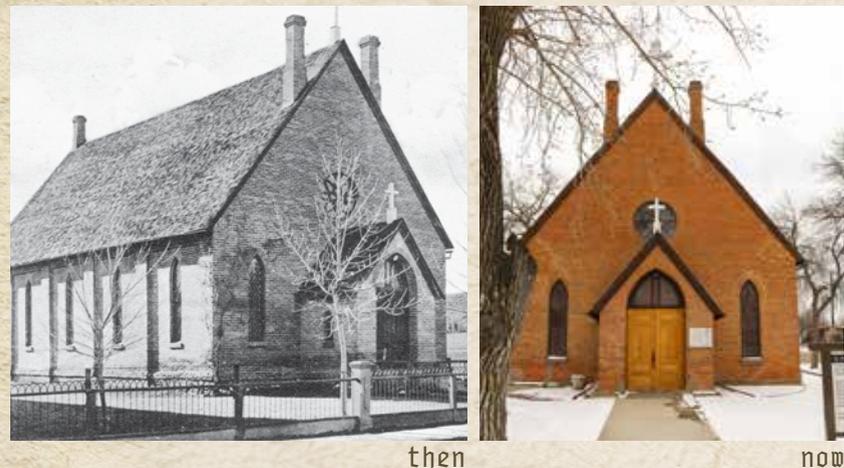


St. Paul's Episcopal Church is significant as Fort Benton's oldest extant church and continuous congregation. Architecturally, the church is distinct as a Gothic Revival style building, reflecting the English roots of the religion. The revival of the Gothic Style occurred in this country starting about 1830 and it created a demand for stained glass that had not been seen since the Middle Ages, when the Gothic Style swept through Europe from the 12th through the early 16th centuries. The revival of the Gothic style coincided with a period of church and community building in Montana Territory.

