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Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.* If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Saints Cyril and Methodius Catholic Church and Rectory

other names/site number North Side Church

2. Location

street & number 633 Bridger Ave [N/A] not for publication

city or town Rock Springs [N/A] vicinity

state Wyoming code WY county Sweetwater code 037 zip code 82901

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this x nomination ___ 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ **national** ___ **statewide** x **local**

Mary Jo. Hopkins 11/2/15
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Wyoming State Historic Preservation Officer
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

✓ entered in the National Register ___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register ___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:)

for Edson K. Beall 12.22.15
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

x	private
	public - Local
	public - State
	public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

x	building(s)
	district
	site
	structure
	object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
2	0	**Total**

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION/religious facility

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION/religious facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Romanesque Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: stone
walls: brick
roof: metal
other:

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with **a summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

Saints Cyril and Methodius Catholic Church and Rectory are located at 633 Bridger Avenue in Rock Springs, Wyoming. The church is chiefly Romanesque in its design and has strong historic integrity. It was constructed in 1925 and was designed by the same architect (Daniel D. Spani) and constructed by the same builder (F.H. Cowell) as the Elks Building (NR listed 12/10/1993) which was completed the prior year. The church looks much the same way today as it did upon its completion in 1925, especially on the exterior. The 125 foot bell tower which rises from the façade of the building is its most prominent exterior feature.

The rectory of the church was built in 1920 in the bungalow style and was also designed by Daniel D. Spani. An addition to the building in the 1950s changed the façade of the building and can be clearly delineated from the original structure. This addition added two offices to the structure on the main floor and four bedrooms and two bathrooms to the second floor. The interior of the original structure remains much the same, especially in the living room where the wooden mantle and built-in bookcases are in their original condition. The kitchen has received the most updating in this part of the house. Original woodwork and door hardware in most of the rooms also remain intact.

Narrative Description

The Church

Saints Cyril and Methodius Catholic Church, built in 1925, stands on its original site at the northwest corner of M Street and Bridger Avenue in a mixed residential and commercial neighborhood. The present church was built over an existing foundation and raised basement which had served as a church since 1912. The congregation built the foundation and basement and held services in the space until enough funds were raised to complete the church in 1925. The cornerstone of the church was laid on July 7, 1912, the feast of the church's patron saints.

The church was designed by Rock Springs architect Daniel D. Spani in 1924. Spani, born in Illinois in 1876, moved to Rock Springs in 1911. He also designed several commercial and school buildings in Rock Springs, including the BPO Elks Building, the former East Junior High School, Roosevelt and Yellowstone schools, the First Security Bank Building (contributing to Downtown Rock Springs Historic District, listed 1/19/1994), and the former North Side State Bank Building.

The church is predominantly Romanesque in style. It is rectangular in outline with a simple gable roof and a raised basement. A very tall slender brick chimney extends from the roof in the northwestern corner of the church. The church is built of a creamy yellow, rough-textured brick made by the Ash Fire Brick Company of Ogden, Utah.

The façade of the church, which faces Bridger Avenue, is dominated by the 125-foot tall bell tower. The base of the tower, which forms the front entrance of the church, is flanked on both sides by two pairs of buttresses. One pair sits at the base of the base of the tower at a 45-degree angle to it; the other pair, also at a 45-degree angle, is located at the front corners of the building. Between the buttresses are tall, round arched windows.

At the base of the tower is a Romanesque arch entry, topped by a cornice with dentils that projects slightly from the façade. Above the entry unit are three tall, narrow, rectangular double-hung sash windows. Above them, halfway up the tower, are three narrow arched, double-hung sash windows. A row of decorative dentils above the three arched windows on the façade extends around all four sides of the tower.

Above the dentils, on all four sides of the belfry, are large arched openings where the bells are located. Above each opening is a narrow parapet and a steep gabled peak pierced by a small five-pointed star. The four corners of the belfry are marked by tall, slender miniature towers and finials. At the very top of the very steep cone of the belfry is a 16-foot cross on which electric lights were installed sometime in the 1930s.

Six buttresses along the east and west elevations of the church are interspersed with six sets of arched stained-glass windows. The dentils above the windows match the pattern above the three arched windows in the bell tower.

Toward the north end (rear) of the church, on either side, are two small one-story brick wings. The one on the west leads to the sacristy on the main level; the other provides entry to the nave of the church and the basement. The entrance on the east has been modified since the church's original construction, but old photographs show a similar structure in the same place. At the rear of the church and extending out is a semi-octagon enclosing the altar area.

The main entrance to the church is reached by a double flight of concrete steps leading to an arched entry. The main doors, topped by an arched, stained-glass transom are recessed behind four archivolts. Just inside the large double wooden doors is a small vestibule. On either side of the vestibule is a small room with a window looking into the main sanctuary. The room on the west is now used as the confessional, the one on the east as a 'crying room' where parents with very small children and babies may participate in the services without disturbing the congregation. Both rooms have been modified since original construction.

Six steps lead up from the vestibule to a pair of bronze doors with stained-glass insets representing the two patron saints of the church. The doors, which are relatively recent addition, open into sanctuary of the church which is furnished with the original oak pews.

The rectangular sanctuary, measuring 60 feet by 37 feet, 9 inches wide, is simple and elegant in design. A barrel vault ceiling with eight articulated ribs is finished with original celotex tiles set in a herringbone pattern. Each of the ribs ends in impost blocks decorated with medallions and outlined with molding that meet and match the cornice molding around the top of the walls.

Between the ribs are four sets of paired, round arched stained-glass windows. The windows contain representation of saints, the Virgin Mary, and religious scenes. Each window also bears the name of

its donor. Original church records identify each of the figures in the windows and also name the donors who were individual members of the parish or religious organizations, such as the Knights of Columbus and the Altar Society. Two smaller stained-glass windows containing abstract designs are located at the south end of the church and are only visible on the inside of the crying room and the choir loft staircase.

Between the windows on the east and west sides of the sanctuary are the 14 Stations of the Cross, also a gift of parishioners. Stations of the Cross are standard items in Roman Catholic Churches, representing scenes from the final three days in the life of Jesus, and used in devotional exercised during Lent. Installed at the end of 1934, this set of beautifully detailed plaster stations replaced an earlier set installed in 1929.

