

PH0365467

# DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED APR 12 1976  
DATE ENTERED OCT 29 1976

## 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. Denis Catholic Church*  
AND/OR COMMON

### 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER *W of N. Whitefield*  
*ME Rte. 218*  
CITY, TOWN *North Whitefield Me.* VICINITY OF  
STATE *Maine* CODE *23* COUNTY *Lincoln* CODE *015*  
NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
*1st Hon David Emery*

### 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	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<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 *Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland*  
STREET & NUMBER *510 Ocean Avenue*  
CITY, TOWN *Portland* STATE *Maine*  
VICINITY OF

### 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. *Lincoln County Registry of Deeds*  
STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN *Wiscasset,* STATE *Maine*

### 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE  
DATE  
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS  
CITY, TOWN STATE  
FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

# 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 _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

St. Denis Church is a rectangular brick building, crowned with a gabled roof. It is a very simple example of a transitional Greek Revival Style church. The church was built in 1833 around the original frame church of 1818.

The facade faces north at one end of the roof gable. The wall is divided into three bays by plain brick pilasters. The inner bay is narrower than the outer two. In each bay is a door as well as a square window, which lights the choir loft. The center door and window are placed equidistant to the surrounding pilasters. The other two doors and windows are placed the same distance from the inner pilasters as the inner door. The three doors are of excellent proportion to the facade. Over each door frame are four small square windows that let light into the vestry.

The large facade windows are of Victorian stained glass. Probably they were installed during the renovations of 1888. Each one is comprised of four large square panes surrounded by a border of smaller squares. A simple triangular pediment is faced with matched boarding and painted white. Above the cornice is a single Federal Style fanlight window. A small Latin cross is located on a square platform at the peak of the gable above the facade.

The sides of the church, the east and west walls, are identical to one another with the exception of the bell tower on the east side. Both walls are made of flat brick. Rectangular windows pierce the surface to create five bays. These windows are also of stained glass, as befits a Catholic church.

The bell tower was added in 1861 to replace the original roof-top belfry. The tower is of an Italian campanile design. It is attached to the church at the northeast corner. Its facade is flush with the church facade. The tower's square shape is emphasized by the brick piers which form the corners. An archway passes through the tower base next to the church wall. It was not centered because room had to be left for the tower stairs. These stairs are lighted by a round-headed window on the east face. About two-thirds of the way up the tower is a brick string course which creates a cube shaped section below the belfry. On the front wall a circular four-part window occupies this space. On the east wall a circular recess is found. Above is the belfry with double arched openings on all four sides displaying the bell. A projecting cornice gives rise to a low pointed roof topped with another Latin cross.

Upon entering the church building, one comes into a narrow vestibule. To the left are stairs leading to the choir loft. To the right is a small confessional. Through a set of double doors lies the sanctuary. It is simply designed in the early Gothic fashion. Two double sections of wooden pews face the altar at the far end. The walls are cream colored with a brown wooden wainscot. A simple pair of pilasters separates the rear pair (See continuation sheets)

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of windows from the others. The stained-glass pattern creates two long trefoil arch sections in each window.

The back wall curves up and out to create the underside of the choirloft. This curve is echoed in the gently curved ceiling. On the end walls the ceiling also curves inward.

A low altar rail and two slender Gothic columns supporting three open work arches separate the nave from the chancel. These are painted dark brown to match the wainscot and create a pleasant contrast to the cream colored walls. The altar screen is painted a pale cream color and is edged in gold gilt. The treatment of the screen is of a simple Gothic design.

Decoration is held at a modest level. The Stations of the Cross line the nave walls. Originally intended for the Portland cathedral, the Stations were found to be too small in scale for the large church. Not wanting to return the paintings to England, the Cathedral sold them to Mrs. Abbie Carden, who donated them to St. Denis in 1888. The whole church characterizes the sincere, honest faith of the rural community of Maine Catholics.

# 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 checked="" 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/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

1833

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

St. Denis Catholic Church of Whitefield, Me. is the second oldest Catholic church in the State and the third oldest in New England. The church was originally a wooden frame structure, thirty-six feet by fifty feet, built in 1818 by a spirited young Irish pastor, the Rev. Dennis Ryan. Father Ryan was the first priest ordained in New England and Maine's first resident parish priest. A rectory was also built at this time.

Maine's population grew rapidly during the 1820's and Father Ryan drew many Irish immigrants to the farming community of Whitefield, making the town the rural Catholic center of Maine. By the early 1830's the community had outgrown the little church. At the urging of Bishop Fenwick, they replaced the "miserably built" church, as the Bishop had called it, with the existing brick building.

At the time of the decision there was some controversy over the location of the church. The choice between the neighboring Catholic community in Winslow and the site in North Whitefield was decided by the donation of eight acres of land by James Keating. The gift was made on the condition the church be built in Whitefield.

The new church was constructed around the wooden chapel. When the brick shell had been completed the smaller church inside was taken down. The new St. Denis Catholic Church was dedicated in 1833 and the stone rectory behind was added in 1851. A third building across the road was completed in 1871 to house the Whitefield Academy and Orphan Asylum run by the Sisters of Mercy. This was abandoned in 1887 when the orphanage in Portland was opened.

In the adjoining cemetery can be found the graves of some of the town's first settlers.

St Denis Church, designed with impressive simplicity, is a monument to early Irish immigration into rural central Maine.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Byrne, Rev. William, D.D. History of the Catholic Church in the New England States, 1899.
- Lucey, William Leo, S.J. The Catholic Church in Maine, 1957
- Sesquicentennial Celebration of Whitefield, Maine 1809-1959

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 2 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	<u>19</u>	<u>450925</u>	<u>4897220</u>	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE	Frank A. Beard, Historian Patricia Brown, Student Assistant	DATE	April 2, 1976
ORGANIZATION	Maine Historic Preservation Commission	TELEPHONE	207-289-2133
STREET & NUMBER	31 Western Avenue	STATE	Maine
CITY OR TOWN	Augusta		

# 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 Carle B. Shettleworth, Jr.

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer DATE April 8, 1976

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER	
DATE	<u>10/29/76</u>
DATE	<u>10/26/76</u>
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION	
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	