



CROSSROADS

Belmont Abbey College

VOLUME II, ISSUE 5

JULY, 1973



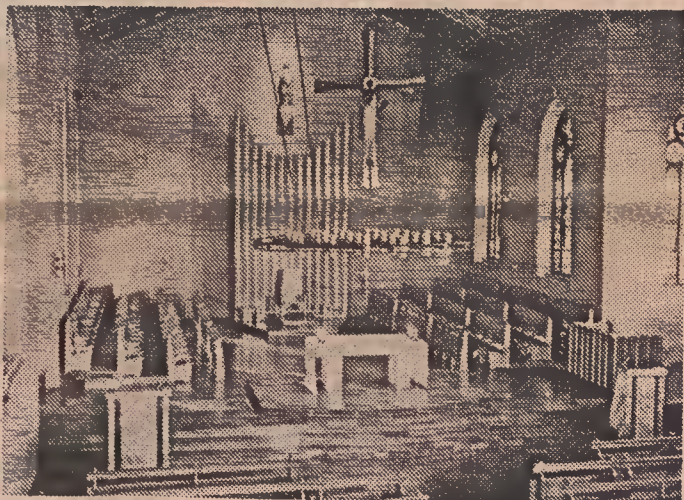
Cathedral Yesterday....



...And Today



Interior Yesterday...



....And Today



Civil War

Slave Block...



....Became

Baptismal Font

Abbey Cathedral: An Historic Place

In April, 1973, Belmont Abbey Cathedral was placed on the National Register of Historic Places which records the story of a nation. "It is a roll call of the tangible reminders of the history of the United States," according to the Register's official program.

In 1872 Jeremiah O'Connell, a Catholic priest, offered to the abbot of St. Vincent's Archabbey in Pennsylvania (the first Benedictine monastery in the United States) a large North Carolina plantation which O'Connell had acquired immediately after the Civil War. The abbot accepted the offer and soon sent a group of Benedictines to establish a monastery on the "Old Caldwell Plantation," as it was called.

Twenty years later on Saint Benedict's Day, March 21, 1892, ground was broken for the new abbey church. In 1894, "It was solemnly dedicated by Cardinal Gibbons in the presence of many Bishops, Abbots, and Priests from every section of the Union." An outstanding part of the new building was the stained glass windows, said to have "received first prize at the World's Fair held at Chicago in 1893."

The interior of Belmont Abbey Cathedral was thoroughly remodeled in 1965 in an unadorned 'modern' style. The handsome stained glass, the plaster stations of the cross hung beneath the nave windows, and the small wooden statue of the Virgin high on the east wall are all that remain of the original ornament. The brick walls and random flagstone floor covering are left bare. The marble altar at the crossing and the altars in the transepts, along with the lectern and pews, are all of modern design.

Even though it has been modernized, the Cathedral still contains the heritage of its early life. For in the vestibule, a Civil War era slave block now converted to a baptismal font was transported to the Cathedral by a graduating class of the College. On it is inscribed: UPON THIS ROCK, MEN ONCE WERE SOLD INTO SLAVERY. NOW UPON THIS ROCK, THROUGH THE WATERS OF BAPTISM, MEN BECOME FREE CHILDREN OF GOD.