The altar area of the church is raised two steps above the nave and located in the wide arched apse of the church. The center of the apse contains a large, decorative wooden table serving as the altar, as well as a round baptismal font. Behind the altar table, on the back wall, is a very large crucifix, which is a recent addition to the church.

On either side of the apse are smaller arched recesses (side altars). The one to the east contains a group of statues representing the Holy Family, while the one to the west contains an abstract mosaic representing the Holy Eucharist and holds a tabernacle with a wheat mosaic on its front. Next to the west side altar is a statue of Jesus, and mounted to the west wall adjacent to the altar are statues of Saints Cyril and Methodius, the patron saints of the parish. All three of these statues were part of the church's original furnishings.

Doors lead from either side of the apse into rooms serving as the sacristy (priest's preparation room) on the west and a storeroom, known as the altar boys room, on the east. Above each door is a small, arched stained-glass window.

Artificial lighting in the sanctuary is provided by bronze electric fixtures. The original fixtures were electric candelabra style lights located above the center aisle. They were probably replaced in the 1970s when the interior of the church was remodeled.

The balcony, used as a choir loft, is reached by a staircase in the southwestern corner of the sanctuary. At the front of the loft overlooking the sanctuary is a handsome, slightly curving solid wooden railing. There are a few pews in the loft for choir members and a small pedal organ.

The south end of the loft is separated from the from the north end by a partition and is reached by two small doors. This back area contains the pumping mechanism for the original pipe organ, four bell ropes, and a wooden staircase leading to the belfry. The staircase makes a 90-degree turn halfway up to the first landing where the bell ropes continue up into the belfry itself. From this landing, a small door leads into the unfinished attic area over the sanctuary. Another brief flight of stairs and a short iron rung ladder lead to the area containing four bells.

The bells were cast for the church in the fall of 1925 by the McShane Foundry of Baltimore. The first three bells (1662 lbs., 836 lbs., and 544 lbs., respectively) were installed in October, with the fourth and smallest bell (275lbs.) added in December, to round out the overall sound. The first three bells were set to intone 'F', 'A', and 'C'; no tone was specified for the fourth bell.

When the first three bells were installed and dedicated, each underwent a baptism complete with godparents (members of the congregation) and a baptismal name. In addition, each bell is engraved with the name of its donor or donors. Together the donors are said to represent the four ethnic groups that made up the majority of the congregation in 1925; Slovenes, Poles, Croatian, and Bohemians.

Up through the 1940s, a cadre of bell ringers who were members of the congregation rang the bells in established patterns on special occasions. According to the only remaining individual who served as a bell ringer, the first bell ringers were Slovenian immigrant men who knew the bell ringing patterns from the old country and who passed their knowledge down to their sons. This gentleman learned the skill from his father. The bells now are not rung; instead, a taped carillon is played from speakers in the belfry.

The entry to the basement is from a door on the east side of the sanctuary that leads to a small vestibule containing an elevator installed in the 1990s. The main room in the basement measures 49 feet long by 37 feet wide. At the south end of the room is a low stage constructed of tongue and groove lumber. Behind the stage are three large storerooms whose walls are the stone foundation of the church. The north end of the basement contains a large kitchen and several storerooms and closets, as well as small restrooms.

The exterior of the church itself has not undergone any major changes over the years, but appears today much as it does in historical photographs. A photograph of the church taken on the day of its dedication shows a single flight of wooden stairs leading to the entrance. Later photographs show a single flight of wide, shallow concrete steps in their place. Today, twin courses of concrete stairs lead at an angle to the entrance. Screens were added to the belfry in the 1930s, and the cross atop the belfry was gold-leafed in 1934.

The interior of the church has experienced more changes than the exterior. The choir loft, for instance, was originally open from front to back. It was partitioned when the pipe organ was installed in 1933. On the main floor, the small addition on the northeast corner of the church was rebuilt in the mid-1980s after a fire in the altar boys room caused considerable damage to that corner of the church. In the mid-1990s an elevator was constructed in the addition.

The chief alteration to the interior of the sanctuary took place as part of the liturgical reorganization mandated by the Second Vatican Council in 1965 under Pope John XXIII. Before those changes, which affected all Catholic parish churches, altars were typically located at the far end of the apse and priests celebrated Mass with their back to the congregation. The Vatican mandates ordered the altars to be moved forward so that priests faced the congregation during the Mass and other services.

At Saints Cyril and Methodius, these changes were instituted in the early 1970s. At that time, the original marble altarpiece was removed and replaced with a table and the mosaic at the back of the apse. The communion rail separating the congregation from the altar area was removed, and the two side altars were revamped.

The original altar, as described in a newspaper article written when the church was dedicated in 1925, as made of marble and measured 17 feet high by 12 feet wide. A historical photograph of the original altar shows a large carved white marble altarpiece with statues of Saints Cyril and Methodius flanking a central tabernacle. Below the tabernacle, across the lower front of the altarpiece, was an engraved and painted representation of DaVinci's Last Supper. The western side alcove at that time held an image of Mary standing atop a small white marble altar with a statue representing the Sacred Heart of Jesus standing to the right of the alcove. Between the main altar and the eastern side alcove was a statue of Saint Anthony. The eastern side alcove itself contained a statue of Saint Joseph on a white marble altar.

The second set of changes inside the church took place after a small arson fire damaged the altar boys room in the mid-1980s. A photograph taken in 1981 shows the present altar and new light fixtures, but the statues of Saints Cyril and Methodius and the Sacred Heart of Jesus are missing.

Overall, the church has been well maintained and exhibits strong historical integrity, especially on the exterior. The interior changes are typical of older Roman Catholic churches that continue to serve as religious and worship centers. They are living institutions, not buildings frozen in time. The changes made in them reflect the current needs and tastes of their congregations and their pastors. In the case of Saints Cyril and Methodius Church, the interior changes are neither structural nor drastic, and have not altered the essential feel of the place for the people who have worshipped there for 90 years.

