





page 3: St. Peter's Catholic Church  
property name

, Union  
county

, SOUTH DAKOTA  
state

6. Function or Use (enter categories from instructions)

Historic functions:

RELIGION/Religious Structure

RELIGION/Church-related residence

RELIGION/Church school

FUNERARY/Cemetery

Current Functions:

RELIGION/Religious Structure

RELIGION/Church-related residence

RELIGION/Church school

FUNERARY/Cemetery

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

(enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Nave plan church

OTHER: American Foursquare

LATE VICTORIAN/Romanesque

Materials:

(enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE/Granite

walls BRICK

WOOD

roof ASPHALT

other BRICK

Describe present and historic physical appearance: /XX/ see continuation sheet

8. Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in

relation to other properties: / / / / /XX/

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria /XX/ A / /B /XX/C / /D

Criteria Considerations /XX/A / /B / /C / /D / /E / /F / /G

Areas of Significance (enter from instructions)

Architecture

Exploration-settlement

Period of Significance

1891-1939

Significant Dates

1891

Significant Person

NA

Cultural Affiliation

NA

Architect/Builder

Babue, Frank

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations,  
and periods of significance noted above /XX/ see continuation sheet

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9. Major Bibliographical References

/XX/ see continuation sheet

Previous documentation by NPS:

- / / preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- / / previously listed in the National Register
- / / previously determined eligible by the National Register
- / / designated a National Historic Landmark
- / / recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- / / recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

- /XX/ State historic preservation office
- / / Other State agency
- / / Federal agency
- / / Local government
- / / University
- / / Other

Specify repository:

South Dakota Historical Preservation Center

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10. Geographical Data

Acreege of property: Six acres

UTM References:

|          |           |            |         |         |          |
|----------|-----------|------------|---------|---------|----------|
| A = /14/ | /700-160/ | /4719-520/ | B = / / | / /     | / /      |
| C = / /  | / /       | / /        | D = / / | / /     | / /      |
| ZONE     | EASTING   | NORTHING   | ZONE    | EASTING | NORTHING |

Quad: Jefferson

Scale: 1:24000

/ / see continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundaries of the nominated property are contained within the legal description as recorded in the Union County Register of Deeds office: Tract 1, Southeast quarter of the Southwest quarter, Less the east 104 feet, Section 18, Township 90 North, Range 48 West, and Lots 1 through 12, Block 1, Original Townsite of Jefferson, Union County, South Dakota.

/ / see continuation sheet

Boundary Justification:

The boundaries of the nominated property are based on legally recorded lot lines the parcel historically associated with the property, which also correspond to the parcel deeded to St. Peter's Catholic Church by Peter Limoges in 1871.

/ / see continuation sheet

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Rising prominently above its surrounding landscape in the flat plain of southern Union County, St. Peter's Catholic Church is a large brick church building with early Romanesque Revival features. The church complex consists of the church edifice, rectory, cemetery, school building, garage, and small commemorative features scattered around a six acre site in the heart of Jefferson, South Dakota. Only the church and the rectory are counted as contributing resources.

Church Building: Resting on a rough cut granite and concrete foundation, the building is rectangular in form with a 125-foot-high bell tower serving as the narthex, a semioctagonal apse, and a square sacristy. The walls are constructed of red brick with concrete mortar and feature seven non-supporting buttresses with simple concrete detail. A thin concrete water-table surrounds the building. Corbeling, fashioned in a rounded arch pattern, decorates the walls just beneath the roof line as well as horizontally across the gables. A gable roof caps the sanctuary while hipped roofs cap the apse and sacristy. All roof surfaces are covered with asphalt shingles. An exposed brick chimney rises off-center from the northeast gable end, and a second chimney rises from the northeast slope of the sacristy.

Fenestration includes sixteen elongated semicircular arched windows along the axial walls and the southwest (front) gable end. The windows have an identical geometric pattern with varying colors of glass. The main entryway, located in the narthex/bell tower, is an enlarged version of the windows. Small round windows pierce the front of the bell tower and the northwest (rear) gable end near the roof peak. Original entrance doors have been replaced with modern steel and glass doors.

The four-sided wooden belfry has a pair of louvers and a cross under each semicircular arched molding. Above the molding on each side is an equilateral triangle with a clock face. A tall, four-sided steeple with a Latin cross at the peak rises from the belfry. Pilasters with bell-shaped capitals mark the corners of the bell tower. Dentils surround the tower just below the steeple and belfry.

