

**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 HOLY FAMILY MISSION

and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number N/A not for publication

city, town Browning, Mont.  vicinity of congressional district First

state Montana code 030 county Glacier code 035

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<u>N/A</u> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Roman Catholic Bishop of Helena, Montana, a Corporation Sole

street & number P.O. Box 1729

city, town Helena  vicinity of state Montana 59601

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Glacier County Courthouse (Book 50 of Deeds, Page 471)

street & number

city, town Cut Bank state Montana

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title None has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records

city, town state

## 7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

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

Holy Family Mission is located fifteen miles southeast of Browning, Montana in the south central portion of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation. The Mission grounds cover an area of approximately 44 acres, bounded to the south by the Two Medicine River. On the grounds are two stone dormitories, one brick church, several outbuildings and corrals and a cemetery.

After 1900, the Mission began to suffer grave financial difficulties. Despite support from public and private sources, the priests were able to make only the most necessary repairs and the buildings gradually began to deteriorate. With the arrival of father Igantius Dumbeck, S.J. in 1929, a major repair program was launched. However, severe hailstorms, blizzards, and floods continued to undermine these efforts. In 1940, Holy Family Mission was closed as a residence, and the buildings were left at the mercy of the elements.

In the 1960's, the Holy Family Mission property was purchased by the Diocese of Helena from the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions. Attempts were made to clean up the grounds and repair the buildings. In 1964, a severe flood struck the areas, causing extensive damage to the Mission buildings and grounds. Since that time, except for the Mission church and cemetery, the property has been leased out to private individuals. Mass is said once a week at the Mission church by the priest from Heart Butte. Some minor repairs have been made to the addition on the girl's dormitory by interested parishoners from Heart Butte.

The following description of the individual structures at Holy Family Mission are referenced by number to the site map.

#1. Mission Church: Built in 1937 with funds from the Marquette League specifically earmarked for chapel construction. One story, blonde brick building on concrete foundation with wood-shingled roof. Exterior buttressing. Pyramidal roofed belfry above central entrance. Arched windows with fixed, single pane, textured glass and wooden pull-outs at bottom for ventilation. Rossette window above alter. Building in excellent condition.

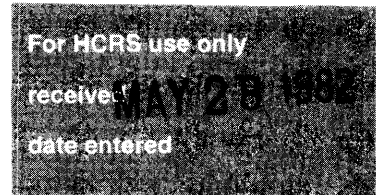
#2. Girl's Dormitory: Original section built in 1898, 2½ stories, cut sandstone construction. Wood shingled gable roof and cedar shakes on gable ends. Two hipped and one gable roofed front facing dormers. Pedimented portico entry. Stone relieving arches over 4/4 double hung windows. Measures 60 x 40' with small projection on south side of building measuring 10' x 16'. First floor: classroom/dining room, kitchen, separate dining rooms for priests, Sisters, boys and girls. Second floor: chapel, classroom, and dormitory rooms for girls and Sisters. Rear addition to girl's dormitory constructed in 1937 of blonde brick with concrete foundation. Flat, tar paper roof and 2/2 double hung windows.

#3. Bakery: One story, stuccoed over wood frame building which has been tied into girls' dormitory by 1937 addition. Wood shingled gable roof. 2/2 double hung windows. Large outdoor brick oven located nearby.

#4. Boys' Dormitory: Constructed in 1895 of native cut sandstone. 2½ stories on raised sandstone foundation. Wood shingled, mansard roof. Measures 46' x 28'. Basement used as recreation room. First floor: superior's office, classroom, library/sitting room, Family post office, and chapel. Second floor: classroom and dormitory rooms for priests, brothers, and boys. Building in deteriorated condition due to severe flood damage.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 1

#5a.: Barn, frame building on partial concrete foundation. Exterior horizontal sheathing. Gabled roof in two sections with two shed roof extensions to north and south. Roof covered with wood shingles. Central chimney and cupola for ventilation.

#5b.: Barn, frame building with no foundation and vertical board and batten siding. Shed roof addition to north, gable roof extension to south for animal stalls. Surrounded by wooden corrals.

#6a,b,c,d: Four small wood frame outbuildings with wood shingled roofs.

#7: Cemetery, dates from the 1890's, approximately seven acres. Combination of wooden, metal and stone markers. No landscaping, only natural vegetation. Any Catholic in the area may be buried here, but the majority have been Indians. Still in use.