The Rectory

The parish rectory was completed in 1920. Built of red brick, it was designed by Daniel D. Spani in a classic bungalow style. As shown in a historic photograph, the façade was formed by a large porch extending out from the rest of the building. A broad gable roof, supported by three brick columns, covered the porch. On either side of the porch were large multi-pane sash windows. In the mid-1950s, an extension of a lighter brick was added onto the front of the building. The current faced is symmetrical in design and has a prominent arched entry. Window units with three casements flank the main entry.

Inside the front rooms on the first and second floors are part of the 1950s addition, but the rest of the rooms in the house appear to be in their original configuration. Light fixtures have been updated, but the original woodwork and door hardware in most of the rooms are intact.

Although the wood has been painted in most of the rooms, the wooden mantle and built-in bookcases in the living room are in their original condition. The kitchen and bathrooms have been remodeled. The basement, which extends the full width and length of the original house, shows the least change in the house. The basement retains its original cabinetry and linoleum flooring.

Prior the turn of the twentieth century, Rock Springs was home to a vibrant Chinese community. By 1880, an estimated 40 percent of the Chinese population of the Wyoming Territory resided in Rock Springs' Chinatown. This community was located at and around the present location of Saints Cyril and Methodius Catholic Church. Archaeological evidence of the former Chinatown is thought to exist

below the surface of the church's adjacent parking lot. While the former existence of the Chinatown is a part of the historic evolution of the site, its history is outside the scope of this nomination.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- [x] A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- [ ] B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- [ ] C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- [ ] D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- [x] A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- [ ] B removed from its original location.
- [ ] C a birthplace or grave.
- [ ] D a cemetery.
- [ ] E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- [ ] F a commemorative property.
- [ ] G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Ethnic Heritage/Eastern European

Period of Significance
1912-1965

Significant Dates
1912
1925

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
Spani, Daniel D./architect
Cowell, F.H./builder

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance begins in 1912 with the construction of the original foundation and basement. The congregation used this covered basement space as their place of worship until funds

were available to complete the full building. The period of significance then continues to 1965 which is the point fifty years prior to this nomination.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

This nomination meets the requirements of criteria consideration A. Saints Cyril and Methodius Catholic Church is significant primarily as it represents the need for immigrant populations to maintain their deeply held beliefs and traditions. It reflects the emergence of the Slavic population of Rock Springs as a stable and unified group.

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The Church of Saints Cyril and Methodius acted as a unifying force for the many Slavic immigrants who began entering the community of Rock Springs in the early part of the 20th century looking for jobs in the Union Pacific coal mines. These people originally found a church (Our Lady of Sorrows) which was dominated by people of Western European descent and the traditions brought from countries such as Italy, France, and Ireland. The clergy was mainly of Irish descent and pushed for assimilation to American ways. These recent immigrants wanted a parish in which their unique cultures and customs would be accepted and adopted into parish life. In 1910, the bishop gave permission for a new parish, Saints Cyril and Methodius, to be created. However, it wasn't until 1925, with the completion of the church, that immigrants of Slavic descent were able to realize their dream of a church all their own.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Since the parish was established in 1910, Saints Cyril and Methodius Church has been a prominent symbol of Rock Springs' Slavic community, comprising the largest ethnic groups in this town that was built on the labor of immigrant coal miners. The church is also a symbol of the ethnic diversity that is the hallmark of Rock Springs' civic identity. The history of the church reflects key elements of American immigration history, including the development of national ethnic identities among immigrant groups, the coalescence of those identities around such institutions as churches, and the tension that developed at the turn of the twentieth century between the Irish-dominated American Catholic Church and ethnic Catholic congregations.

The historical context in which Saints Cyril and Methodius Church was conceived, built, and used extends into the last third of the 19th century as the post-bellum United States was beginning to stretch its industrial legs, and coal mining, steel making, and railroad building dominated the American economy. It encompasses as well the regional forces that built the Rocky Mountain region economically and socially.

The industrial boom of the 19th century created a demand for labor that brought millions of European immigrants to this country. By the 1880s and 1890s, many of those immigrants were pouring out of southern and eastern Europe – Italians, Slavs, and Greek – joining the older waves of British, Irish, German, and Scandinavian immigrants who had arrived in the first half of the century. The story of

those immigrants and their descendants during the past one hundred years is a familiar one. The version played out in Rock Springs follows the national script closely.

Remote southwestern Wyoming, in 1868 still part of Dakota Territory, had its role to play in the national industrial scene as the first transcontinental railroad pushed through its high desert plateaus. The route of the Union Pacific through southern Wyoming was chosen in part because of the rich coal reserves that lay beneath the surface – coal not only to power the railroad's steam locomotives, but also to be shipped and sold to consumers in the east.

Rock Springs had its origins as a coal mining town. In 1868, the Union Pacific began opening mines in and around Rock Springs and began importing labor to work them. At first most of the miners were native born Americans from other mining areas of the country. But the Union Pacific also recruited large numbers of workers from Europe, particularly from the British Isles. So the work force in the Rock Springs coal mines during the first decade of their operations consisted primarily of English, Scotch, and Welsh, along with a substantial number of Finns. In 1875, following labor unrest, the company hired several hundred Chinese miners. But a mob of white miners, angered at the Chinese presence, led a violent attack against them in 1885, killing 28 Chinese miners and driving the rest out of Rock Springs. The company decided to look to Europe again for its labor force.

In the late 1880 and 1890s, southern and eastern European immigrants began to arrive at the Rock Springs coal mines in large numbers. Their impact on Sweetwater County's population can easily be read in the company's employee rolls. By December, 1896, 1,089 men were working in the Union Pacific Coal Company mines in Rock Springs. Of that number, only 60 were identified as "Americans", while workers representing 21 other nationalities were listed. Eastern and southern Europeans, including Austrians, Hungarians, Italians, Poles, Slovenians, and Russians, comprised nearly 25% of the work force. By 1906, that percentage had risen to nearly 50%. By 1917, 56% of Rock Springs miners were from this part of the world.

In this ethnic mix, people of south Slavic descent, including those who identified themselves as Austrians, Carniolians (Slovenians), Croatians, Dalmatians, Montenegrins, Serbians, and Slavs made up a significant proportion – 551 of 32% of the work force in 1906, and 477 or 37% in 1917.

