

St. John the Baptist
Russian Orthodox Church
Naknek
Alaska ^{BARSTOLE BAY}

HABS No. AK-85

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

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Location: Naknek, north side of the Naknek River, ^{BRISTOL BAY} Alaska.

Present Owner: Alaska Diocese, Orthodox Church in America.

Present Occupant: St. John the Baptist Russian Orthodox Church.

Present Use: Church.

Significance: St. John the Baptist is a plain, wood-framed church, including both nave and sanctuary under its gable roof. Three onion domes, recent additions, enliven the roofline and distinguish this building as a Russian Orthodox church.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1912, according to Paul Chuan, the warden, who was born in 1901 and remembered the construction.
2. Original plans and construction: The wood-framed church has a simple rectangular plan, with both nave and sanctuary included in the main block. The royal doors came from Nushagak at the time of this church's construction.
3. Alterations and additions: The onion domes are a recent addition, as they do not appear in a ca. 1974 photograph of the church.

B. Previous Churches on the Site:

The previous church, which was log with a sod roof, was located behind the present one.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The rectangular plan and gable roof encompass the sanctuary and nave.
2. Condition of fabric: fair.

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B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The main block measures 16'-6" x 38'-0", with a 10'-6" x 9'-7" vestibule on the west end.
2. Foundations: Sills on the ground.
3. Walls: The walls are covered with beveled siding, and tongue-and-groove boards are used as corner boards. Flush boards cover the west front and vestibule. The building is painted white with green trim.
4. Structural system, framing: wood frame.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: There is a vertical-plank door with board surrounds.
 - b. Windows: The windows are six-light and single-light, fixed sash.
6. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: The gable roof over the main block, and the lower gable roof over the vestibule, are covered with corrugated metal.
 - b. Cupolas: Three onion domes and crosses ornament the roofline.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The nave is one open space, separated from the sanctuary on the east by the iconostas. The vestibule is on the west.
2. Stairways: There is a one-step amvon with a semi-octagonal projection in the center.
3. Flooring: The floors are covered with wall-to-wall carpeting. The sanctuary floor is covered with linoleum.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: There are horizontal boards on the walls. The steep tray ceiling, with a double molding at the cornice, is faced with beveled siding. The walls of the vestibule are unfinished.
5. Doorways: The doorway between the vestibule and sanctuary has a four-panel door.

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6. Decorative features: The iconostas is constructed as a standard wall; the openings have molded surrounds, and there is a foliated cornice across the top. The royal doors have one unusual circular painting, and like another below it, divides in the middle. Other ornaments in the church include processional banners, two wooden sconces, and a metal chandelier.
7. Bells: The bell is hung on a metal stand on the south side of the vestibule.
8. Mechanical equipment: The building is equipped with electricity.

D. Site:

Located on a bluff next to the river, the church is set in a fenced cemetery. The church faces west, with the altar on the east, as is traditional among Russian Orthodox churches.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Chuan, Paul, the warden, who was born in Naknek in 1901, interviewed by author May 30, 1990.

Wallace, Fern A. The Flame of the Candle. Chilliwack, B.C.: SS. Kyril and Methody Society, 1974. Plate 109 shows the church without its domes.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Documentation of St. John the Baptist Russian Orthodox Church was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), a division of the National Park Service, the state of Alaska, and the Icon Preservation Task Force. The project was executed under the general direction of Robert J. Kapsch, chief of HABS/HAER, and Boyd Evison, Alaska Regional Director, National Park Service. Recording was carried out during summer 1990 by Steven M. Peterson, project director; Jet Lowe, photographer; and Alison K. Hoagland, historian, who prepared this report.

ADDENDUM TO
ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
Nanek
Bristol Bay
Alaska

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