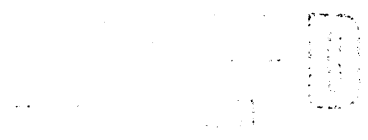


1447

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**



NATIONAL
REGISTER

1. Name of Property

historic name: Ursuline Academy

other name/site number: Ursuline Centre

2. Location

street & number: 2300 Central Avenue

not for publication: n/a
vicinity: n/a

city/town: Great Falls

state: Montana

code: MT

county: Cascade

code: 013

zip code: 59401

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: Private

Category of Property: Buildings

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u> 2 </u>	<u> </u> building(s)
<u> 1 </u>	<u> </u> sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
<u> 2 </u>	<u> </u> objects
<u> 5 </u>	<u> </u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: n/a

4. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination X 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 X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Maull Deaf _____ 8-15-91
Signature of certifying official Date

MONTANA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

- entered in the National Register
___ See continuation sheet. Rebecca Byers 9/26/91
- 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 Keeper for _____
Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic: Religion/church school, church-related residence

Current: Religion/church school, church-related residence

7. Description

Architectural Classification: Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals: Collegiate Gothic

Materials: foundation: stone
 walls: brick
 roof: asphalt

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Striking a balance of richly appointed, Renaissance influenced Gothic Revival architecture, this prominent, yet elegant, ecclesiastical academy has served the educational mission of the Order of the Sisters of Ursula since the building was brought into service on July 3, 1912 until the present day. The academy and its detached gymnasium, the landscaped grounds and two outdoor shrines all contribute to the significance of this historic property. The buildings occupy one full block on the upper east end of Central Avenue in Great Falls, and are surrounded by mature landscaping in a predominantly residential neighborhood of modest homes dating from the 1940s and 1950s. The facility exhibits a strong sense of integrity with very minimal (reversible) change to minor elements of the basic design.

The plan shape of the academy is comprised of three major elements. The symmetrical center mass is reflective of a cruciform in plan with the "head" of the cross oriented toward Central Avenue to the north. The central mass is paralleled by a full length dormitory wing to the west that housed students, and the third element is a shorter length dormitory wing to the east that continues to provide housing for the Sisters of the order. The principal mass is connected to the dormitory wings by smaller recessed stair halls on each side. The plan size of the structure occupies an overall dimension of 176' x 130' that is articulated by the re-entrant spaces (courtyards) between the wings, center mass and the recessed stair towers.

The academy is built of four story brick bearing wall construction with three and one half of those stories projecting above grade; a square tower centered above the "head" of the cross and the main entrance to the building, extends an additional two stories above the rest of the structure. The courtside wall (east elevation) of the student dormitory originally included continuous wood porch/balconies at all floors, as did the south end elevation of the Sister's quarters; these features, similar to cloisters, have been removed with the exception of the bottom row of balconies at the student wing. A two-car wood frame garage has been attached to the south end of the Sister's quarters and a small one-story wood frame structure abuts the south end of the east elevation of the principal mass.

The roofs of the building and tower are flat, and they are sheltered by crenellated parapets that are adorned with terra-cotta copings and appointments.

The long wing of the center cruciform plan shape projects southerly and houses the laundry and kitchen on the lower level, an auditorium room for students on the main floor. The academy chapel occupies the two floors directly above. The sidewalls of the chapel are offset from the walls below between the chapel entrance and its altar to create the traditional nave and transept configuration of Christian architecture. The side wings of the central mass provide space for circulation, formal reception rooms on the main floor and classrooms on the upper floors. The refectories are located at the lower level of this part of the structure.

The front (north) elevation is of symmetrical composition to reflect the plan configuration and is subdivided into seven major vertical elements. The central feature of the elevation is the projecting six-story tower/entry bay; it is flanked by four-story bays created by the stepped-back side wings of the cruciform shape of the principal mass on each side. The narrow stair halls connecting the east and west dormitories to the

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7

Ursuline Academy

Page 1

center of the academy are deeply recessed from the plane of walls of the flanking transepts and are approximately one and one-half stories shorter in height. The seven bay composition is completed by the end views of the dormitory wings at each side of the elevation, which extend forward toward the avenue to align with the front of the tower.

The tower bay is further defined by massive quoined pilasters at each corner and a full width entrance at the lower story. Windows on the second and third level of the tower are housed within a very subtle two-story projecting wall bay that folds out from the pilasters at the corners of the tower. Five equally spaced windows grace the respective stories of the terra-cotta clad wall of the bay; three in the flat center of the projection and one to either side in the angled walls.

The second and third stories of the "transept" wings also have five equally spaced windows on each floor that face the avenue. The windows are vertically aligned between stories; all but the center window of the pattern continue downward through the first floor and the exposed half story of the lower level.

The connecting stair halls feature window locations at stair landing (or half-story) heights; a pattern of three narrow 1-over-1, double-hung windows occurs between the second and third floor and they are aligned directly above a similar pattern of three between the first and second floors. The plane of the wall of the stair bays is offset toward the avenue at approximately the one and one-half story level to allow for vestibule spaces at the first floor. The vestibules are associated with secondary entrances that also serve the main elevation. The stair entrances are composed of double doors surrounded by a rectangular pattern of transom lights and sidelights. These doors are accessed by a series of exterior concrete steps. An additional series of interior steps elevate the visitor to the level of the main floor.