As the Union Pacific opened up one mine after another in Rock Springs, the neighborhoods that sprang up around them were known by the number of the mine. For instance, the area just south of the railroad tracks was called "No. 1 Hill", while the area along Bitter Creek north of the tracks was known as "No. 4." The Union Pacific deliberately mixed ethnic groups both in the mines and in the mining camps and neighborhoods in which the miners and their families lived. Workers were assigned to company housing within neighborhoods in which their mine was located. This policy had the effect of discouraging the formation of ethnic enclaves within neighborhoods, and was in keeping with the company's determination to mix nationalities and languages at the work place and in the camps to prevent miners from working together against the company.

Nevertheless, immigrants in Rock Springs, as everywhere else in the nation, were able to develop and maintain a sense of ethnic identity in a wide range of ways. One reason they were able to do so was the result of stream migration, in which immigrants from a particular village or province in the old

country followed relatives or acquaintances to a location in the new one. A second reason was the strong emphasis in most ethnic groups on marrying within the group. A third reason was that in the new country the old divisions between villages and provinces gradually gave way to a new sense of national identity with Slovenia or Poland or Finland.

Ethnic identity was maintained in cultural forms such as food ways, religion, language, music, and customs. The practice of boarding one's newly arrived countrymen especially helped promote the continuation of language and food ways. Also new institutions established in the immigrants' new homes provided a base for ethnic identity. Among the first of these were churches. Many central and eastern European immigrants, including those in Rock Springs, were devout Roman Catholics.

The large influx of southern, eastern, and central European Catholic immigrants to the United States in the late 19th and early 20th centuries caused a dramatic change in the American Catholic Church. The newly arrived immigrants, especially the Italians, Poles, and Slavs, were dissatisfied with the American parishes, which were dominated by Irish clergy, and began establishing their own ethnically based congregations with their fellow countrymen as pastors. The history of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Rock Springs is typical of the process by which these so-called "national" parishes were established. According to historian Richard Linkh,

> Before a national (that is, immigrant) parish was organized, the foreign group ordinarily shared the American church in one of two ways. First, when the foreign group began settling an area, a foreign priest would be assigned to a given parish to minister to the immigrant group there. As the group increased in number, the foreign congregation would be allowed the use of a portion of the American parish church… It was only when the ethnic group had grown sufficiently to support its own church and had received permission from the local ordinary (Diocesan office) that the national parish was established.

By 1914, Slovenians alone had established 34 parishes in 14 states including Wyoming. These are in addition to those formed by Croatian, Slovaks, and other Slavic groups. Within these parishes, members could use their own languages and continue familiar religious practices from the old country.

The national parishes differed from the usual American Catholic parishes in that their boundaries were not drawn geographically. In the standard parish, all Catholics living within the bounds of the parish were automatically members. In contrast, the membership of the ethnic parish was based on national origin. This meant that two Catholic parishes, one "American and the other "National," could exist within a few blocks of each other in a town or city – as they did in Rock Springs. In January, 1925, the bishop of Cheyenne established the Union Pacific railroad tracks in Rock Springs as the dividing line between Our Lady of Sorrows parish on the south and Saints Cyril and Methodius parish on the north. But at the same time he gave the pastor of the north side parish jurisdiction over any Catholic Slavs who happened to live within the boundaries of the south side parish.

In the 1890s and through the 1910s, the population of Rock Springs swelled with immigrants from eastern and southern Europe looking for work in the coal mines. A substantial proportion of these immigrants were Slavic and Roman Catholic. Many of them settled in neighborhoods north of the railroad tracks where the Union Pacific Coal Company was opening new mines.

It is hard to overestimate the tracks as a literal and symbolic dividing line in Rock Springs. At that time, there was no under or overpass to carry traffic or pedestrians. Foot and vehicular traffic had to endure long waits several times a day as trains slowly passed through and often stopped in the center of town. By the 1910s, the north side of Rock Springs was identified as the working class, blue-collar side of town, while the south side was seen as the white-collar, middle-class area. These distinctions played a critical role in the establishment and development of Saints Cyril and Methodius Church.

The first Roman Catholic priest in Rock Springs was John Delahunty, assigned there in 1888 to serve a group of Irish, English, and Italian communicants. During his 16 years as pastor, Father Delahunty organized the parish of the Seven Dolors (now known as Our Lady of Sorrows) and built a church in 1894 on the south side of the Union Pacific tracks.

Father Delahunty recognized the need for ministry to the newly arrived Slavic immigrant Catholics. As early as 1889 he arranged for a Father Cyril Zupan to give a mission for his Slavic parishioners. Such missions involved preaching in the various native languages of the immigrants including Slovenian, Slovak, and Croatian. In 1901 a Father Anton Blahnik visited the parish to give another Slavic mission.

By 1900, 70% of the Roman Catholics in Rock Springs lived north of the tracks. They were predominantly Slovenians, Croatian, Poles, and Slovaks. By that time the congregation had outgrown the church and there was talk of building a new one. In those discussions the tension between the north side and south side members of the congregation came to the surface. Although the Slavic members of the parish had an assistant pastor, Father James Cerne, assigned to serve them, they demanded that a new parish church be built on the north side of the tracks where most of them lived. Safety was cited as the primary reason for the demand. Parents claimed it was too dangerous for their children to travel across the tracks to the south side church.

In 1910, the bishop gave permission for the creation of a new parish Saints Cyril and Methodius, and for a new church to be built to accommodate both congregations. The Slavic member of the congregation contributed an overwhelming proportion of the money, nearly $7,000, to the building fund and clearly expected that the church would be built on their side of town as a result. But a year later, the bishop, perhaps to forestall a split along ethnic lines, proposed to reunite the two parishes with a Slovenian priest, Father Anton Schiffrer, and a new church to be built in the north side of town. According to the proposal, “All nationalities shall have the same rights in the new church and any language may be used for the benefit of the people.” But the effort failed. The Slavic parishioners wanted their own church and the bishop finally complied with their wishes later on that year.