On the interior, attention is drawn to the apse by an elaborate hand-carved altar, a mural depicting the "Ascension of Christ," and gold leaf motifs on light blue walls. It is further enhanced by a painted sunburst in the very center of the ceiling and two stained glass windows placed high along the back walls. An eternal candle, flanked by statues of Mary and Jesus, hangs just inside the apse. The original pulpit and pews have been replaced with modern wood fixtures. The sanctuary is painted in hues of light blue, pastel yellow, and white, with gold leaf motifs along the walls just under the Stations of the Cross. Corinthian columns support a vaulted ceiling. Roof support from

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the columns continues into the basement where piers provide a stable base. Light fixtures of white glass and ornate gold painted metalwork are suspended from long chains. At the rear of the sanctuary is located a two tier balcony, of which the upper deck houses the pipes for the organ and the lower deck houses the organ console as well as provides extra seating.

Modern steel and glass doors separate the narthex from the sanctuary. In the narthex, a wainscot handrail decorates the staircase that leads to the balconies. The room is brightly lit and is painted a pastel yellow color.

Rectory: Built in circa 1915, the rectory is a cubic two-and-one-half-story house designed in the popular vernacular American Foursquare style. Rising from a concrete and brick basement, the brick masonry walls feature two string courses of vertical brickwork. The house is capped by a hipped roof covered with asphalt shingles. Hipped-roof dormers project from the southwest (front) and northeast (rear) facades. A brick chimney rises from near the center of the roof. An open porch with latticed brickwork and paired Doric columns on brick pedestals sprawls across the front facade. Fenestration is generally symmetrical, consisting mainly of wide double-hung one-over-one windows. In addition, the entry door capped by a transom pierces the center of the front facade and is flanked by large multiple-light picture windows. A two-story enclosed wood frame sun porch covers the entire rear facade of the building. The interior main floor plan of the rectory is very simple, with a living room and study on either side of a central hallway and the kitchen and dining areas in the rear. Original doors with transoms are still intact.

Cemetery: Well maintained, the St. Peter's Cemetery surrounds the rear of the church. It features a metal overthrow, which is located to the southwest of the church building, and a variety of trees that dot the landscape. Presently there are more than 1275 identified graves and approximately 400 unidentified graves in the cemetery. One source suggests that the present church building may have been built over several graves.

School: Built in 1952, the three-story grade school/convent is located to the southeast of the rectory. Resting on a concrete foundation, the building is constructed of yellow brick and is protected by a flat roof. Fenestration includes bands of windows that are visually grouped within flush concrete rectangles. A statue of St. Peter holding the keys to the Kingdom stands above the main entrance.

Garage: A modern three-car garage is the newest building on the premises. The square one-story wood frame garage, resting on a concrete pad, is clad with 12-inch-wide lapped siding. It is capped by a gable roof covered with asphalt shingles.