The top of the vestibule "house" has a small parapet with two crenels and a terra-cotta Latin cross emblem (aegis) centered in the frieze area below the coping.

The end bays of the dormitory wings are similar to the wall articulation of the transept bays with a pattern of five equally spaced openings that reduce to four windows at the lower two levels. The other elevations of the academy generally incorporate regularly spaced individual windows at all levels that reflect the dormitory usage of the academy.

The east and west elevations of the Academy are subtly divided into three bays by an offset in the wall plane. The end bays of these elevations created by the offset is identical in proportion to the end entry elevation of the dormitories.

The original windows, patterns, and sightlines are unaltered throughout, although removable aluminum storm windows have been added at many locations. Fenestration of the exterior elevations is defined by floor level.

The one-half story projecting above grade from the lower level features closely spaced rusticated horizontal brick coursing in the walls, large corner quoins of light colored brick to contrast with the dark red/purple brick of the wall plane, and 1-over-1, double-hung windows that are placed in the wall without further adornment. The main entry level is separated from the level below by a wide belt course of light brick, has flat planar walls of dark brick at all locations (except the tower), corner quoins of light brick that are of smaller scale than at the floor below, and all windows are 1-over-1 double-hung units with a transom light above. All window openings of this floor (except courtside windows of the dormitory wings) are accentuated by a perimeter band of decorative light colored brick that is quoined at the jambs and is a solid band at the head and sill. Architectural treatment of the upper second and third floors is separated from lower constructions by a belt course of light colored brick that occurs at the sill height of

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7

Ursuline Academy

Page 2

the second floor windows. Fenestration of the upper two floors is integrated as a single treatment by continuing corner quoining through their combined height and also extending the jamb quoining of the windows through the spandrel area between floors to engage the vertically aligned decorative brick of the window directly below. This polychromatic richness of pattern occurs at all upper floor windows on the transepts of the main elevation and at all but the center window of the main elevation of the dormitory wings to create a 2-1-2 division of the dormitory window bays. This pattern terminates at the belt course below the second floor windows; as a motif it groups windows in phalanxes of five, two or one that adds another dimension of variety to the entry facade with the greatest unity being achieved in the center of the elevation. Upper floor windows in the transepts have transom lights similar to the floor below; the wooden 1-over-1, double-hung windows at the dormitory wings and stair towers are without transoms.

A projecting concave terra-cotta architrave defined the level of the concealed roof and occurs several brick courses above the head of the third floor windows on all facades. The parapet of the wall continues upward for several feet and is capped by the crenellated terra-cotta coping above. In a departure from classical architectural vocabulary, the architrave is embellished with regularly spaced terra-cotta foliations along its length that are applied in a manner reflective of modillion blocks below a classical cornice. The entablature area of the parapet is of light colored brick at the dormitory wings; the darker brick and quoining pattern of the lower walls continue through this uppermost wall area of the central cruciform mass. The pattern of merlons and crenels of the battlements is regularly spaced along the top of the wall of the side elevations of the academy with the merlon of slightly dominant dimension.

This pattern is varied at the main elevation; the top of the transept portions of the central mass have a single crenel at each inside and outside corner and a grouped pair of crenels in the center of their respective bays; and the entry end facades of the dormitory wings feature a pair of crenels at each corner with a very low slope pedimented merlon in the center of each parapet.

A plain uninscribed, terra-cotta rectangular appointment can be seen below each pediment shape in the frieze area of the dormitory wings.

The end bays of the side elevations also incorporate the pediment, emblem, and light colored parapet motif of the dormitory ends.

The fenestration is consistent on all side and back elevations of the academy with the exception of three stained glass monumental windows on each side of the upper chapel walls, divided light steel sash windows in the solarium at the southwest corner of the chapel wing, a rank of 6-over-1 windows at the lower floor of the south end of the east wall of the principal mass that admit light into the laundry, and the treatment of the dormitory windows facing into the courts between the wings that do not have the patterned surround of light brick.

The non-pareil, leaded, stained glass, chapel windows are set in four-centered tudor arches. The wood tracery creates a pattern of geometric cusps and subdivisions across the upper one-quarter of the windows that gravitates into a triumvirate of long narrow Gothic lights within the lower part of the windows. A narrow band of operable hopper vents (also stained glass) trim the bottom of the openings.

The monumental main entrance to the academy is symmetrically located at the base of the tower and is elevated by a series of bay-width exterior concrete steps extending outward toward Central Avenue. Each side of the steps is flanked by a concrete plinth that supports a Gothic crocket at the end nearest the avenue. The entrance bay thus created by pilaster and step is recessed and the brick of the recessed wall circumscribes a monumental four-centered tudor arch that contains double doors with glass Gothic panes,

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7

Ursuline Academy

Page 3

sidelights to either side of the doors, and a transom light above the doors and above each sidelight. The arch is trimmed by a wide ribbed band of terra-cotta that is additionally quoined at the jambs.

A wide muntin extends across the opening at door head height and is clad with terra-cotta; the words "Ursuline Academy" are inscribed in the panels of the terra-cotta muntin. A pattern of rectangular reliefs also surround the arched door opening in the plane of the brick wall. The bottom of the subtle projecting wall bay above the main entry is surfaced in terra-cotta to meld into the vertical surfaces of the two-story projecting wall bay above.