The parish of Saints Cyril and Methodius was incorporated in July, 1910, under Father Schiffrer's direction. By November, at the first meeting of the church trustees, there were 2,000 parishioners in the congregation.

In 1911, the corporation purchased three lots from the Union Pacific Company for $1,800 with the intention of building a church. At about the same time, the Slovenski Dom (NR listed 12/30/1997) organized by six Slovenian fraternal lodges as acquiring land a block away. The trustees decided that with the limited funds on hand, they would begin with a foundation and covered basement to serve the congregation. A local construction company, Rock Springs Lumber, was awarded the bid. The cornerstone for the church was dedicated on July 7, 191, the feast day of Saints Cyril and Methodius, the patron saints of the Slavs. The completion of this initial church building was celebrated on December 25 of that year with masses in three languages.

With the first step toward a church completed, the trustees set about raising funds to build the full structure. In June, 1912, they discussed the possibility of applying to the "headquarters of the Catholic Slavish lodges' for a loan. Apparently this plan was not adopted as it was never mentioned again in the minutes of the trustee's meetings.

In 1924, when church coffers had reached $15,000, Father Schiffrer and the church trustees decided it was time to build a full church. They hired Daniel Spani, who had designed the first church structure as well as the rectory, to draw up the plans. The construction contract as awarded to F.H. Cowell, a contractor from Denver.

The new church was built over the old basement which was expanded to accommodate the larger structure. To save on construction costs, 58 volunteers from the congregation did the excavation for the foundation. They also performed other tasks that saved money on the contract including unloading brick and painting roof shingles. Some of the most expensive furnishings for the church including the stained-glass, the side altars, and the bells were donated by individual members and church groups. The church was dedicated on December 13, 1925.

Father Schiffrer left Wyoming six months later for health reasons. He was replaced by a series of pastors, none of whom stayed more than three years until Father Albin Gnedovic, a Slovenian priest who had been ordained in Ljubljana and served at a Slovenian parish in Cleveland for six years, arrived in 1931 to serve as pastor of Saints Cyril and Methodius for the next 42 years. The need for a Slavic priest is underscored in a letter from the pastor immediately preceding Father Gnedovic, Father Martin Kennedy. Father Kennedy wrote to the head of a religious order in Chicago inquiring about the possibility of procuring a Slovenian priest for Rock Springs and explaining,

> Our parish is a Slavic one, in which the Slovenes (Jugoslavs) are, by far, the most numerous. Then we have approximately forty Slovaks (Czechoslovak) families and a few dozen Croatian (Jugoslavs). Father Schiffrer…spoke all Slavic dialects with equal fluency. Father Zaplotnik, my immediate predecessor, spoke the Slovene and Croatian well, but had a hard time with the Slovak…Now your man must know sufficient Slovene to make announcements and hear confessions in that dialect, otherwise we must look elsewhere

The distinctive ethnic flavor of the church during its early years is apparent in all aspects of the life of the church. Old world customs such as the blessing of food on Holy Saturday were maintained. The congregation regularly used Slovenian hymnals and the male bell ringers used patterns they knew from the old country. An annual fund-raising event (held in the Slovenski Dom before the church as completed) featured plays in Slovenian directed by Father Schiffrer, a Slovenian style bazaar called a tambullah, and ethnic foods, including kronskis (a locally produced garlic sausage), bob (a doughnut-like pastry), and potica (a sweet nut bread). Many immigrant women brought with them the art of making Cluny lace, a method of lace making involving a complicated system of bobbins and needles. They prided themselves on producing lovely lace pieces for use on the altar and in the priest's vestments.

Various Slavic languages continued to be used in the church through at least the 1940s. In 1937, to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the original cornerstone laying, Father Gnedovic announced that there would be three masses that day in Slovak, Slovenian, and Croatian. Father Gnedovic himself not only spoke several Slavic dialects, but also regularly brought in priests during the 1930s and 1940s to give missions in Slovenian, Slovakian, and Croatian. Church announcements, both oral and printed, were regularly made in all three languages. A highlight of the parish's history occurred in October, 1935, when Bishop Gregory Rozman, Bishop of Ljubljana, made an official visit to Saints Cyril and Methodius.

The establishment of the church on the north side of Rock Springs, in spite of the presence of the south side church mirrors the development of ethnic parishes in other parts of the country. The fact that it happened in a very small town suggests the power of the immigrant impulse to practice one's religion in a familiar setting. In fact, at that time, Rock Springs was the only town in Wyoming with two Catholic parishes.

From the beginning the relationship between the two parishes has been uncomfortable at best and stormy at worst. In 1910, after Saints Cyril and Methodius parish was formed but before it had its own church, the bishop ordered that Saints Cyril and Methodius parish pay rent to Our Lady of Sorrows parish for use of the church. This demand caused outrage among the Slavs and was one of the precipitating factors in their demand for a separate building.

Even after Saints Cyril and Methodius Church was built and the parish well established on its own, friction between the two parishes continued. In the church trustee minutes for March, 1926, for instance, Father Schiffrer complained that Father S.A. Welsh, the pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows, was luring children from the north side parish to the south side to participate in the choir and other youth activities.

In the 1940s the population on the north side of Rock Springs began to decline in favor of the south side of town. When the bishop redrew the parish lines giving Our Lady of Sorrows a chunk of territory that had historically been part of Saints Cyril and Methodius parish, Father Gnedovic argued angrily with him over the decision.

The tension between the two parishes also mirrors other features of the Catholic Church on the national scale. By 1900, two-thirds of American Catholic bishops and an even larger proportion of clergy were Irish immigrants or of Irish descent. The hallmark of Irish-dominated Catholicism was an aggressive policy of assimilation and acculturation to American ways.