All of the structures at Holy Family Mission add to the historic character of the site. Although some of the buildings are in an advanced state of deterioration, their associative value with the earlier operation of the Mission school remains very apparent.

## 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 type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" 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** 1886-1937 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Founded in 1886, Holy Family Mission served for 53 years as the center of the Catholic faith and Federal/philanthropic Indian policy on the Blackfeet Reservation and remains a significant complex of buildings which represent the early "Christianizing and civilizing" philosophy of the mission school movement. Located on the banks of the Two Medicine River, nestled beneath sandstone cliffs where the Blackfeet once ran buffalo, the site for the Holy Family Mission was chosen for its proximity to the tribal population center, its agricultural potential, and its aesthetic appeal. Indian children who boarded at the Mission were systematically inculcated with the values of Christianity, the skills of yeomanry, and the ethos of individualism and private property ownership.

Blackfeet culture had reached its zenith during the first decade of the 19th Century. Early contact with the white fur traders had materially changed the culture through the replacement of stone and clay implements with metal tools, cooking vessels, and weapons. Trade with the whites also served to strengthen the political authority of the tribal chiefs for a time. The expansive hide dressing industry occasioned an increase in polygamous marriage. By mid-century, the vigor of the Blackfeet economic, social, and religious institutions made the task of a missionary formidable. Indian resistance to the missionary policy which entailed the acceptance of Western views of religion, work, agriculture, and marriage met the Catholic missionaries who had come to the reservation as early as the 1840's.

The years from 1850-1900 saw the almost complete destruction of the Indian world through successive small pox epidemics, liquor trading, military conquest, the disappearance of the buffalo and subsequent starvation. The complementary objectives of government policy and religious missionary principles during the later part of the 19th Century allowed for the establishment of the Holy Family Mission. The Peace Policy of Ulysses S. Grant and the General Allotment Act of 1887 were designed to create an agricultural economic base among the Indians to replace the no longer viable nomadic way of life. The boarding school concept was officially sanctioned by the US government. The federal Indian School superintendent stated in 1886 that, "Only by complete isolation of the Indian child from his savage antecedents can he satisfactorily be educated". (US Report 1886, LXI, cited by Harrod, p. 87) During the first years at Holy Family Mission, the Jesuit priests received essential financial support from the federal government as well as assistance from the federal Indian agent in securing children from the reservation for the school and returning the recalcitrant.

Located well within the then shrunken boundaries of the Blackfeet Reservation, Holy Family Mission in 1886 consisted of a residence and a small log chapel. In 1887, Chief White Calf, who had been baptized by an earlier itinerant priest, donated the land for a school. IN 1890, Holy Family Mission officially opened the doors of its new 2½ story, wood frame school and dormitory building and Father Damiani and three Ursuline Sisters launched the Catholic Church's most impressive experiment designed to civilize and

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Jesuits in Montana by Wilfred Schoenberg, S.J.  
 Indian and White in the Northwest by Laurence Palladino, S.J.  
 "The History of the Holy Family Mission, Family, Montana, From 1890 to 1935" by Hugh Black, an unpublished Master's Thesis  
 Mission Among the Blackfeet, by Howard L. Harrod, University of Oklahoma Press, 1971

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 44 acres  
 Quadrangle name Piegan, MT Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

**UMT References**

A	1 2	3 7 1 7 6 0	5 3 7 1 2 6 0	B	1 2	3 7 1 7 6 0	5 3 7 1 0 8 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	1 2	3 7 1 5 7 0	5 3 7 1 0 7 0	D	1 2	3 7 1 5 7 0	5 3 7 0 9 6 0
E	1 2	3 7 1 1 4 0	5 3 7 0 9 6 0	F	1 2	3 7 1 1 4 0	5 3 7 1 9 3 0
G				H			

**Verbal boundary description and justification** Part of Lots 3 and 6, T31N, R9W, Section 2. The boundary of the nominated property is described by the polygon formed by the above UTM reference points. The northern boundary is the right-of-way of the county road. NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$  and NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$  of Section 2.

