

THE STORY OF PINE HILLS



➤ The Seminary Chapel was . . .

THE CENTRAL OBLATE PROVINCE had only five scholastic brothers in 1933. This small number increased to 13 in 1939, and to 22 in 1947. But as the second juniorate, Our Lady of the Ozarks College, merged her graduates with those of St. Henry's, the total mushroomed to 33 in 1950. Other provinces already had their own crowded scholasticates. The need became even more urgent with the increasing amount of vocations produced by the province's G.I. and belated vocation program. Central Province brothers were already studying in Rome, Italy, San Antonio, Texas, and Washington, D. C.; in Canada, at Ottawa, Ontario, and Battleford, Saskatchewan. The number approached 80, and was growing annually.

With post-war construction unthinkable, Very Rev. Edwin Guild, O.M.I., Provincial, and his council scoured the Midwest for adequate facilities. Each real-estate venture had too many disadvantages. Among the numerous proposals, a former business college in Chillicothe, Mo., and a convent in St. Louis were deemed

OUR LADY OF THE GULF PARISH
BAY ST. LOUIS

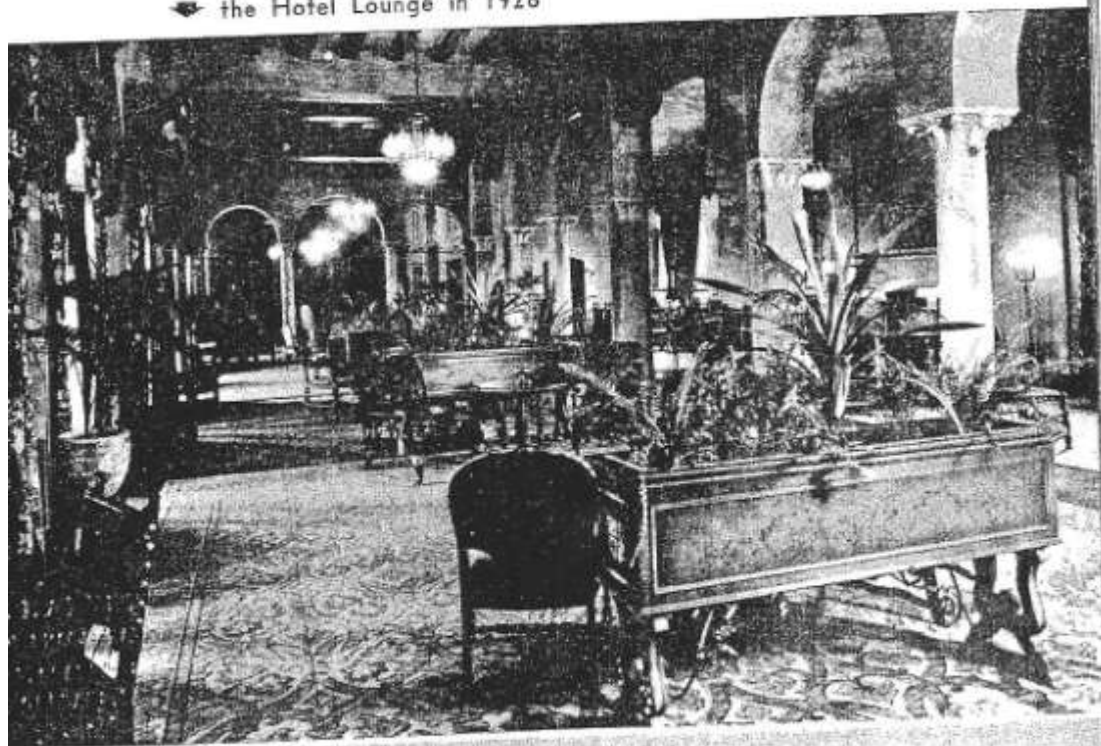
unsuitable. In Hopkins, Minn., however, a suburb of Minneapolis, the Hennepin County Old Folks Home furnished tempting bait. The council approved, and the bids were submitted. It seemed that the scholastics were to have their own home at last.

Meanwhile, two members of the mission band, returning from a preaching stint at Houma, La., discovered a large, erstwhile Methodist College at Brookhaven, Miss. When the Provincial council rejected it, however, Fr. Thomas Williams, the pastor, explained the Oblates' unsuccessful search to the zealous Bishop of Natchez, Most Rev. Richard O. Gerow, S.T.D. Anxious to host such a missionary congregation in his statewide diocese of 82 cotton and timber counties, His Excellency requested realtors to ferret out a Southern location.

