

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: 90001214

Date Listed: 8/17/90

St. Xavier Mission Church & Rectory
Property Name

Big Horn
County

MT
State

N/A
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.

Antoinette J. Rice
Signature of the Keeper

8/20/90
Date of Action

=====

Amended Items in Nomination:

Statement of Significance: Under Criteria Considerations, E should be replaced with A and B.

The Period of Significance should read 1888-1940.

This information was confirmed with Chere Jiusto of the Montana SHPO.

DISTRIBUTION:

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

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

RECEIVED
JUL 13 1990

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL REGISTER

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. Xavier Mission Church and Rectory
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number n/a n/a not for publication
city, town St. Xavier n/a vicinity
state Montana code MT county Big Horn code 003 zip code 59075

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>2</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>2</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 Maude Shuford Date June 27, 1990
State or Federal agency and bureau MT SHPO

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. Autawicki Lee 8/17/90
 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: **Mission Church**
Rectory
Current: **Mission Church (in use)**
Rectory (not in use)

=====

7. Description

=====

Architectural Classification: **Gothic Revival**
Vernacular gable-front-and-wing

Materials: foundation: **rubble stone** roof: **asphalt shingle**
 walls: **wood** other: **n/a**

Describe present and historic physical appearance. (See continuation sheet.)

=====

Located on Big Horn River in the Crow Indian Reservation in Montana, St. Francis Xavier Mission complex is composed of the historic mission church, a small, wood frame rectory and a large school building. The original brick school at the site that was constructed in 1887 burned in 1968. To replace the historic school building, St. Ann's Church was moved to this location from Lodge Grass (32 miles south-east of Hardin). St. Ann's is a wood frame building with a gable roof and lapped siding. When the church was moved to St. Xavier, the front vestibule and a side steeple tower were removed. Due to the loss of integrity of design and location, St. Ann's does not contribute to the significance of the St. Xavier Mission and is not included within the defined boundaries of the nominated property.

St. Francis Xavier Mission Church is a one-story, wood frame, rectangular building with a gable roof covered with asphalt shingles. Ornate exposed rafters, and a simple verge board with king posts at the peak add decorative detail. The building is sheathed with the original beveled lapped siding, with the exception of the lower portions of the exterior walls, which have new siding that matches the original so closely in width and thickness that only a close examination reveals the difference between the two. The building sets on a rubble stone foundation which has been recently repointed in some areas. The main entry has been altered with the replacement of the original doors with the present pair of flush, hollow core doors and the enclosure of the transom. The surrounding wood trim, including a segmental arch, molding and header, remains intact. On each side of the main entry there is a pointed-arch window with original wood trim and double hung sash featuring simple tracery. Over each of these windows is a small rectangular window with more elaborate trim and a small rose window graces the gable end. Along each side of the church are five pointed arch-windows identical to those on the front elevation. The rear of the church is sheathed with beveled lapped siding.

The interior of the church was almost completely remodeled in 1987. Although walls and ceilings now have a textured wallboard finish and the sanctuary has all new light fixtures, several early or original features of

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section Number 7

Page 1

=====

the interior survive. These include the wood trim around the pointed arch windows, the small rectangular balcony windows, and the doors to the anterooms, which feature 19th century bulls-eye corner blocks. Also surviving are the balcony balustrade, featuring ornate cut-out work, and the two eight-sided columns with bracketed capitals and ornate base, which support the balcony. Turnbuckle tie-rods span the sanctuary at the tops of the side walls. Historic oil paintings of the stations of the cross (produced by Kurz and Allison of Chicago) adorn the side walls. The overall plan of the interior features the entry at the east end, altar and small anterooms at the west end, and main sanctuary between.

Thirty-eight feet south of the church is the rectory, built in 1889 about seventy-five feet east of the church and moved to its present location sometime after 1970. The rectory is considered to be a contributing building in association with the mission, even though its position at the site has been changed. The one-story rectory is L-shaped with intersecting gable roofs, a small shed-roof porch in the corner of the ell, and shed-roof additions on the south and east sides. The building has beveled, lapped siding on the rear addition to the north with composition shingle on the west (rear). Wood shingle siding covers the remaining north, east and south exterior walls. The windows are four-over-four double hung units. The rectory sets on a new concrete foundation. Although moved from its original location east of the church, the rectory still is able to convey its strong historical association as an integral part of St. Xavier Mission.

