

ST. JOSEPH'S ACADEMY
Local Landmark Designation Report

Prepared by the Office of the Planning Commission
October 2005

A comprehensive framework to protect and preserve historic resources and develop architectural guidelines in East Baton Rouge was established with the adoption of the Historic Preservation Ordinance in August 2004. This ordinance established the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC), defined its responsibilities and created a review procedure for the HPC. The Historic Preservation Commission is considered a part of the planning function of City-Parish Government and is administrated by the office of the Planning Commission.

A landmark is a building, structure, site, place, object, cultural landscape or work of art deemed worthy of preservation by reason of value to the City of Baton Rouge/Parish of East Baton Rouge, State of Louisiana or local region for one or more of the following reasons:
It is an outstanding example of a building, structure, object or work of art representative of its era;
It is one of the few remaining examples of past architectural style;
It is a place, building, site, object, work of art or structure associated with an event or a person of historic or cultural significance to Baton Rouge, State of Louisiana or the region; and/or
It is a site or place of natural or aesthetic interest that is continuing to contribute to the cultural or historical development and heritage of the city-parish, state or region.

BACKGROUND

St. Joseph's Academy (SJA), an all-girls secondary school located at 3015 Broussard Street, is owned and operated by the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Medaille and staffed by the Sisters of Saint Joseph and dedicated laypersons. The Sisters of St. Joseph began as six women in LePuy, a village in France, and has grown to more than 24,000 sisters in 49 congregations on four continents. The Sisters of St. Joseph of Medaille is one of those congregations, taking its name from the order's founder, Father Jean Pierre Medaille. On October 15, 1650, Bishop Henry DeMaupas of the Diocese of LePuy, France, gave official Church recognition to this new institute of Sisters of St. Joseph. Sisters from France first came to the United States in 1855 to Bay St. Louis, Mississippi. Establishing a central house in New Orleans, the Sisters extended their ministry to the poor and suffering of Louisiana and Mississippi, opening schools, hospitals and an orphanage.

The Sisters of St. Joseph of Medaille arrived in Baton Rouge in 1868. The first school and orphanage was originally located in downtown Baton Rouge on Seventh Street and was later moved to Fourth Street at Florida Street. SJA was accredited by the State of Louisiana in 1926. The SJA campus was relocated to its current location on Broussard Street in 1940. The Main Building was constructed in 1941, and Medaille Hall was constructed in 1947. Construction of the convent, children's home, chapel and cafeteria was completed in 1964. In 1988, dedication ceremonies marked the completion of the Activity Center and the renovation of the former gym and stage areas in Medaille Hall into the library/media center and foreign language department. The Irene W. Pennington Science Center was completed for the beginning of school in 1999.

The mission of St. Joseph's Academy is to educate young women as responsible and unifying members of the world community. In the spirit and charism of the Sisters of Saint Joseph, St. Joseph's Academy offers opportunities for faith development in the Catholic tradition, academic excellence and personal growth.

SJA was named a Blue Ribbon National School of Excellence in 1991, 1996 and 2002. SJA celebrated its 125th anniversary in 1994. As part of the celebration, a bronze plaque was dedicated and placed on the original site of SJA, now the site of Bank One/Albemarle. Through the work of the SJA Dads' Club, a memorial entrance was added to the main building on Broussard Street. The iron sign that welcomed visitors to the Fourth Street entrance in the late 1800s and early 1900s continues that tradition today.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Collectively, St. Joseph's Academy is a fine example of the historic revival styles that dominated the architecture of institutional buildings during the first half of the 20th century. Gothic or Colonial styles were at the time the favorite choices for schools. St. Joseph's is unusual and significant, in this regard, because of its use of a French neo-classical design (rather like New Orleans' Ursuline Convent). There are numerous institutional buildings from this period in Louisiana that have some form of historic styling (Gothic, Colonial and Tudor, among others), but very few feature a specifically French-derived design such as this. It's a select company: LSU's French House, The Veteran's Administration Hospital Complex in Alexandria and Barksdale Airforce Base in Bossier City.

St Joseph's represents a form of neo-classical architecture once popular in 18th century France, after the Baroque went out of fashion. These are elegant, subtle, quietly styled buildings. SJA's noteworthy features include its symmetrical, low-pedimented form, its use of copious quoins, its wrought iron (looking) brackets and balconies, its French doors and its modest bas relief sculpture. Medaille Hall also features characteristic low arched openings.