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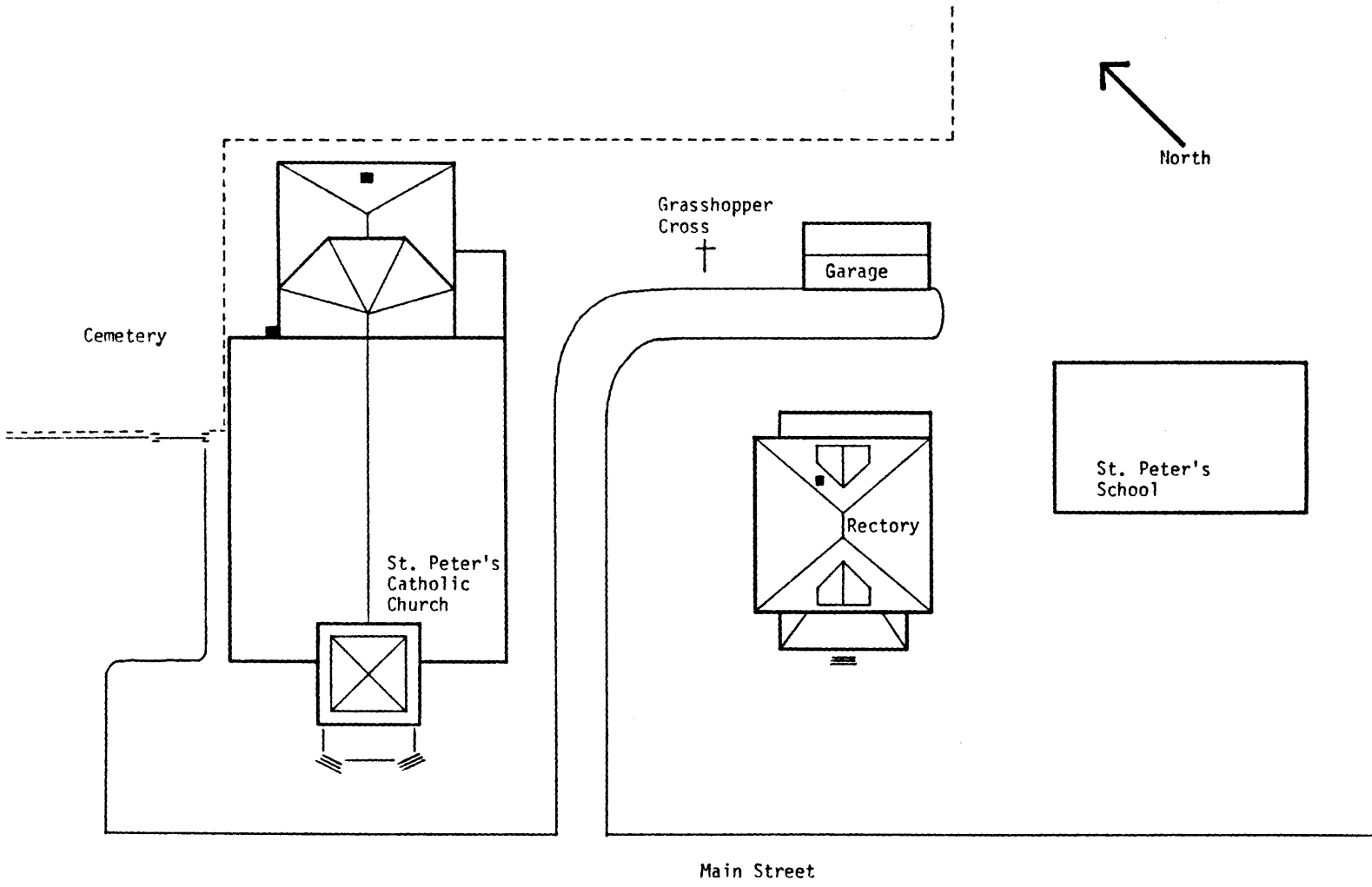
Other Features: Located to the northeast of the rectory are a bell mounted between modern brick piers, a flagpole, and the cemetery "Grasshopper Cross". The original cross was replaced in 1987 as indicated on a plaque. At the base of the cross is a small stone and concrete grotto housing a statue of Mary. For information about the history of the grasshopper crosses, see the Item 8 Statement of Significance.

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Site Map





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Under criteria A and C of the National Register Criteria, the St. Peter's Catholic Church is significant in the areas of Exploration/Settlement and Architecture. French Canadian Catholics were the first to settle in what is now Union County, around the present-day community of Jefferson. The current St. Peter's Catholic Church, built in 1891, is the third Roman Catholic church on the property. Architecturally, the church is a fine example of an elaborated nave plan church, taking much of its stylistic treatment from Early Romanesque Revival influences. Under the South Dakota Historical Preservation Plan, the property relates to the historic context and sub contexts labeled: IV. Permanent Rural and Urban Pioneer Settlement, B. 6. Ethnic Enclaves/French; and H. Religion.

Popular in America for ecclesiastical commissions as early as the 1840s, Romanesque Revival offered a universal round arch design concept acceptable to almost all denominations. Its use for church design in South Dakota lasted well into the 20th Century. Architectural details of the Early Romanesque Revival style (as described by Marcus Wiffen) at St. Peter's Catholic Church include round arches over windows and doors, a round arch motif repeated in the corbeling, and the dominating bell tower. Typical of early Catholic churches in the state, it is a large edifice with side aisles, a polygonal apse, and a towering steeple. Unlike most of its counterparts, however, its design does not include transepts. Its most outstanding interior appointments are the tall Corinthian columns and the hand-painted mural depicting the "Ascension of Christ."