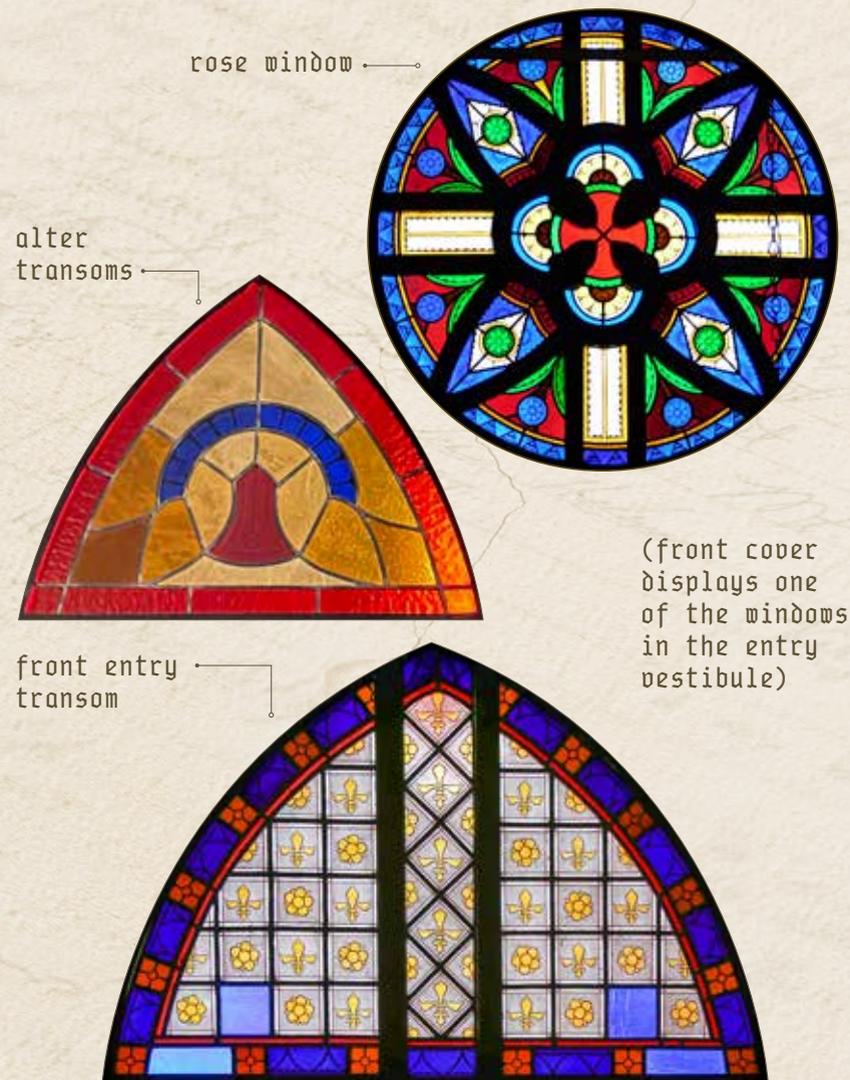


The typical, lancet shaped openings that line the sidewalls of church are filled with a variety of stained-glass windows; many donated by parishioners in memory of loved ones, the windows provide a unique collection of the stained-glass art. The church and its furnishings provide outstanding original integrity and exist much as they did at the time of its construction.

Historically, St. Paul's Episcopal Church represents the "first sign of a civilized society after years of circuit-riding priests and bishops coming occasionally to minister to a heathen town of saloons, brothels, and gunfights." It marks the metamorphosis when white civilization and culture came to Fort Benton and the head of navigation on the

Missouri River. It has been in continuous use since the first service on August 11, 1881. St. Paul's Episcopal Church was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on September 29, 1980.

Circular rose or wheel windows represent one of man's most profoundly sacred symbols. Since the earliest days of recorded history, the circle, in a variety of forms has been used in rites; from neolithic rock paintings to the circle as a symbol of eternity. The rose window in St. Paul's is another feature of the Gothic Revival Style.



(front cover displays one of the windows in the entry vestibule)

*This brochure was made possible by a grant from Big Sky Country National Heritage Area (BSCNHA).*



ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
IN FORT BENTON

**STAINED  
GLASS**

east wall

west wall



William Burnett Galbraith came from Ireland and became a blacksmith in Fort Benton, a trade he learned in the old country. After several years, the need for blacksmithing waned with the arrival of the railroad and major changes in transportation. He returned to New York to marry Isabella Taylor from Northern Ireland. They homesteaded in the Goosebill area of Chouteau County for many years. The couple's children honored their years of faithful membership in St. Paul's with this Sheaf of Wheat stained glass window.

Reverend John H. Chestnutt took charge of St. Paul's in 1903 and served longer than any other minister, retiring in 1918. St. Paul's was consecrated in 1905, 24 years after its construction. During his tenure, a wave of new settlers came to Chouteau County and greatly expanded the church's congregation. The debt on the rectory was paid and many improvements were made on the property of the church. The Junior Guild commemorated his ministry in Fort Benton with this window in 1931. It appears to be created by the same stained-glass craftsman as the Harber window.

Anna M. Conrad (1857-1888) was the wife of Joseph Baker, relative of I.G. Baker, one of the first successful merchants in Fort Benton. He called her "Nanny" and described her as a beautiful, blue-eyed, golden-haired young lady. It was a shock when she passed away at the young age of 31. This window was dedicated as a tribute from her husband and daughter.

This typical Gothic Revival, lancet window is likely one of the originals in the 1880 church. Produced by a unknown studio in the "States", the windows likely arrived in Montana Territory by steamboat. Over time, several have been replaced by custom memorial windows.

Though the background of W.E. Price is somewhat a mystery, his family were well-known cattlemen in Fort Benton during the time of the construction of the church. He was a relative of the prominent Conrad family.

William K. Harber, born in England in 1858, married Fannie Sarah Hart, and they had three children, Frances, Nora, and Florence. Educated in the printer's trade, he became the London correspondent for the Deer Lodge, MT "New Northwest". He settled in Fort Benton in 1883 and took over editing the River Press, continuing for over 30 years. His editorials were said to make the "round of the state." Joel Overholser, editor after Harber died, commented that he was "a clear thinker, a user of pure English and fearless in expressing his view." His commemorative window was dedicated in 1931.

Frances "Fannie" Harber Johnstone (born 1891) and her husband, Adam, homesteaded in the Dugout area. Fannie was an active member of the Home Demonstration Club and was honored by her fellow Homemakers for her warm service. Their only child William later served as vice-president at Montana State University in Bozeman.

Nora Harber, sister to Fannie, followed in her father's steps at the River Press. She served many years with Women's Club, museums, and the planning board for construction of the local hospital. She served as the Vestry Treasurer and a faithful member of St. Paul's.