Father Welsh, pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows Church from 1918 to 1959, was himself of Irish descent and was ordained in Saint Patrick's Cathedral in New York, the fountainhead of the Irish Catholic Church in the United States. He regularly hired newly arrived Irish priests to serve as his assistants. The two Catholic parishes in Rock Springs thus clearly reflect the two major impulses in American Catholicism - the dominance of the Irish and the emergence of ethnic congregations in reaction to that dominance.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

____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 # _____
____recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

_x_State Historic Preservation Office
____Other State agency
____Federal agency
____Local government
____University
____Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): 48SW7255

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.1 acres
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	12	648365	4605932	3			
2				4			

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Saints Cyril and Methodius Catholic Church and Rectory are located on lots 15-21 of block 6 of the Pilot Butte Addition to the City of Rock Springs, Sweetwater County, Wyoming. The nominated boundary is the entirety of these lots.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary represents the land currently and historically associated with Saints Cyril and Methodius Catholic Church.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Barbara Allen Bogart/David M. Tate

organization Historical Consultant/Rock Springs Certified Local Government date August, 2015

street & number 1020 Lee Street telephone

city or town Rock Springs state WY zip code 82901

e-mail

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

  A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**

- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: **Saints Cyril and Methodius Church**
City or Vicinity: **Rock Springs**
County: **Sweetwater** State: **Wyoming**
Photographer: **Brian Beadles**
Date Photographed: **September, 2015**

Saints Cyril and Methodius Catholic Church and Rectory
Name of Property

Sweetwater County, WY
County and State

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

South façade of Saints Cyril and Methodius Catholic Church and Rectory, photographer facing north.
1 of 10

South façade of Saints Cyril and Methodius Catholic Church, photographer facing north.
2 of 10

Main entry of Saints Cyril and Methodius Catholic Church on south façade, photographer facing north.
3 of 10

Façade of Saints Cyril and Methodius Catholic Church and Rectory, photographer facing northwest.
4 of 10

East elevation of Saints Cyril and Methodius Catholic Church, photographer facing west.
5 of 10

Rear elevation of Saints Cyril and Methodius Catholic Church, photographer facing southwest.
6 of 10

Rear elevation of Saints Cyril and Methodius Catholic Church, photographer facing southwest.
7 of 10

West elevation of rectory, photographer facing east.
8 of 10

Interior of Saints Cyril and Methodius Catholic Church, photographer facing south.
Photo taken by Richard Collier in 1997. Interior has not changed substantially since photo was taken.
9 of 10

Interior of Saints Cyril and Methodius Catholic Church, photographer facing north.
Photo taken by Richard Collier in 1997. Interior has not changed substantially since photo was taken.
10 of 10

Property Owner:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name _____

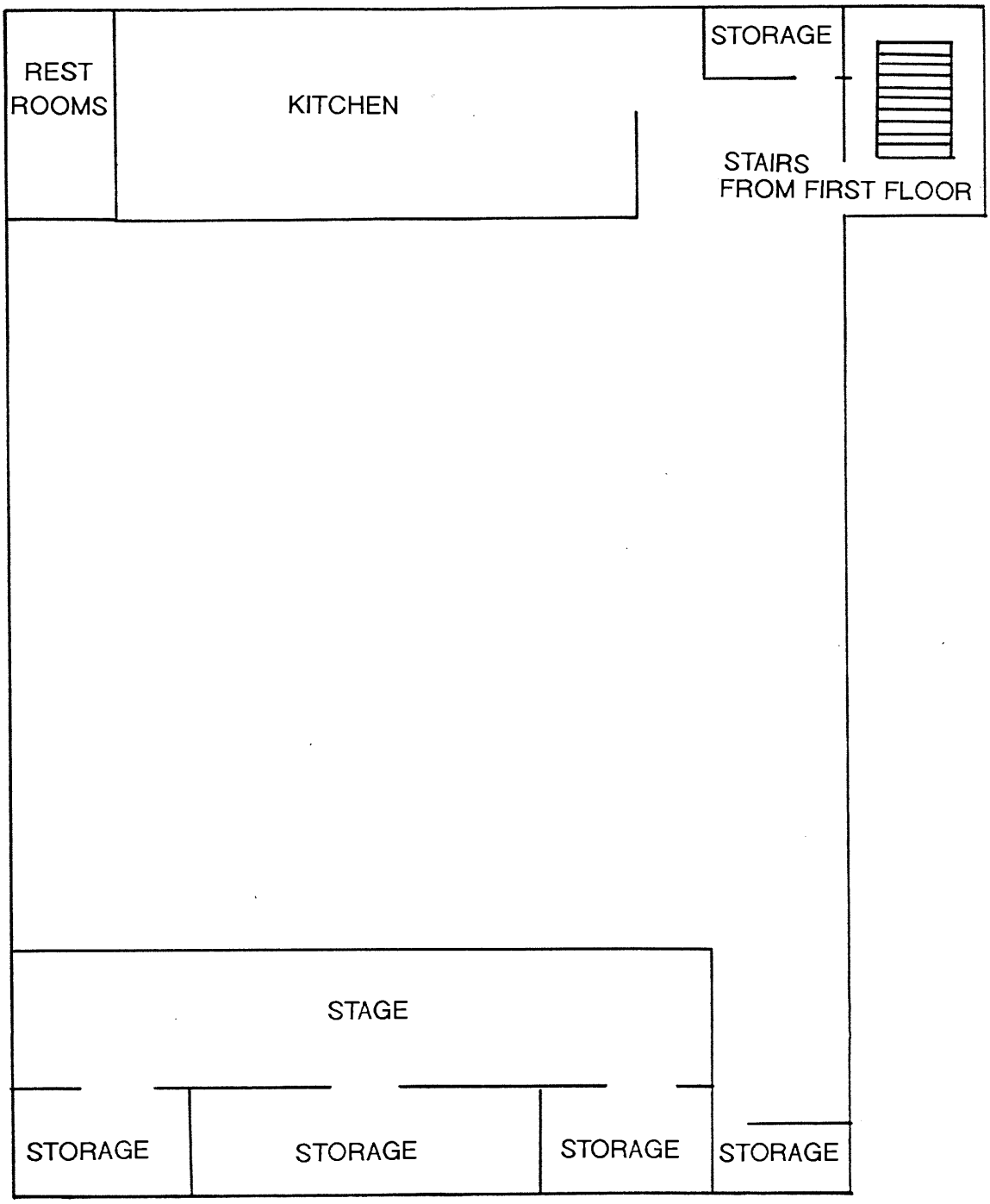
street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