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

state	N/A	code	county	code
state		code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Connie Flaherty/Diocesan Historian edited by Patricia Bick, Preservation Office  
 organization Diocese of Helena date October 1, 1980  
 street & number P.O. Box 1729 telephone (406) 442-5820  
 city or town Helena state Montana 59601

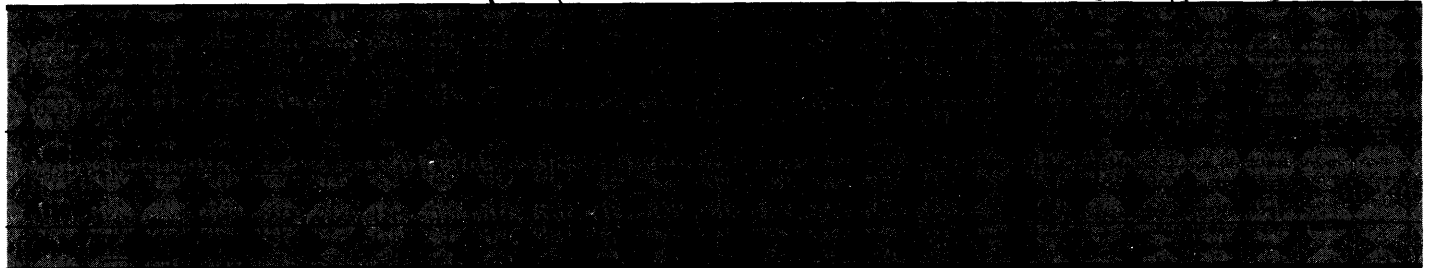
# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

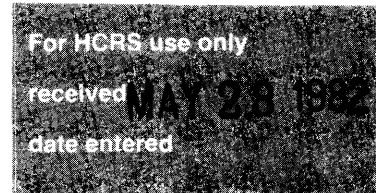
As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Marcella Sheffy  
 title Deputy SHPC date 3-15-80



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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 1

Christianize Blackfeet children. By 1892, over 100 Blackfeet children resided at the Mission which was set up to displace and replace the functions performed by the traditional home. Although parents were allowed to visit, children under 11 years of age were kept at the Mission for 11 months of the year and the older children were kept year round, until 1919 when no summer residents were recorded.

With the donation of a small herd of cattle in 1892, the Jesuit priests endeavored to make the Mission self-sustaining. The Mission school also raised chickens and grew all of its own vegetables. This effort necessitated the construction of numerous barns, sheds, and outbuildings on the site. The bakery was an important aspect of this economic effort and for a time the Mission was famous for its whole wheat bread. Before the turn of the century, the Mission could boast that it produced all of its necessary foodstuff except flour and sugar.

In accordance with the Catholic school philosophy, male and female students were kept strictly separated at the Mission. IN 1895 the large sandstone boys' dormitory was constructed. When the original wood frame classroom/dormitory building burned down in 1898, a new sandstone girls' dormitory was erected on the site. Vocational training was a major emphasis of the Mission school curriculum and traditional Western sex roles were reinforced. The boys were taught animal husbandry and farming techniques while the girls received an education in housekeeping, sewing, and cooking.

Throughout its existence, Holy Family Mission was plagued by financial difficulties. After 1900, the federal government opened another Indian boarding school in Cut Bank and subsequent federal aid to Holy Family was sporadic and indirect. The Mission's main sources of financial aid were Mother Katherine Drexel of a wealthy and prominent Philadelphia family, the Catholic Indian Mission Bureau, the Marquette League, personal donations from the bishops of Helena and other friends of the Mission, and the Blackfeet tribe itself. Despite support from these public and private sources, the Mission was only able to make the most necessary repairs and the buildings gradually began to deteriorate. With the arrival of Father Ignatius Dumbeck, S.J. in 1929, a major repair program was launched. Barns were replaced, building repaired, and a new water system installed. However, the 1930's also saw severe hailstorms, floods, blizzards and continuing financial problems. The Blackfeet Tribal Council withdrew its support of the Mission in 1939 and the school closed the next fall with debts amounting to \$74,117.02 and cash on hand totaling \$21.71.

Holy Family served as the base from which Catholic missionaries extended their influence throughout the Blackfeet Reservation. Two permanent outposts were established in Heart Butte and Browning before the Mission ceased operations. Today, the Mission's farm buildings are leased out to local persons and continue to be used. Sunday Mass is held in the 1937 chapel. Although the remainder of the buildings are in a rather severe state of deterioration, the Parish Councils of the Catholic Churches at both Heart Butte and Browning are very interested in rehabilitating and preserving the old Mission complex.

The associative value of this resource remains very strong, even though some of the buildings possess a lesser degree of architectural integrity due to severe deterioration.

