

St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church
South East Corner Fourth Street and D Street
Jacksonville
Jackson County
Oregon

HABS No. ORE-121

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
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ADDENDUM
FOLLOWS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. ORE-121

ST. JOSEPH'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

Location: Southeast corner of Fourth and D Streets, Jacksonville, Jackson County, Oregon

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The Catholic residents of Jacksonville first celebrated mass in the home of Charles Casey in 1853, when missionary Father James Croke visited the town.¹ In 1855, when Father Croke again undertook a missionary tour of Southern Oregon, he reported to his superior, Archbishop Francis Norbert Blanchet of Oregon City, that there were 105 Catholics--100 adults and 5 minors--in the Rogue River Valley. His report indicated that about one-third of the Catholics in Oregon not served by resident clergy in established parishes lived in Jacksonville and the surrounding area.² In 1856, Father Croke again wrote the Archbishop, advising him that the Catholics of Jacksonville desired a church, and that "if the mining be successful this winter, there would be a fair chance of making a good collection toward building a little church, which will answer not only for that town but for all the mining districts for sixty or seventy miles all around."³

In 1858, James Cluggage sold Archbishop Blanchet the lot on which St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church now stands.⁴ The building was erected that same year--although not without certain difficulties. Father Croke wrote from San Francisco advising the Archbishop that Charles Casey had told him the lumber was ready and would spoil if construction did not begin--but that money was still needed.⁵ Father Croke decided to go to Jacksonville to personally supervise construction; enroute he collected \$856 for the church. "This was very fortunate," he reported to his superior, "for otherwise I could scarcely meet the expenses as I have been able to collect only \$30 in Jacksonville since you left. They all promise, will give their names very readily to be paid at some future day, but names won't build a church and I can't spend much time idly."⁶

The design and specifications for the church, prepared by the building contractor A. M. Berry, were laid out in great detail before construction. The building was to be frame, with dressed siding and a shingle roof. There were to be four windows on each side and a double door on the facade; all openings were to have "gothic heads--all glazed except the gothic door head which is to be filled up with wood." The sash were to be two panes wide and three panes tall. The flooring was to be dressed tongue-and-groove boards; the interior woodwork was to be cased and the walls prepared for plastering. Between the nave and sanctuary there was to be a balustrade with brass caps and a gate in the center. The sanctuary was designed with a "neat plain altar ... with tabernacle, steps, platform."⁷ Although a serviceable building, Father Croke and Archbishop Blanchet evidently had some reservations about the aesthetic

effect: "Your Lordship's suggestion about the height of the piers arrived too late to be attended to. The church, however, looks very high and when completed will be a neat building. It looks very short."⁸ The church building was dedicated by Archbishop Blanchet in November 1858,⁹ although construction had perhaps not yet been completed.

After St. Joseph's church had been completed, Father Croke was re-assigned and replaced by Father Fierens. Two years later, Father Francis Xavier Blanchet became the pastor. As a part of the missionary and proselytizing activities of the Catholic Church, Father Blanchet invited the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary to establish a school in Jacksonville.¹⁰ Three Sisters of the order arrived in August 1865 and opened a school with twelve resident and thirty-three day students.¹¹ They bought a house on Fifth Street across from the Methodist Church. It was a long, narrow building, sixteen feet wide and fifty-eight feet long, with five rooms that were used for classrooms, dormitories, and quarters for the Sisters.¹² Five years later, the Sisters bought James Drum's house on California Street for use as a convent and school and moved a second building onto the grounds.¹³ The Fifth Street property was sold in 1873. In 1881, an additional building was constructed on the California Street property; it measured fifty-four feet by thirty feet and had two stories. The first floor consisted of a hall, a thirty-by-twenty-foot classroom, a senior classroom, and a recreation room; the second floor was a dormitory.¹⁴

In 1869, when a small-pox epidemic ravaged the town, the Sisters volunteered their services as nurses. The town's Board of Health reluctantly accepted their offer. For the two months during which the epidemic raged, the Sisters nursed the sick and assisted in burying the dead.¹⁵ Their work was most effective. In his memoirs, Ten Years on the Pacific Coast, Father Blanchet ascribed considerable influence to the Sisters: there had been twenty-two Easter communions in 1864; in 1872 there were one hundred and six. In addition, fifty children attended catechism classes, thirty-three marriages were solemnized, and three hundred baptisms were performed. Also in that year fifty Protestants converted to Catholicism.¹⁶

In 1875 the Catholics of Jacksonville purchased the house and lot adjoining the church building and converted it into a rectory.¹⁷ The lot and house had been owned by Arthur Langell and John Bingham and had been sold to satisfy a judgment against the two men, in favor of Mary Ann Harris.¹⁷

The Church in Jacksonville not only served local needs, but also served as the center of Catholic missionary activities in Southern Oregon. The first mission attached to the church was established by Father Francis Xavier Blanchet about seventy miles southwest of Jacksonville, on the border of California.¹⁸ In later years, additional missions were established at Grant's Pass, Eagle Point, Ashland, Linkville (now Klamath Falls), and Roseburg--and at such distant points as Eugene, Marysville (now Corvallis), and Lakeview in Oregon, and Crescent City

in California.¹⁹ Each of these communities eventually had a parish church of its own. The parish centered in Jacksonville was transferred to Medford in January 1909, since Medford had "outstripped" Jacksonville in population. St. Joseph's became a mission church;²⁰ each Sunday a priest comes from Medford to celebrate the Mass. The rectory building is now owned by the Jacksonville Museum.