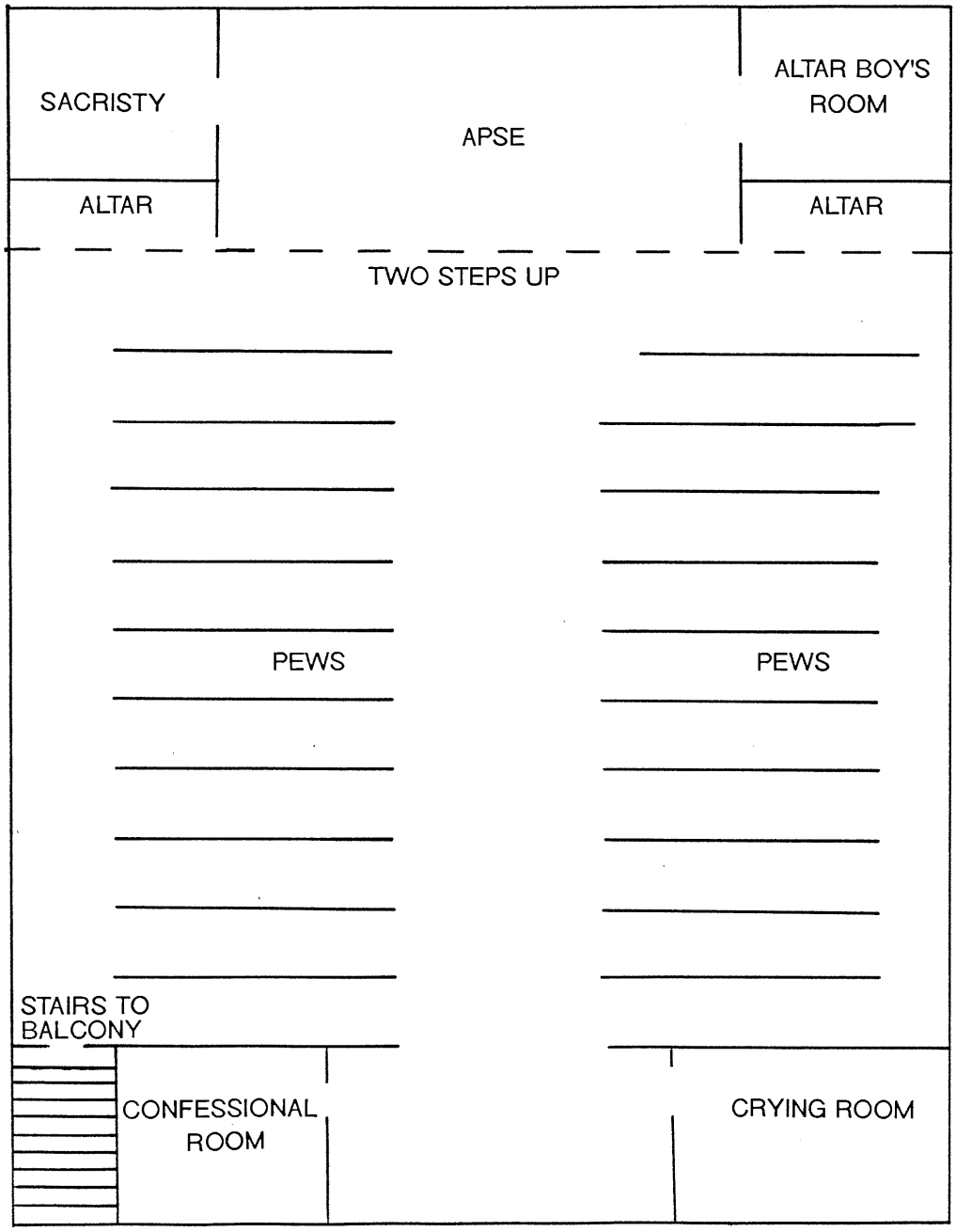
Map of Saints Cyril and Methodius Catholic Church and Rectory, Rock Springs, Sweetwater County, Wyoming.