In the early 19th Century, a promising fur trade brought many people of French descent from both St. Louis and Montreal to the banks of the upper Missouri River. Soon, many French or French-Canadian communities developed along the river in the three-state region of Iowa, Nebraska and South Dakota. As early as the 1850s a "French Settlement" was located near present-day Jefferson. Reportedly, the inhabitants there were of a mixed heritage of Indian, French, and French-Canadian. Although the fur trade rapidly declined very shortly thereafter, several residents stayed on to make a living in other ways. For one thing, they hoped to rely on the commercial trade of those who traveled the military road that passed by the settlement. In the Spring of 1859 three more families arrived near Jefferson headed by Michael Ryan, A. Christie, and a man named Matthews. By July of that same year, the land once occupied by the Yankton Sioux, between Minnesota and the Missouri River, was opened for white settlement, and that region witnessed its first legal homesteader movement. Dakota Territory was organized in 1861, and Union County was founded the following year. At that time, the "French Settlement" numbered 25 French-Canadian and 3 Irish families. Organized as a city in 1885, Jefferson was known first known as Willow Post Office and then renamed Adelscat before adopting its present name.

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According to Sister Claudia Duratschek, the second Catholic church in the territory was a log structure erected at Jefferson in 1862. It was located just to the north of the present St. Peter's Catholic Church. On May 25, 1863 the first mass was held in the sod shanty of Desire Chaussee by Fr. Forbun. No reason was given for not holding mass in the newly erected church. According to The Irish Standard, on February 22, 1867 the Catholic residents at Jefferson became the first Catholic mission organized and founded in southern Dakota.

During the following fall, the parish obtained the services of a French-speaking Canadian priest, Fr. R. Boucher. In anticipation of his arrival, they began construction of a new church measuring 30-feet by 60-feet. The church was nearly complete when Fr. Boucher came to the community in 1869. It was described as being painted white and sporting a steeple, bell, and windows of colored glass. Dedicated in 1869, the church received its name St. Peter's, however, sources have differing opinions as to the origin of the name. In his History of the Catholic Church in Nebraska, Henry Casper suggests that the name was taken from St. Pierre Apotre, while Calanthe Lambert, a local resident of Jefferson, submits that it is in honor of St. Peter, the patron saint of Peter Limoges the man who donated the land for the church. Documents filed in 1871, record that Peter Limoges sold six acres of land to the Catholic church for one dollar. He also stipulated that "... the land shall be occupied by a church of the Roman Catholic Church ..." and that services be held by a priest, or the land would revert to Limoges or his heirs. Records indicate several different spellings for Limoges.

Grasshopper infestations plagued Dakota Territory during the decades of the sixties and seventies. In response in 1874, Fr. Boucher and his parish instituted a pilgrimage to save their crops from the grasshoppers. Chanting prayers, they walked for thirteen miles in a triangular route around the perimeter of the parish beginning at the church cemetery. They journeyed to the Montagne farm two miles west of Jefferson, and on to the Morin farm six miles north of St. Peter's, and then returned to the cemetery. A short time after the vigil, the parish erected three "Grasshopper Crosses" marking the points on the described triangular journey. Sister Claudia Duratschek described the result of the pilgrimage this way: "...in answer to Fr. Boucher's faith and to the people's confident hope, manifest divine intervention saved the fruits of their labor." Two years later, Fr. Boucher led a Rogation Day procession, and again crop destruction by the grasshoppers was averted. Between the years 1931 and 1933, Fr. Joseph Barre renewed the pilgrimages. The present priest Fr. Burian plans a pilgrimage to the Grasshopper Crosses in the spring of 1989 in celebration of the South Dakota Centennial.

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A three-story brick parochial school was built in 1889 under the supervision of Fr. Joseph Bauer. The building measured 24-feet by 53-feet with a kitchen addition of 18-feet by 22-feet. Its construction and furnishing costs totaled 4,000 dollars. Upon dedication of the building in 1890, the Benedictine sisters from Yankton operated the school as a boarding institution. Financial problems soon developed and the school closed in 1898. It was reopened ten years later under the direction of the Presentation sisters from Aberdeen, also a Benedictine group. In 1952, under the supervision of the Very Reverend John M. Brady, a new grade school/convent complex replaced the old building. Its total cost with equipment exceeded 120,000 dollars.

In August of 1891, the parish began construction on the present church. Frank X. Babue of Sioux City was the builder. Two differing totals for the cost of the new brick building, 17,800.00 dollars and 14,224.00 dollars, are recorded in parish records. It is not known which figure is correct. Services were first held in the new edifice in February, 1892, and dedication ceremonies took place in July of that same year. The French language was used in services until 1939.

