

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**



**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic St. Richard's Church

and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number 505 4th Avenue West \_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Columbia Falls \_\_\_ vicinity of congressional district /

state Montana code 30 county Flathead code 029

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: office

**4. Owner of Property**

name Drs. Ruth Ann and Robert Hager

street & number 250 Hilltop Drive

city, town Columbia Falls \_\_\_ vicinity of state Montana

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Flathead County Courthouse

street & number 897 South Main

city, town Kalispell state Montana

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title NONE has this property been determined eligible? \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no

date \_\_\_ federal \_\_\_ state \_\_\_ county \_\_\_ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

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## 7. Description

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**Condition** excellent good fair deteriorated ruins unexposed**Check one** unaltered altered**Check one** original site moved

date \_\_\_\_\_

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**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

St. Richard's church is a two-story, gabled building of gothic design. It is brick, with wood doors and windows, a cedar shingle roof, and a wood and shingle steeple that stands about sixty feet off the ground. The exterior is in original condition except for a 12'x12' garage door that was installed, about 1965, in the back wall to allow the building to be used for storage. The present owner has submitted an application for approval to rehabilitate the church for use as a chiropractor's office. The planned rehabilitation would remove the existing garage door and add an enclosed stairway to resemble the original openings.

The interior of the building is all one large room, with a raised area for the pulpit, and a balustraded choir loft at the end of the narthex. There is a 6'x10' entry in the front, and two small service rooms in the two rear corners beside the pulpit. The ceiling is a vaulted gothic arch and is about 28' to the ridge from the main floor. The ceiling is tiled with pressed metal tiles. The interior is without any of the original furnishings, and the floor has been altered to support heavy equipment.

The windows are the most striking aspect of the architecture. They are gothic arches measuring about 6'x14' high and are all wood sashes made into intrinsic designs, and glazed with multi-colored stained glass. The interior is in original condition except the furnishings, the floor, and the garage door.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates**      1891                      **Builder/Architect**                      Byrnes brothers

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

St. Richard's Church qualifies under criteria A and D.

St. Richard's Church was built in 1891 as a Catholic mission church, the first church built in northwestern Montana. It served the community as a church from 1891 until 1958. In 1892 the church was the first public school in Columbia Falls. The building has great significance to the community as an historic community building and as representative of an early locally constructed brick edifice.

Within the territory now comprising St. Charles' Parish of Whitefish is the first Catholic Church built in Northwestern Montana. It is St. Richard's church at Columbia Falls. Father H. Alleys, then stationed at Frenchtown, visited the territory, found the nucleus of a strong Catholic settlement in this locality, and decided that a church was necessary. In the spring of 1891, the Byrnes brothers made the brick from a local clay at a brickyard near the river for the church. That the work was well done is evidenced by the fine condition of this Gothic building after 50 years of service. "A little weatherbeaten, like the Byrnes brothers themselves, but in very nice shape."

In 1892, the new church served as the first public school in Columbia Falls. It housed pupils on weekdays and worshipers on Sundays. Father Alleys himself completed the payments on the building after he had moved to Anaconda. This was done at the request of Bishop John B. Brondel.

In 1894, Kalispell became a parish with a resident priest, the Rev. H.J. Van de Ven. Thus Kalispell replaced Frenchtown as headquarters for priests visiting the territory all the way to the Canadian border. After Father Van de Ven, Father Van Clarenbeck, Father Gallagher, and Father Arts were successively in charge of Kalispell. Each visited Columbia Falls and looked after the spiritual welfare of the Catholic people of the vicinity.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Souvenir Centenary Edition of the Register for the Diocese of Helena (Vol. XVII, No. 35), August, 1941.

# 10. Geographical Data

UTM NOT VERIFIED

Acreege of nominated property less than 1  
Quadrangle name Columbia Falls South, MT

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UMT References

A 

1	1	7	08	4	19	5	36	1	44	0
Zone			Easting			Northing				

B 

Zone			Easting			Northing				

C 

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D 

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E 

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F 

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G 

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H 

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

Lot one and the north half of Lot 2, Block 40, Columbia Falls Original Townsite. Land presently owned by present owner.

SW 1/4 SE 1/4 SE 1/4 Section 8 T. 30 N. R. 20 W.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Pyramid Builders and

organization Montana Historic Preservation Office date 4/23/79

street & number 340 Chipmonk Ct. telephone 837-4897

city or town Bigfork state Montana

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

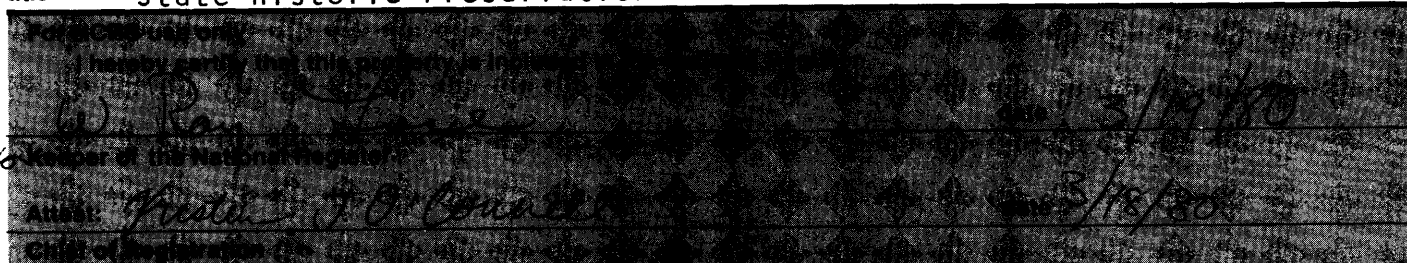
The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Ednie Lee Kinser, Jr Ken Rote

title State Historic Preservation Officer date 9-10-79



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<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** 1891 **Builder/Architect** Byrnes Brothers

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

St. Richard's Church in Columbia Falls, Montana was built in 1891 and was the first Catholic Church built in northwestern Montana. For a brief period, between October and December 1892, the Church housed the first public school in Columbia Falls. The building has great significance to the community as an historic community building and is a representative example of an early edifice constructed in locally fired brick.

St. Richard's Church was constructed only two years after the Great Northern Railroad laid tracks through the territory and the town of Columbia Falls was founded. Father H. Alleys, then stationed in Frenchtown about 12 miles from Missoula, Montana visited the Columbia Falls area and found the nucleus of a strong Catholic settlement. He decided that a church was necessary and a fine brick edifice was constructed shortly thereafter. Father Alleys also patented a simplified method for setting stained glass.

St. Richards Church by its excellant construction testifies to the relative prosperity found in lumbering, mining, and farming of the new town of Columbia Falls. Although one of the finest Catholic churches in northwestern Montana, for the greater part of its history St. Richards was serviced by visiting priests from the larger neighboring communities of Frenchtown, Kalispell, and Whitefish. The arch diocese sold the property in 1958.