=====
8. Statement of Significance
=====

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

Applicable National Register Criteria: **A**
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): **E**
Areas of Significance: **Religion**
Period of Significance: **1888-1910**
Significant Dates: **1888,1889**
Significant Person(s): **n/a**
Cultural Affiliation: **n/a**
Architect/Builder: **(unknown)**

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.
(Also see continuation sheet.)

=====
St. Xavier Mission Church and Rectory are eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under criterion A for their association with early Jesuit missionary work among Montana's Native American tribes. These two buildings are the oldest religious buildings in Big Horn County that are still in use. On June 11, 1987, St. Xavier Mission celebrated its 100-year centennial. Since the establishment of the mission, St. Xavier has served as the center for the acculturation and religious educational efforts of the Catholic Church on the Crow Reservation in southeastern Montana. The church and rectory retain a high level of architectural integrity and well represent the kind of simple, wood-frame vernacular buildings erected and maintained to support the Catholic Church's missionary activities in Montana.

The first recorded contact between Christians and the Crow Indians who were living in the valley of the Big Horn River came in 1840 when Father DeSmet, a Jesuit missionary working in western Montana, was on a return trip to St. Louis. At a spot fourteen miles from St. Xavier, DeSmet used a tree to explain the concept of the Trinity to the Crow. According to Crow legend, the tree, known as the Trinity Tree, still lives and is a local landmark. Returning to western Montana in 1844, DeSmet again visited the Crow and was treated with the greatest respect.

Nearly 40 years went by before the Crow again had contact with the Catholic priests. In 1880, Father Peter Barcelo journeyed from Helena to the Big Horn Valley where on his visit he baptized 114 Crow children. In 1886, Father Grassi and Father Prondo visited the Crow to select a spot for a permanent mission. They chose the present site of St. Xavier, some 22 miles from the U.S. military outpost of Fort Custer near the present site of Hardin, and 14 miles from the Trinity Tree where the Crow Indians met with Father DeSmet.

Father Grassi and Father Prondo returned the following year and the mission location was established on February 25, 1887, when they cleared a 9-foot by 12-foot patch of snow and pitched a tent that would be their home for the following eight months. The "Black Robes" played an important part in

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section Number 8

Page 1

=====

the history of the Crow tribe, which was in the midst of a transition from a subsistence way of life based on hunting and gathering to a reservation society.

