

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received FEB 25 1986
date entered MAR 27 1986

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic St. John the Baptist Catholic Church

and/or common St. John the Baptist Church

2. Location

street & number Mullan Road N/A not for publication

city, town Frenchtown N/A vicinity of

state Montana code 030 county Missoula code 063

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Roman Catholic Bishop of Helena, a corporation sole

street & number P.O. Box 1729

city, town Helena N/A vicinity of state Montana

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Missoula County Courthouse

street & number W. Broadway

city, town Missoula state Montana

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

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 date <u>N/A</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

St. John the Baptist Church is a two story, Greek Revival, ecclesiastical style wood frame church in Frenchtown, Montana, a small community located in the Clark Fork River Valley of west-central Montana. Constructed on a stone foundation, the church is sheathed in beveled lap siding. Four concrete steps and a wheelchair ramp, both installed in 1980, lead up to a set of centrally-placed wooden double doors, which replaced the original multi-panel doors at an undetermined date. Above each door is a semi-circular stained glass transom. Flanking the entrance on each side are smaller wooden doors (also replacements) each with a semi-circular stained glass transom. A rose stained glass window is located above the main entrance at the same height as the eaves. The east and west facades are punctuated by five tall, fixed, 32-light stained glass arched windows, and the west elevation has an entrance to the basement covered by a wood frame, gabled roof vestibule. Storm windows cover the stained glass windows. All of the stained glass windows are covered with multi-light storm windows. Attached to the rear of the church is a one story, gable roofed extension covered with beveled lap siding. The west side has an eight-light fixed window and a wooden door with transom. Two small square, single-light fixed windows are located in the north facade, and a corbeled brick chimney pierces the ridgeline. Each corner on the extension and the main church building has Doric pilaster corner boards. A three-tiered wooden bell tower rises above the gabled roof. Covered with beveled lap siding, the square base is surmounted by a belfry which features tripled square columns at each corner, arched openings, Mission style trim and an octagonally-shaped roof covered with metal. The bell, which was cast in New York and added in 1885, has an inscription written in French dedicating it to the church in Frenchtown. Atop the belfry is a smaller wooden tower with wooden supports, arched openings and hexagonal roof which is covered with metal. A wooden cross caps the bell tower. A brick chimney is located toward the rear of the building on the west slope, while a cinder block chimney rises against the east wall.

The interior of the church is remarkably intact and features a barrel vaulted ceiling and two chamfered wooden posts on each side of the nave. The entry is separated from the main body of the church by a series of swinging wooden doors; located in the southwest corner is a graceful, wooden circular staircase constructed with wooden pegs. The entire church is decorated with ornate wooden trim in a variety of elaborate star, dentil and wainscot patterns, and all woodwork is painted in a combination of off-white, red, and light and sky blue colors to commemorate the French national flag. The white, red and blue pattern was painted in 1959 in conjunction with the 75th anniversary of the church and duplicates the original interior color scheme which had been covered with white paint. The pulpit, candlesticks, and all hardware are original, while four statues were added by 1893. The original oak pews were lengthened after two stoves were removed at an undetermined date. A unique feature of the pews is a wooden board attached perpendicularly at the top of the benches that apparently served to divide the seats. Small metal numbers attached on the ends of the pews are still visible today.

Located to the immediate west of the church is a Bungalow style rectory that replaced the original rectory in 1911. It is a noncontributing element to the property.

8. Significance

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

Specific dates 1884 **Builder/Architect** Lugar Forast, builder

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

St. John the Baptist Church, built in 1885, is significant for its architecture as a well-preserved example of the vernacular Greek Revival ecclesiastical style, and for its ethnic associations with the settlement and development of Frenchtown, Montana.

Built almost entirely of wood, the church is typical of the classical Greek Revival tradition with a simple box-like design, three bays in width, without projections for an entry, apse or transepts. The plain structure has a gable front with cornice returns, and, as is common with the style, features a wide band of trim beneath the cornice, Doric corner pilasters, a gable roof, and a whitewashed exterior.

