

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 90000356

Date Listed: 3/14/90

St. Peter's Catholic Church  
Property Name

Wibaux  
County

MT  
State

Multiple Name

-----  
This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

for Patrick Andrews  
Signature of the Keeper

3/14/90  
Date of Action

===== Amended Items in Nomination:

Statement of Significance: For St. Peter's Catholic Church, a historic church significant for its architecture, Criteria Consideration A should be checked.

This information was confirmed with Pat Bick of the Montana SHPO by telephone.

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DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

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NATIONAL REGISTER

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name St. Peter's Catholic Church  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number West Orgain Avenue n/a not for publication  
city, town Wibaux n/a vicinity  
state Montana code 030 county Wibaux code 109 zip code 59353

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>1</u>	_____ Total

Name of related multiple property listing: n/a

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official Marcella Slayby Date Jan. 19, 1990  
Montana SHPO

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register. Patrick W. Andrews 3/14/90  
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Church

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

School

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Gothic Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

walls scoria, wood

roof asphalt

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

This late nineteenth century church was constructed in 1895 and remodeled in 1938. It is located 1 1/2 blocks west of the center of the historic commercial district of Wibaux and stands alone at the west end of the north half of the block. The church stands at the base of a hill overlooking the town from the west.

The building is a rectangular, wood frame church with front projecting centered steeple, gable roof, scoria over beveled board siding, and concrete foundation. Ivy covers most of the side and rear exterior walls of the church. The roof is asphalt shingle with close cropped eaves and gable-end rake boards. The projecting, central entryway supports an octagonal steeple with octagonal pyramidal roof, topped by a cruxifix. The front of the projecting entryway has an arched window inset with narrow, paired, wood frame, double-hung windows and circular light centered between the window arches. The main, wood frame, double wooden doors have five horizontal panels in each door. An arched fan light is located above the doorway. Shed roof side additions constructed in 1938 run between the entryway and the side of the church. Side windows are arched, wood frame double-hung. The rear of the church has a wood frame stained glass window with ribbon windows above, in which are located three circular lights. A plaque on the rear window reads: "Through the generosity of Pierre Wibaux this church was erected in honor of St. Peter, A. D. 1895." The rear of the church also has a wood frame double door with multiple, horizontal wood panels.

The church retains the basic design of the original building but was remodeled in 1938. The length of the original building was extended by the construction of a rear addition, shed roof wings running between the entryway and the side of the church were added to the front of the church that covered up the arched windows originally located on each side of the entryway, and a scoria facing was added to the entire building. A full basement was also excavated during the 1938 remodeling. The church retains its original arched, wood frame windows. It appears that the windows originally located at the front of the church were removed in 1938 with the construction of the front, shed roof additions. These windows were used on the side walls of the rear addition. The original rear window of the building was used on the new rear addition constructed in 1938.

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In 1969 the interior was remodeled to convert the church into a catechismal school. The main floor was divided into four rooms with paneled walls with sound proofing and florescent lighting. The old sacristy was left untouched and used as a store room. The basement was partitioned in the same way and a furnace installed. Other changes included the addition of wood paneling to the north wall of the sanctuary, and carpet laid in the sanctuary, aisles, and sacristy.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1895-1938  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Cultural Affiliation  
n/a  
\_\_\_\_\_

1895  
1935-36  
1938  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person  
n/a

Architect/Builder  
R.R. Cummings, Eugene Blas - 1895  
L. Nistler - 1935-36

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

St. Peter's Catholic Church, built in 1895, was constructed within the first years of settlement of Wibaux, Montana, as a ranching community. The building follows a simple, gable-roofed design format of vernacular, Gothic Revival, wood-framed church construction, distinguished by its central steeple and entrance, regularly spaced windows along the side walls and stained glass, tri-partite window above the altar at the end wall. In 1935-36 and 1938, the building was lengthened and its exterior walls were covered with locally obtained scoria, a rough textured lava rock. These alterations add a distinctive architectural quality that enhances the significance of this vernacular church building. St. Peter's Catholic Church qualifies for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under criterion C as a unique adaptation of a simple vernacular design, which was altered to accommodate an enlarged parish during the 1930s. The building served as the community's Catholic church until 1965.