Five individual terra-cotta panels occur directly below the second floor windows of the wall bay and announce the "1911" date, with the initials "S U" occupying the middle panel. The top of the angular wall bay aligns horizontally with the architrave of the adjacent transept roofs and is very subtly crenellated; the flat wall plane of the tower continues upward.

The five windows of the fifth floor tower/studio occur above the wall bay and are framed as a grouped unit by the light colored brick head, sill, and jamb brick surround typical of other windows in this facade. Simple Doric columns serve as mullions of this window grouping and the lights are deeply recessed into this unique blend of architectural elements. Similar window groupings occur on the other tower facades.

A Latin cross aegis occurs in the brick wall above the studio windows and is balanced by two terra-cotta foliations between the shield and the corner pilasters. The tower architrave extends across the facade above this emblem and is similar in appointment to the architrave of the transepts; the architrave abuts the corbelled pilasters at each tower corner.

The intersection of architrave, pilaster, and concealed roofline is elaborately announced by the presence of eight winged gargoyles; two at each corner of the tower. The gargoyles are functional and contain canals that discharge a short distance above implied crockets attached to the pilasters below. The parapet continues upward for another story height to culminate in pinnacles at each corner of the tower. The parapet height walls of the pinnacle house are articulated with terra-cotta bas relief in the form of a pair of Gothic indents on each face that are joined at the top into a third bridging pointed relief. The field of brick between pinnacles is coursed in a pattern of crosses and quoins. Each of the tower parapets between pinnacles is capped with a battlement pattern of crenel-low slope pediment-crenel, that abut the pinnacles on all four facades.

Miniature flamboyant gable dormers embellish the four faces of the Second Empire style terra-cotta pyramidal roofs (replete with finial) that shelter each pinnacle.

The coup-d'grace of this Gothically elegant and architecturally complex center of learning is a large terra-cotta Latin cross centered on the tower pediment of the main elevation and appropriately, it reaches heavenward.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7

Ursuline Academy

Page 4

Significant Interior Details

Entry into the Academy is achieved by passage through a grand bay-width stair vestibule. The space is finished with white Georgian marble steps, wainscot, and marble door rails and stiles at the inner vestibule doors, sidelights, and transoms.

The ceiling is deeply coved at the perimeter with plaster molding and period, brass light fixtures are suspended in the space. A unique alabaster chandelier is located above the top landing.

The plaster walls feature a deeply recessed panel pattern of white plaster trimmed with gilded and foliated moldings.

The wall opposite the vestibule doors, in the central corridor, embraces religious iconography painted by Sister Raphael Schweda.

The school function of the building is evident in the straight forward materials chosen for the 45 dormitory rooms and classrooms. Plaster walls and ceilings, hardwood flooring, and wide, flat casing, base and trims are typical throughout. A few corridor and room ceilings have had contemporary surface materials applied, but these alterations are minimal and reversible.

The school auditorium is a simple rectangular volume with a traditional stage at the north end. The two-step proscenium stage projects outward into the auditorium, which is furnished with anchored, molded plywood seating for the audience. The flat floor is hardwood; walls and ceiling are painted plaster articulated by dropped beams clad in dark paneled wood. Music practice rooms line both sidewalls of the auditorium.

The two-story chapel space is a total of five bays in length with one bay dedicated to the altar and one bay sheltered by a serpentine balcony that is located above the main entry to the chapel. The balcony is accessed from the upper floor corridor.

The gabled shape of the plaster ceiling is articulated by dark stained, wood tudor arches at the bay lines, that is further coffered by the dropped wood purlins at third-points of each bay. The wide space between the ridge line and the center curve of each arch is relieved by Gothic tracery and dentils. Walls are also painted plaster and the flat floor is hardwood.

A paneled wood communion rail with gates allows access to the raised altar at the southern end of the chapel. The wall behind the altar features a three-part blind arcade that frames religious iconography by Sister Raphael Schweda. The center arcade is currently draped.

The fifth floor "Tower Studio" where these artworks were executed rises above the Academy building to allow natural light from all four sides. Above the studio is a storage loft, which is lighted by two skylights.

Gymnasium/Dormitory

The Ursuline gym occupies the southwest corner of the block that has been dedicated to the academy and its functions. It is separated from the academy and is located directly behind the student dormitory wing. The long, rectangular, two-story gym facility is of brick bearing wall construction and is oriented east/west with the main entry centered on the west end, facing 23rd Street; it was built in two stages with construction of the main gym in 1925 and the boy's dormitory at the east end in 1927. The massing of the added dormitory is offset slightly to the north from the principal mass of the gymnasium. Other

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7

Ursuline Academy

Page 5

than a small wood frame vestibule added to the east wall of the dormitory, and a handicapped ramp to the main entry from the sidewalk, the building is unaltered.

The original (1925) 50' x 150' gymnasium is seven bays in length with five bays dedicated to the athletic floor, one entry bay used for foyer and the seventh bay, at the east end, for exiting and spectator seating. The end bays are narrower than the five gym bays. The interior of the two-story gym features balcony "arena" seating on all four sides of the field of play; the west balcony occupying the space above the foyer. The nearly flat, built-up roof is supported by clear-span structural, welded plate girders at the bay coordinates. The floor is of wood frame with a minimal crawl space below. The concrete sub-structure extends upward from the frost line to a point slightly above grade and forms a plinth for the building.

