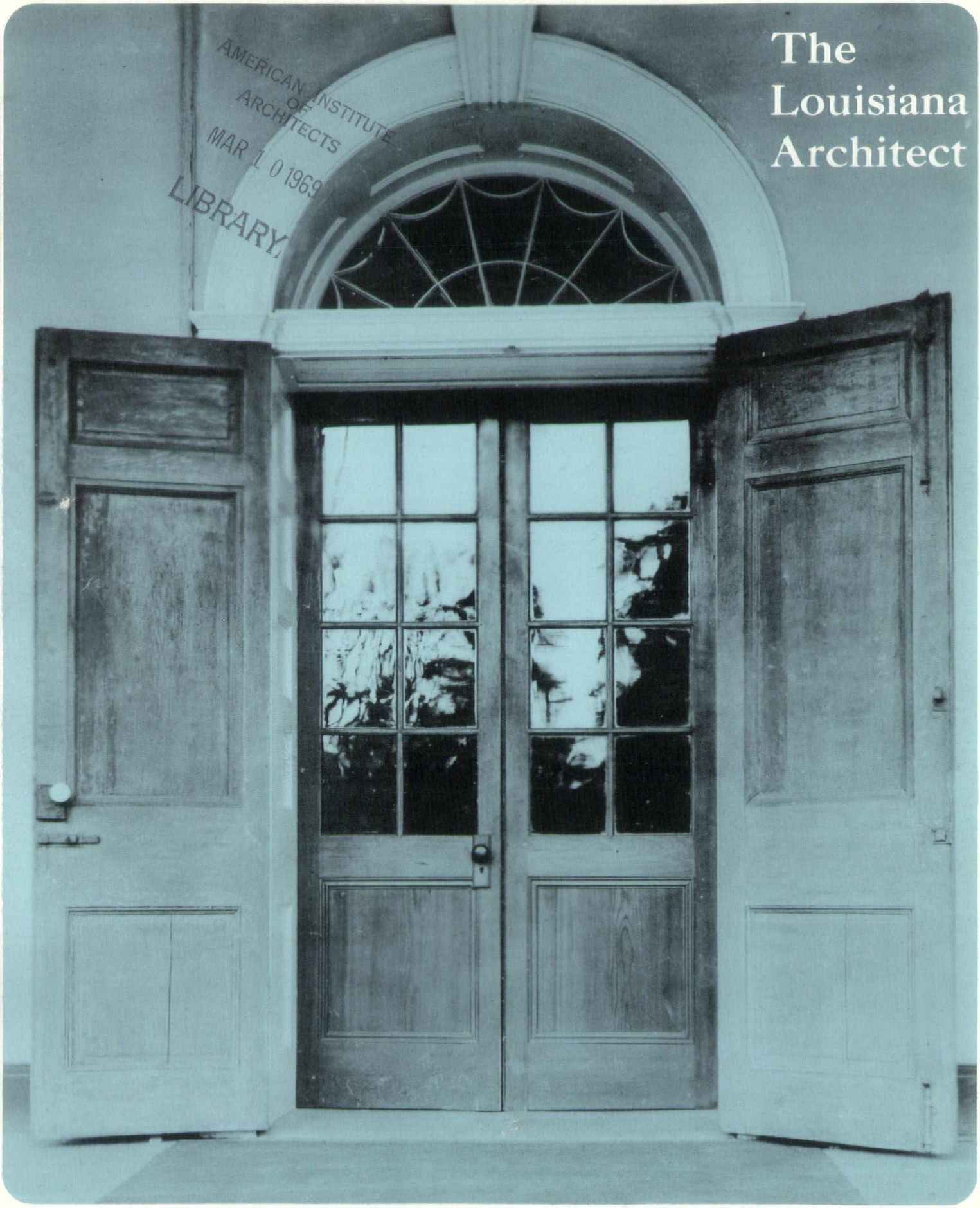
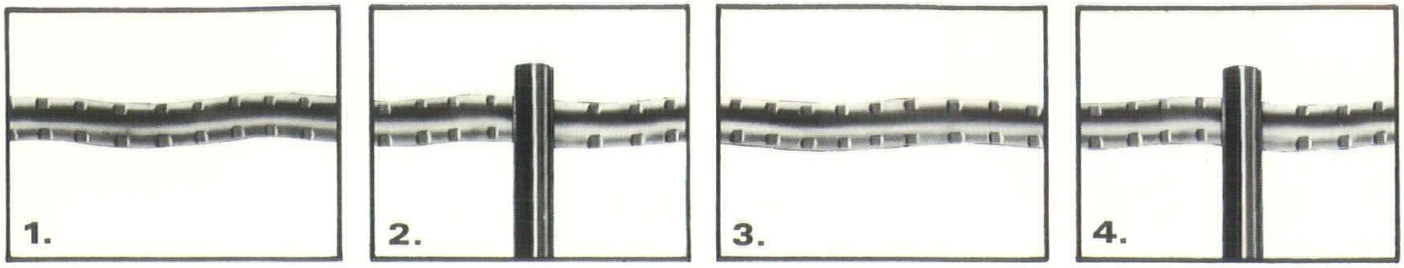
February, 1969

