

Methodist Church
Main street of Bannack
Bannack, Beaverhead County
Montana

HABS No. MON-6

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Western Office, Division of Design and Construction
1000 Geary Street
San Francisco, California

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PHOTOGRAPH-DATA BOOK REPORT
HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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METHODIST CHURCH

Bannack, Beaverhead County, Montana

LOCATION: Main street of Bannack.
OWNER: The Methodist Church of Montana.
OCCUPANT: Vacant.
USE: Used rarely for special events.

BRIEF STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

A small frame church, not uncommon in style and size among the gold camps of the west, had its construction interrupted by the approach of Chief Joseph during the Nez Perce War.

I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and Subsequent Owners: Methodist Church of Montana.
2. Date of Erection: Begun in the spring of 1877 and dedicated on August 19, 1877. Cost about \$2,000.
3. Architect: Unknown.
4. Builder: Church members and townspeople.
5. Original Plans: None known.

6. Notes on Alterations: Pumice block replaced some of the stone foundation. Wooden steps are not original. A new roof was put on in 1954.

7. Important Old Views: None known.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

1. This was the second church building started by Brother William Wesley Van Orsdel, an early Montana circuit rider. Construction of the church was reported by Brother Van Orsdel at the 4th Quarterly Conference held at the Poindexter Schoolhouse on June 21, 1877.

2. Construction was interrupted by the threat of attack to the town by Chief Joseph and the Nez Perce Indians during the week of August 10, 1877.

3. "Brother Van" preached a sermon to the townspeople and ranchers who sought refuge in Bannack in front of the Court-house on Sunday evening, August 12, 1877. He and John Poindexter volunteered to attempt to slip past the Indians watching the town to seek help from General Howard and his troops. They did so, successfully, on the night of August 13, 1877. A troop of Cavalry arrived the next night and prevented the Indian attack.

4. Chief Joseph by-passed the town on his run for freedom. After the Indians left the townspeople, miners, soldiers and cowboys helped to complete erection of the frame church in a few days.

5. "Brother Van" preached the dedicating sermon the following Sunday, August 19, 1877.

C. References:

1. Adams, Paul, When Wagon Trails were Dim, Montana Conference Board of Education of the Methodist Church, 1957.

2. Lind, Robert W., From the Ground Up, published by Robert W. Lind, 1961.

3. Mills, Edward L., Plains, Peaks and Pioneers, Portland - Binford and Mort, 1947.
4. Prospectors Trail, State Parks Division, Montana Highway Commission, Helena, Montana.

II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: A modest frame structure not uncommon among western mining towns. It is rectangular in plan with a vestibule projecting to the south. The front entrance doors are set in a pointed arch frame with transom lights above the double doors.

2. Condition of Structure: Fair.

B. Technical Description of Exterior:

1. Overall Dimensions: 25'-3" x 40'-5" with the vestibule of 13'-3" width and a depth of 8'-1".

2. Foundations: Native stone, rubble construction. Pumice blocks have replaced the stone foundation across the front of the church and for the vestibule.

3. Wall Construction: 2x6 studs set 16" o.c. The 6" bevel siding set 4-3/4" to the weather is nailed directly to the studs.

4. Chimneys: Two brick chimneys are set in the corners of the church. They probably connected to wood stoves, since removed.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and Doors: The main (south) entrance opening into the vestibule has two four-paneled wood doors set in a pointed arch framework. Above the door is a transom of ten lights (now gone) set in wood mullions. The only other door is a single four-paneled

door set in a rectangular frame located along the north wall of the building.

b. Windows: 6/6 wood double-hung windows having a simple square board trim on the exterior.

6. Roof:

a. Steep gable roof, about a 6 in 12 pitch. Hand-split wood shakes nailed to the sheathing with square nails. A new roof of wood shakes was put on in 1954. Sheathing of alternating 1x10 and 1x4 boards.

b. Framing: A simple trussed system of 2x6s with 1x8 diagonal members set 4'-0" o.c.

c. Cornice, Eaves: Boxed-in eaves.

C. Technical Description of Interior:

1. Floor Plan: One story rectangular plan set north and south with a vestibule to the south.

2. Flooring: Soft-wood flooring.

3. Wall and Ceiling Finish: A wainscot of vertical wood boards; plastered above. Ceiling was plastered.

4. Doorways and Doors: Only interior doors are those connecting the vestibule and the nave, and they are not original.

5. Trim: Wood trim with mouldings.

D. Site:

1. General Setting and Orientation: Bannack is located about 25 miles southwest of Dillon in the southwestern part of Montana. The church faces the main dirt street at the eastern end of town. The building is set north and south with the front facade facing south.

2. Enclosures: None
3. Outbuildings: None extant.

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