The entry elevation is of symmetrical composition with a monumental entry on axis that is flanked by two individual large steel sash windows placed in the field of dark brick to each side. Five windows of identical proportion and construction occupy the second floor of the facade and are aligned with the windows and entry below. The large, square windows embrace a pattern of twelve panes, four wide and three high. All windows in the building are surrounded by the light colored brick surround treatment described for the academy building.

The gym entrance is a monumental, two-centered Tudor arch set in a rectangular field of terra-cotta that extends above the head height of the adjacent first floor windows and is quoined into the brick walls at the sides. The quoining extends from the height of the springline of the arch to the base of the doors. The Tudor arch is relieved by ribbed terra-cotta trim at its perimeter, houses wood panel double doors, and features a transom between the top of the doors and the top of the arch. The transom is sub-divided into six vertical lights.

An architrave of corbelled light brick extends around the top of the building and is located at the top of the second floor windows. The crenellated parapet is sheltered by a brick coping that is flat with the exception of a stepped mold above the entry.

The frieze area is unadorned except for a credit stone centered above the main entry. It is composed of three elements; a large center stone has the initials "M A A" and smaller flanking stones are inscribed with the date "19" and "25" to either side.

Engaged pilasters articulate the column lines at the side elevations; they extend through the architrave to a point below the parapet coping where they are trimmed with a stone weathering gablet. The crenels of the battlements are aligned above the pilasters at the side elevations.

Windows on the second floor of the five interior side bays are identical to the main entry windows; the first floor windows of these bays are similar, but are one pane shorter in height. The windows in the west bay utilize divided lights of the same size as the typical window that are configured in a pattern of three wide and three high, thereby reducing the window size proportionately.

The east spectator bays of the side elevations have second floor multi-light windows that are located above the exit doors.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7

Ursuline Academy

Page 6

Grounds

Echoing the ordered dignity of the buildings, the grounds surrounding the Ursuline Academy were formally landscaped and mature plantings are evident today, providing a sense of seclusion to the site, which is now surrounded by buildings of more recent vintage. Although the landscape designer is unknown, the plantings were plotted on the original building plans. The grounds are counted in this nomination as a contributing site.

The one-block site occupies the northwest corner of a four-block parcel that is uninterrupted by streets. On the eastern boundary of the site, a driveway from Central Avenue allows access to the rear of the Academy for parking and deliveries. The full block east of the site contains a public school that was originally Great Falls Central Catholic High School. The two contiguous blocks south of the site contain an athletic field (to the east) and the home of the Catholic Diocese of Great Falls, facing west.

Two religious shrines within the grounds of the Academy have been included in this nomination as contributing objects. Both shrines are constructed of round, glaciated river cobbles set in concrete, with arched openings for the statuary and both were added to the grounds in 1929. The shrine dedicated to the Blessed Mother is located in the garden area south of the academy and east of the gymnasium. Sheltered by a canopy of mature ash trees, the park-like area provides a tranquil repose for the shrine. The shrine is approximately nine feet high and is surrounded by a circular flower bed in the manicured lawn; it is approached, on axis, by a concrete walk across the planting and includes a step for kneeling at the base of the pedestal. Ivy has grown up and over the stonework adding a natural richness to the shrine. The shrine for St. Joseph is of slightly smaller scale and can be found on the grounds west of the student dormitory.

The grounds of the Ursuline Academy have, along with the buildings, matured relatively gracefully, with minor changes, over its nearly 80 year history in the city of Great Falls.

8. Statement of Significance

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

Applicable National Register Criteria: **A, C**

Areas of Significance: **Architecture
Social History
Education
Landscape Architecture**

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): **A**

Period(s) of Significance: **1911-1941**

Significant Person(s): **n/a**

Significant Dates: **1911, 1925, 1927, 1932**

Cultural Affiliation: **n/a**

Architect/Builder: **Shanley, George H. (architect)
Leigland, H. S. (builder)**

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Ursuline Academy in Great Falls, Montana, epitomizes the late 19th and early 20th century growth of the Ursuline Order in Montana and its quest to bring "education, culture, domestic Christian living and tranquility" to the state. The massive, Collegiate Gothic academy and its adjacent gymnasium/dormitory represent the culmination of the work of the "Lady Blackrobes" who first came to Montana Territory in 1884 and for 107 years have enriched the history of Montana through their religious and educational work. The intact interior of the academy clearly speaks to its history as a major boarding school and as a center for the missions of the order. Those functions are also represented by the books, art, furniture, iconography, musical instruments and Native American artifacts that lie within the walls. As the repository for the records of closed Ursuline missions and schools in the northwest region, it has the potential to contribute important information on the Order and its role in the cultural development of Montana, particularly their pioneering work in introducing a Christian education to many of Montana's Native American tribes. Although a religious property (exception A) the primary significance of the buildings is derived from their architectural, educational and historical importance.

The Ursuline Academy was built at the height of the homestead movement in 1911, a period of great population growth in Montana. It has stood through the proliferation and subsequent decline in the number of rural schools, the establishment of myriad new urban schools, both public and parochial, as well as the advent of the school bus, which ultimately eliminated the need for boarding schools.