The Louisiana Architect



Sacred Heart Academy of Grand Coteau, Louisiana



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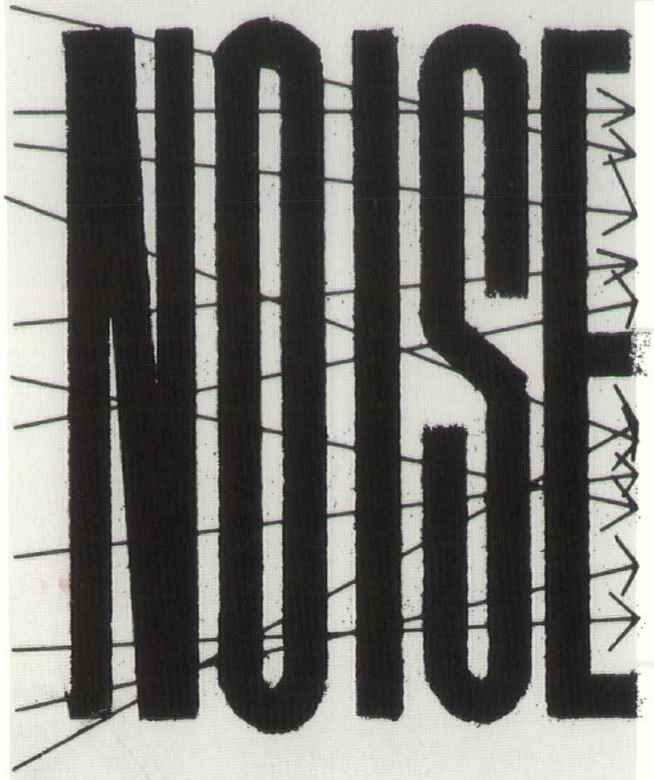

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EDITORIAL

IN TIMES OF CHANGE
Louisiana-Student-Architect Relations

As on other campuses throughout the country, students in Louisiana schools of architecture are voicing their disenchantment with the establishment. They want a voice in determining courses of instruction, faculty selection, project assignments and classroom decoration.

Some students seem to have a sincere desire to contribute their ideas on these subjects and to participate with the faculty to improve conditions, all within the framework of established university regulations. Others do not ask, but demand change, saying that university faculty and officials are deaf to student views. In reality, they are themselves closeminded.

LAA President, Max Heinberg, has wisely observed that no one group is entirely right or entirely wrong and all have some good to contribute to better architectural education. He suggests that some of the shortcomings may be solved if communications between the parties were improved. Perhaps the talents and time of all concerned could be focused on some agreed-upon goals.

To establish these new lines of student-faculty communication, he has suggested that a tripartite committee of students, faculty and practicing architects be established at each school of architecture. These committees would meet on a regular basis and discuss freely any matter which concerns either of the groups, or architectural education in general. The task of accomplishing this objective will be in the hands of Dee L. Glueck, AIA.

Regardless of what some students think, their thoughts, problems and concerns are not totally unique to this generation. The practicing architects of the LAA, having traveled the same road, still remember some of the trials. They are willing to hear new ideas and to talk change.

After all, nothing improves without change.

