

THE MS. FILE *Quincy - Architecture*
Quincy College Chapel

College Avenue at Eighteenth Streets - Byzantine - 1902 - Architect unknown

The Chapel at Quincy College is one of the most unusual buildings in the city of Quincy. Its Byzantine style was originally only evidenced in the architectural construction but in 1956 a complete redecoration was undertaken which brought the entire room... architecture and design into one harmonious unit. The decorating was a project completely under the direction of Father Thomas Brown, O. F. M., art instructor at Quincy College. The work was done by the National Company of St. Louis under the direction of Matthew J. Petersen. Most of the figures were painted on canvas by James Ridgeway in Omaha, Nebraska. They were put in position by Donald DeSpain, who also did the backgrounds.

Byzantine art is a decorative art. It enhances and brings out the architectural forms it enriches. It suppresses the suggestion of a third dimension in its figure portrayals, for this would penetrate and contradict a curving surface or the structural flatness of a wall. It prefers a gold sky in its supernatural landscapes which still will reflect variously as light changes, and thus give variety without the loss of the sweep of the architecture. It embraces the oriental taste for rich and deep colors which fit so well with the generous use of gold.

The general plan is quite natural. Central is the image of Christ over the high altar in the golden vault. Inspiration for this figure was taken from the famous Pantocrator in the apse of the cathedral of Cefalu, Sicily, built in the first half of the twelfth century. On the semicircular band directly below the Christ figure stands the figure of Mary as this position is common in Byzantine churches. The archangels hold the next place and are located on either side of Mary. Next to the archangel Michael stands the husband of Mary, St. Joseph who holds the symbol of his earthly trade... a carpenter's square. Across the sanctuary, next to the archangel Gabriel stands St. John the Baptist.

The vaulted ceiling of the nave and the transept is peopled with angels in accordance with the Byzantine symbolism of the vaults of heaven. The most important decorative feature of the chapel is the long frieze of seventy saints which encircles the room on the entablature level. The inspiration for this heavenly procession was taken from the famous Byzantine frieze in the basilican church of Sant' Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna, a sixth century building. In gleaming white and gold this calm movement, multiplied seventy times over, gives a solemn insistence directing attention toward the central figure of Christ. To help identify them, each carries a symbol pertaining to his life. In the lunettes above the transept doors are copies of the famous Good Shepherd of the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, c. 425 A. D. This is a piece carefully constructed, with a landscape purposefully kept flat according to the best canons of mural decoration.

In 1970 the chapel underwent a second, but more minor, renovation. The altars were reduced greatly in scale and the altar for Mass was moved almost into the center in keeping with the new liturgy. Also, placed above each side altar are carvings done by Father Tom.

The organ, located in the gallery above the entrance, is an instrument of three divisions and was built by the Wicks Organ Company. A restoration was carried out several years ago by a local serviceman.

The Friars Chapel, located just off the east transept, is also open on today's tour. It was built in 1963-64 and designed by the Quincy firm of Frank Horn & Assoc. to specifications of Father Tom. This is a room set aside primarily for use of the priests of the College. Father Tom designed the Tree of Life window in the door to the chapel as well as the clerestory windows. He also designed and made the Tabernacle, Ciborium and the candlesticks. The benches were made in Quincy by the Huck Company.

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