

STATE: Wyoming	
COUNTY: Sublette	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
70-4-49- <del>008</del>	4/28/70

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
Father DeSmet's "Prairie Mass" Site

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
sec. 36,

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
S½, SE¼, R.111 W., T. 34 N. 6th P.M.

CITY OR TOWN:  
Daniel vicinity

STATE Wyoming	CODE 49	COUNTY: Sublette	CODE 035
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**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/>	Public <input type="checkbox"/>	Occupied <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes: Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Site <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/>	Private <input type="checkbox"/>	Unoccupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/>
Object <input type="checkbox"/>	Both <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Preservation work in progress <input type="checkbox"/>	No: <input type="checkbox"/>
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
Agricultural <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Government <input type="checkbox"/>	Park <input type="checkbox"/>	Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Comments <input type="checkbox"/>
Commercial <input type="checkbox"/>	Industrial <input type="checkbox"/>	Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/>	Other (Specify) <input type="checkbox"/>
Educational <input type="checkbox"/>	Military <input type="checkbox"/>	Religious <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Entertainment <input type="checkbox"/>	Museum <input type="checkbox"/>	Scientific <input type="checkbox"/>	

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNERS NAME:  
City of Daniel and Quarter Circle 5 Ranch

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Daniel

STATE:  
Wyoming

CODE:  
49

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:  
Sublette County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Pinedale

STATE:  
Wyoming

CODE:  
49

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: .9

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Wyoming Recreation Commission, Survey of Historical Sites, Markers & Mon.

DATE OF SURVEY: Summer-Fall 1967 Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Wyoming Recreation Commission

STREET AND NUMBER:  
604 East 25th Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Cheyenne

STATE:  
Wyoming

CODE:  
49

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**7. DESCRIPTION**

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Fair <input type="checkbox"/>	Deteriorated <input type="checkbox"/>	Ruins <input type="checkbox"/>	Unexposed <input type="checkbox"/>
INTEGRITY	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	Altered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Unaltered <input type="checkbox"/>		Moved <input type="checkbox"/>	Original Site <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The site of "The Prairie Mass" is on a broad open plain atop a high bluff overlooking the Upper Green River valley. A spectacular panoramic view of the valley and the surrounding mountains is visible to the north and the west. Presently the geographic setting is essentially the same as it has always been; however, the encroachments of modern civilization have become evident. Fencing, a modern ranch complex, a water tower and a cemetery now exist adjacent to the "Mass" site.

A granite cross monument has been erected in recent times upon the location of the original altar site. Around the monument is a 14' x 14' half moon shaped chapel built of native rock and covered with a wooden roof. Across the front is a steel gate portraying a cross and the name "DeSmet". The inscription on the granite cross reads: "Holy Mass was offered here for the first time in Wyoming by Father DeSmet, July 5, 1840." A flagpole stands at the southeast corner of the chapel and set into the southeast corner of the chapel is a 12' x 14' bronze plaque reading: "Commemorating Hundredth Anniversary of the Mass by Father P. J. DeSmet - July 5, 1840 - Dedicated by the Most Reverend P. A. McGovern, D. D. July 4, 1940."

A short distance to the south of the chapel and west of the cemetery is a stone monument which marks the grave of Pinckey W. Sublette. A bronze plaque on the stone read: "Pinckey W. Sublette - Died 1865 - Buried on Fontenelle Creek - Exhumed 1897, taken to the U. S. Circuit Court at St. Louis, Mo., Returned by a court order to Sublette County, Wyoming to be buried here July 27, 1935 - Placed July 4, 1936 by the Historical Landmark Commission of Wyoming."



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**8. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian       16th Century       18th Century       20th Century   
 15th Century       17th Century       19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1840

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |                |              |                          |                |                                     |                 |                          |
|----------------|--------------|--------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Aboriginal     | Education    | <input type="checkbox"/> | Political      | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Urban Planning  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Prehistoric    | Engineering  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Religion/Phi-  |                                     | Other (Specify) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Historic       | Industry     | <input type="checkbox"/> | losophy        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | _____           |                          |
| Agriculture    | Invention    | <input type="checkbox"/> | Science        | <input type="checkbox"/>            | _____           |                          |
| Art            | Landscape    | <input type="checkbox"/> | Sculpture      | <input type="checkbox"/>            | _____           |                          |
| Commerce       | Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> | Social/Human-  |                                     | _____           |                          |
| Communications | Literature   | <input type="checkbox"/> | itarian        | <input type="checkbox"/>            | _____           |                          |
| Conservation   | Military     | <input type="checkbox"/> | Theater        | <input type="checkbox"/>            | _____           |                          |
|                | Music        | <input type="checkbox"/> | Transportation | <input type="checkbox"/>            | _____           |                          |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (Include Personages, Dates, Events, Etc.)