The Ursuline Academy opened in September of 1912 with 151 students. The co-educational student body consisted of both day students and female boarders. In 1925, the gymnasium was completed and, in 1927, it received an addition to provide boarding facilities for young men. Boarding ceased in the addition in 1937, reflecting the rapidly changing needs of the institution.

The Academy provided leadership in a post-frontier setting by offering more than a fundamental curriculum. In addition to a full range of academic and commercial classes, with "thorough instruction in all the arts and sciences," the health and morals of the children were "in a special manner cared for by the Ursuline Nuns." Children of any denomination were accepted at the school, with those "of the faith" receiving added religious training.

Additional significance is gained because the College of Great Falls was launched in the Academy in 1932. Mother Genevieve McBride, an Ursuline, served as Dean of the diocesan college. The college was recognized and accredited that year by the University of the State of Montana. It remained in the Ursuline Academy for ten years.

Also, in 1932, organizational changes occurred which altered the province lines for the Order and required the Ursulines to proceed slowly towards centralization. Partly due to a need for teachers at the expanding Ursuline Academy in Great Falls, they began to leave the smaller Mission schools. Continuing the trend, larger schools were closed during the 1950s. St. Ignatius, the only other extant Ursuline school, closed in 1978. The Ursuline Centre represents the complete centralization of the Order in Montana.

Until 1950, the Academy offered classes from kindergarten through high school. With the opening of Great Falls Central Catholic High School, the secondary school closed at the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8

Ursuline Academy

Page 1

Academy in 1950. In 1962, there were 300 students (K-8) and for the first time, there were no boarding students. Our Lady of the Lourdes Parish (1946) and Holy Family Parish (1965) the elementary school in the Academy closed in 1966.

Drawing from the original tenets of the Order of St. Ursula, the Sisters have "been obliged to make fresh rules and change certain things." In 1970, following a period of reflection and prayer, the Academy was renamed the Ursuline Centre, announcing the changes. Fulfillment of their educational mission is currently accomplished through an in-house day care center and kindergarten. Ursulines continue to teach at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish and provide missions to outlying areas. They have also opened their home to at least eleven denominations of mainline churches that form the Montana Association of Churches, as well as others who come on a local basis. The Ursuline Centre provides ecumenically-based retreat work, workshops, study groups and a sharing of the building, historical archives, and artifacts through a newly inaugurated tour program.

The Ursulines' Mount Angela Academy, established in 1884 at St. Peter's Mission, was located in a "startling and inspiring" landscape in the Mission Valley on the historic Mullan Road from Fort Benton. Although an Indian Mission school, settlement in the region created the demand for expanding educational facilities to serve the growing white population. Settlement in the area also left the Academy even more isolated, as new transportation routes were developed. Plans were made in 1910 to move the Academy to the rapidly growing community of Great Falls.

Although the Sisters owned valuable property on 2nd Avenue North between 8th and 9th Streets, the Great Falls Townsite company offered any two blocks in the city as incentive for them to locate the academy in Great Falls. Two blocks on the south side of Central Avenue, between twenty-third and twenty-fifth streets were selected for the new facility. Situated on a rising point of ground, originally called Mount Angela Terrace, the area was removed from the populated area of the city. Overlooking the business and residential areas of Great Falls, with the "winding curves of the Missouri and the blue peaks of the Belt Mountains" in the distance, the tranquil site proved ideal for continuing the educational work of the Ursulines of the Mount Angela Academy.

Architecture

The selection of the Collegiate Gothic style for the Ursuline Academy in 1911 reflected the American architectural thinking of the period. Styles were frequently chosen not just for fashion, but for associative qualities, and Gothic Revival was firmly linked to learning, as well as being a mainstay of ecclesiastic architecture. The acknowledged adaptation of Gothic Revival motifs to "Collegiate" or "Academy" usage endured beyond the time of construction of the Ursuline Academy, which introduced the powerful style to the community of Great Falls. It remains unchanged, as the first of three major representatives of this style in the now-mature community.

Nobly sited and one of the largest facilities in the community at the time, it was and continues to be, a profound architectural statement representing commitment to, and legitimacy for, the community as a regional center dedicated to learning.

Architect George H. Shanley was commissioned by the order and its administrators to design the facility, which adds to the buildings' significance. Shanley was formally trained, experienced and traveled at the period of his career when he began work on the Academy. Educated in Vermont, he made his way westward, working in Minnesota and North Dakota before coming to Montana in 1898. His private practice, as well as his partnerships with other Montana architects, including Fred Willson and Roscoe Hugenin, is well represented across the state. Shanley made Great Falls his permanent base in 1907 and over several decades he designed numerous buildings throughout Montana and in Wyoming, in addition to adding over 40 prominent buildings to the city of Great Falls.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8

Ursuline Academy

Page 2

Typical of the time and style, Shanley utilized brick bearing wall and wood and steel frame technology for the facility. A centralized heating plant and an elevator were incorporated, reflecting state-of-the-art methodology of local construction practice. The Academy design also included the self-contained elements of an infirmary, laundry, kitchen, as well as dining facilities for both the Sisters and the students. Shanley, in collaboration with C. H. Baker, later designed the gymnasium adjacent to the Academy, in keeping with the materials and style of the Academy building.

