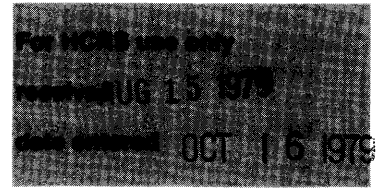


**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**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. Paul Roman Catholic Church

and/or common

2. Location

street & number Off OR 215 ___ not for publication

city, town St. Paul ___ vicinity of congressional district Second

state Oregon code 41 county Marion code 047

3. Classification

| Category | Ownership | Status | Present Use | |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> district | <input type="checkbox"/> public | <input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> work in progress | <input type="checkbox"/> educational | <input type="checkbox"/> private residence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> site | Public Acquisition | Accessible | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object | <input type="checkbox"/> in process | <input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted | <input type="checkbox"/> government | <input type="checkbox"/> scientific |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> being considered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted | <input type="checkbox"/> industrial | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> military | <input type="checkbox"/> other: |

4. Owner of Property

name Parish of St. Paul Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Portland in Oregon
The Chancery Office

street & number P.O. Box 126 2838 East Burnside
Portland, OR 97207

city, town St. Paul ___ vicinity of state Oregon 97137

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Marion County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Salem state Oregon 97301

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Statewide Inventory of Historic Properties has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1970 ___ federal state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records State Historic Preservation Office

city, town Salem state Oregon 97310

7. Description

| | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Condition | | Check one | Check one |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input type="checkbox"/> unaltered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site |
| <input type="checkbox"/> good | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered | <input type="checkbox"/> moved |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fair | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed | | date _____ |

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Mission of St. Paul, on French Prairie in the Willamette Valley of Oregon, had its origins in 1836 when retired Hudson's Bay Company engages, French Canadians, and their Indian wives built a 30 x 70-foot log church and appealed for a Catholic priest to serve their fledgling farming community. Jesuit missionary Francis Norbert Blanchet arrived from Quebec via the North Mission of the Red River country and Fort Vancouver in 1839. By 1846, the Parish of St. Paul had built a more permanent brick church which is still in service today and appears almost as it did in 1846. It was the first brick church erected in Oregon, and it is probably the oldest brick building standing in the state.

St. Paul Church was built in the Gothic Revival Style. Its characteristics include a cruciform plan, lofty spire, pointed arch openings, a steeply pitched gable roof, and simple wooden window "tracery." The first spire, documented in a sketch by the Canadian artist Paul Kane made during the artist's peregrinations in the West in 1846, appears to have been a tall cone over the entrance at the southeast gable end. In 1866 a four-sided brick sacristy was added to the northwest end. In 1898 a brick vestibule and belfry replaced the original spire at the southeast end. Rising to a height of 92 feet, the existing tower has a more complex outline with somewhat "baroque" scrolled decoration and gablets framing the louvered panels of the belfry. A spire surmounted by a Latin cross rises from the belfry section. The main entry with its pointed arch head is flanked by buttresses with sandstone coping. A small wheel, or rose window fitted with stained glass is situated above the arched entry. As a result of the bell tower addition of 1898, the church appears slightly Late Victorian in character, but the later tower is well integrated with the body of the church nonetheless.

Writing to the editor of the Portland Herald on August 6, 1867 to correct a misattribution of the date of the brick church at St. Paul, Father F. N. Blanchet explained that the first cornerstone had been blessed on May 19, 1846, and the church was consecrated and opened for divine service the following November. The nave measured 45 x 100 feet, with the transepts "exceeding the main walls" 15 x 25 feet. The bell in the belfry weighed 500 pounds. In 1866, he reported, the parishioners engaged Portland architect Elwood M. Burton--collaborator on the design for the imposing Multnomah County Courthouse completed in 1864--to supervise improvements. Mr. Burton "declared the whole structure to be good and sound from bottom to top" and commenced reparations. The original belfry reaching to a height of 84 feet was strengthened, and the roof was resingled. From the time of the church's construction in 1846 until 1866, the interior had been unfinished. According to Father Blanchet's account, it was Burton who added the Corinthian columns supporting the barrel vault over the center aisle. At this time also the coved ceilings of the 10-foot-wide side aisles were added, as was the back gallery, or choir loft. Four sections of pew seating were installed, and all woodwork was painted. The cost of these improvements was \$2,000. The cost of constructing the church in 1846 had been \$20,000. St. Paul Church was still the largest on the Northern Pacific Coast twenty years after its erection, according to Father Blanchet.

St. Paul is a small farming community 25 miles southwest of Portland. It has a population of about 300. Not unlike its French prototypes of medieval times, the church and its bell tower crowned with spire and cross dominate the flat landscape and serve as the focal point of the town. The church grounds are located a block and a half from the central business district. The SE to NW axis of the church lines up precisely with the axis of Church Street, the main road into town from the east. Behind the church, at the westerly end of Church Street, is a residential district containing houses dating from the mid-1800s to the present. Removed about 100 feet from the church to the southwest is the rectory, and to the northeast about 150 feet is the grade school. The church complex is situated on a

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parcel of about two acres. Well maintained lawn and shrubs complete the immediate setting.