IN THIS ISSUE

The Louisiana Architect

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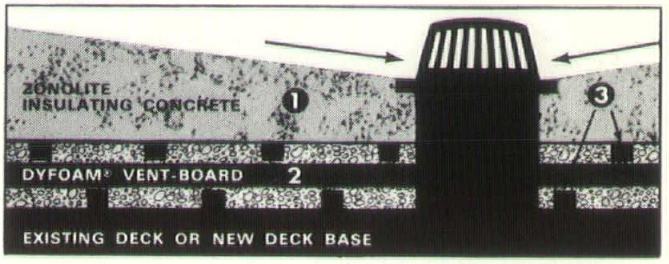

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Academy of the Sacred Heart

GRAND COTEAU, LOUISIANA

On the outskirts of the little Acadian town of Grand Coteau, on a large site embellished with pines and live oaks, camellias and other flowering plants, stands the old Academy of the Sacred Heart. The large, three storied, galleried and dormered main building is flanked on one end by a handsome Greek revival chapel and on the other by compatible buildings of more modern construction. The Academy was established in 1821 in the heart of French-Acadian country by nuns sent from near St. Louis, Missouri, by Blessed Philippine Duchesne, the French founder of the Sacred Heart Order in the United States. She had arrived in New Orleans in 1818 and after a brief but gratifying visit with the Ursuline nuns there, had proceeded up river to establish her headquarters. Soon afterwards she received an offer from Mrs. Charles Smith, a wealthy widow of Grand Coteau, to establish a school there. Mrs. Smith gave the nuns her old French Colonial plantation house which served them for some time.

Within a few years, as the institution grew, a new building was erected at a cost of $9,200.00, a contract being signed on June 12, 1830, for a two story brick building which still stands and is the oldest section, the lower centerpart, of the present building. This first building, about fifty feet in length, was built of red brick laid in Flemish bond, reflecting the growing influence of American architectural style in French Louisiana. This is not surprising for the local superior of the convent, Madame Xavier Murphy and the builder, William Moore, were both obviously of Anglo-Saxon rather than French origin. The same style is to be seen in the house that William Brand designed and built in New Orleans in 1831 for Samuel Hermann, now the Christian Woman's Exchange at 820 St. Louis street. The style had also been used in the buildings of the College of Louisiana, (later Centenary College) at Jackson, built in 1832 by Alexander Smith. Americans moving into Louisiana had brought with them this familiar Jeffersonion style of Virginia and other Eastern states, red brick, white trim and green blinds, often with classical white columns. Soon after completion of the first building, Madame Murphy in 1834 contracted with Samuel Young, another local American builder, to enlarge it to more than twice its original size. The contract, dated May 30, 1834 states:

(The building is) to be attached to the East end and to make a part of the new brick convent at that place. The building to be constructed according to a plan thereof . . . said building shall be seventy eight feet six inches front and be placed on a line with the front of the said brick convent and to have forty five feet in depth, and a gallery in front, of the same dimensions of that already built to which it is to be attached. Windows shall . . . have hook rail sashes and be hung with weights and cord. The windows as well as the door to be of the same workmanship as those of the building above mentioned. The front door of the building to be so constructed or made as to add beauty to the front . . . All the front dormer windows to be circular heads and pilasters and all in the rear square heads and finished with architraves . . . The roof to be of good red or yellow cypress shingles . . . The walls of all the rooms shall be well plastered with good strong lime and sand mortar like the first story of the house of Hypolite Chretien.

Evidently the red brick walls of the original building proved unsatisfactory, either from an appearance standpoint or from the practical point of waterproofing, for the entire front walls of both the old and the new buildings were specified to be "well plastered and finished with plaster of lime and sharp sand or marble dust, so as to show a uniform front the whole extent." Dormer windows were added to the old building at this time, to each in front and back, as well as four each in front and back on the new structure. Both buildings had gable ends rather than the hipped roof form generally preferred by the French. It is interesting to note the mention of the nearby plantation house, Chretien Point, built in 1831 for Hypolite Chretien by Samuel Young and Jonathan Harris, carpenter and bricklayer, which was also of red brick with a plastered front. The roof of this notable house, however, is hipped, a concession perhaps to its French owner. The details of doors and windows of the convent including the dormers, compare favorably with the best examples of the Federal or post-colonial styles in New Orleans and elsewhere.