In 1912, a pipe organ was installed at a cost of 4,200 dollars. During the years 1926-1935, artist Henry Goering was commissioned to paint the altar mural of the "Ascension of Christ." New Stations of the Cross were installed in 1952. Further redecorating and renovating took place from 1962-1964 in response to the Vatican II conferences. Some redecorating has continued into the present day. In 1986, the sacristy was remodeled, and the chapel was named for "Our Lady of Fatima". In 1988, the parish spent 30,000 dollars to restore the steeple and bell tower.

In circa 1915, the parish built a brick rectory. The rectory features a practical central hall floor plan with a study and living room near the front entrance, hardwood trim work, and doors with transoms. Improvements to the rectory between 1969-1980 included paneling, carpet, and drapes. A three-car wood frame garage was also built during this twelve year period.

St. Peter's Catholic Church continues to serve a small congregation. Many current members of the parish are descendants of the founders of the community. Although it has experienced some changes of interior decor, the church retains most of its original architectural integrity. In excellent condition, it remains a tribute to those French Canadians who settled the region.

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The period of significance of the nominated property extends from the date of construction of the church in 1891 to 1939, the established 50-year cut-off date for the National Register. The property derives its significance from its architectural and historical distinction and therefore qualifies for listing in the Register under Criteria Consideration A. The cemetery does not meet Criteria Consideration D and therefore is recorded as a non-contributing site.

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1. St. Peter's Catholic Church  
Jefferson, Union County, South Dakota  
Taken by: John Rau  
September 1988  
Negative: South Dakota Historical Preservation Center  
Northwest and southwest facades, camera facing east  
Photograph #1

2. St. Peter's Catholic Church  
Jefferson, Union County, South Dakota  
Taken by: John Rau  
September 1988  
Negative: South Dakota Historical Preservation Center  
Northeast and northwest facades, camera facing south  
Photograph #2

3. St. Peter's Catholic Church  
Jefferson, Union County, South Dakota  
Taken by: John Rau  
September 1988  
Negative: South Dakota Historical Preservation Center  
Southwest (front) facade, camera facing northeast  
Photograph #3

4. St. Peter's Catholic Church  
Jefferson, Union County, South Dakota  
Taken by: John Rau  
September 1988  
Negative: South Dakota Historical Preservation Center  
Interior toward altar, camera facing northeast  
Photograph #4

5. St. Peter's Catholic Church  
Jefferson, Union County, South Dakota  
Taken by: John Rau  
September 1988  
Negative: South Dakota Historical Preservation Center  
Interior toward southeast wall, camera facing south  
Photograph #5

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6. St. Peter's Catholic Church  
Jefferson, Union County, South Dakota  
Taken by: John Rau  
September 1988  
Negative: South Dakota Historical Preservation Center  
Interior toward balcony, camera facing southwest  
Photograph #6

7. St. Peter Catholic Church  
Jefferson, Union County, South Dakota  
Taken by: John Rau  
September 1988  
Negative: South Dakota Historical Preservation Center  
Interior entryway, camera facing north  
Photograph #7

8. St. Peter's Catholic Church/Rectory  
Jefferson, Union County, South Dakota  
Taken by: John Rau  
September 1988  
Negative: South Dakota Historical Preservation Center  
southwest and southeast facades, camera facing north  
Photograph #8

9. St. Peter's Catholic Church/Rectory  
Jefferson, Union County, South Dakota  
Taken by: John Rau  
September 1988  
Negative: South Dakota Historical Preservation Center  
northwest and northeast facades, camera facing south  
Photograph #9

10. St. Peter's Catholic Church/Cemetery  
Jefferson, Union County, South Dakota  
Taken by: John Rau  
September 1988  
Negative: South Dakota Historical Preservation Center  
toward overthrow, camera facing northeast  
Photograph #10

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11. St. Peter's Catholic Church/Cemetery  
Jefferson Union County, South Dakota  
Taken by: John Rau  
September 1988  
Negative: South Dakota Historical Preservation Center  
camera facing north  
Photograph #11
  
12. St. Peter's Catholic Church/School  
Jefferson, Union County, South Dakota  
Taken by: John Rau  
September 1988  
Negative: South Dakota Historical Preservation Center  
southwest facade, camera facing east  
Photograph #12
  
13. St. Peter's Catholic Church/Garage, Grasshopper Cross replica, and bell  
Jefferson, Union County, South Dakota  
Taken by: John Rau  
September 1988  
Negative: South Dakota Historical Preservation Center  
northwest and southwest facades, camera facing east  
Photograph #13