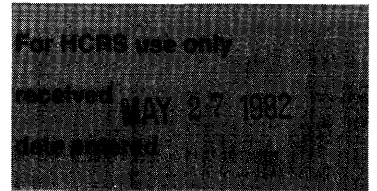


**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**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 Salem Swedish Methodist Episcopal Church (KN00-2)

and/or common John Fletcher Christian College Chapel

2. Location

SW of Axtell

street & number Rural N/A not for publication

city, town Axtell *mc* vicinity of congressional district Third

state Nebraska code 31 county Kearney code 099

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name John Fletcher Christian College and Academy

street & number P.O. Box 248

city, town Axtell vicinity of state Nebraska

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Kearney County Courthouse

street & number Courthouse

city, town Minden state Nebraska

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date On-going federal state county local

depository for survey records Nebraska State Historical Society

city, town Lincoln state Nebraska

7. Description

Condition

excellent

good

fair

deteriorated

ruins

unexposed

Check one

unaltered

altered

Check one

original site

moved

date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Salem Methodist Episcopal Church complex is comprised of three buildings -- church, parsonage and school. The complex is located on the campus of John Fletcher Christian College and Academy near Axtell, Nebraska. Axtell, a small Nebraska farm community with a population of 500 (1970 census), is located nine miles west of Minden, the county seat of Kearney County and approximately 140 miles southwest of Lincoln, the state capital.

The earliest building on the site is the original parsonage. In 1883, the rectangular, frame, one-story pastor's home was built. During the period of 1903-06 the parsonage was rotated from a longitudinal axis running east-west, to stand as it does presently, lengthwise north-south. At this time a cross-gabled second story was added, forming biaxially symmetrical facades. The hip-roofed porch addition is ornamented by roof crestings, Eastlake-inspired turned columns and ornate column brackets and balustrades. A later one-story, frame, gable-roof addition was attached to the east facade, without injuring the building's integrity, forming the present tee-shaped plan.

In 1898, the existing Salem Methodist Episcopal Church was built, replacing an outgrown 1884 frame structure. A late Carpenter Gothic structure, Salem Methodist Episcopal Church is arranged in an ell-shaped, modified Akron plan. The building is formed by a 30' by 50' worship space, a 16' by 28' adjoining Sunday School room and a 10' by 10' entry-bell tower at the crossing.

The exterior of the church is sided in white clapboard and trimmed in dark green. The high-pitched gable roofs are adorned by a small bargeboard piece placed at the peak of the gable. The gable walls each hold a tri-part wood bar-tracery window. Gothic pointed-arch windows pierce the remaining walls. A three-sided apse projects from the east wall of the nave.

The entrance/vestibule tower contains circular windows on the south and west walls. The louvered belfry is secured by engaged spired tourelles at the four corners. The decorative woodwork continues the quatrefoil theme found also in the gable bargeboard and circular window tracery. The steeple reaches an apex of 73 feet and is capped by the original weathervane.

The walls and concave ceiling of the nave are covered with pressed-tin complete with original wainscoting. Four lancet windows in the north wall of the nave illuminate the space. On the south wall, the original wood doors with three-part arched, transom windows separate the nave from the Sunday School rooms. The pews, communion rail and pulpit are original. The light fixtures are the original carbide gas fixtures (now electrified) and reproduction kerosene lamps have been placed on the walls.

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The three sided apsidal recess contains two lancet windows. Placed axially on center above the apse is a circular window containing quatrefoil patterned tracery.

The old Carter School, erected in 1910 in the Swedish community of Carter, Nebraska, located forty miles southwest from the present site, was moved to its present location in 1978. The schoolhouse is a two-room rectangular, hip-roofed structure, 32 by 48 feet in dimension. The symmetrical entrance (west) facade features tall windows and an arched recess defines the double-doored, transomed entry. Wood hoodmold and keystone detailing delineates the arched opening. Six windows on the west facade and four windows each on the north and south facades are symmetrically placed.

This nomination includes the churchyard and the cemetery. The cemetery is located at the southern end of the lot and was begun in 1882.

