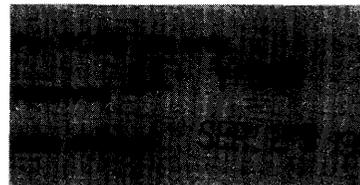


**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**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. Paul's Episcopal Church

and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number S.W. corner of 14th Street and Chouteau Street not for publication

city, town Fort Benton vicinity of congressional district 2

state Montana code 30 county Chouteau code 015

**3. Classification**

| Category  | Ownership                                  | Status  | Present Use                            |   |
|---|--|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> district               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied        | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) | <input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted | <input type="checkbox"/> government    | <input type="checkbox"/> scientific           |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> being considered  | <input 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 City of Fort Benton

street & number 1204 Front Street

city, town Fort Benton vicinity of state Montana

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Chouteau County Court House

street & number 1308 Franklin Street

city, town Fort Benton state Montana

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title State Inventory  
Historic District of Fort Benton has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1968 and 1972 federal  state county  local

depository for survey records Montana Historical Society  
225 North Roberts

city, town Helena state Montana

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## 7. Description

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**Condition**

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

**Check one**

unaltered  
 altered

**Check one**

original site  
 moved    date November 8, 1979

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**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

Located at the corner of 15th Street and Choteau Street in Fort Benton, St. Paul's Episcopal Church is a one-story rectangular building of local soft brick. 60 feet by 30 feet wide and 40 feet in height, it has five tall narrow leaded glass lancet windows down each side with plain pilasters between each. There is a large leaded glass window in the front of the chancel, as well as two leaded glass windows in the opposite end similar to the side windows, with a round rose window high on the rear wall over the entry. The roof is a steep pitched gabled roof which is shingled. Twin chimneys protrude from the rear wall and on the ridge between them is a large Celtic cross. Near the front a third chimney cuts through the side of the roof and on the front wall at the ridge line is a fourth chimney. The entry is a low brick vestibule with its own gabled roof and smaller cross on the ridge. Two small leaded glass lancet windows are on each side with double doors and a leaded glass lancet window surmounts the doors. All windows are arched with the brick corbelled out, the sills are all brick. A low brick room is attached to the front wall; it has a shed roof and was built as part of the original church.

The interior of the church has an open ceiling to the rafters and is lathe and plaster, as well as are the walls of lathe and plaster. There is a three-foot wainscoat. In order to form the chancel, two small rooms were placed on each side with doors opening into the chancel. Each has a small lancet window of leaded glass above the doors. The exterior has had a two-foot-high concrete curb poured around the base to protect the soft brick from water deterioration. This is the only addition since its original construction. The building was restored, inside and outside, with a National Park Service Historic Preservation Grant in 1975.

## 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/<br>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 checked="" 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** 1880 - 1979 **Builder/Architect** John Wilton

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

St. Paul's Episcopal Church is significant as the oldest Episcopal Church in Montana, and also as Fort Benton's oldest church. Architecturally the church is distinct as an example of high Gothic-like steep gabled church with stained glass lancet windows. It is a superb example of the small community church built in Montana during this period. It also represents the period when civilization and culture came to Fort Benton, when settlement of merchants with their families brought about schools, churches and theater to a wild frontier town.

St. Paul's Church of Fort Benton is the home of Montana's oldest continuous congregation. It represents the first sign of a civilized society after years of circuit-riding priests and bishops coming occasionally to minister to a heathen town of saloons, brothels, and gunfights. The church first came to Fort Benton in the hands of Bishop D.S. Tuttle who visited infrequently until 1879 when he established a congregation and left Rev. S.C. Blackiston in charge of the mission. After holding services in the schoolhouse, a saloon and finally in the court house, a drive was established to build a church. Many of the most prominent men in Montana's history were involved in the establishment of the church such as W.G. Conrad, C.E. Conrad, Joseph A. Baker, Paris Gibson, Charles Duer, W.H. Todd and J.S. Hill.

The church was named for St. Paul's School in Concord, New Hampshire since Rev. Joseph Coit, headmaster, made the first sizeable contribution to the building fund. On June 11, 1880 \$4000 had been subscribed. Building began that spring and the first services were held the following year. The leaded glass windows are memorial windows and works of art. The furnishings are the originals of the 1880's and the church itself stands today much as it did at the time of its construction. It has been in continuous service since the first service on August 11, 1881 as an edifice to the coming of civilization to west of the Missouri at the head of navigation on the river.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

St. Paul's Church Records  
 St. Paul's by Rev. Martin Grissom  
 Historical Society of Mont. Contributions: Vol. 5, 1904 - Tuttle

# 10. Geographical Data

**UTM NOT VERIFIED**

Acreege of nominated property Approximately 1/4 acre

Quadrangle name Fort Benton

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

**ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED**

UMT References

A 

|      |   |         |   |   |   |          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|------|---|---------|---|---|---|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1    | 2 | 5       | 2 | 5 | 0 | 0        | 0 | 5 | 2 | 9 | 5 | 9 | 4 | 0 |
| Zone |   | Easting |   |   |   | Northing |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