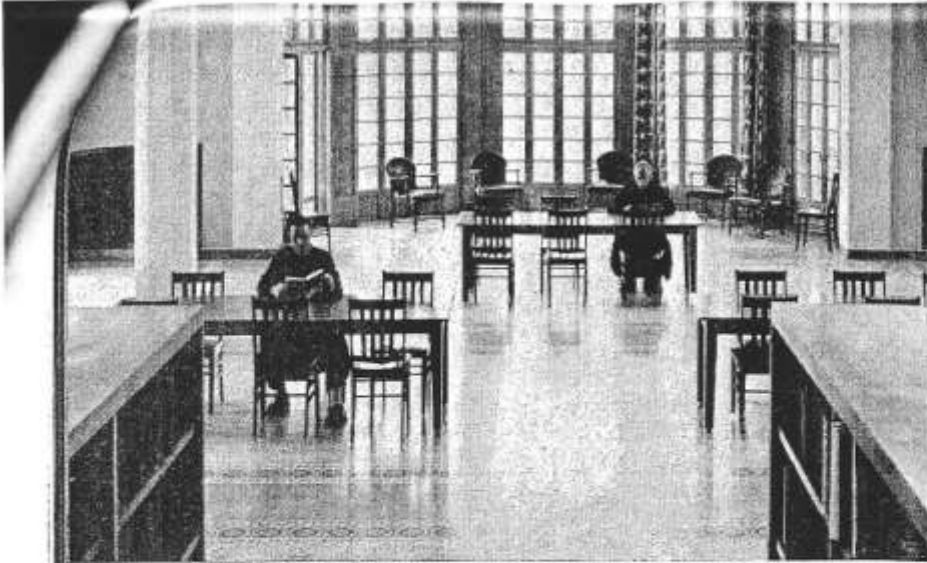
Up North in Hopkins, the Oblate hopes died as Minneapolis-Honeywell Regulator Co. outbid them for the two story brick structure. A few weeks previously, however, a graphic brochure had arrived, relating to Fr. Provincial the sundry advantages of an abandoned resort hotel.

That forged the second link in the Pine Hills story, a history itself dating back to 1925. Long before Mississippi's verdant Gulf Coast lured its present tourist trade, a group of progressive New Orleans' business men planned an elite subdivision on the North

the Hotel Lounge in 1926



CHALKEY'S PLACE
STREATOR, ILL.



◆ The Seminary Library was . . .

shore of the serene Bay of St. Louis, an inlet of the Gulf of Mexico. Here they could forget city noise and heat. Cypress-fringed swamps were filled. Log-supported roads were constructed. Concrete sidewalks soon angled beneath the pines and skirted magnolia shaded lots. An 18-hole golf course fair-ways around a \$75,000 palm-topped club-house. A wide, sandy beach terminated in a rambling boat house.

Dominating the miniature city of Pine Hills, a massive hotel was erected for \$1,350,000 with \$200,000 worth of furnishings. Five stories of 180 private, Persian-rug rooms and tile baths, the ultimate in designing, rose above a spacious first floor and basement. A 25,000 gallon water tank crowned the architectural monument beneath tiled roofs. Besides the basement, the steel and concrete resort had a cypress-beamed lounge, leading through a ceramic-tiled lobby down into a french-windowed dining room.

Successfully engineered as the first mammoth coast hotel, Pine Hills, the bayou Shangri-la, welcomed full houses after her opening on Dec. 20, 1926. Thunder clouds of the depression hovered over her, but it was the construction of the first causeway across the mouth of the Bay of St. Louis that broke her back, after only three years of operation. This re-routing of arterial highway 90 doomed her as inaccessible. The old Spanish Trail had skirted her portals—now it was nine miles away.

Subsequent attempts to reopen Pine Hills also failed. Hotel men lost their way in the back road maze, and gave up hope. Other

religious orders at Pine Hills in 1947 hurricane (and elevator shaft) ruined the prop

Divine Providence, forged the elephant." On June 1, 1947, with the signing of contracts.

The first Catholic scholasticate was installed as Superior of the Sacred Order of the Most Holy, on June 1, 1947.

With Fr. P. school year began, the brothers, on October 1, 1947, the second

◆ The



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NEW ORLEANS, LA.

