

MONTANA HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL INVENTORY

BRIDGER SURVEY

Legal Description: Block 13, Lots 11-14 O.P.
Address: 220 W. Broadway
Ownership: Name: Methodist Church
Address: Box 12
Bridger, MT 59014



Historic Name: Methodist Episcopal Church
and Parsonage
Common Name: Methodist Church and Parsonage
Date of Construction: 1905-06/Addition 1947;
Parsonage 1911-13
Architect: I.J. Hares (Church Addition)
Builder: Maurice Levander and Eric Forsman
built the Parsonage
Original Owner: Methodist Church
Original Use: Church and Parsonage
Present Use: Church and Parsonage

	3	33
	3	34
Roll#	3/Frame#	35
	3	36



Research Sources:

Abstract of Title: Carbon County Courthouse:
1902, Bridger Improvement Co.; 1906, Methodist
Episcopal Church

Plat Records: Carbon County Courthouse

Tax Records: Carbon County Courthouse

Building Permits: N/A

Sewer/Water Permits: N/A

City Directories: 1905-1922

Sanborn Maps: 1907, 1916

Newspapers: Red Lodge Picket; 10-5-00; Free Press; 7-12-03;

4-22-04; Clarke Fork Herald; 5-16-07; 6-20-07; 9-5-07;

Carbon County Gazette; 3-16-05; 12-29-05; 2-2-06; Carbon

County Republican; 5-25-06; 6-15-06; Bridger Banner;

3-26-08; 4-2-08; Bridger Times; 6-11-09; 8-6-09; 2-25-10;

8-19-10; 9-2-10; 3-3-11; 4-7-11; 5-12-11; 6-16-11; 8-25-11;

9-1-11; 11-10-11; 11-17-11; 12-1-11; 12-15-11; 3-15-12;

4-26-12; 5-24-12; 6-28-12; 8-30-12; 11-15-12; 3-14-13;

4-25-13; 5-16-13; 6-6-13; 6-20-13; 7-8-13; 8-15-13; 8-29-13;

12-26-13; 2-20-14; 3-6-14; 3-20-14; 4-3-14; 4-10-14; 4-24-14;

5-15-14; 5-22-14; 7-10-14; 8-28-14; 9-11-14; 3-26-15;

8-11-16; 8-25-16; 9-22-16; 12-8-16; 7-6-17; 8-24-17; 9-21-17;

5-10-18; 6-7-18; 8-30-18; 1-10-19; 7-20-33; 12-12-46;

12-19-46; 5-1-47; 7-2-47; 10-21-48; 6-28-51; 12-25-52;

2-14-57

Other: N/A



of Mrs. T.H. Barlow, as did the Ladies Aid. Often services were held in the Barlow Hotel dining room, or in Hiram Haskin's hall above his hardware store. Then in March 1905, they took the big step, and excavation for the foundation of a church began under the direction of pastor Reverend J.C. Clark. By December the bell had arrived, and all 700 pounds of it were lifted to the steeple. Carpenters continued working through the mild winter, and on May 27, 1906 the Bridger Methodist Episcopal had the distinction of being the first church building to be dedicated in the Clarks Fork Valley. While the paper is silent on the issue, the building undoubtedly was constructed by volunteer labor. The officers of the church read like a Who's Who on Main Street, so no doubt the merchants contributed all the cost that could not be donated. And the Ladies Aid sold ice cream and cake on Saturdays, which probably aided the congregation more than the building fund.

In 1907 a finishing touch, a stained glass window was donated to the church by J. Thomas Brown in memory of his mother. On the top sash were the words, "Faith, Hope, and Love", and below, "Oblin Ellen Brown, age 63, died November 19, 1906." Joseph Dunlap was the second minister, beginning in September 1907. In 1908 through 1910 Reverend James Coad was minister of this church, and in November 1911, after he left here, he was expelled from the ministry. While at Bridger, he was very successful in his work. He held a 3 week revival with Rev. E.M. Isaac of North Dakota as guest speaker, and attendance reached 4,767 persons, and 147 conversions. Also during his stay, the Mine Sunday School sold their organ, gave the proceeds to this church, which bought a new pipe organ in 1909.