**Historical Background**

The church was built primarily through the donation of Pierre Wibaux who was from a distinguished French family which had operated a textile business in Roubaix since 1810. Wibaux traveled to England to learn more about the textile business and, while there, developed an interest in the cattle business. He traveled to Chicago to learn the marketing end of the business and traveled west in 1883 with the Marquis de Mores, at which time he selected land in the Beaver Creek Valley about 12 miles north of Keith and Mingusville (later Wibaux) for the location of a ranch. Wibaux faired well during the infamous winter of 1886-1887 and, with capital loaned to him by his brother, bought up remnants of herds from discouraged ranchers and from the numerous eastern- and foreign-owned cattle companies looking to save as much as possible from their investments. By the mid-

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1890s, Wibaux operated one of the largest cattle ranches in the United States, owning by that time about 65,000 head of cattle and 300 horses. He sold between 3000 and 9000 cattle annually. By the late 1890s, he began to wind down his operations with the break-up of the open range and by the opening of the area to homesteading and farming.

Wibaux not only contributed to the development of Wibaux area by stimulating its economic growth, but also was, in many ways, responsible for taking specific steps that developed the town itself. He and other ranchers persuaded the Northern Pacific Railroad to build stockyards at Mingsville in 1883 and to enlarge these in 1894. In 1892, Wibaux, along with Henry Boice of the Berry-Boice Cattle Company built an office/residence in town, where Wibaux lived and conducted business during the week. He improved the appearance of the town by continuously campaigning to clean it up and by having his French gardener, Jules Accart, landscape the grounds of the town office and residence. He campaigned actively to have the town platted and named after him, both events taking place in 1894.

Wibaux also was responsible for the construction of the St. Peter's Catholic Church. The impetus for this came from his father, Achille Wibaux, who lived in Roubaix and was disturbed that the town of Wibaux did not have a church. He instructed his son to build a church in Wibaux and Pierre contributed \$2,000 to the construction of the church, which was built by R. R. Cummings and Eugene Blias, both from Glendive. Father Van der Broeck of Miles City superintended the construction of the church. The interior was finished in Georgia pine and the church was provided with side colored windows and a main alter window was composed of leaded glass with the following inscription: "Through the generosity of Pierre Wibaux this church was erected in honor of St. Peter, A. D. 1895." Bishop J. B. Brondel, Bishop of the Diocese of Montana, assisted Father Van der Broek in the dedication of the church in Wibaux on November 1, 1895.

Father Lindesmith, a chaplain at Fort Keogh, had been the first to minister to the Catholic families in Wibaux. Wibaux became a mission of Miles City in 1887, with the appointment of its first pastor, Father Pauwelyn. Wibaux remained a mission of Miles City until 1908 when it became a mission of Glendive. Wibaux was assigned its first resident priest, Reverend Jacob Jacet, who was soon replaced by Father Cieslewicz. The Wibaux parish also included St. Philip, whose church was built about 1911-12. Father William Callahan became pastor of St. Peter's Church in 1927, when Father

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Cieslewicz became pastor of St. Joseph's Church in Great Falls. Father Leahy became pastor of the church in 1931.

By 1935, St. Peter's Church was too small to serve its congregation. The Depression, area drought, and limited funds forced the parishioners to organize a subscription drive to enlarge the church. L. Nistler and Sons were the carpenters for the remodeling effort and many parishioners assisted. This stage of the remodeling, which included the construction of a basement, was completed in 1936. St. Peter's Church was enlarged and faced with scoria by its parishioners in 1938, giving it a unique vernacular texture. Father Leahy conceived of the idea of covering the church with native scoria. Wagons and pickups from the fields "and patient men did a beautiful job of laying the rock up to and on the steeple." Father Leahy also established a catechismal center in Wibaux. The building continued to function as the Catholic Church for Wibaux until 1965, when a new Catholic church was built, and the old St. Peter's Church was converted to a catechism school.

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

The Glendive Independent. June 15, 1895, June 29, 1895, July 6, 1985, July 13, 1895.

Jones, Irene. Trails Along Beaver Creek. Wibaux: Pioneer Gazette. 1976.

Welsh, Ronald Hugh. "Pierre Wibaux, Badlands Rancher." Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation. University of Missouri. 1955.