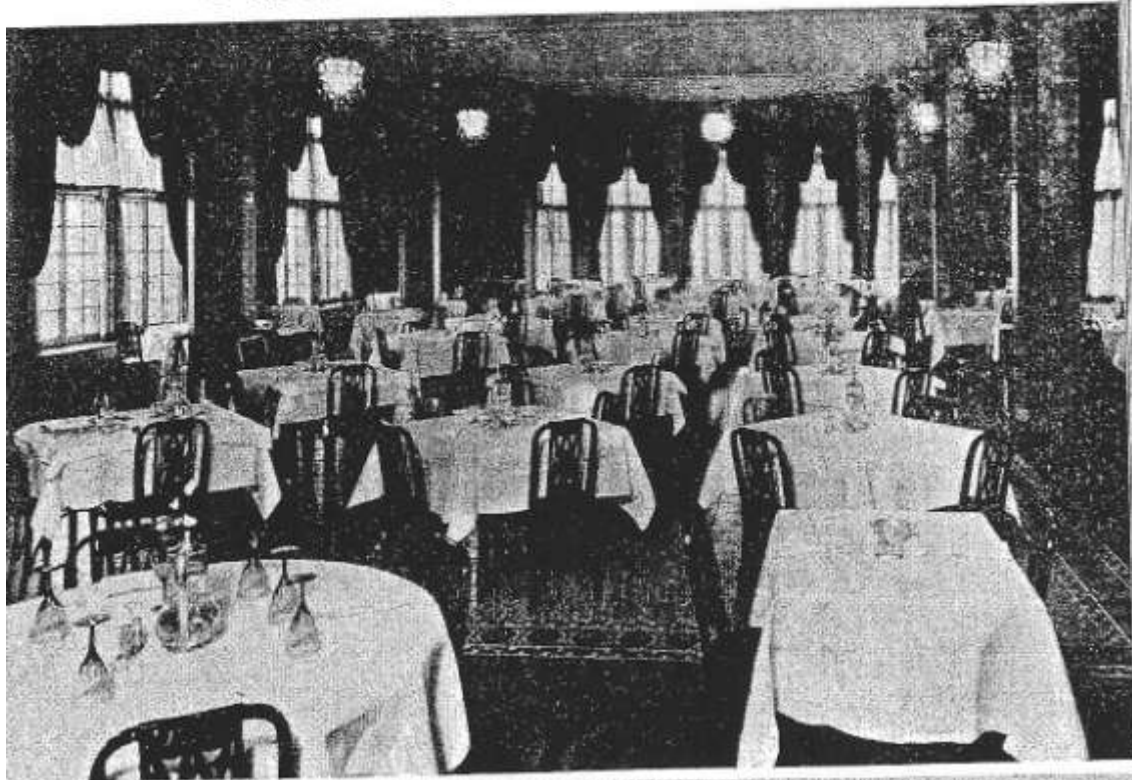
religious orders deemed it inadvisable. Uncle Sam housed troops at Pine Hills in 1942, but left her vacant after six months. The 1947 hurricane devastated roofs and wall plaster, flooded basement and elevator shafts, dismembered club house and boat house, and ruined the property.

Divine Providence, through the intercession of Mary Immaculate, forged the final link in the history of the remote "white elephant." On June 2, 1953, the Central Oblates' dream was realized with the signing of the deed and the letting of the renovation contracts.

The first contingent of Oblates arrived on June 10. The scholasticate was canonically erected under the patronage of Our Lady of the Snows, and the Very Rev. John E. Taylor, O.M.I., was installed as Superior by the Provincial, Very Rev. Edwin J. Guild, O.M.I., on June 27.

With Fr. Provincial singing the first Solemn High Mass, the school year began for five Fathers, 59 scholastics, and six coadjutor brothers, on Oct. 26, 1953. Twenty-seven years after the formal opening, the second chapter in the Pine Hills story had just begun.

❖ The Hotel Dining Room in 1926



NATIVITY PARISH
BILOXI, MISS.

Father Superior's Message . . .

Perhaps no one realizes better the enormity of a task than he who has stood by to witness the long hours of work, the fatigue, the seemingly small progress made from day to day in the reconstruction of an abandoned hotel such as was this, our present Oblate Seminary. Most schools are completed before being occupied. Our Oblate seminarians moved into the shell of a not particularly clean building, and through the help of kind local friends acquired the absolute necessities of life to enable them to transform this structure into what it is today.

Our gratitude goes to all who have made this project the reality it is today. We are particularly grateful to His Excellency, Bishop Richard O. Gerow, S.T.D., who by word and deed has shown us a hearty welcome into his diocese.

We cannot let this occasion pass without rendering our thanks to Mr. John Collins, our kind and helpful architect. Our gratitude also goes out to all the skilled workmen who took special pains to restore our seminary to its pristine beauty and utility.

We thank the many kind people who are now our close neighbors and friends because of their solicitude for us in time of need.

But most praise must go to the Oblate seminarians and coadjutor brothers who under the direction of Father Becherer have done a mammoth job of putting in long hours of labor and yet did not neglect the necessities of their spiritual and intellectual formation. They have given generously; God will reward their unstinting gift of themselves.

May God and our good heavenly Mother continue to bless this undertaking as they have in the past.

VERY REV. JOHN E. TAYLOR, O.M.I.,
Superior