

CONVENT OF THE SACRED HEART, CHAPEL  
(Academy of the Sacred Heart, Chapel)  
1821 Academy Road  
Grand Coteau  
St. Landry Parish  
Louisiana

HABS LA-54-B  
*LA-54-B*

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS  
FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
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1849 C Street NW  
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## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

### CONVENT OF THE SACRED HEART, CHAPEL (Academy of the Sacred Heart, Chapel)

HABS No. LA-54-B

Location: The chapel is attached to the west side of the Academy of the Sacred Heart School building, Grand Coteau, Louisiana.

UTM 30°25'50" N, 92°02'19.65"W

Significance: Constructed in 1851, the chapel has served as the religious center for the oldest continuously operating educational institution west of the Mississippi River.

Description: The simple Greek Revival style chapel was constructed in 1852 as an addition to the west side of the main school building. The two-story sacristy structure that wraps around the altar was added at a later date. In the 1970s, the ornate altar-piece was removed from the chapel and stored in other buildings on the site.

The two-story chapel is made of clay brick masonry, load-bearing construction. The foundation is constructed of masonry piers rising to pilastered, Flemish bond brick bearing walls. The front and rear walls rise to pedimented gables. The roof is constructed of vaulted timber trusses with cypress tongue and groove decking.

The exterior brick was originally whitewashed but is now the natural brick color. The roof is shingled. The west elevation has arched and shuttered windows containing the original stained glass. There is a cast iron cross on the roof of the front façade of the structure.

The interior walls and vaulted ceiling are painted plaster. There is a cast iron spiral staircase leading to the choir loft on the east side of the front entrance. There are galleries on the east and west sides of the altar on the second floor. There are several doors providing access to the main school building along the east elevation. There are carved wood panels with seats built along the east and west walls of the nave.

The two-story sacristy addition is revealed by a masonry bearing wall (attic), by the change in flooring (interior) and in the masonry construction (exterior).

History: The Academy of the Sacred Heart in Grand Coteau was originally founded in 1821 by the Sisters of the Sacred Heart as the Institute for the Education of Young Ladies. The girls' school was built on land with a large plantation house donated by Mrs. Charles Smith. In 1830, Madame Xavier Murphy, the prioress of the Institute, contracted with William Moore to build the two story main school house. In 1834, she contracted builders Samuel Young and Jonathan Harris to make several other additions to the school house. Young and Harris also worked on Cretian Point Plantation outside of nearby Sunset, Louisiana.

By 1837, records indicate that 200,000 bricks had been made and saved for use in building their chapel. However, the bricks, along with 100 acres of land were given to the Jesuits for building a college near the academy. Fourteen years later, in 1851, building of the chapel for the Academy of the Sacred Heart finally began. Construction of the Chapel was completed in 1854. The Chapel adjoined the 1834 addition to the main school building.

Sources:

“Louisiana’s Architectural Heritage: Academy of the Sacred Heart.” *The Louisiana Architect* (Feb. 1969).

Angers, Trent. *Grand Coteau: The Holy Land of South Louisiana*. Lafayette: Acadian House Publishing, 2005.