Providing an example of early 20th century campus landscaping on a small scale, the campus surrounding the academy adds to the significance of this historic property. Although the designer is unknown, the landscape design is evident on the original building plans. The ordered landscaping accents the formality of the building architecture, with straight rows of trees lining geometrically arranged walkways. The shrines and gardens, placed into this landscape in 1929, furthered this order with the addition of circular flowerbeds bisected by walkways, a popular early 20th century landscaping device. The plantings, especially now-towering conifers and thick ivy, perhaps have overgrown the intended appearance of the grounds, but remain original to the site and representative of the original concept for the academy's campus.

Representing an investment of over \$200,000, the Academy was turned over to the nuns in July of 1912. Wagonloads of furniture left Saint Peter's to fill cars of the narrow gauge "Turkey Trail" railroad, then serving Great Falls, from Lethbridge. The transfer of the Motherhouse from St. Peter's also occurred in July. The Mission of St. Peter's continued as an Indian School for girls, dependent on the house in Great Falls, until fire destroyed the Mission School in 1918.

The Great Falls Tribune, August 4, 1912, announced the opening of the new educational facility as "one of the best structures of the character west of the Mississippi River."

The iconography which adorns the walls of the Academy was the work of Sister Raphael Schweda (1884-1972). Sister Schweda began her art study as a small child in Germany. She accepted a scholarship to the Dusseldorf Art Academy at age 13. After beginning college, she came to the United States and studied at the College of St. Catherine in St. Paul. She obtained both bachelor and master of fine art degrees from Notre Dame.

She entered the Ursuline order in 1912 at St. Peter's Mission near Cascade. Her final vows were made at the Ursuline Academy in Great Falls in 1917. Sister Raphael taught art classes and private lessons in the "Tower Studio" for 53 years. In addition to the artwork in the Academy, as well as other churches in the area, Sister Raphael's work is represented in private collections in the city.

The Order of St. Ursula

The inspiration fostered by St. Ursula, a patroness of education in the 5th century, has resulted in centuries of Christian education by the Order of St. Ursula--the Ursulines. Named for the legendary princess who was martyred for her faith, the Company was organized in Italy by Angela Merici in 1535. In forming the Company, the far-sighted Angela directed that: "If according to times and needs you should be obliged to make fresh rules and change certain things, do it with prudence and on good advice."

The formation of the Company coincided with a period of reform in the Catholic Church, when it was recovering its temporal power and actively expanding. The Order of Saint Ursula was approved by Pope Paul III, in 1544. It was the first religious order in the Catholic Church dedicated to the teaching of girls. On the tide of a renewed interest in classical art, literature and learning, the order spread rapidly throughout Europe. It was from a monastery in France that the first Ursulines were to come to the "New World" in 1639. The first convent was established in Quebec at the invitation of the Jesuits, who were working among the Huron Indians in Canada. The first Ursuline School in what was to

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8

Ursuline Academy

Page 3

become the United States, was founded in Louisiana in 1727, again at the request of the Jesuits. By the middle of the 19th century various other Ursuline missionaries from Europe had opened schools in the United States.

The Society of Jesus Order--the Jesuits--was founded by Saint Ignatius Loyola in 1540. The Reformation also carried the Jesuits, who originated in Spain, to far away places. It was often at the invitation of the Jesuits that their "Sisters" came to assist with the Catholic mission.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8

Ursuline Academy

Page 4

The Ursulines in Montana

Father Eli Washington Lindesmith of the Cleveland, Ohio, Diocese, was commissioned Chaplain in the U.S. Army in 1880, and was assigned to Fort Keogh near Miles City, Montana. It was Father Lindesmith who first foresaw the value of bringing religious women as a way to "subdue" the Cheyenne Indians in the area. But, it was not until after Montana was elevated to the status of a vicariate in 1883 that the need was to be filled. Bishop John B. Brondel was appointed administrator of the vicariate and established his residence in Helena. He appealed to Bishop Gimour of Cleveland, Ohio, for Ursuline volunteers for the Cheyenne mission. Bishop Gimour selected six out of thirty eager volunteers for the mission, including Mother Amadeus Dunne, whom he referred to as the "flower of my flock."

Born in Akron, Ohio in 1846, Sarah Theresa Dunne was determined from childhood to be a missionary in the Rocky Mountains and in Alaska. She and her sister, Mary, were enrolled in the Ursuline boarding school in Cleveland, where they made up their minds to become Ursulines. At age 15, Sarah Dunne asked to join the Order at the convent of the Toledo Ursulines. The nuns felt she was too young and frail to be accepted, but she "petitioned with such persistence" that she was reluctantly accepted. As an Ursuline, Sarah took the name of Sister Mary Amadeus. In the following years, she gained the respect of her companions as an outstanding teacher. She was unanimously elected Mother Superior in 1874 at the age of 28.

The six Montana-bound Ursulines, with Mother Amadeus at the head, planned to establish their motherhouse at Miles City and sent out small bands of their order to found schools among the various Indian tribes in the state. The first mission was named after St. Labre, "the poorest of God's poor" by Bishop Brondel, who was aware of the poverty of the Cheyennes. Three of the "Lady Blackrobes" were welcomed by the local Indians, and despite many hardships, the order continued its educational mission at St. Labre until 1933.

In Miles City, the remaining three members of the original group opened a boarding school for white children in a temporary convent and school. Girls' classes were held in the convent, while boys were taught in the church. The school continued to grow and in 1902 the new Ursuline Convent of the Sacred Heart opened, on a site donated by the people of Miles City. The Ursulines continued their educational mission in Miles City for 70 years, until 1954.