The cruciform church is 100 feet long, 45 feet wide, and 45 feet in height, with transepts measuring 15 x 25 feet. The entrance is in the southeast end and is marked by the vestibule and 92-foot-high bell tower of 1898. The sanctuary at the northwest end is raised about two feet above the floor of the nave.

The walls are constructed of clay bricks which were manufactured on the site. Tradition holds that Indian women did most of the brick-making. According to the Oregon Writers' Project records, the pit behind the church from which the clay had been excavated could still be seen as late as ca. 1940.¹ Masonry work has been attributed to a Hudson's Bay Company mason named McAdam. The walls are over two feet thick. The joists are rough-sawn 2x14s. Some lumber for Mission St. Paul is known to have come from Ewing Young's sawmill on Chehalem Creek at present-day Newberg. An enterprise launched in 1838, Young's was the first lumber mill in Oregon independent of the Hudson's Bay Company, and it was considerably closer to French Prairie than the sawmill at Fort Vancouver on the Columbia. Ewing Young's account book shows that the mill supplied the "church" a substantial number of board feet of lumber (boards and weatherboards) in the spring of 1839, normally at no charge. It is likely that these orders went to clad and improve the log church which had been moved up onto the prairie after its initial construction on the east bank of the Willamette in 1836. Following Young's demise in February 1841, the sawmill washed out in a flood later in the same year. Some of the lumber manufactured by Young's mill may have been salvaged from the original church and incorporated into the framework of the brick building in 1846, but it would not have been possible for Young's mill to produce custom work for the new church since it had been washed out some five years prior to the beginning of the project.

There are twelve large stained glass windows in the church, each donated by a parish family, as is customary. Among the names incorporated into window glass at St. Paul's are those of the McKay, Kirk and Branto families.

The roof of the church has been the subject of some debate. The soffit boards are about 5 1/2 inches wide, which is thought to be more characteristic of the later 19th century than 1846, and, thus, they no doubt reflect later repairs. Also, there is a trace line under the eaves which suggests that the pitch of the roof may have been slightly altered. There is no documentation of any changes in roofline other than the times it was resingled.²

Internally, the building appears today much as it looked upon completion of the finish work in 1866. The barrel-vaulted ceiling is supported by six Corinthian columns along either side of the center aisle. The columns are situated in the center of the pew sections, and the center aisle ceiling span is about 20 feet. Ceilings of

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the side aisles span ten feet and are coved at the outside wall. The side altars are carved in a fleur-de-lis motif. In the 1960s, as a result of liturgical changes brought about by the Vatican Council of 1962, a new main altar was built and placed out from the wall some five feet so that those officiating at a service could face the congregation. The interior walls are wainscotted with 1x2 beaded boards to a height of about three feet. The wainscot is placed directly over the plastered brick and is stained in an alternating pattern of two dark boards and two light. An old hanging lamp shown in one of the earliest interior views is still in use. The Latin cross of iron surmounting the belfry spire is the same one which was hammered out by a former Hudson's Bay Company blacksmith in 1846. The symbolic metal weather cock atop it, taken down recently for repairs, shows the lettering of the oil cans from which it was soldered in 1898.

¹See also Sunday Oregon Journal (October 30, 1938), Features Section, page 3.

²Ibid., In 1938, in preparation for the centenary of the Catholic Church in Oregon celebrated the following year with pageantry and solemn pontifical mass, the church was refurbished. What was reported to have been clay mortar, rather than lime mortar, had eroded considerably, and the brick was repointed and "waterproofed." At this time also the steeple was resingled.

8. Significance

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

Specific dates 1846, 1866 **Builder/Architect** Original masonry: Hudson's Bay Company
mason named McAdam. Elwood M. Burton, Portland architect of improvements of 1866.

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

St. Paul Roman Catholic Church is among the most significant landmarks associated with the Catholic Church in the Pacific Northwest. It is the last structural vestige of one of the earliest missionary enterprises undertaken anywhere in the region. The first was the Methodist Mission founded on the Willamette River north of present-day Salem by the Reverend Jason Lee in 1834. The second was established for the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions by Dr. Marcus Whitman at Walla Walla in 1836. St. Paul parish dates its beginnings to 1836, when a small settler community of French Canadians retired from the fur trade built a log church, or chapel, but the Catholic mission was officially established with the arrival of Jesuit missionary Francis Norbert Blanchet at St. Paul in 1839. Blanchet and others under his direction developed the mission into an important religious and educational center. Blanchet was rewarded for his pioneering efforts on behalf of the Roman Catholic Church by being named first Archbishop in the present boundaries of Oregon. He was in Europe at the time of the construction and dedication of the existing brick church of 1846. Nevertheless, since he had planned it, initially, as a cathedral, Blanchet is inextricably associated with the first permanent church of Mission St. Paul. The building has the distinction of being the first brick church in the Oregon country, and no other congregation of any denomination in Oregon has been worshipping at the same site for a longer time.