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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1883, 1898, 1910 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Salem Swedish Methodist Episcopal Church complex is significant to Kearney County and southcentral Nebraska as an assemblage of three buildings closely associated to instructional needs of Swedish immigrants populating this area of the state during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Scandinavian immigration (Sweden, Norway, Denmark) composed 75-80% of the foreign born population of Kearney county during this period. Of this percentage, 35-40% immigrated from Sweden.

Used for religious, scholastic and residential purposes, the complex is significant architecturally as an intact midwest vernacular interpretation of Victorian architecture.

The history of the Salem Methodist Episcopal Church complex begins in 1878, when frontier Swedish pioneers, built what was called by Rev. Carl Charnquist "En Torv Katedral" (A Sod Cathedral) (Strombom: 1944).

The sod cathedral was built as a community effort, with the majority of the constructors ascribing to the Lutheran faith. A year later, due to an "organizational disagreement" (Strombom: 1944), one half of the members withdrew from the church to form a Christian fellowship of the Wesleyan persuasion. By 1882, the group had increased sufficiently that the Kansas-Nebraska District of the Northwest Swedish Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church sent Rev. Carl Charnquist to have charge over the group on a full time basis. By 1883, the nucleus formed by the split from the Lutheran group had crystalized into the officially organized congregation of Salem Methodist Episcopal Church. This same year a parsonage was built and by mid-summners day, 1884, a small frame church building was erected.

Permanence seemed to be recognized at this time by the building of the parsonage. Establishment of a pastoral living arrangement insured a growth of the congregation and of the community. Rev. Charnquist describes the gathering of the subscriptions as, "We were well received and found most all of them (farmers) glad to hear that a church was to be organized. . . ." (Strombom: 1944).

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By 1898, the 1884 church building proved to be incapable of accommodating the needs of the growing Salem congregation. It was at this time that the present church was built and dedicated. July 31st, 1898, dedication day; was described as having "most imposing ceremonies, a large concourse of people witnessing the interesting service." (The Axtell Advertiser, August 12, 1898). By securing subscriptions of neighborhood farmers, the church was built nearly debt free, owing only \$217 of the \$3,300 value by dedication day. The District Superintendent, Rev. A. J. Lofgren wrote in the 1898 Conference Minutes that the "church is a landmark and an honor to the community and all they who contributed to its building." (Strombom: 1944).

The school building was constructed at the Swedish community of Carter, Nebraska, forty miles southwest of its present site. In 1880, a sod schoolhouse was erected, replaced by a frame building in 1893. In 1910, the present school building was constructed. The school housed several generations of Swedish school children until consolidation closed its doors in 1974. In 1978, John Fletcher Christian College purchased the building and moved it to its present site for use as a college classroom.

Nebraska was dominated early in its history by ethnic immigration groups moving into the area. Salem Methodist Episcopal Church complex represents their Victorian influences expressed in vernacular architectural form.

Salem Methodist Episcopal Church displays a restrained Carpenter Gothic Revival mode of styling applied to the Akron plan format. The Gothic motif is characterized in Salem M. E. Church by the high-spired tower with original weathervane, the stained glass lancet windows and overall vertical emphasis of roof pitch, tower and windows. The church has been for the most part restored to its 1898 condition, retaining original pews, altar rail, pulpit and 1914 pressed tin walls and ceiling covering.

The "Akron plan", originally designed to meet the needs of Sunday schools alone, has naturally been modified to meet the needs of different congregations. Since the Akron Plan is an American fabrication, and is without roots in Revival style reproductions, the Akron Plan has proved conducive to many types of stylistic manipulations in its three-dimensional form. Gothic and Romanesque Revival, Queen Anne, Italianate and Shingle styles are all examples in Nebraska of Revival styling applied in form to Akron plans. The Akron plan here is adopted to more general usage; Sunday School rooms adjacent to the nave instead of classrooms off a central Sunday School area.

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The parsonage complements the church in its Victorian flavor. While the financial structure of the day didn't allow extravagance, the parsonage displays what is perhaps the typical Swedish immigrant residential design, corner periphery rooms, central chimney and cross gabled roof. The porch addition also displays fine Eastlake inspired columns, brackets, roof-cresting and balustrades.

The old frame Carter school also reflects a restrained Victorian influence. Hoodmold and keystone details adorning the arched entry, tall windows and the steep pitch of hip roof give the school buildings its Victorian flair.

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