In July of 1884, Mother Amadeus was again approached by the Jesuits with a request for four Ursulines to establish a school at St. Peter's Mission, in central Montana Territory. With novices from Miles City and Helena, Mother Amadeus arrived at the mission in October to open a boarding school for Blackfeet children. Enrollment grew to a high of 218 Indian students in 1894, and St. Peter's expanded to meet the need. With few schools in the region, the facility again expanded to create a school for white children. A Novitiate was also established, and St. Peter's became the Motherhouse of the Ursulines in Montana. Sisters came from around the United States, Canada and Europe to the remote mission. After the Mount Angela boarding school was moved to Great Falls, the Ursulines continued the Indian Mission school at Saint Peter's until it was destroyed by a fire in 1918.

From Saint Peter's, Ursulines were sent to establish three more mission schools. At Saint Paul's Mission on the Fort Belknap Reservation, the Ursulines served the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine Indians from 1887 until 1936. Also in 1887, they established a school at St. Francis Xavier's Mission, serving the Crow Tribe until 1933. Holy Family Mission School was established near Browning in 1890, again for Blackfeet students. The Ursulines remained there until 1939.

The mission schools at Saint Ignatius served numerous tribes including the Upper Kootenais, Pend d'Oriettes, Flatheads and Mountain Kalispells. Joining the Sisters of Providence and the Jesuits, who were already teaching at Saint Ignatius, the Ursulines

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8

Ursuline Academy

Page 5

started a kindergarten. Accepting children as young as two years of age, the experimental school proved a practical success. From 1890 to 1896, there were over 300 children enrolled in the Saint Ignatius schools. The Ursulines continued teaching at Saint Ignatius until 1978.

In addition to the remote mission schools, the Ursuline teachers also served Native Americans in two Montana towns. In 1892, they launched a school at Pryor for Chief Plenty Coups and his Crow tribe. Saint Charles' school was short lived, however, and had to be closed for lack of funds in 1898. At Arlee, a chapel had been built by the Jesuits and dedicated in 1889. Mother Amadeus decided to open a school there for the Flathead tribe in 1892. Again a lack of resources created a problem in maintaining the school at St. Berchman's Mission, and it closed after only five years.

In 1900, at the request of Bishop Brondel, the Ursulines went to Anaconda and set up a school in an abandoned hotel. Twenty-three years later, a large parochial school and convent were built for the Ursulines and they remained until 1954.

Mother Mary of the Devine Heart, of the Great Falls Ursulines, went to Roundup, Montana to become the first superior of Saint Benedict's Parochial School in 1922. A group of Ursulines left the Academy in Great Falls to teach at the parochial school for eleven years. Three Sisters made the trip every Sunday to nearby Klein, where they instructed the children of the small mining camp. The growth of the Ursuline Academy in Great Falls created the need for more teachers, and it became necessary to withdraw Ursuline teachers from the smaller schools. Saint Benedict's closed in 1933.

Reverend Mother Amadeus was Superior General of the Missions of the Northwest until 1900, when unification of all Ursuline houses occurred at a meeting in Rome. St. Peter's and other missions then became houses of the Northern Province of the United States. Mother Amadeus was installed as first provincial of the Northern Province, which was headquartered in New York. Four years later, at age 64, she was chosen as first Superior of Alaska. The foundress of Montana's Ursuline missions passed away in 1919. At her request, she was buried at St. Ignatius Mission in Montana.

The Ursulines' contribution to teaching Indian children the "religion, language and customs of white society, destined to dominate the region," is touched on in nominations to the National Register of Historic Places for St. Ignatius, Holy Family, St. Peter's and St. Xavier Missions. These and other existing sites and buildings need to be examined to provide additional information on the Order and its role in the development of education in the state.

The Ursuline Academy in Great Falls stands today as a visual reminder of the lengthy career of the Ursuline Order in Montana, which began in sod-roofed, dirt-floored, log missions and culminated in their definitive, "high style" institution of learning. Recalling important chapters in the history of Montana education, those of the boarding school and of the Indian mission schools, the Academy commemorates the efforts of the over 200 Ursuline sisters who have served in Montana between 1911 and the present.

For over four and one-half centuries, the Order of St. Ursula has continued its original mission, that of teaching. During the last of those centuries, the Ursulines, who have been "solely and entirely devoted to the instruction of youth" have touched the lives of thousands of Montana citizens.

9. References

Abair, Sister St. Angela, "A Mustard Seed in Montana." Recollections of the first Indian Mission in Montana, Toledo, Ohio, 1938. (Mimeographed)
Annals, St. Peter's Mission. Archives of Ursuline Academy, Great Falls, Montana.
Charvet, O.S.U., Elizabeth Marie, personal interview with Ellen Sievert, March 13, 1991.
Devine, O.S.U., Marietta, personal interview with Ellen Sievert, March 6 and 10, 1991.

