

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The nominated property for St. John the Evangelist Cathedral includes the cathedral itself, the adjacent Bishop's residence, the rear cemetery and the landscaped front lawn with its single large oak. The Bishop's house is constructed in style and materials to echo the cathedral. The nominated area excludes the modern rectory, the chancery, the modern school buildings and rear athletic fields. The church tower dominates the surrounding low scale commercial and residential neighborhood.

The cathedral itself has a seven bay basilican plan with vaulted side nave and side aisles and a large semicircular apse. Ancillary spaces (chapels, sacristies, and staircases) are articulated as separate geometric units on the exterior - a distinctly Romanesque characteristic.

The church is constructed of brick with buttresses which support steel roof trusses, from which the plaster groin vaults are hung.

The exterior is articulated in stucco and red brick. Its basic features (the stair towers, the ancillary masses, the buttresses, the square bell tower, the domes, the tripart windows, the round arches and the corbel table) are primarily Romanesque in derivation. But they are assembled in a vertical attenuated way, with many large openings, in a manner more reminiscent of the Gothic style. There is little unity in the design with many contrasting forms juxtaposed.

A number of St. John's features are "carry overs" from the nineteenth century. These include the polychromatic contrasting colors, the column flanked arched portals, and the complicated massing.

The ribbed and vaulted interior was elaborately painted and stenciled by Rudi Compti in the 1920's. Ribs, groins, spandrels, and panels are picked and contrasted by stenciled patterns. There are also a number of portraits of saints on the ceiling and in panels around the apse. The high quality stained glass windows are original. The baldichino is relatively new as is the linoleum floor.

SPECIFIC DATES 1913-1916
BUILDER/ARCHITECT Cousin

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

St. John the Evangelist Cathedral is a local architectural landmark which is known throughout the region for its elaborate and imposing design both inside and out. Its striking, bold, and somewhat unromanesque use of Romanesque architecture makes a strong statement of the importance of the cathedral in the town and in the diocese. The design has a high degree of individuality which can be seen in its somewhat retardaire use of polychromy and its unstudied boldness. St. John's makes a significant contribution to the Lafayette townscape, which cannot boast of many noteworthy buildings. The cathedral is also noteworthy for its elaborate painted interior by a local artist.

Father W. J. Teurlings, pastor of St. John's Parish in Lafayette from 1906 to 1929, was the leader of the project to build the new church from the early planning stages to the completion of construction. The main justification for the new edifice was that the congregation had outgrown its old church building, which dated from the mid-nineteenth century.

It was in 1909 that Father Teurlings and his congregation began to plan. "Ah, but I had big plans in my head" he recalled years later in his autobiography. "A dream of a church, strictly church-style, perfect in its proportions and delineations." Father Teurlings visited his parents in Holland in 1910, and on this visit he met an unemployed architect whose surname was "Cousin," who agreed to draw the plans for the church. Mr. Cousin finished his drawings a few months after he met Father Teurlings and mailed them to Lafayette from his home in Nymegen in the Netherlands. It is sometimes claimed that the design closely follows a church in Holland.

Father Teurlings called on Eugene Guillot of New Iberia to be the contractor. Many of the congregation's farmers dramatized their enthusiasm for the project by using their wagons to haul

building materials from the railroad depot to the site. Such volunteer work helped cut costs. According to Father Teurlings, the church cost approximately \$50, 000. The cornerstone was laid in November, 1913, and construction was finished in 1916.

Less than two years later, southwestern Louisiana was declared an independent diocese with Lafayette as its seat. St. John's Church became St. John's Cathedral with Father Jules Jeanmard as its first Bishop.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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