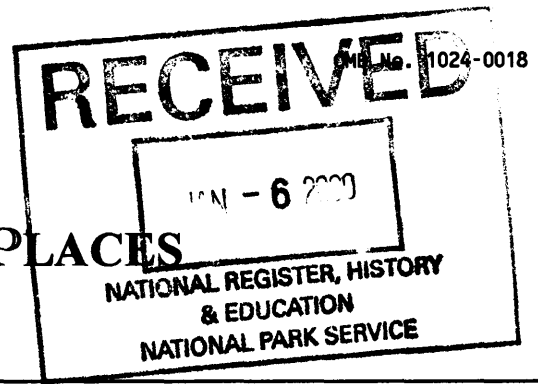


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: Lodgepole Community Hall

other name/site number:

2. Location

street & number: Fort Belknap Indian Community

not for publication: na
vicinity: na

city/town: Lodgepole

state: Montana code: MT county: Blaine code: 005 zip code: 59527

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally.

Mark F. Sauner
Signature of certifying official/Title

12/24/1999
Date

Montana State Historic Preservation Office
State or Federal agency or bureau

(_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

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

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

- I hereby certify that this property is:
- entered in the National Register
_ see continuation sheet
- determined eligible for the National Register
_ see continuation sheet
- determined not eligible for the National Register
_ see continuation sheet
- removed from the National Register
_ see continuation sheet
- other (explain):

[Signature]
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Edson H. Beall *2/24/00*

5. Classification

Ownership of Property: public-Indian Tribe	Number of Resources within Property	
Category of Property: building	Contributing	Noncontributing
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: na	<u> 1 </u>	<u> </u> building(s)
Name of related multiple property listing: na	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
	<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
	<u> 1 </u>	<u> </u> TOTAL

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:

RECREATION & CULTURE/hall

Current Functions:

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

OTHER/neo-Native American

Materials:

foundation: concrete
walls: logs w/siding
roof: wood shingle
other: brick

Narrative Description

The Lodgepole Community Hall is located in the small community of Lodgepole on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation. Lodgepole is located near the southern boundary of the reservation. The timbered slopes of the Little Rockies rise to the south of Lodgepole while the scattered buildings of the community are found on the rolling hills and in the coulees of the broken plains.

The Lodgepole Community Hall is a 1930s adaptation of the traditional multi-sided log dance halls built on Montana's Indian reservations. The one-story building is basically rectangular in form with wings to the front and back. The multi-sided shape is created by canting the walls where the wings join the main body of the building.

The Hall rests on a concrete foundation. The walls are constructed of square notched logs that reportedly came from the nearby Little Rockies. The logs are sawn on three side; the exterior surfaces retain their round surface. Evenly spaced vertical logs on the inside of the walls provide structural stability to the exterior walls and may support the roofing system. The exterior of the hall was covered with a fiberboard siding ca. 1960s.

A moderately pitched gable roof rises over the central rectangle of the building. Lower gable roofs extend over the wings of the building. Small, triangular shaped pent roofs cover the canted corners. The roofs are covered with wood shingles and the rafter tails are exposed. A tall brick chimney rises from the building's rear wing.

A small, corrugated metal vestibule covers the paired front doors. The date of its construction is unknown, but it post-dates construction of the hall. In addition to the front doors, two other doors provide access to the building: one at the southeast cant and one near the rear northwest corner of the hall. Rectangular, wood four-light windows are spaced around the building, just below the eaves.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria: A

Areas of Significance: ETHNIC HERITAGE/
Native American; POLITICS/GOVERNMENT;
SOCIAL

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): NA

Period(s) of Significance: 1936-1949

Significant Person(s): NA

Significant Dates: 1936

Cultural Affiliation: Assiniboine

Architect/Builder: unknown/PWA

Narrative Statement of Significance

Statement of Significance

The Lodgepole Community Hall is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A. The building is the last historic example of a number of dance halls built on the Fort Belknap Reservation, home of the Assiniboine and Gros Ventres tribes. The hall is associated with the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, and it is the reservation's best surviving building to represent the government's policy change -- from assimilation to self-determination. The New Deal programs of the 1930s conveniently, even though not totally coincidentally, provided for the construction of these tribally-associated community halls. The Lodgepole Community Hall, built for the reservation's Assiniboine people, also represents their early trust and confidence in the Act's goals of improved economic conditions and respect for tribal cultural traditions. The Lodgepole Community Hall functioned as the center of Assiniboine tribal identity on the reservation, which was expressed largely through traditional Indian dances.

Introduction

The U.S. Government fixed the current boundaries of the Fort Belknap Reservation in 1887. The lands of the reservation, only a small fraction of those granted to the Gros Ventre and Blackfeet by the Treaty of 1855, also became home of the Assiniboine. The two tribes have maintained their separate identities. The majority of Assiniboine live near the village of Lodgepole and the Gros Ventre are centered around Hays.