An old photograph in the convent archives shows the appearance of the building before the addition of the present third story. A second addition, however, had been made by the time of this photograph (ca 1860). This was a three story structure at the left end, an addition built between the original building and the chapel. Subsequently, the third story was extended over the entire building, the old dormers being apparently re-used in the new roof. It was probably at this time that the cast iron gallery columns and railings were added to the entire front in place of the original columns which were of turned wood with wood balustrades.

On May 30, 1834, the same day as the contract for the first addition, Samuel Young also contracted with Madame Murphy for the erection of a brick kitchen in the rear. This was a one story building eighty-eight feet long by nineteen and a half wide with a six foot wide gallery. This contract states: . . .

The house to be divided into four rooms, as per plan, by three partitions, two to be of plank and one of brick, with a kitchen fireplace in the room . . . adjoining the kitchen to have two wash boilers set in furnaces; a fireplace in the east end of the building, an inside chimney.

A new kitchen replaced the old one in 1922 preserving something of the original character with the six foot gallery. By another contract dated August 8, 1835, another American builder, Phillip Carroll agreed to build a "Vivier" or pond, 125 feet by 36, five feet deep and to do certain grading and clearing for the fish pond.

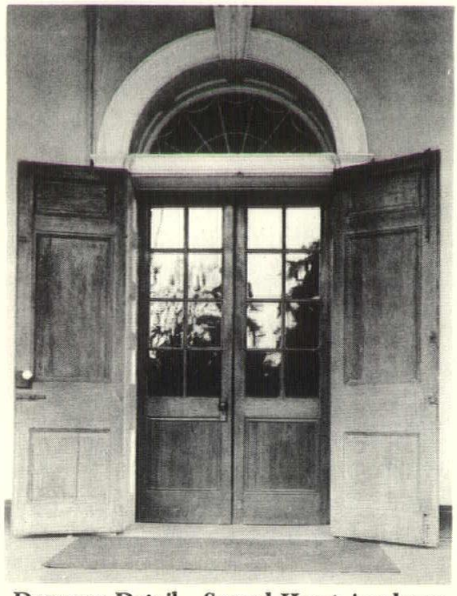
The chapel, built in 1850, reflects the changing taste of the day, being built in a simple Greek revived style with brick pilasters and pediment, arched and shuttered windows. The brick is whitewashed and above the front pediment is a handsome cast iron cross.

In 1854, a fine, large, brick barn was erected behind the chapel, one hundred and forty feet long and forty wide, with "five arched openings of ten feet wide, with one square door and two square windows on the side fronting east . . ." John Caswell signed a contract on December 2, 1854, to do the brick work for this building for John Doyle. Other early buildings in the rear, used as servants quarters, together with the refectory built by E. W. Phillips of New Iberia in 1893 and more recent buildings designed by Hays Town, architect, complete one of the most interesting landmark groups in Louisiana.

Contracts and other information quoted here were obtained through the courtesy of the Sacred Heart nuns by Mary Pollingue and Craig W. Manmus, students in Louisiana Architecture at Tulane University. The photographs were made by Richard Koch some years ago, before the plaster was removed from the brick walls of the main building.