Rev. S.P. Ulrich succeeded Coad as pastor. He added another Sunday sermon to the schedule, and had Rev. T. Rauch of Billings give it in German to accommodate the German speaking immigrants in the valley. Ulrich also took his ministry to Riverview schoolhouse near Belfry and to Fromberg. In 1911 he helped volunteers make "numerous" repairs inside and outside of the church, and started the construction of the Methodist parsonage. (There was another parsonage at a different location prior to this one.) Four months after the excavation for the basement began, Ulrich resigned over differences with the District Superintendent, and the building project lagged.

David Hardy of Big Timber took the ministry in March 1912, and there was a complete reorganization and election of officers. By November things calmed and thoughts again turned to the parsonage. The first one was sold to W.T. Rule, the Forsman house was rented temporarily for Mr. Hardy, and plans were made to work on the new parsonage the first of spring. That year Hardy held his Christmas program at the Opera House to accommodate the crowd. When spring came Eric Forsman was laying the stone walls for the foundation of the parsonage. Baldwin Lumber Co. got the contract for materials, and Maurice Levander was the carpenter. It was finished by July 1913. This seven room house was said to be "modern in its appointments," and "one

of the nicest in the Yellowstone district."

Late in 1946 the Methodist began planning an expansion to accommodate the new membership. As population grew in Bridger, the membership doubled between 1942 to 46. They decided to keep this church and build a new wing with a full basement. Excavation began in May 1947 and the addition was finished in October. The new wing had a dining hall to serve 150 people, but at the opening banquet, 185 persons attended. On the last day of December, 1952, the congregation held a special mortgage burning celebration in honor of their completing the loan payments for this addition.

INTEGRITY

The 1906 church retains a high degree of historic architectural integrity. In 1947 a parish hall was added on to the south elevation of the church. This frame addition is sheathed with the same novelty siding as the original church, its roof pitch corresponds with that of the church, and because the addition projects approximately one foot from the west wall of the church, it clearly reads as a later addition. Because parish hall was built onto the rear of the building, it does not significantly detract for the overall design integrity of the church. The only other notable alteration to the church was the construction of a handicap access ramp along the west wall during recent years.

The only alteration to the 1912 parsonage has been the enclosure of the originally screened front porch with one-over-one double hung windows, which has little effect on the historic architectural qualities of the building.

HISTORICAL and/or ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Methodist-Episcopal Church is the oldest church in the Clarks Fork Valley and, together with its adjacent parsonage, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A and C. Shortly after the founding of the community of Bridger, plans were formulated for the construction of this church, which has served as one of the community's primary social institutions for over 70 years. As typical of many young western towns, plans to build a church preceded those for any other civic buildings and generally followed a few years behind the construction of numerous saloons. The parsonage, located on the lot to the east of the church, has historically been associated with the church since its construction. Congregations in small Montana communities often were served by itinerant ministers who covered a broad territory, as was the case in Bridger, until such time as the congregation was able to gather the resources to provide housing to attract a resident minister. Only seven years after the completion of the church the parsonage was ready for occupancy.

The church is also architecturally significant as a fine example of standardized Methodist church design, with an L-shaped plan, simplified Gothic windows with wooden tracery set in the gable ends, and a corner entry placed at the base of a tall bell tower set at the intersection of the two ells. The open bell tower is finished with turned spindle fretwork. Located on a corner lot in the eastern residential section of Bridger, the Methodist-Episcopal church is a prominent landmark building in the community.

FORM PREPARED BY:

Name: Carbon County Historic Preservation Office

Address: Box 1651

Red Lodge, MT 59068

Date: October, 1986

GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION:

Acreage: 120' x 135'

USGS Quad: Bridger, Mont. 1956 7.5

UTM's: Zone 12, 663400 E., 5017700 N.





