

Cataldo Mission Fact Sheet



The Cataldo Mission is located on a hilltop 24 miles east of Coeur d'Alene along I-90. Constructed in 1850-53 by members of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe and Catholic Missionaries, the church is Idaho's oldest standing building. Its design is attributed to Father Anthony Ravalli, S.J., who studied literature, philosophy, theology, mathematics, and natural sciences and medicine in Italy.

The building's stone foundation, dug in the mountains half a mile away, was shaped and put into place by hand along with the dressed timbers and rafters using handmade rope and pulleys, a broad-axe, an auger, a pen knife and an improvised whipsaw. Willow saplings were fastened to the uprights, woven with grass, and plastered with mud and clay – a process called wattle and daub. Father Ravalli hand carved and painted the altar and two white statues. He also painted the glass transom above the front door, his depiction of the Sacred Heart. The ceiling inside the main sanctuary is blue – stained with native Huckleberries. A self-sufficient village, with many structures, surrounded the graceful Roman Doric style mission, including the restored Parish House.

The Mission measures about 90 feet high and 40 feet wide. The six, square, upright timbers in front are 28 inches square and the two by the altar are 3 feet by 3 feet. All are more than 25 feet long, and were hewn and planed with a broad axe.