Sacred Heart Academy
Old Photo CA. 1860

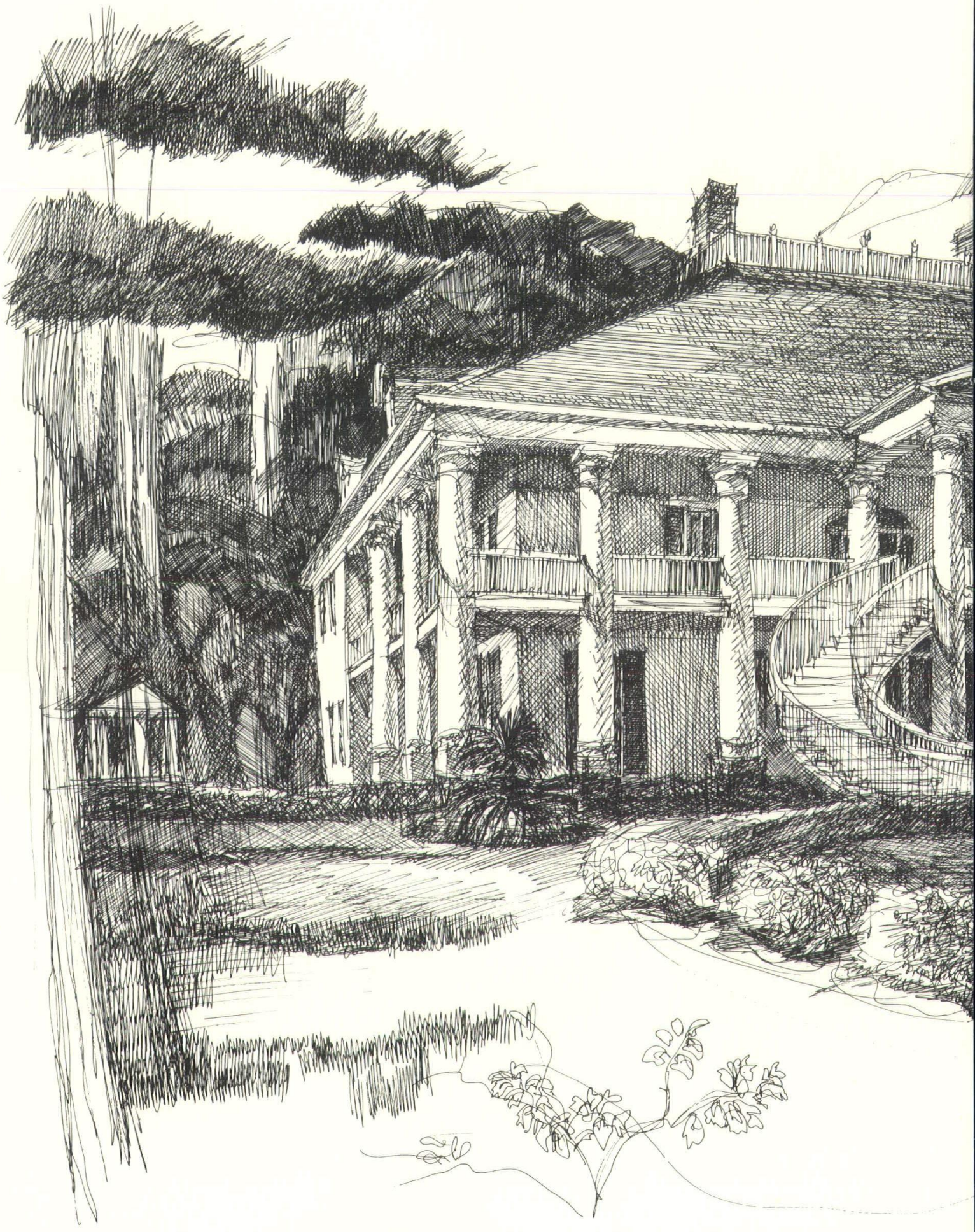
Front of Chapel — Sacred Heart Academy



Doorway Detail—Sacred Heart Academy

Main Building — Sacred Heart Academy

Photography—Richard Koch



EVERGREEN

WALLACE, LOUISIANA

Of all the plantation homes in Louisiana, restored or otherwise, this group with its 2,500 acres still intact gives the most complete picture of the plantation way of life. Not only is the main building itself excellently restored but the gardens, garconnieres, pigeonnieres, overseers house and even some of the slave cabins have been preserved. Together they form an admirable complex showing the extent to which the art of planning and site development progressed in early 19th century Louisiana.

Evidently the building was built around 1830 upon the marriage of a Michel Becnel and Desiree Brou, whose descendants retained the property for sixty years.

In 1946 after the house and property had reached a somewhat neglected state, Mrs. Matilda Gray of Lake Charles purchased it and, with Koch and Wilson and Douglas Freret as architects, she accomplished this unique and excellent example of preservation.

JOHN DESMOND, FAIA

MUNICIPAL AUDITORIUM and CIVIC CENTER

MONROE, LOUISIANA

THE DESIGN PROGRAM required that the facilities accommodate practically every type of indoor entertainment, cultural and civic event as well as state and regional conventions. It was desired that the complex become the entertainment and assembly center of the region and provide a source of pride for the citizens of the city. Though no fixed budget was set initially, the need for a flexible and economical design was stressed.