Previous documentation on file (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 # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

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

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property less than one acre

UTM References

A 

1	3	5	6	1	5	1	0	5	3	0	3	8	7	0
Zone				Easting				Northing						

B 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

C 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

D 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Wibaux First Addition, Block 13, lots 1-3

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

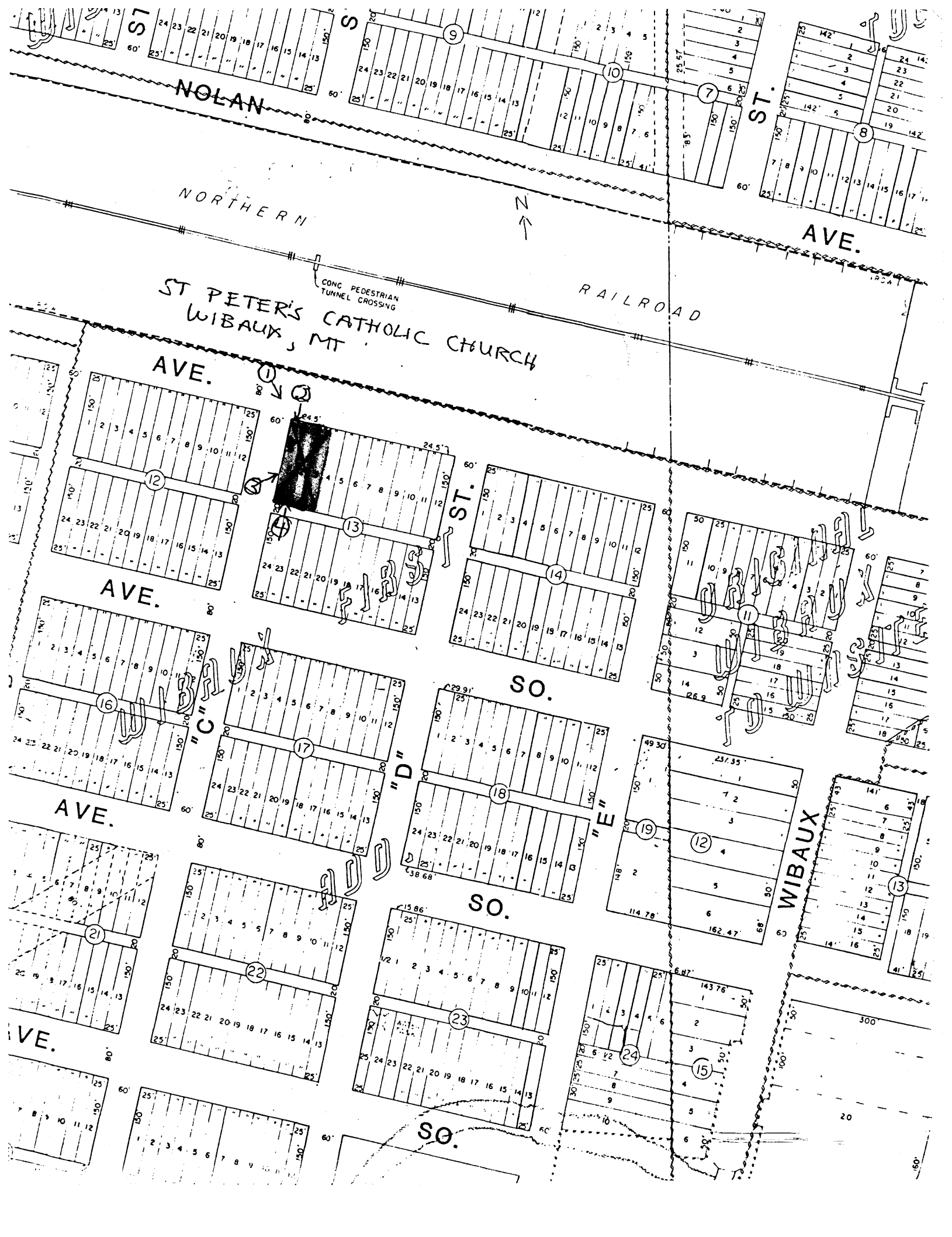
The boundaries are based on the legally recorded lot lines that have been historically associated with the resource.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title William A. Babcock, Jr. date March 1989  
organization Research and Writing Services telephone (406) 549-9987  
street & number 2920 Salish Court city or town Missoula state Montana zip code 59801





ST

NOLAN

S

ST

AVE.

NORTHERN



RAILROAD

ST PETER'S CATHOLIC CHURCH  
WIBAUX, MT

CONC PEDESTRIAN  
TUNNEL CROSSING

AVE.

AVE.

AVE.

VE.

ST.

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WIBAUX