STS. CYRIL AND METHODIUS CHURCH
BASEMENT
REAR



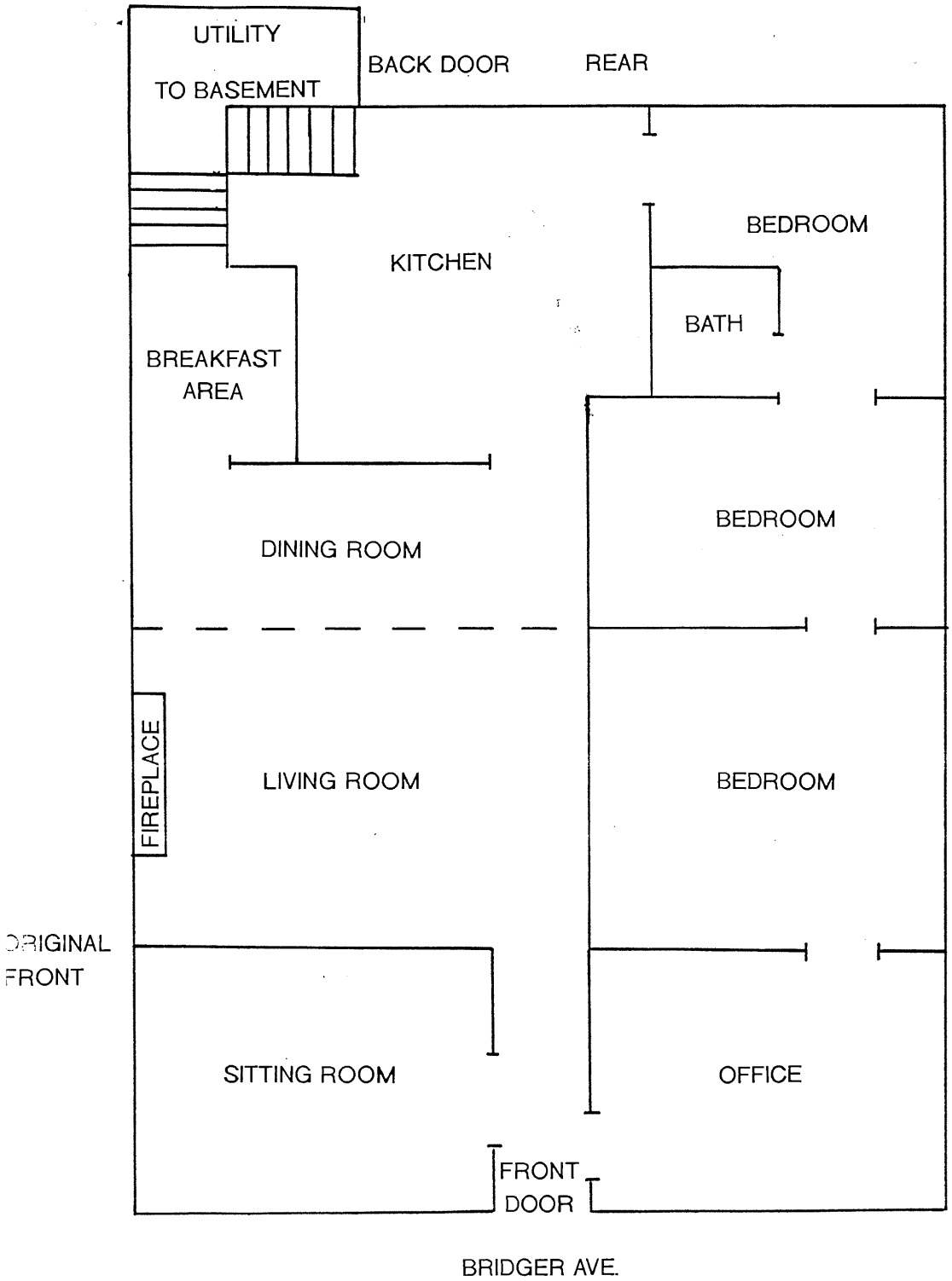
FRONT

STS. CYRIL AND METHODIUS CHURCH
FIRST FLOOR
REAR

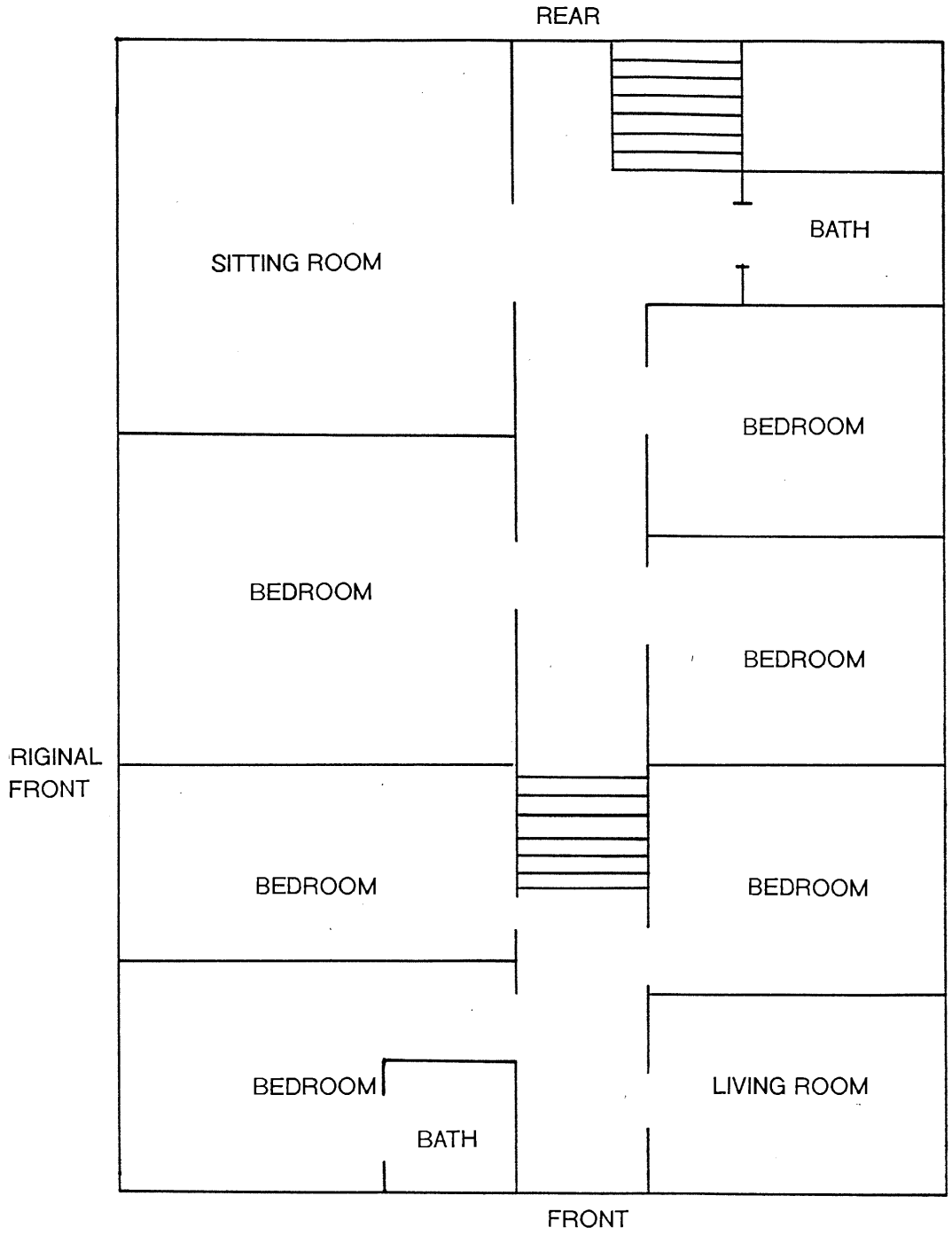


FRONT
BRIDGER AVE.

RECTORY FIRST FLOOR



RECTORY SECOND FLOOR



SAINTS CYRIL & METHODIUS
CATHOLIC CHURCH

PARKING
COMPACT CAR PARKING ONLY
COMPACT CAR PARKING ONLY

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PRESENCE
GOD GO WITH YOU
HANDICAP ONLY