

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED **MAR 31 1980**
DATE ENTERED **MAY 27 1980**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC
West Luther Valley Lutheran Church
AND/OR COMMON
Bethany Church

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER *SW of Orfordville on*
West Church Road
CITY, TOWN *Brodhead* *Orfordville* *vic.* VICINITY OF *First*
STATE *Wisconsin* CODE *55* COUNTY *Rock* CODE *105*
---NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OBJECT S	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Members of Bethany Lutheran Church. Attention: Mrs. Selmer Olson
STREET & NUMBER
1011 East Fifth Avenue
CITY, TOWN *Brodhead* VICINITY OF STATE *Wisconsin 53520*

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. *Rock County Courthouse*
STREET & NUMBER
51 South Main Street
CITY, TOWN *Janesville* STATE *Wisconsin 53545*

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Rock County Historic Survey
DATE
1975 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL
DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS *Rock County Historical Society*
CITY, TOWN *Janesville* STATE *Wisconsin 53545*

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The West Luther Valley Church is a neat, well-preserved vernacular building of 1871-72. It is sided with narrow white clapboards; foundations are limestone. A square, shingled tower, surmounted by a slightly smaller square clapboarded belfry, rises above the ridge-pole near the front of the building. Four tall, rectangular 4/4 double-hung sash windows extend down each side of the building. There is also a pair of rectangular windows above the enclosed porch on the north or entrance side. The sashwork of the windows is mostly original, with some repair; however the original clear glass panes were replaced about 1950 by soft green, orange and yellow tinted translucent glass. Also around 1950 the enclosed frame porch or narthex, which had been in place since at least 1907¹, was repaired. It is on concrete foundations.

A frame kitchen wing at the rear, on limestone foundations, may have been added around the turn of the century. About 1950 a full concrete basement and furnace were added to the church; these do not detract from the building.

The church is situated on about an acre of ground in the rural, gently rolling setting of the Town of Spring Valley. The trees planted on the site include one huge, four-trunked maple. The rural character extends to a water pump and outhouses, which are not considered part of the nomination, nor is a metal shed on the site.

The basic proportion of the interior is unchanged. The choir loft with spindled balcony above the north entrance is still intact, though its stairway has been repaired. However the 1950s renovation added a vaulted, dropped ceiling under the gable to conserve energy, and simple wallpaper and green wall paneling were added. The floor was carpeted.

The interior is primarily noteworthy for the church furniture, which was moved here from the East Luther Valley Church in 1871 when that church was rebuilt and the West Luther Valley Church constructed. This furniture, which consists of altar with reredos, railings, pews, pulpit and baptismal font, most probably dates from 1847, when the East Luther Valley Church opened with the Reverend C. L. Clausen as its pastor. There are eighteen wood pews--probably oak--of two-toned mustard gold with stained brown edging, which is supposedly the original color scheme. Special pews called "pens" on either side of the church (nave) between the pews and the altar were for the use of the klokeren (assistants to the pastor) on special occasions like baptisms. The baptismal font also combines paint and stain. Its basin is an ironstone bowl.

The altar rail is five-sided; it is also walnut with white-painted spindles. The walnut altar with an arched reredos, surmounted by three ogive finials, together form the most impressive piece of church furniture. About 1950 the altar itself, which remains underneath, was sheathed in ordinary veneer sheeting. It is not

FHR-8-300A
(11/78)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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West Luther Valley Lutheran Church

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ITEM NUMBER 6 PAGE 1

Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Places

1975

State

State Historical Society of Wisconsin

Madison

Wisconsin 53706

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West Luther Valley Lutheran Church

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known how successfully this sheathing could be removed, but it would be desirable, if possible. According to various early 20th century illustrations², the altar was traditionally painted or stained dark, while the reredos was painted in light colors, except for trim such as details of the arch and side posts and for the three arched frames which form the center triptych. This is the basic color scheme still followed. The central panel of the triptych is the most ornate; it is framed with slender turned walnut posts surmounted by finials and is topped by an ornate Gothic arch with lacy wooden tracery. A low relief polychromed plaque with the baptism of Christ occupies the center; it has been retouched, but the pastel tints are supposed to be the original ones. A gold low relief cross inside a gilt, pointed arched frame is on either side. The base of the triptych is a dark wooden panel inscribed with these words in Norwegian, painted in gilt Gothic script: Gaaer hen og lærer alle Folk og døber dem! Matth. 24.12 (Go forth and teach all people and baptize them.)

Other furnishings brought from the East Church are a wooden hymn board of Gothic Revival design and two stained walnut offering bowls. The oil-burning chandelier was also brought from the East Church, but is later than the wooden furnishings. The provenance of the church bell is not known, but it dates at least back to 1871-2, having been in the West Church since then.³ All of the historic fittings described herein are considered to be a part of the nomination.