THE DESIGN CONCEPT divides the complex into three major structures plus a mechanical equipment building. These buildings face upon a landscaped plaza and are connected by covered walkways. The structural system chosen for each building was deemed the most economical for enclosing the interior space shape desired. The concrete hyperbolic paraboloids used for the lobbies of the buildings and for the covered walkways provide a common structural form which serves a visual tie for the buildings as well as a physical connection. The large pool with fountains in front of the complex is a center of interest with its constantly changing water fountains and colored lighting.

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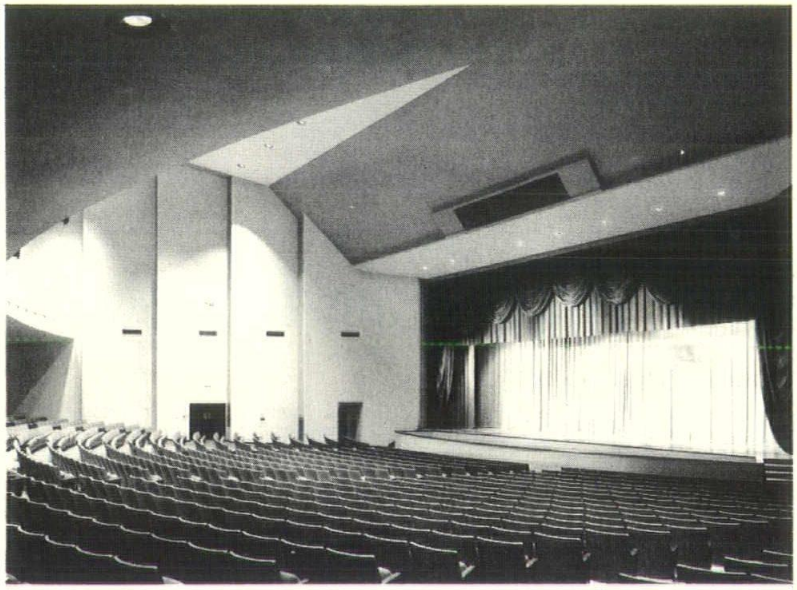

Photo—Roger Kelley

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JOHNS and NEEL, AIA Architects

JOHNS and NEEL, Architects, AIA, 1600 Stubbs Avenue, Monroe, Louisiana, provide consulting Architectural and Engineering services for the design and construction of buildings, and comprehensive services on land-use, master planning, feasibility studies, site selections, and development-type projects.