X 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: Ursuline Centre, Great Falls, Montana. Repository for Northwest Region Order of St. Ursula.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: Approximately two acres

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	12	479950	5261000

Verbal Boundary Description:

The Ursuline Academy Campus is located in the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 7, T20N, R4E. The property encompasses all of Block 345, Eleventh Addition to the City of Great Falls, Cascade County, Montana.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary includes the entire city block that has historically been associated with the Ursuline Academy.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title: Ken and Ellen Sievert, partners

Organization: Sievert & Sievert, Consultants

Street & Number: 1602 3rd West Hill Drive

City or Town: Great Falls

State: MT

Zip: 59404

Date: March 1991

Telephone: 406/761-6955

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

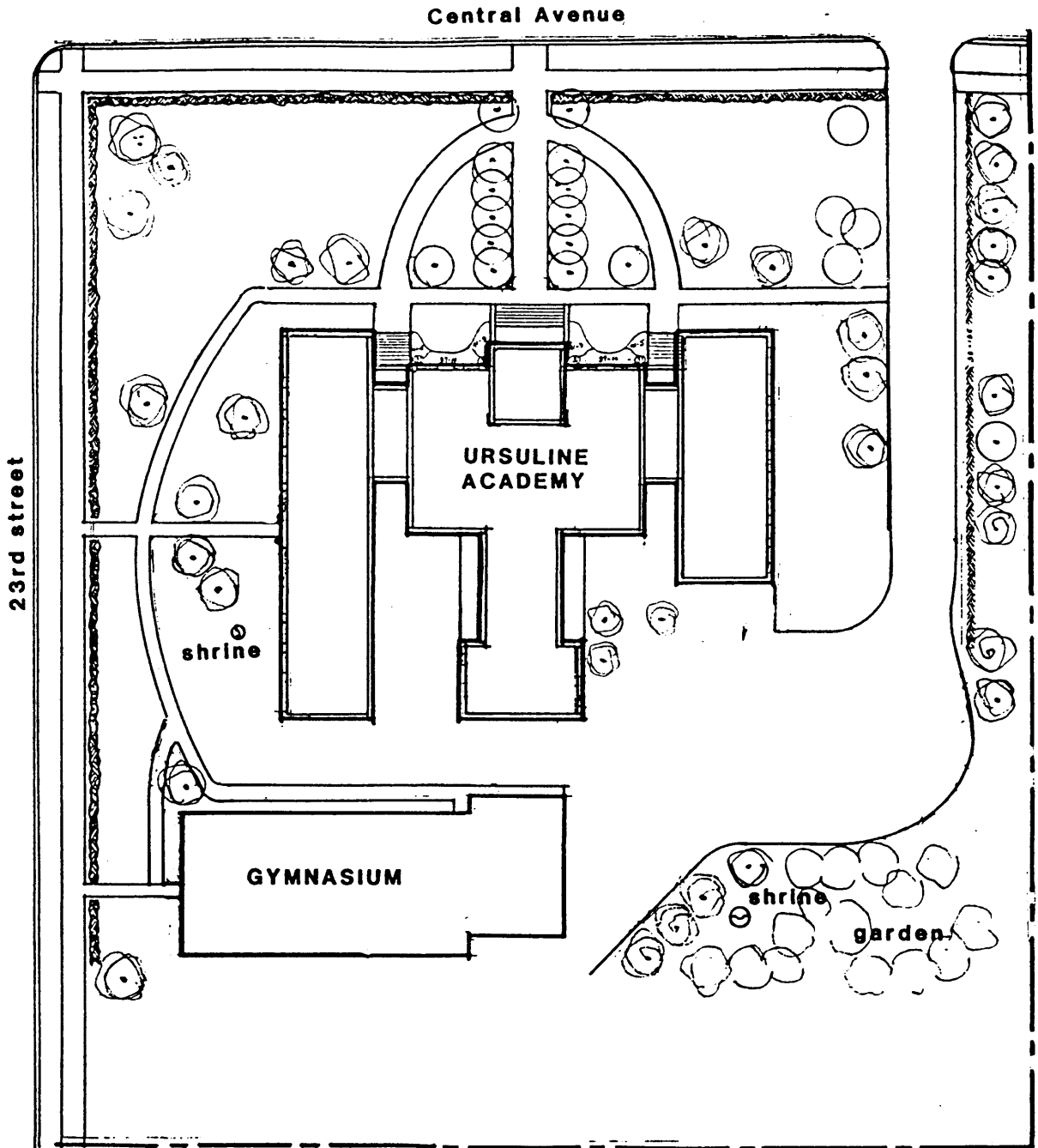
**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 9

Ursuline Academy

Page 1

Great Falls Tribune, May 23, 1911; December 11, 1911; August 4, 1912.
Johnson, O.S.U., Ursula Marie, personal interview with Ellen Sievert, March 10, 1991.
McBride, O.S.U., Genevieve. The Bird Tail, New York: Vantage Press, 1974.
Mondesert, S.J., Claude and DeLubac, S.J., Henri. The Ursulines of the Roman Union.
France: 1958.
Shanley, Geo. H. Blueprints and Rendering, Ursuline Academy. Shanley and Baker.
Blueprints, Gymnasium, Ursuline Archives.
Suenens, Cardinal Leon Joseph, The Nun in the World. Maryland: The Newman Press, 1962.
"The Ursulines: A Century of Service to Montana." Westmont Magazine (A supplement to
Westmont Word, the Catholic Newspaper of Western Montana), February 22, 1984.



**PLOT PLAN URSULINE ACADEMY
GREAT FALLS MONTANA**

Ursuline Academy
2300 Central Avenue
Great Falls
Cascade County
Montana