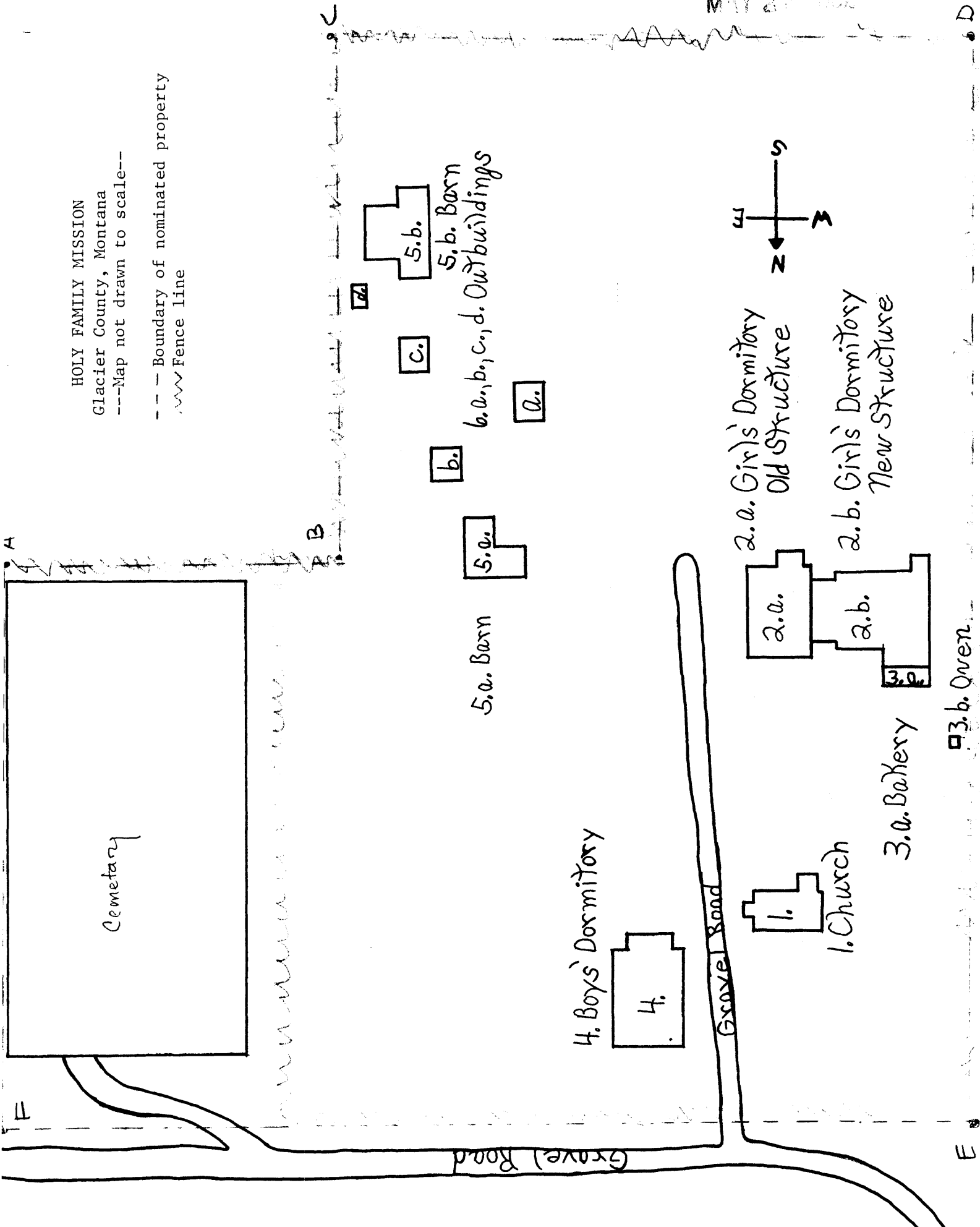
MAY 20 1902

HOLY FAMILY MISSION

Glacier County, Montana

---Map not drawn to scale---

- - - Boundary of nominated property  
. . . Fence line



Cemetery

4. Boys' Dormitory

5.a. Barn

b.

c.

d.

5.b.

5.b. Barn  
5.b. Outbuildings

a.

2.a. Girls' Dormitory  
Old Structure

2.b. Girls' Dormitory  
New Structure

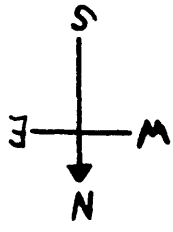
3.a. Bakery

3.b. Oven

1. Church

Gravel Road

Grave Sand



A

B

C

E

D

F