"The Prairie Mass" represents one of the earliest occurrences of organized Christian religious ceremony to take place in the Rocky Mountain region and the first Catholic Mass to be held in the area that now comprises the State of Wyoming. This Mass, while being a noteworthy event in itself, is also a symbolic reminder of the missionary movement on the Western Frontier that so greatly influenced the cultural transition of many of the American Indian tribes. In this movement Father DeSmet, who presided over "The Prairie Mass", looms large as one of the most prominent figures in the whole history of the northwest from St. Louis to the Pacific Coast.

Reverend Pierre DeSmet (1801 - 73) was born in Belgium and came to America in 1821. Joining the Jesuit Society he soon began his life's work among the native peoples of his newly adopted land. After several missions among the Indians, Father DeSmet started out from St. Louis on March 27, 1840 to begin work among the Flathead tribe located in the Upper Missouri Valley. Joining an American Fur Company caravan, Father DeSmet journeyed up the valley of the Platte River past Fort Laramie, Independence Rock, over South Pass, and paused briefly at the annual fur trader's rendezvous in the shadow of the Wind River Mountains on the Upper Green River. Father DeSmet added a new element to the rendezvous by delivering sermons and lectures, holding religious ceremonies, and participating in council discussions with various groups of Indians. This "first" in history would also be the last since the fur trade was a dying occupation and the rendezvous was destined to become an obsolete practice.

On Sunday, July 5, 1840, the first Mass ever celebrated in the Rocky Mountains took place. The altar of native stone stood on a slight elevation and was decorated with wildflowers. Surrounded by a grandeur of prairie landscape, verdant mountain meadows and rugged snow-covered mountains, Father DeSmet celebrated the Holy Sacrifice of Mass Sub Dio, his black robe offering a sharp contrast to the wilderness surroundings. An estimated 2,000 Indians, trappers and traders were present and the congregation was addressed in both French and English with the Indians spoken to through an interpreter. The Canadians sang hymns in French and Latin and the Indians in their native tongue. When the service concluded, the French-Canadians christened the site "La Prairie de la Mess" -- The Prairie of the Mass. As Father DeSmet expressed in his

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

\_\_\_\_\_, Manuscript files, Historical Division, Wyoming Recreation Commission, Terrell, John Upton, Black Robe, The Life of Pierre Jean DeSmet, Missionary, Explorer & Pioneer, (Garden City, New York, Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1964).

\_\_\_\_\_, Miscellaneous File, Wyoming State Archives and Historical Department, Historical Research Division, Chittenden, H.M. and Richardson, A. T. Life, Letters and Travels of Father Pierre Jean DeSmet. Vol. 1.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN ONE ACRE		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	0 ' "	0 ' "		42 ° 52 ' 03 "	110 ° 2 ' 36 "	
NE	0 ' "	0 ' "				
SE	0 ' "	0 ' "				
SW	0 ' "	0 ' "				

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:  
Bill Barnhart, Historian

ORGANIZATION: Wyoming Recreation Commission      DATE: Dec. 19, 1969

STREET AND NUMBER:  
604 East 25th Street

CITY OR TOWN: Cheyenne      STATE: Wyoming      CODE: 49

12 STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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 National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name Paul H. Prescott

Title State Liaison Officer

Date December 19, 1969

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Ernest Allen Connally  
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date APR 28 1970

ATTEST:

William J. Murtagh  
Keeper of The National Register

Date APR 2 1970

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Father DeSmet's  
"Prairie Mass"

(Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

8. Statement of Significance - page - 2

own words "it was a spectacle truly moving to the heart of a missionary that this immense family, composed of so many different tribes should prostrate themselves in equal humility before the "Divine Host".

Father DeSmet's accomplishments in the years that followed are of heroic proportions. In his work he established 16 treaties, crossed the ocean 19 times and traveled 180,000 miles on his errands of human charity for the Indians who knew him as their "sincerest friend". The great spiritual experience of conducting the "Prairie Mass" without doubt contributed to and influenced the course of Father DeSmet's life. As a man who possessed few material items and who was continually on the move there is little of a purely physical nature that has survived which relates to Father DeSmet's life and work. The site of the first Mass in the northern Rocky Mountains not only represents a landmark of a significant event in Western history but also commemorates the life, work and times of a significant figure in the West.