From 1887 until 1934, the U.S. Government's goal of assimilation proved disastrous for the people on the Fort Belknap Reservation. The agent's position turned over regularly, and each agent brought his own ideas for economic development to the reservation. Some agents placed an emphasis on cattle, others horses, and even others, irrigated farms. These erratic and rapidly changing ideas, all of them unsuccessful, combined with federal policy changes, confused the tribal members and plunged them into poverty. After almost 50 years of failed assimilation policies, unfilled treaty appropriations, and lack of rational planning, the national depression of the 1930s only exacerbated the already dire economic conditions on the reservation.¹

During the Great Depression, however, converging political, social, and economic reforms resulted in a reversal of the federal government's Indian policies. Politicians came under increasing criticism for the economic conditions on the nation's reservations, the exodus of bankrupt dry land farmers from the Great Plains checked calls for opening reservations to white settlement, and the general economic collapse changed attitudes about governmental assistance programs. As a result, the U.S. Congress passed the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. The express purpose of the act was "to rehabilitate the Indian's economic life and to give him a chance to develop the initiative destroyed by a century of oppression and paternalism." Allotment of reservation lands ceased, self-government was promised, and individuals were granted the freedom to practice their native religions.²

¹ David Rodnick, *The Fort Belknap Assiniboine of Montana: A Study in Culture Change* (New Haven: no pub., 1938).

² Loretta Fowler, *Shared Symbols, Contested Meanings: Gros Ventre Culture and History, 1778-1984* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

Lodgepole Community Hall
Name of Property

Blaine County, Montana
County and State

9. Major Bibliographic References

See continuation sheet

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 # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other -- Specify Repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acres of Property: 0.20 acres

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
	A 12	683950	5322845

Legal Location (Township, Range & Section(s)): A tract of land located in the N $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 5, T26N, R25E, M.P.M.

Verbal Boundary Description

Commencing at the C-S 1/16 corner; thence S 89° 57' 00" W, 489.33 feet to the point of beginning; thence S 00° 03' 00"E, 104.73 feet; thence N 74° 27' 20" E, 91.96 feet; thence N 00° 03' 00 W, 100.17 feet; thence S 89° 57' 00" W, 20.00 feet; thence S 00° 03' 00 E, 20.00 feet; thence S 89° 57' 00" W, 68.82 feet to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification

This is the legally recorded boundary for the property associated with the Lodgepole Community Hall.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Lon Johnson	date: April 1999
organization: State Historic Preservation Office	telephone: 406-444-7742
street & number: 1410 Eighth Avenue	zip code: 59620
city or town: Helena	state: MT

Property Owner

name/title: Fort Belknap Indian Community	telephone: 406-353-2205
street & number: Rural Route 1 Box 66	state:MT zip code: 59526
city or town: Fort Belknap Agency - Harlem	

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The interior of the Lodgepole Community Hall is one large space. The expansive dance floor has an 18 foot high ceiling (the structural system of the roof is hidden beneath fiberboard). The floor is marked out for a basketball court. A raised stage is located in the rear wing and bleachers overlook the dance floor in the front wing. Wooden stairs on either side of the stage lead to a kitchen in the partial basement. A wood cookstove is found in the kitchen.

Integrity

The Lodgepole Community Hall lost some integrity with the installation of the 1960s-era fiberboard siding. This siding covers the exterior log walls resulting in a loss of design, materials, and workmanship. Current speculation is that the squared logs were not very weathertight, and the siding was installed to reduce the building's heating requirements.

Despite this loss of integrity, the hall retains integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association, and to some extent design. The retention of these aspects of integrity continue to convey the building's essential physical features, and justify eligibility under Criterion A. The hall is located on its original site at the center of the scattered village of Lodgepole. At the time of its construction, it was the most impressive building in the community. A new community hall now holds that honor, but it is located in another area of the town. The setting of the hall has changed little since its construction. The building is located in a small flat area surrounded by rolling hills. The only new development in the immediate area is a one-story school behind the building. Although the loss of the exterior wall materials has resulted in some loss of integrity, the buildings overall shape, massing, and scale are still clearly evident. These characteristics are strong enough to convey the building's historic character and associations. There is little question when one looks at the building, but that it was constructed to serve as a community gathering place.

The interior of the Lodgepole Community Hall retains all aspects of integrity. Other than the replacement of the flooring and the painting of the log walls (dates unknown), it looks as it did at the time of construction.