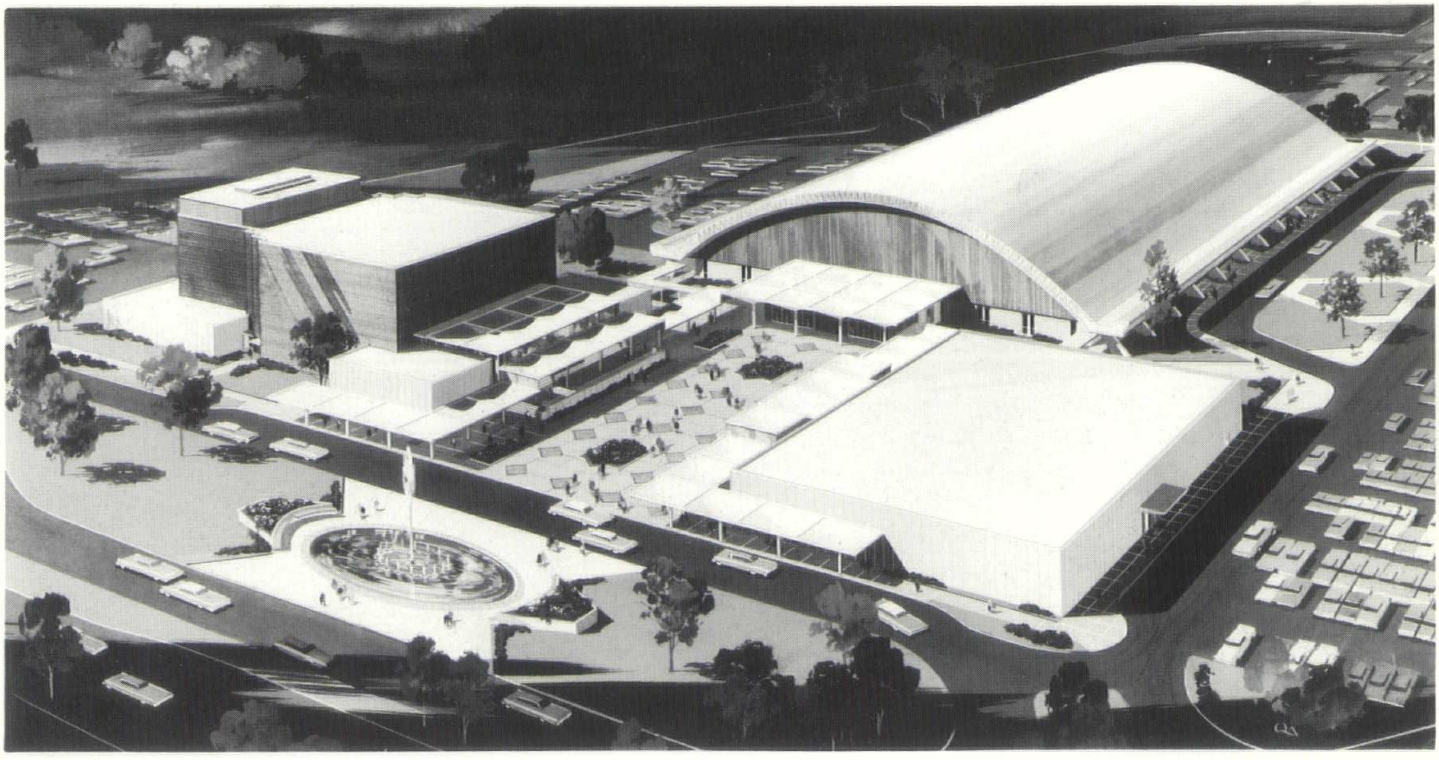
Photo—G. E. Arnold

THEATER

THE THEATER BUILDING is used principally for events requiring complete stage facilities, such as plays, concerts, operas, ballets, and pageants. It contains 2,246 seats. The raised terraces at the lobby entrances overlook the main plaza. The interior space shape of the theater was dictated by acoustical and sight line requirements. The varying planes of the plaster panels at the side walls and ceiling are angled to provide reflective sound reinforcement for the rear seating areas. Sound absorptive materials are used on the curved rear walls only.

CONFERENCE HALL

THE CONFERENCE HALL BUILDING is used for banquets, trade shows, exhibits, dances, and meetings. The administrative offices for the complex are located in one corner of the building. The ticket office handles advance ticket sales for events in all buildings. Flat ceilings are used in the main banquet room to accommodate the movable walls which are used to divide the room into smaller spaces as the function requires. The movable wall panels are supported on tracks set in furred plaster beams which also serve to break up the large expanse of ceiling. The banquet room will seat up to 1,500 persons for banquet events. The kitchen design concept makes use of much rolling equipment in order to provide flexibility for the various caterers using the facility. Very large banquets held in the adjoining arena building can be easily served from this kitchen.



MUNICIPAL AUDITORIUM and CIVIC CENTER

JOHNS and NEEL, AIA Architects
Monroe, Louisiana

ARENA

THE ARENA BUILDING is used for ice shows, circuses, basketball, trade shows, exhibits, conventions, meetings, ring events and road shows. 4,712 permanent seats are provided with portable seating and telescoping risers providing a total seating capacity of 7,900 for certain events. The use of portable stages, basketball floor, running track, ring and seating risers give this area considerable flexibility. Light fixtures over the arena floor are attached to electrically operated trusses and can be set at varying heights as required by the event and can be lowered to the floor for re-lamping. The concourse on three sides of the area are sufficiently wide to accommodate exhibit booths. The steel circular arches are ideally suited for enclosing the interior space shape required. They provide a 50 foot clearance above the arena floor, adequate headroom at the upper balcony seats and sufficient utility and duct space above the concourse ceiling.

