

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The original Holy Rosary Institute building is located in a suburban area east of the city of Lafayette. It is surrounded by new school buildings which constitute a modern, much enlarged Holy Rosary Institute. However, the old school building retains a commanding presence on campus owing to its three-story height, its broad front, and its central position.

The building itself was inexpensively constructed of standard materials with features and details commonly found in small town commercial buildings of the period. Entered from a second story Colonial Revival porch, the main block has a pair of protruding end wings and an appended chapel on the west. Corridors run the length of the building on each floor with the staircase set in the center. On the main floor (east end), the corridor and the adjacent classrooms combine to form one large room by means of folding oak doors. The interiors are characterized by golden oak panel doors with transoms, narrow gauge wainscoting, and plate glass sash windows. Brickwork is laid up in common bond with black glazed header stripes on the facade of the chapel portion. All windows have segmental arches except for the round arch chapel windows. The building is surmounted by a double corbel table and a parapet.

Specific dates 1913
Builder/Architect Builder-Reverend Philip Keller

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)
Criterion A

Holy Rosary Institute was founded in 1913 by the Reverend Philip Keller, a priest of the Diocese of Galveston, Texas, now the Diocese of Galveston/Houston. In its inception Holy Rosary Institute provided vocational and technical education for black females, thus embodying the racial ideology of Booker T. Washington, who remained the dominant spokesman for blacks in the United States until his death in 1915. The main thrust of Washington's famous 1895 Atlanta speech was that blacks must first establish themselves economically before agitating for social or political equality. He stressed that this economic advancement would come through industrial/technical training. His own Tuskegee in Alabama provided such an education and Holy Rosary Institute reflected Washington's ideas.

In addition, the founding of Holy Rosary must be viewed within its historical context. The late nineteenth and early twentieth century is generally regarded as the nadir of race relations in the United States. Blacks in the South were disfranchised, legally segregated, impoverished, and uneducated. What schools there were for blacks were separate and decidedly inferior. It was within this context that Holy Rosary Institute was founded in 1913.

Holy Rosary also has served as a Normal School to train teachers for rural black schools and is presently one of the few remaining black Catholic high schools in the United States.

From 1913 Holy Rosary Institute has been staffed by the Sisters of the Holy Family, a congregation of black religious women founded in New Orleans in the 1850's. The priests and brothers of the Society of the Divine Word, a religious congregation of men dedicated to the spiritual care of blacks, have been associated with the school since 1930.

Major Bibliographical References

Siegmund, Peggy. "A History of Holy Rosary Institute." 1963. Typed copy located in Holy

Rosary Institute National Register File, State Historic Preservation Office, Baton Rouge.

Letter from Bishop Gerard L. Frey, Diocese of Lafayette, June 3, 1980. Located in Holy Rosary Institute National Register File, State Historic Preservation Office, Baton Rouge.

"Holy Rosary Institute." Article in Impact, March-April 1979, pages 4-5. This is a publication from the National Office for black Catholics in Washington, D. C.