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With trust and confidence that the Indian Reorganization Act would finally lead to independent, self-governance, and improved economic conditions, the Fort Belknap tribes became the first Plains reservation to accept the act. Even while developing a constitution for the reservation, it became clear that tribal expectations of self-determination were to be limited by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. A provision in the constitution recognizing semi-independence for the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine was vetoed in Washington, D.C. and replaced with a joint council with equal representation from each tribe.³

Background to Construction of the Lodgepole Community Hall

It was against this backdrop, then, that in 1935, the first new community hall was constructed in Hays, center of the Gros Ventre population. The Bureau of Indian Affairs' Division of Extension and Industry first promoted the construction of community halls on the reservation. In conformance with the government's changing attitudes about tribal identity and cultural practices, the division identified the need for "a community hall in each of the three districts which would house all general community meetings and activities."⁴ A contemporary description of Hays describes the new community hall,

where many days labor had been volunteered in an attempt to rush this first of the community halls to completion. The building is rectangular and gable-roofed, with a large auditorium suitable for dances and basket-ball, and many small rooms, still to be partitioned off, for the use of the various social clubs.⁵

The funding source for the Hays Community Hall is unknown, but the use of volunteers suggests it came directly from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and not through a New Deal public works program. This was to change when construction began on the Lodgepole Community Hall in 1936.

Construction of the Lodgepole Community Hall

Different contemporary and historical accounts attribute construction of the Lodgepole Community Hall to each of the three New Deal programs active on the reservation---the WPA, PWA, and CCC. It is likely that all accounts are in part correct since all three programs were active in Lodgepole at the time, but construction was sponsored by the PWA. One newspaper article reported that: "The workers of PWA are nailing the floor in the new community hall. The WPA workers [on the school] haven't worked for a couple of days on account of the weather." Logs for the building probably came from the CCC; its crews were cutting timber from the nearby Little Rockies in 1936.⁶

The community of Lodgepole dedicated its new hall on November 11, 1936, Armistice Day, "with a feast, speaking and native dancing." November and December saw a number of other events at the hall including a dance sponsored by the Women's Club at which quilts were raffled off, a children's program and dance, and a "white" dance.⁷ It appears that another dedication ceremony took place in November, but

³ Fowler, 95-95.

⁴ U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, "Annual Report of Division of Extension and Industry, Fort Belknap Reservation, Harlem, Montana, for 1935." On file at Fort Belknap Tribal Government Archives, Fort Belknap.

⁵ Rodnick, 67.

⁶ *The Harlem News*, October 30, 1936. "Recollections of Fort Belknap's Past."

⁷ *The Harlem News*, October 30; November 27; December 11, 1936.

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since the newspaper covering it did not provide a date, it also may have been the Armistice Day celebration. The newspaper described the event:

The dedication of the new community hall was a very interesting affair, the program being a combination of Indian tribal tradition and of modern governmental activity. An unusually fine assortment of Indian costumes were worn, both by the dancers and by the young Indian women who served the fine lunch. It was quite evident that the affair was an enjoyable one to both Indians and whites. A number of government officials and their wives were present.⁸

The New Deal programs provided jobs on the reservation for the first time, and per capita income reached an all time high.⁹ The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) first employed tribal members on the Fort Belknap Reservation in 1933. The Indian CCC program, although organized along similar lines as the CCC, was administered under the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and not the U.S. Army. Besides being made up entirely of Indians, the Indian CCC's enrollment regulations also permitted older and married men to enlist. Some camps were comprised of tribal members from a number of reservations, while other camps employed tribal members to do work on their own reservation.¹⁰ A former CCC recalled in 1981: "The CCC really did a lot of work on Fort Belknap during those days. The men also received a pay check, which was what we needed the most."¹¹ The PWA and WPA also provided employment opportunities on the reservation. Because the acronyms for these two programs were frequently used interchangeably, it is impossible to unquestionably assign specific projects to either without further research. Oral histories and contemporary newspaper accounts describe men under these programs involved in building construction, thinning timber and graveling roads; women sewed clothing and quilts, and canned foodstuffs.

The design of the Lodgepole Community Hall had its recent antecedents in log dance halls built on the reservation shortly after the turn of the century. "Roundhalls" (log dance halls) were constructed at Hays, Big Warm (near Lodgepole), and at the Agency (among other possible locations). A photograph of the Hays hall shows what appears to be a 12-side log building with a conical roof. A small, square ventilator with a pyramidal roof caps the building. Double doors provided access to the hall, and it appears windowless. A Gros Ventre elder described one of these early dance halls (probably the one at Hays) as made out of logs, "they had benches all around and they were nailed in the wall. In the front was a lot of room, it was really nice and warm and they had four stoves to keep it warm. They didn't have flooring, just sod."¹² Another elder recalled that before dance halls, wagons were used to create a circle in which to dance. Showing the significance of these buildings on the reservation, he goes on to say, "But now days we got halls, they dance in halls, these big civic center halls."¹³

⁸ *The Harlem News*, December 4, 1936.

⁹ David Rodnick, *The Fort Belknap Assiniboine of Montana: A Study in Culture Change* (New Haven, CT: no publisher, 1938).