In 1810, John Jacob Astor's Pacific Fur Company authorized an exploratory trek into the Oregon country. The Astor Overland Expedition, which had originated in Montreal and arrived at the mouth of the Columbia River in 1811, had among its members Joseph Gervais, Etienne Lucier, Louis Labonte, and Michel LaFramboise--each of whom was a French Canadian of the Catholic faith interested in making his fortune in the West. These engages worked for the three successive fur companies which governed the territory for three decades: the Pacific Fur Company, the Northwest Company, and Hudson's Bay Company. Each of the engages retired from the fur trade at about the same time and settled on French Prairie. Theirs was the first permanent farming community in Oregon.

In 1834 and 1835 the French settler community sent an appeal to the Red River country of Canada, near Winnipeg, for a Catholic priest. In 1836 the community built a log church on the west bank of the Willamette River, near what later became the Fairfield townsite, in the hope of attracting a priest to "French Prairie." The Methodist Mission was several miles to the south, on the opposite bank of the river, and, before the appearance of a priest, marriages and baptisms were performed for most of the settler community by Methodist missionaries. Hudson's Bay Company Chief Factor John McLoughlin suggested that the Catholics move their church back up onto the prairie, and so it was moved westerly to the site of St. Paul.

When the Jesuit missionaries Francis Norbert Blanchet and Modeste Demers arrived in Oregon on November 24, 1838, they found an undeveloped region essentially ruled by the Hudson's Bay Company. The missionaries were not in the employ of the Company, but were dependent upon it for transportation, supplies and protection. The Company required only that the two priests not take up permanent stations in the Willamette Valley. Consequently, Fathers Blanchet and Demers spent most of their first year in Oregon traveling from homestead to outpost, performing baptisms and marriages.

(continued)

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On January 6, 1839, Father Blanchet came to St. Paul, and the first mass at that location was held soon thereafter. Blanchet stayed on at St. Paul for a month. So great was the desire of the people to attend his services that they brought their families and lived in tents around the log church. Seventy-four baptisms were performed, and twenty-four marriages blessed.

By the end of 1839, Hudson's Bay Company had softened its policy and allowed the priests to take up permanent stations. Blanchet received a letter to that effect from the Company Governor, James Douglas, on October 9, 1839. This change of policy was brought about largely at the behest of John McLoughlin Chief Factor of the Columbia District headquartered at Fort Vancouver. Father Blanchet lost no time with his newly-granted authority, and left promptly for St. Paul.

On October 17, 1843, St. Joseph's College for Boys was founded at St. Paul by Father Pierre Jean DeSmet. On December 1 of the same year, Father Blanchet was appointed Vicar-Apostolic by the Holy See, and he was given the title "Bishop of Philadelphia." The next year, the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur opened a girls school at Mission St. Paul. Subjects taught included English, French, writing and arithmetic. Tuition, for those who could afford it, was charged in flour, meat, potatoes, eggs, salt, candles, tea, and rice. This "income" enabled the sisters to care for the orphans of the district.

In 1844 Blanchet went to Canada, and from Canada to Europe in the interests of his charge. He was away until 1847, and during his absence from St. Paul Pope Pius IV erected the Oregon country into an ecclesiastical province containing three suffragan sees: Oregon City, Walla Walla, and Vancouver Island. The first was allotted to Archbishop Blanchet; the second to the archbishop's brother, the Reverend A.M.A. Blanchet, Canon of Montreal; and the third to Blanchet's faithful colleague, Vicar-General Modeste Demers.

While matters were settled in Rome, the cornerstone of the present St. Paul Roman Catholic Church was laid in May, 1846 by Father Modeste Demers, mission administrator during Blanchet's absence. The church was dedicated on November 1, 1846. Paul Kane, Canadian artist traveling in the Pacific Northwest, sketched the Catholic precincts at St. Paul and thus provided a documentary record of the church's appearance near the time of its completion. The original Paul Kane watercolor sketch is held by the Royal Ontario Museum.

The period 1839-1849 was the high point of Mission St. Paul. During that decade it was the religious and educational center of French Prairie. The center of activity was moved to Oregon City soon after Blanchet's return in 1847. Until 1880, mass at St. Paul was given in both English and French. Since that time, the gradual influx of English-speaking settlers has contributed to the lessening of the use of the French language in the area, and today it is only the "Old Timers" who prefer French to English in daily speech.

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Oregon Writers' Project, A Guide to Oregon (New York, 1940).

Interviews, 1978

Joe McKay, St. Paul, Oregon
Harriet Duncan Munnick, West Linn, Oregon
Archbishop Francis P. Leipzig, Portland, Oregon

Blanchet, Francis Norbert, Letter to Editor regarding the building of St. Paul Roman Catholic Church in Portland Herald (August 1867). Letter was dated at Portland, August 6, 1867. The letter is merely initialed "F.N.B.," but it is unmistakably the work of Father Blanchet. Clipping in scrapbook held by Sacred Heart Academy, Salem, Oregon.

Munnick, Harriet D., "The Transition Decades on French Prairie: 1830-1850," Marion County History, Vol. 4 (June 1958), 35-42.

"Oregon's Pioneer Mission," Champoeg Pioneer, Vol. 3, No. 39 (April 1959), 1.