FOOTNOTES

1

Reverend William McLeod, "Souvenir, 1858-1958," p. 2.

2

James Croke to Archbishop Blanchet, September 20, 1853, quoted in McLeod, p. 12.

3

James Croke to Archbishop Blanchet, September 18, 1856, quoted in McLeod, p. 13.

4

Jackson County Deeds, November 9, 1858.

5

James Croke to Archbishop Blanchet, n.d., quoted in McLeod, p. 13.

6

James Croke to Archbishop Blanchet, n.d., quoted in McLeod, p. 14.

7

James Croke, "Specifications for Roman Catholic Church in Jacksonville, Oregon Territory," October 21, 1858, quoted in McLeod, pp. 14-5.

8

James Croke to Archbishop Blanchet, n.d., quoted in McLeod, p. 15.

9

McLeod, p. 15.

10

Reverend Francois Xavier Blanchet, Dix ans sur la cote du Pacifique par un missionarie canadien, trans. by Don Wilkins, WPA Project Nos. 4185 and 5606, MSS in University of Washington, Oregon Collection, p. 32.

11

McLeod, p. 25.

12

Jackson County Deeds, November 25, 1865.

13

Jackson County Deeds, May 9, 1870; "Chronicles of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary," MSS in Jacksonville Museum, Jacksonville, Oregon.

14

Ibid.

15

McLeod, pp. 26-7.

16

Blanchet, p. 32.

17

Jackson County Deeds, May 29, 1875.

18

Blanchet, pp. 31-2.

19

McLeod, p. 11.

20

Sacred Heart Parish Directory, Medford, Oregon: 1970.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. Description of Exterior:

1. Number of stories: The entire building is one story.
2. Number of bays: The facade has three bays with a central entrance; the side elevations are three bays wide.
3. Layout, shape: The building is rectangular and deeper than it is wide; a rectangular sacristy has been added at the east end.
4. Wall construction, finish, color: The walls are framed, with clapboard sheathing. The body of the building is painted light gray; the corner boards and trim around the door and windows is painted white.
5. Openings: There are pointed-arch door and window openings in the main block. The main entrance has a three-part fanlight above the transom bar and double wooden doors below. The windows have similar transom lights above four-over-four-light double-hung sash. The glass is colored. Both the windows and doors are framed with plain board fascias and unmolded wooden sills.
6. Roof:
 - a. Shape: The roof is gabled. The gable on the main facade is treated as a classical pediment.

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- b. Cornice: Cornerboards, treated as pilasters with recessed, pointed head panels, have capitals that support an entablature which surrounds the entire building. There is a wide boxed cornice above the architrave and frieze. The gable ends have a raking architrave, frieze, and cornice identical to the elements of the flat entablature.

- c. Tower: The tower with steeple sits astride the ridge, slightly behind the plane of the facade. The tower is a box with louvered openings on each face. Below the openings at sill level, a molding encircles the tower. The openings themselves have Gothic pointed heads, with louvers to the springing of the arch and solid panels above. Cornerboards support a full entablature around the tower. The steeple is a steep pyramid sheathed with shingles. At the apex of the steeple there is a ball surmounted by a cross.

B. Description of Interior:

- 1. Floor plan: The interior is a large, rectangular room. The sanctuary at the east end is defined by a balustrade with molded rails and turned posts and balusters. The choir loft at the west end is supported by two columns and two half-columns. The sacristy is a rectangular room behind the altar.

- 2. Staircase: The staircase to the choir loft is dog-legged with a turned newel post and plain bannister. It is located in the northwest corner of the room, on the left as one enters from the street.

- 3. Flooring: The floors are of wood.

- 4. Wall and ceiling finishes:
 - a. Side walls, back walls, and ceiling: The walls are covered with wall paper. The ceiling is flush boarding. A narrow cove molding marks the junction of wall and ceiling.

 - b. Altar wall: The central altar is raised three steps. It has a rectangular base with pilasters flanking a central panel. At either side, there is a secondary altar--an

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inverted section of a pyramid with a panelled face. All three altars are painted to resemble marble. Over the central altar, there is a large, varnished wooden reredos, carved in elaborate Gothic patterns.

c. Choir loft: The choir loft is convex in the center. It has an elaborate balustrade with a scalloped band and a row of rosettes at the bottom and top of the square balusters.

5. Openings: The door and window frames are flat boards without moldings.

6. Fixtures: The pews are simple benches with an S-scroll molding at the arm. Small clasps with porcelain knobs which once fastened window curtains back remain. There are four brass-bracketed, oil lamps at the windows, a gas bracket on either side of the altar, and two hanging gas fixtures. These lighting devices date from various periods in the development of the building.

C. Site and Surroundings:

The building faces west on Fourth Street and is set back from the property line. There are some shrubs and a few large trees on the lot.

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