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Purchasing
Annals
A.B.S. of La.

XAVIER UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA

Miller 1956 (Jaco)
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at request of
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Xavier University which today is located on Palmetto Street between Short and Broad, touching as far as Howard Avenue on its northeast side, had its earliest beginning on Magazine Street on property which once housed Southern University, a fine institution for Negro youth. "Old Southern" had closed its doors in 1912 and the property was sold to Scotlandville, near Baton Rouge, as a state institution.

In March of 1915, Reverend Archbishop Blenk of New Orleans, who had on many occasions urged Reverend Mother M. Katharine Drexel, Foundress of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People, to come to New Orleans and undertake work there for the higher education of Negroes, wrote to Reverend Mother telling he had learned that "Old Southern" would be sold at auction in the early days of April, 1915, and he believed it could be acquired at a good price. Reverend Mother M. Katharine answered the call and on Monday, April 5, 1915, left Philadelphia for New Orleans, accompanied by Mother M. Mercedes. On Tuesday of the following week the property on Magazine Street with its shaded grounds and various buildings, was purchased at auction sale by Mr. Harry MacInery, a prominent gentleman of New Orleans, for the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People.

In September of that same year "Old Southern" was opened again as a Catholic school under the auspices of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. Conducted much on the same educational lines as formerly, Xavier began its work in New Orleans with 7th and 8th grades, an academic course covering four years of secondary school, Home Economics, including cooking, sewing and the making of garments for the girls and Industrial Arts and crafts with some of the trades for the boys. The school opened September 27, 1915, with an enrollment of about 250; the following week saw the number increased to 315. In May, 1916, Xavier was incorporated and the name changed from "Southern University" to "Xavier University". State approbation and the charter with authority to grant degrees was granted by the State legislature in 1918. During the next years the student body increased rapidly. It was found necessary in 1917 to open a Normal department to prepare students for the teaching profession. This department expanded into a Teachers' College in 1925. At the same time a College of Liberal Arts was initiated. The next year Pre-Medical courses were added to help students who wished to equip themselves for medical careers. By 1927 the College of Pharmacy had opened its doors. In a very few years the necessity of meeting the practical needs arising from increasing enrollments urged the Sisters to the separation of Secondary School and College. After various trials and vicissitudes the property situated on Palmetto below Carrollton was purchased in June, 1929.

Work on the ground was promptly begun and the Xavier Stadium located on this site was opened in 1930. The erection of the present Administration and College Building, the Science Hall and the Faculty House was begun in September, the first piles being driven on the Feast of St. Peter Claver, September 9, 1931. These three buildings in beautiful English Gothic and of Indiana Limestone were designed by Wogan and Bernard, New Orleans Architects, and were completed by September, 1932. On October the 12th in 1932, since kept as Founder's Day, these buildings were dedicated by the late venerated D. Cardinal Dougherty, at that time Archbishop of Philadelphia, and the cornerstone was laid by His Excellency, Most Reverend John W. Shaw, of New Orleans, since deceased.

Made possible by a partial grant from the General Education Board, the Xavier University Library building in English Gothic was commenced in October of 1936 and was dedicated on Founder's Day, October 12, 1937. The Library now houses 76,829 volumes and 467 magazines. It was quickly followed by the Gymnasium which has well served the community, accommodating many schools and organizations on all manner of occasions besides serving Xavier University students daily.

Over the war years because of the necessity of receiving Veterans, several navy and army barracks were purchased from the government which have served as temporary quarters for dormitories, cafeteria, music and laboratory buildings;

also for garage, maintenance and machine shops. In 1953 plans were made for a men's dormitory which was constructed in 1954 and blessed on the feast of St. Michael, September 29, 1955. It is a very modern, serviceable and comfortable building, much appreciated by the young men. It accommodates about 180 students.

Xavier graduates are recognized by the State of Louisiana. Xavier is also recognized by the Southern Association of College and Schools, by the American Council on Pharmaceutical Education. It is affiliated with the Catholic University of America and a member of the National Catholic Educational Association, the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools of the South (colored), the Association of American Medical Schools, the Association of American Colleges. Its graduates, now numbering over 2500, have Master and Ph.D. degrees from many of the leading universities of the country and from abroad. Several Fulbright scholars are numbered among them. They are found in every walk of life, as priests, religious, doctors, lawyers, technicians, teachers, army and navy men, in secretarial pursuits, interpreters; as well as good homemakers, dieticians and nurses. Married and with happy families, they are living all over this country and some beyond the seas.

The faculty of Xavier University numbering 109 is composed of priests, nuns and lay professors, white and colored men and women among whom there are both Catholics and non-Catholics.

About 30% of the student body is non-Catholic. In the various fields which the students have chosen at Xavier University they have proven themselves worthy of the careful training and education offered them. Owing principally to the death of the Reverend Mother Foundress last year. Xavier is now in much need of financial assistance to further the necessity of greater facilities in this splendid uplifting work of training the young colored people of the South to a life of greater usefulness and service. You can give your assistance in this noble work. Will you not do so?

On Xavier's cornerstone, the inscription gives us a strong incentive.

"God's greatest work on earth is man.
Man's master art is the leading of man to God."

N.B.

1. Written by Reverend Mother Agatha, President, Emeritus of Xavier University in 1956 while still residing at Xavier University Convent.
2. Catholic University of America, terminated its affiliated program June 1, 1969.