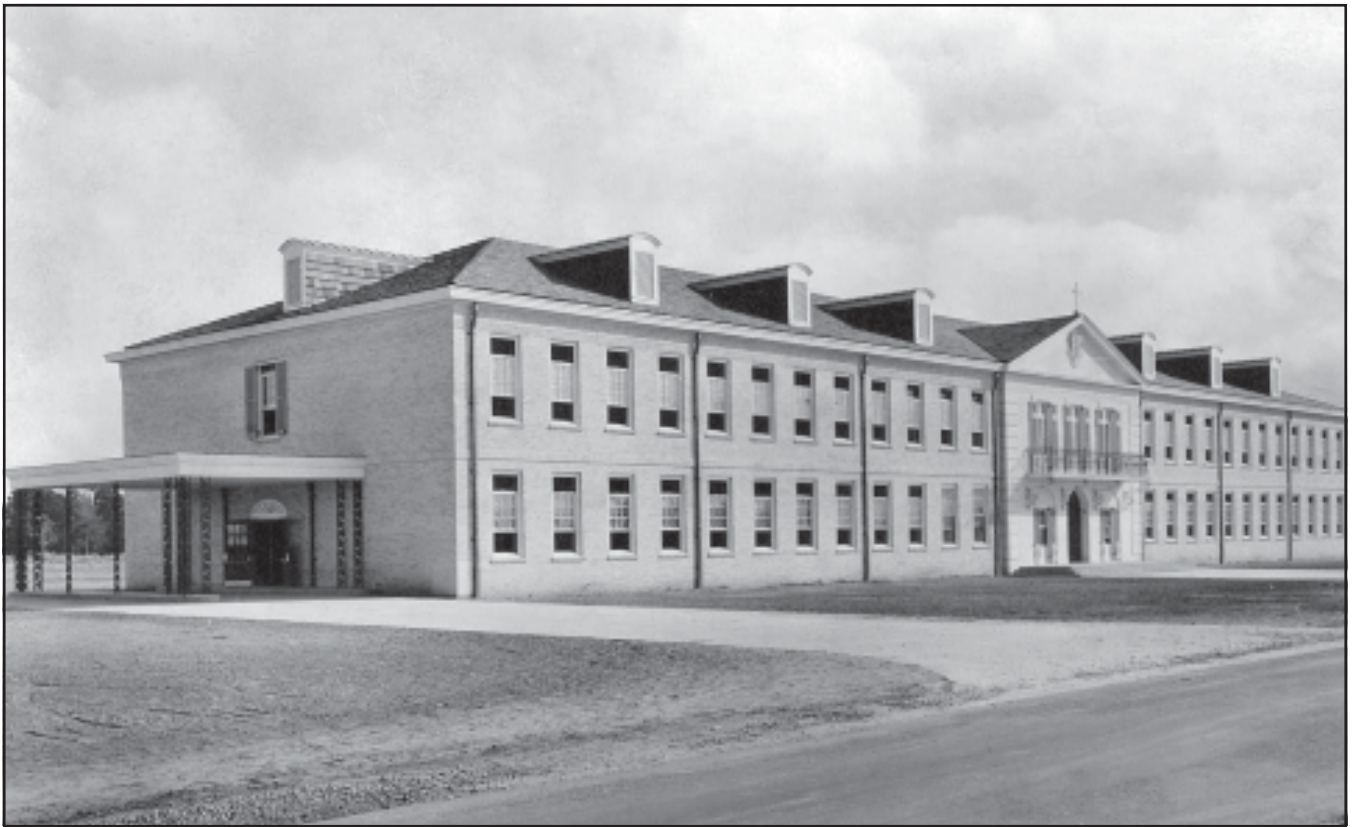
SIGNIFICANCE

St. Joseph's Academy is significant for the French neo-classical design rarely seen in institutional buildings of its time. SJA is also significant for the presence of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Medaille in the Baton Rouge community since 1868 and the presence of St. Joseph's Academy in its current location on Broussard Street since 1940.

SUMMARY

St. Joseph's Academy meets the criteria for selection as a local landmark. Specifically, St. Joseph's Academy is one of the few remaining examples of past architectural styles (French neo-classical design). It is also a place of interest that is continuing to contribute to the cultural heritage of the City-Parish.

After designation by the Metropolitan Council, St. Joseph's Academy will follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties as design guidelines. Material changes in appearance, including modifications, to the exterior of the Main Building and Medaille Hall will be reviewed by the Historic Preservation Commission.



1941

The Main Building, constructed in 1941, represents French neo-classical architecture that was popular in France during the mid-18th century.



2005