¹⁰ James Austin Hanson, "The Civilian Conservation Corps in the Northern Rocky Mountains (Ph.D. diss., University of Wyoming, 1973); Donald L. Parman, "The Indian and the Civilian Conservation Corps," *The American Indian* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Clid Books, 1974).

¹¹ Information in this paragraph is from an oral history project sponsored by the Fort Belknap Education Department: "Recollections of Fort Belknap's Past," published in 1982. Mention of the New Deal programs is found throughout the oral histories. The first quote is from Dave Hawley, Jr.; the second is from Frank Ohlerking.

¹² Estelle Mount (69 years old) in "Recollections."

¹³ Leo Wing, Sr. (81 years old) in "Recollections."

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Use of the Lodgepole Community Hall

The Lodgepole Community Hall served as the social and recreational center of the Fort Belknap Assiniboine people. The community hall is more often referred to as a "dance hall," and it is here that the Assiniboine held frequent Indian dances. Through the years of the government's assimilation policies most Native American ceremonies were banned. The Fort Belknap agents' toleration of Indian dances left this as the one avenue left to openly express cultural traditions. As one anthropologist said about the dances carried into the twentieth century, "they viewed the events in large part as the perpetuation of old customs."¹²

An oral history project in 1981 under the direction of the Fort Belknap Curriculum Development Project documented the importance of dances on the reservation. Stories from Assiniboine and Gros Ventre elders are filled with descriptions of the ceremonies they remembered and took part in. The following quotes from that oral history provide a sense of the place these dances played in maintaining cultural traditions and a sense of community:

The Assiniboines had the fool dance along with other dances. Long ago, women never used to dance like they do now. . . . Once in awhile the women used to dance the round dance. . . . The grass dance was strictly for men. No women ever danced the grass dance. Other dances were the ring tail, rabbit dance and tea dance. . . . They used to also have the kettle dance where the dancers would put on their crow belts and dance with a little stick.¹³

The Indians were allowed to hold gatherings and dances anytime they wanted to. These people like the Gros Ventres or any of these reservation people would have tea dances, handgames and just any kind of get together for dancing and singing. . . .

. . . Most of the dances were just regular grass dances, mainly. They had all kinds of different dances where you had partners. Like the owl dance, rabbit dance, ringtail and the 49. These were kind of the top dances. They really enjoyed themselves. Each dance they had they had special songs that they sang for those particular dances. . . . They had celebrations like during Christmas for a week. Everybody looked forward to it, people came from all over just to dance with the Gros Ventres. They had good dances at that time.¹⁴

The Indians were allowed to hold gatherings and dances like house dances, tea dances and night dances. . . . They had a round hall over at Lodge Pole, and that is where they used to dance in the winter time, during Christmas. The people would come from the river too. They would shovel all the snow out of the coulee to get to the dance.¹⁵

Use of the Lodgepole Community Hall gradually declined over the years. This decline reflected growing disenchantment with the Indian Reorganization Act; self-determination was largely unsuccessful. The inter-tribal business council, and resulting factionalism in the face of continued economic hard times and government interference, led to a perception by many of a declining tribal

¹² Loretta Fowler, *Shared Symbols, Contested Meanings* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 160.

¹³ Lena "Buck" Snell (76 years old) in "Recollections."

¹⁴ George Chandler (59 years old) in "Recollections."

¹⁵ Isabel Wing (70 years old) in "Recollections."

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identity. Cultural traditions such as "old time" dancing also suffered. Poverty continued to significantly impact the lives of the Fort Belknap Indians, and members left the reservation in search of better jobs and educational opportunities. The U.S. Congress encouraged this out-migration with new policies terminating federal assistance programs, and even ordering some tribes to dissolve their governments. At Hays, the Gros Ventres viewed a new "rectangular" dance hall that replaced the "round" dance hall as a symbolic loss of tribal tradition. "Those who remained [on the reservation] gradually found it less and less practical or interesting to participate in dances and other such activities, especially as the elderly people who presided over them were dying year by year."¹⁶

Social change in the United States, starting in the 1960s, resulted in a revived interest in ethnic pride and cultural traditions. The U.S. Congress again responded with major legislation, this time aimed at strengthening "the Indian sense of autonomy without threatening his sense of community." Federal funds enabled many Indians to return to their homelands. On the Fort Belknap Reservation, cultural programs were renewed, but largely centered at the agency.¹⁷

Future of the Lodgepole Community Hall

The continuing importance of the Lodgepole Community Hall is indicated by the Fort Belknap Community Council's intentions to begin restoration work on the Lodgepole Community Hall. Plans call for a new roof and removal of the exterior siding.

¹⁶ Fowler, 133.

¹⁷ Pevar, 4-5; Fowler, 133-134.

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