Footnotes

1. Souvenir Celebration of the 25th Anniversary of Rev. Johan A. Bergh's Pastorate of the Luther Valley Church, Rock County, Wis., 1907, illus. p. 19.
2. Ibid.
3. Interview with Esther Olson, West Luther Valley Church, Nov. 27, 1979.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ART (folk)	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Assn. with well-known person.
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1871-2; 1847 furniture

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Anders Bjornstad

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The West Luther Valley Church is significant both as the principal remaining structure associated with the 19th century Norwegian settlement of Rock County, and as the receptacle for its historic fittings. The fittings themselves, including the pews, two pews, pulpit, baptismal font, altar rail and altar with reredos, hymn board and offering boards are significant for their ^{one-time} association with the Rev. Claus Clausen, a well-known historical figure who was one of the most prominent religious leaders of the formative years of the Norwegian Lutheran Church in the United States. Further, they are significant in the religious history of the Norwegian Lutheran Church itself, and as examples of 19th century three-dimensional folk art.

EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT: Wisconsin is known for the diversity of ethnic groups which migrated here in the 19th century. From the late 1830's through the Civil War, southern Wisconsin, specifically Rock County, was one of the primary centers of Norwegian settlement in America.¹ Ole Natesta's (Nattestad's) claim in Jefferson Prairie, Town of Clinton, southeastern Rock County, in July 1838 is considered to be the first Norwegian settlement in Wisconsin.²

The first Norwegian settlers in southwestern Rock County, then called Rock Prairie, arrived in 1839. The area, renamed Luther Valley by Clausen, consists of several civil towns of southwestern Rock County, especially Newark, Plymouth, Avon, Spring Valley, and part of Beloit. This large area was considered to be the parish of the Luther Valley church.³ In Norway, the state Lutheran church had served each parish, or local area. The West Luther Valley church is the oldest remaining sanctuary serving the Norwegians of Rock County.

ASSOCIATION WITH WELL-KNOWN PERSON: Rev. Claus Lauritz Clausen (1820-92) was born in present-day Denmark and came in 1843 to Muskego, Wisconsin, (now Waterford, Racine County) as a teacher to the Norwegian settlers. He was ordained a minister (to serve the Muskego congregation) in October of that year. He was probably the second Norwegian to be ordained a minister in the United States.⁴ The first was the peasant-born lay preacher, Elling Eielsen, who had been ordained only 15 days earlier, and who settled in Jefferson Prairie in the 1840's. Clausen visited Luther Valley in 1844 and conducted services in Skavlem's (now Hegge's) stone house. He accepted a call as the Luther Valley pastor, arriving July 31, 1846. He pledged half his yearly salary for a building and proceeded to oversee the erection of the first Luther Valley Church (the east church), a stone building 28' x 44', which opened in the fall of 1847. This church was furnished with the "home made"⁵ altar, pews, baptismal font and pulpit which were subsequently moved in 1871 to the west church, where they remain. Clausen served as Luther Valley pastor until 1851. He remained in the community as editor of the Norwegian Press Association, which established

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See Continuation Sheet

UTM NOT VERIFIED

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 0.6

UTM REFERENCES Quadrangle Name: Brodhead East, Wis.-Ill. Scale: 1:24000

A	<u>16</u>	<u>309170</u>	<u>4719625</u>
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C			

B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Located in NW 1/4, SW 1/4, Section 28, T-2-N, R-10 E. Bounded on the north by West Church Road, on the west by the section line between sections 28 and 29, on the south by the northern limits of the church cemetery, and on the east by the east property line of the church parcel.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Nancy Belle Douglas

ORGANIZATION

Rock County Historical Society

DATE

Dec. 14, 1979

STREET & NUMBER

PO Box 896

TELEPHONE

608-756-4509

CITY OR TOWN

Janesville

STATE

WI

53545

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL X

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer Signature Richard Kerner

TITLE Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin

DATE

3/7/80

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

W. Ray Luce

DATE

5/27/80

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST

Kristin O'Connell

DATE

5/15/80

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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a print shop in a stone building erected for the purpose near the east church.⁶ In 1851 the Norwegian Press Association published the what is purported to be the first Norwegian church paper in America, Maanedstidende, and one of the first secular papers, Emigranten. "From 1851 until late in the 1860's Emigranten was the leading Norwegian paper among the Norwegians of America."⁷

In 1853, Clausen left Wisconsin for Iowa, then Minnesota. Yet he returned on occasion to Luther Valley to hold services, the last time being when he officiated at Rev. J. A. Bergh's installation in 1882. He served in the Civil War as Chaplain of the 15th Wisconsin Regiment (1861-62). After 1861 he was the leader of a faction within the church which declared that slavery was a sin. Bitterness on the issue led to Clausen's resignation from the Norwegian Synod in 1868 and his eventual affiliation with the Norwegian-Danish Conference.⁸

RELIGION: Luther Valley and Rev. Clausen were closely connected with the organization of the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America. The church furniture which is now in the West Luther Valley Church was already installed in the East Luther Valley Church when it was the scene, in Jan. 1851 and Oct. 1853, of meetings which organized the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (Norwegian Synod). Clausen served as superintendent of the Norwegian Synod in 1851-52.⁹ The Norwegian Synod grew by 1917 to a membership of about 150,000 souls, when it merged with two other bodies to form the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America. At another meeting here in 1861 Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, was planned.¹⁰

After Clausen's resignation from the synod in 1868, he was connected with the Norwegian-Danish Conference, to which the two Luther Valley churches of 1871-72 also belonged for some 44 years.