By 1860, several French-speaking immigrants from Quebec and eastern Canada founded the settlement of Frenchtown in the Missoula Valley. In 1864 local resident H. Miller served as the chairman of the first board of County Commissioners for Missoula county, and with Commissioners C.C. O'Keefe and F.L. Loveland, had jurisdiction over much of western Montana. By 1866 the office of the Justice of the Peace had been established, and two years later a post office was located there. By 1868 a restaurant, saw mill, grist mill, two saloons, a distillery and feed stable provided goods and services for area residents, and the town had achieved a certain degree of stability and permanence. Shortly after Louis Barrette discovered gold in Cedar Creek northwest of Frenchtown in 1869, 3,000 prospectors flooded the area and soon the community was providing food, lodging and supplies for area miners. To accomodate the growing population, four new hotels were built in 1870 and the local sawmill produced 6,000-10,000 board feet of building materials per day. A number of new businesses opened in the early 1880s including a feed stable, variety store, millinery, and a variety of other stores.

By 1864, the French-Canadian Catholics living in Frenchtown had successfully lobbied for a church, and in the same year, a crude log building was built to serve as the first Catholic church in Frenchtown and the second church in Montana for non-Native Americans. By the time Father Tremblay arrived in Frenchtown in the summer of 1884 as Frenchtown's first secular priest, the town had outgrown the original church. Construction for a new church began in June 1884 and by August 21 of the same year St. John the Baptist Catholic Church was dedicated. A ship's carpenter named Lugar Forast is credited as the primary builder of the church, but a number of other local men reportedly assisted in its construction. A sermon was given in French by the Reverend Tremblay in conjunction with St. John's Day, a Canadian national and religious celebration.

In May 1885, the St. John the Baptist Society was organized by the adult men of St. John's parish, who each paid their annual "une piastre" dues as membership. Ten articles which were written in French comprised the "Statute de la Societe

9. Major Bibliographical References

- Flaherty, Cornelia M. Go With Haste Into the Mountains. Helena: Falcon Press Publishing Co., Inc., 1984.
- Frenchtown Historical Society. Frenchtown Valley Footprints. Frenchtown, MT.: Frenchtown Historical Society, 1976.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than 1.5

Quadrangle name Arlee

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

UTM References

A

1	1	7	1	0	7	0	0	5	2	1	0	1	2	5
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

Zone			Easting				Northing							

D

Zone			Easting				Northing							

E

Zone			Easting				Northing							

F

Zone			Easting				Northing							

G

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H

Zone			Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet

T15N, R21W, NW $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ Section 35

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
N/A			

state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Connie Flaherty Erickson, Historian-Archivist

organization Diocese of Helena

date 12-20-85

street & number P.O. Box 1729

telephone (406) 442-5820

city or town Helena

state Montana

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Maureen S. DeJoy

title SHPO

date 2-14-86

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the
National Register

date 3/27/86

James M. McPherson
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
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Continuation sheet

Item number

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St. Jean Baptiste, Frenchtown, Montana" stated that the organization's purpose was: Article I, the maintenance of their nationality and religion under the U.S. flag, Article II, that in order to promote public decency for their children in Frenchtown, they would not frequent saloons during the time of Mass, with fines for those who did, and Article IV, they would honor the day of June 24 as the patron saint's day. Until 1984, a French flag hung inside the church.

St. John's Day was traditionally celebrated by hundreds of residents from Frenchtown, Missoula, Butte and other western Montana communities who took part in festivities which began in the morning with a special high mass at the decorated church. Speeches, games, races and dances followed in the afternoon, with a dinner a ball, and fireworks after dusk. The holiday was regularly celebrated up to the 1960s, and local citizens have recently renewed the tradition.

St. John the Baptist Church retains excellent historic architectural integrity and remains today as one of few buildings that date to Frenchtown's boom period in the late 19th century. St. John's has been inextricably linked to the growth, development and continued prosperity of Frenchtown. The church is the most prominent building in Frenchtown, and its role as the fundamental center of religious and social activity for the local French-Catholics has not been significantly altered for over 100 years.

Boundary Description and Justification

Beginning at the juncture of the fence immediately west of the church and Mullan County Road, proceed north approximately 255' to a fence; turning east go about 250' to another fence, and turn south and proceed about 255' until reaching the Mullan County Road; turn west and go 250' back to the point of origin.

The boundary as drawn includes an area surrounding the church consisting of mowed grass extending to fencelines on three sides of the church. Beyond the fences is dense brush and grass which historically has been privately owned and used for pasture.