Photo—G. E. Arnold

Photo—Dave Gleason

JOHN L. WEBB, AIA, is an editorial advisor to the Louisiana Architect and a former LAA president. He is a partner in the firm of Bodman, Murrell and Webb—Architects of Baton Rouge and has extensive experience in industrial architecture. A graduate of L.S.U., Mr. Webb is licensed both as an architect and as a mechanical engineer.

BLUEPRINT FOR INDUSTRIAL SECURITY

By JOHN L. WEBB, AIA

The requirement for security is well known in the design of penal institutions, and the resulting formidable appearance is an accepted fact of life. Although not as obvious by their appearance, there is also a requirement for security in many types of industrial plants — a requisite which has been solved until recently by the simple expedient of building a fence around the plant, and stationing a guard at each entrance.

This is still in many cases the most direct and least expensive method of providing security, but as the demands for security has increased the availability of personnel for the relatively menial task of performing guard duty has decreased. As there becomes an increasing awareness of the reaction of a plant's image to the public and to the employees within the plant, the role of the architect in "building-in" security becomes increasingly important.

Security is necessary to keep unauthorized personnel from entering certain areas, either in order to protect them from hazards, to prevent industrial espionage, or simply to keep them from getting in the way.

And as painful as it may be to contemplate, security is necessary to prevent employees from stealing from their employer. Many employees, who consider themselves completely honest, see nothing wrong with "liberating" a few tools, items of equipment, or products for their own use. Add these to the few who do have larceny in their souls, and the loss each year becomes a staggering sum.

Often designs comply with state and insurance codes for fire protection and life safety, but are woefully inadequate in providing safeguards that can prevent theft and pilferage, reduce shipping and receiving losses, and control pedestrian and vehicular traffic to and from a facility.

BLUEPRINT FOR INDUSTRIAL SECURITY

(Continued)

The architect's greatest challenge in plant security is to successfully blend security features and utilitarian aspects, without sacrificing design aesthetics. Careful programming of the logistical relationship of functions within a plant may lead to an arrangement where certain areas may be located outside of the plant with interior walls actually serving as a part of the barrier to the secure area. In such an arrangement there is usually no need for salesmen or job applicants to actually enter the plant.

In considering the cost of operating the security system, the number of entrances should be carefully scrutinized, and those for which no clear requirement exists should be eliminated. Those which are of secondary importance may be controlled by closed circuit television with monitors in a central location actuating electrically operated gates.

Where no requirement for actual surveillance exists, gates may be actuated by coded identification cards. In this regard, however; the possibility of illegal use of such cards should not be overlooked. Although future needs cannot be fully anticipated, latitude for total security is important and should be incorporated into initial design concepts and plans.

Close liaison between the architect and the plant's security chief is essential at the initial planning stages. Not only must the actual physical barriers be agreed on, but the systems by which they will be controlled must also be determined. This means the inclusion of proper electrical conduit, wiring, outlets and switch boxes, lighting, turnstiles and other items of hardware. It also means providing the capability for change—for change is the name of the game in plant growth.

Within the plant, special consideration should be given to the security of vital areas such as vaults, switchgear, and storage areas for classified information. Such areas should be located well away from reception desks, plant gates, and from isolated areas. The answer here is often strong floor, walls and roof, and a heavy lock on the door—simple, but often overlooked.

An area of increasing concern to the security chief is the rising incidence of civil disturbance and riot. One of the largest users of buildings in the country has recently published a very depressing document which directs its architects in steps which can be taken to avoid damage in case of such incidents.

These include the reduction of glass and the use of glass substitutes, such as high strength transparent plastics wherever the need for visibility must be met.

It recommends the use of stronger doors, hinges from which the pins cannot be removed, and heavier locks. Poorly selected locks and indiscriminate distribution of keys are themselves major causes of security problems.

The report suggests careful location of vents, grilles, etc., in such a way that gasoline cannot be poured into the building and set on fire, or air supply contaminated by smoke or stench bombs.

While it may seem trite to say so, perhaps the most important things to mention about security at the design stage is that it should be considered. It is a surprising fact that this matter is often overlooked until the occupant develops the actual need.

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