B 

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| Zone |  | Easting |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

C 

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| Zone |  | Easting |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

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| Zone |  | Easting |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

F 

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| Zone |  | Easting |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

G 

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| Zone |  | Easting |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

H 

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| Zone |  | Easting |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Verbal boundary description and justification

Lots 1 and 2, Block 49 original townsite and part of the Brinkman Addition, Fort Benton

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

state None code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title John G. Lepley, Curator

organization Fort Benton Museum date November 8, 1979

street & number 817 Main Street telephone 622-3278

city or town Fort Benton 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Marcella Sheffy originally signed 2-21-80

title Deputy SHPO date 6-26-80

**For HCRS use only**

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

John W. Ray  
 Keeper of the National Register date 9/29/80

Attest: John W. Ray date 9/17/80

United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

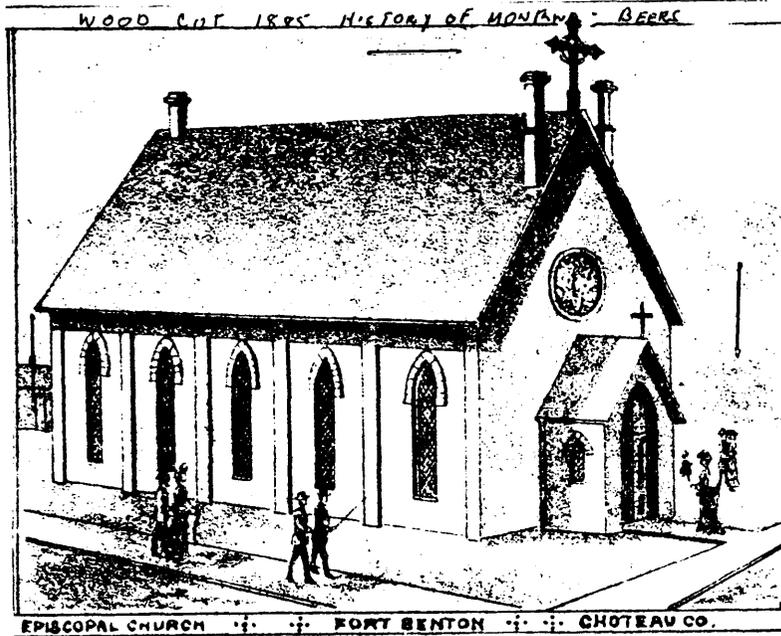
National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For HCRS use only  
received  
date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 2



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

|                      |      |
|----------------------|------|
| FOR HCRS USE ONLY    |      |
| RECEIVED FEB 26 1980 |      |
| DATE ENTERED         | SE 9 |

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

8

PAGE 2

Fort Benton's significance in the early settlement of Montana is immeasurable. No other town played such a prominent role in the opening of the Northwest from 1860 to 1887. Until the transcontinental railroads (the Northern Pacific, the Canadian Pacific and the Great Northern) crossed this country, Fort Benton's role as the greatest trade center and jumping off point was unchallenged. Three-quarters of all freight which entered the mining regions of Montana and Idaho came up the Missouri River from St. Louis, Sioux City, Omaha and Bismarck, and was unloaded on the levee at Fort Benton. There all of the Merchant Princes of the region had their headquarters and lived. Most entered other enterprises in later years and became the cattlemen, bankers and politicians of Montana. Some of them were Matt Carroll, T.C. Power, John Power, I.G. Baker, W.G. Conrad, C.E. Conrad, Kleinschmidt, W.S. Wetzel and John T. Murphy. The happenings in Fort Benton were closely tied to Virginia City, Helena and the other lesser early-day communities, so much so that the entire area was dependent upon the freight leaving Fort Benton. The vast majority of the people arrived and spent their first days in Fort Benton before heading to the gold fields or other endeavors in the wilderness. All major roads in the area had their terminal in Fort Benton. The first U.S. Government-built road (the Mullan Road) in the West left Fort Benton to Fort Walla Walla on the Columbia, forming a transcontinental route via the two rivers and the road.

Fort Benton also played a most important part in the settlement of the Canadian West. Most freight and supplies from Edmonton south came up the river and were transported from Fort Benton up the Whoop-Up Trail. The Northwest Mounted Police received their supplies by that same route; even their payroll was entrusted to Benton merchants for delivery. So all of Fort Benton's businesses played a significant role in the settlement of this part of the West. The large companies acted over a widely spread area, but surely the small businesses were of local significance in that booming freight town which was called the "Chicago of the Plains" during its twenty-seven years as the Northwest's greatest trade center.

# FORT BENTON, MONTANA

## — FT BENTON HISTORIC DIST.

- ① FT. BENTON - HISTORIC LANDMARK
- ② GRAND UNION
- ③ ST. PAUL'S CHURCH
- ④ I.G. BAKER HOME
- ⑤ H.J. WACKERLAW CO.
- ⑥ FT. BENTON ENGINE HOUSE
- ⑦ CHOUËAU CO. JAIL
- ⑧ CHOUËAU CO. COURT HOUSE
- ⑨ HIRSH BERG HOME