The West Luther Valley Church was constructed in 1871, as a branch of the East Luther Valley Church, to accommodate members who lived in the western parts of the parish. In this same year, 1881, the 1847 east church stone building was razed and a new frame was built on its site. This second church burned in 1951 and was replaced by a 3d building. The builder of these two 1871-72 churches was Anders Bjornstad, born in 1839 at Toten, Norway. He also built the Orfordville Norwegian Lutheran Church, recently razed, and a church in Polk County, Wis., which was constructed in 1869.¹¹ Of the three Rock County Bjornstad edifices, only West Luther Valley remains. Jesse Woodward was said to be head carpenter of the west church.¹² Prof. A. Wenaas dedicated the west church in 1872 during a conference held at Luther Valley between the factions of the Norwegian Synod and the Norwegian-Danish Conference.¹³ The West Luther Valley Church was a branch of the East Luther Valley Church until 1966, when the West Church became a member of the Wisconsin Synod, and was renamed Bethany Church.¹⁴ Some of the services continued to be held in Norwegian as late as the 1950's.¹⁵ The Norwegian ethnic base is still present, but the present membership is drawn from a wider spectrum of the area population.

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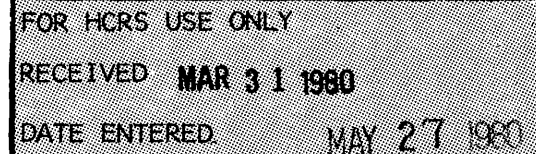
West Luther Valley Lutheran Church

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FOLK ART: The church furniture in the West Church is significant for its connection with the Reverend Claus Clausen. It also constitutes a remarkable set of locally made "Folk Art," including particularly the altar reredos. Traditional altars in Norway, with some of the characteristics of the Luther Valley altar, can still be seen; typically they are topped with a high, arched reredos, which is flanked with decorated columns and centered with a painting or pictorial image from the life of Christ, such as the Last Supper or Crucifixion. The altar front is treated more simply. It is typically separated from the congregation by a spindled altar rail.¹⁶

1. Brown, Wm. F., Ed., Rock County, Chicago, 1908, pp. 280-81
2. Ibid., pp. 416-18.
3. Interview with Mary Johnson Carratt; files in Carratt collection, Beloit, Dec. 13, 1979.
4. Rasmus B. Anderson, Life Story, Madison, 1917, pp. 10-11.
5. Beloit Daily News, Jan. 1951.
6. For location of the East Church (Section 4, Town of Newark), the print shop, the Hegge house, etc. as well as the West Luther Valley Church, see Douglas and Hartung, Rock County Historic Sites and Buildings, Janesville, 1976, pp. 174-75; 168-69; 164-65.
7. Anderson, Op. cit., p. 21.
8. Dictionary of Wisconsin Biography, Madison: SHSW, 1960, pp. 78-79
9. Ibid. The first three primary Norwegian synods in the mid-19th century were the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (Eielsen Synod), 1846; The Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church (Norwegian Synod), 1851; and the Scandinavian Augustana Synod, 1860, O. M. Norlie, History of the Norwegian People in America, Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1925, p. 160.
10. Luther Valley Lutheran Church of Rock County Church Book, 1931.
11. Carratt interview and ms. in Carratt files.
12. Esther Olson, America the Beautiful, 1976, p. 4.
13. Luther Valley..1931, p. 16.
14. Olson, Ibid.
15. Carratt interview.
16. Norge's Dekorative Malerkunst gjennom 1000 Ar, 1952, Pl. 38 (Romsdal stavkirke, restored 1675; 39 (Telemark, Kvitseid kirke, early 18th c.); 50 (Setesdal, Bykle kirke, 1826).



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"Address" by Rev. Adolph Bredesen, pp. 49-63, in Koshkonong: Minde fra Jubelfesterne paa Koshkonong, Decorah, 1894.

Brown, Wm. F. ed., Rock County, Chicago, 1908, pp. 280-81; 436 ff; 1012-14.

Souvenir: Celebration of the 25th Anniversary of Rev. Johan A. Bergh's Pastorate of the Luther Valley Church, Rock County, 1907.

Rasmus B. Anderson, Life Story, Madison, 1917, pp. 10-12, 20-21.

Luther Valley Lutheran Church of Rock County Wis. Church Book, 1931.

Book of Beloit, Beloit, 1936, pp. 91-92.

Dictionary of Wisconsin Biography, Madison: SHSW, 1960, pp. 78-79.

Douglas and Hartung, Rock County Historic Sites and Buildings, Janesville, 1976, pp. 164-65; 168-69; 174-75.

Esther Olson, America the Beautiful (Bethany Church), 1976.

Interview with Esther Olson, Bethany Church, Nov. 27, 1979.

Interview with Mary Johnson Carratt, Beloit, Dec. 13, 1979.

Carratt Collection files, Beloit.
Files of the RCHS.