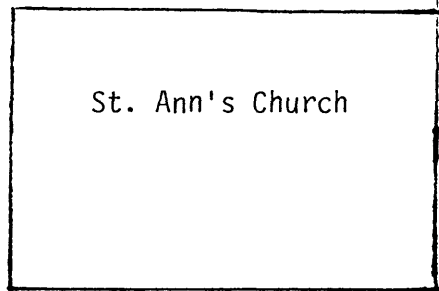
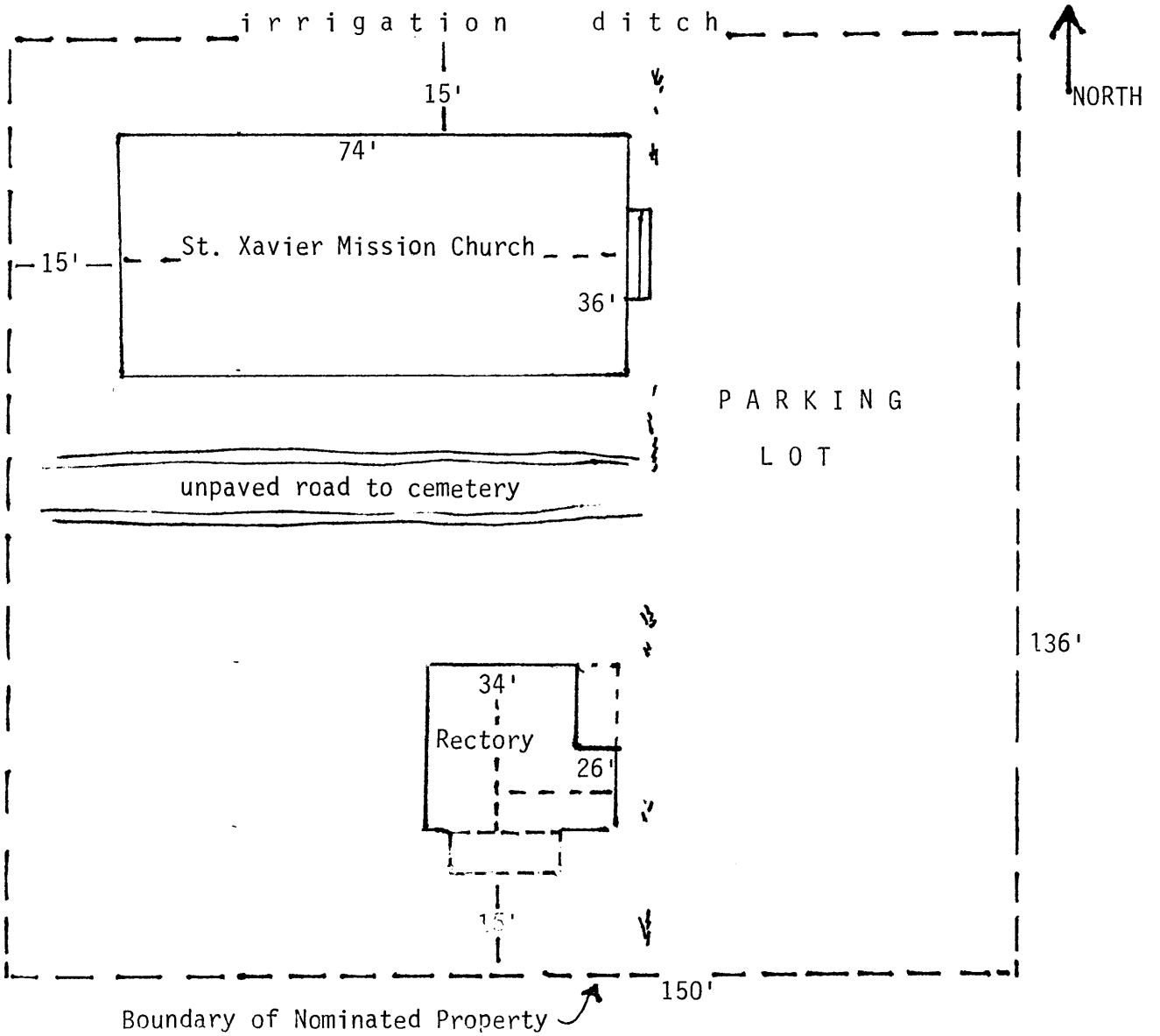
By September of 1887, a 60' x 40' two-story schoolhouse was completed and October saw the arrival of the Ursuline Sisters who took over the school. By Christmas of 1887 there were fifty students in the school. The children were taught the religion, language and customs of the white society that would soon dominate the region. The historic brick school building was destroyed by fire in 1968 and was replaced by the relocated St. Ann's Church from Lodge Grass (32 miles away).

The mission church was built in 1888, and the wood frame church still stands and is used by the people of the Big Horn District today. The rectory was built in 1889 to serve as a residence for the mission. Originally located approximately 75' east of the mission church, the rectory was moved in 1970 onto a new concrete foundation 38 feet south of the church building. Great care appears to have been taken to preserve the architectural appearance of the rectory over the years.

St. Xavier continues to serve as the Catholic mission on the Crow Reservation. From the mission at St. Xavier, priests served several mission chapels at other locations on the reservation including Pryor, Wyola, Warman, Crow Agency and Lodge Grass. Priests from St. Xavier also served the predominately white Catholic congregation at Hardin, which was established in 1907. This practice continued even after the community of Hardin was able to erect a permanent church building in 1919.

St. Xavier Mission Church and Rectory
Crow Indian Reservation
Big Horn County, Montana

not to scale



9. Major Bibliographical References

Billings Gazette, June 7, 1987.

The Oregon-Jesuit, #23, March 1954, pp. 1-3, 5, 9, 14.

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

Acreege of property less than one

UTM References

A 1, 3 2, 8, 6 8, 0, 0 5, 0 3, 7 8, 4, 0
 Zone Easting Northing

C _____

B _____
 Zone Easting Northing

D _____

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description T4s;R32E, SE¼ section 23

The boundary for the historic property is scribed approximately 15' to the north and west of the mission church, 15' to the south of the rectory, and 60' to the east of both buildings. The overall dimensions of the boundary are 136' by 150'. See enclosed sketch map.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary is drawn to include only the historic mission church and rectory within the nominated area. St. Ann's church is excluded from the nomination because it was moved to this site from Lodge Grass within the past 20 years and therefore does not possess an historical associative connection with the Catholic missionary efforts within the community of St. Xavier.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jackie Redding
 organization Big Horn County Historic Preservation Officer date January, 1990
 street & number 200 N. Center telephone 406-665-2137
 city or town Hardin state Montana zip code 59034