

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received DEC 31 1987  
date entered JAN -7 1988

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Zion Presbyterian Church

(NeHBS # CX00-12)

and/or common Same

2. Location

street & number N/A

N/A not for publication

city, town Clarkson

vicinity of

state Nebraska

code 31

county Colfax

code 037

3. Classification

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: social

4. Owner of Property

see continuation sheet - (cemetery)

name Zion Church Preservation Society, c/o Mrs. Henry Hamernik

street & number N/A

city, town Clarkson

N/A vicinity of

state Nebraska 68629

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Register of Deeds

street & number Colfax County Courthouse

city, town Schuyler

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

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date <u>N/A</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

## Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Zion Presbyterian Church is situated in a rural setting near Clarkson, Nebraska, a small town located in the northern portion of Colfax County. Designed by a Czech architect, the vernacular frame church building was constructed in 1887-88, and features a central entrance tower with a cast iron bell. The nomination also includes the church cemetery, which is located directly south of the church building, and two frame privies, located north of the church building (one contributing site and three contributing buildings). Structural and historical integrity has been preserved.

Zion Presbyterian Church is located about 5 miles southeast of Clarkson (1980 population 817) in northeastern Nebraska. Built in 1887-88 at a cost of \$1,594.20, this frame church measures 14.70 by 8.62 meters. The building was designed by M. D. Flechor, a Czech architect, about whom no information is readily available. The church is situated on a brick foundation, features a gabled roof and has a central entrance tower which houses a cast iron bell.

Zion Church is of simple design with corner pilasters and round-arched windows providing some ornamentation. A side entrance into the church and a cellar entryway to the basement are located on the east facade of the building. A secondary exterior basement entrance is found on the front facade of the structure. A miniscule rose window set into the tower carries through with the curvilinear design of the window and front door hoods.

The interior of the church is in near original condition. Tongue and groove wainscotting lines much of the chancel area, which displays a more elaborate paneling ornamented with arches set in relief. A chancel rail is also faced with this same motif, as is the balcony balustrade (see photos #9, 10, 11). The altar pews and light fixtures are all original to the structure, however the ceiling has been covered with asbestos tiles. A center aisle leading to the chancel area separates the nave which can be closed off from the vestibule with double doors. A stairway in the southwest corner of the church rises to the balcony. From the balcony, access to the belfry is gained through a door above the vestibule (photo #12). The church sets on a full basement which houses a furnace room and large social hall.

The nomination also includes the church cemetery, (see photo #'s 1, 7, 8) located just south and across the county road from the church building. Zion Church once provided its pastor with a residence, however the manse was moved to an area farmstead in March of 1954 after the well on the church property went dry. There are also two frame outhouses (see photo #6) directly north of the church.

The church has been in the care of the Zion Cemetery Association since 1975 when the last regular services were held, though the property was actually owned by the Homestead Presbytery. The church property was recently purchased by the Zion Church Preservation Society, a group of former Zion members who organized and formed a corporation to preserve the Zion Church. The cemetery property is

## 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 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 type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1937	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) ethnic

**Specific dates** 1887-1937 **Builder/Architect** M. D. Flechor

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Zion Presbyterian Church is significant, on a state level, in the area of religion (Criterion A) and ethnicity, as the first Czech Presbyterian Church in Nebraska and one of a very few in this section of the country. The church is significant in the area of architecture (Criterion C) for its vernacular, romantic emulation of the Czech National spirit in design. The period of significance is derived from the original construction date (1887-88) of the building through 1937, the last year in which the property continues to meet the 50 year criterion.

Czech Protestants can be traced to the Bohemian Brethren, an organization formed after John Hus was burned at the stake in 1415. The Battle of White Mountain, which took place in 1620, left Czech protestants bitterly persecuted and by the 18th century many thousands left their homeland and came to America where they organized the Moravian Church. In 1790, Austrian Emperor Joseph II issued the Patent of Toleration which allowed Czech protestants to organize their own Evangelical Reformed Church in Bohemia and Moravia. It was from these congregations that the Protestant emigrants came to Nebraska in the late 19th century. Due to a lack of ordained Czech protestant ministers, families often conducted their own worship services. Only twelve congregations were organized in Nebraska and by 1967 only eight remained.

The records for Nebraska Czech protestants are sparse, however available materials yield the following information.

In 1879, several Bohemian and Moravian protestant families came to the Clarkson community by way of eastern Iowa. These families filed homestead claims and began meeting in homes for religious services. Soon the need for a cemetery led to the donation of land by Joseph Smatlan for this purpose. The cemetery was dedicated in June 1875 by Reverend Frank Kun who came to Nebraska from Ely, Iowa, to visit his friends. Reverend Kun returned once or twice each year for several years to conduct services and help the settlers organize their congregation properly. A church council was created and by the late 1880's, membership was over 100 and the need for a suitable place of worship could not be ignored.

Joseph Novotny donated land in early 1887 for a building site for a church and manse and construction began in June. The building was completed in 1888 and was dedicated in the fall of 1889. Services were conducted in the Czech language until 1939, when due to pressure from younger members, the English language was adopted.

By 1964, population in this rural area had dwindled and Zion's church membership was down to 44. Membership continued to decline until finally on December 28, 1975, the last worship service was held for a congregation of 25.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property approximately 4 acres

Quadrangle name Clarkson, Nebr.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

A	<u>1</u> <u>4</u>	<u>6</u> <u>6</u> <u>1</u> <u>5</u> <u>3</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>1</u> <u>6</u> <u>3</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

D			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

E			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

F			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

G			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

H			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

### Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	<u>N/A</u>	code	county	code
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state	<u>N/A</u>	code	county	code
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# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title	<u>D. Murphy, Architect;</u> <u>Janet Jeffries Spencer, Cultural Historian;/</u>		<u>Joni Gilkerson, Technical</u> <u>Editor and additions</u>
organization	<u>Nebraska State Historical Society</u>	date	<u>February 1984/Revised August 1987</u>
street & number	<u>1500 "R" Street/P.O. Box 82554</u>	telephone	<u>(402) 471-4787</u>
city or town	<u>Lincoln</u>	state	<u>Nebraska</u>

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national     state     local

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 James A. Carson

title Director, Nebraska State Historical Society date December 22, 1987

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Melvin S. Bryan    1-7-88  
Keeper of the National Register    date

Attest:

Chief of Registration

date

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet

Owner of Property

Item number 4

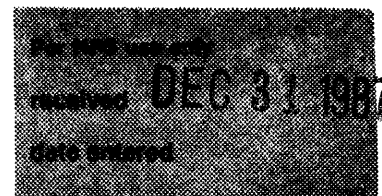
Page 2

Cemetery

Zion Cemetery Association  
c/o Riley Telecky, President  
Route 1  
Clarkson, Nebraska 68629

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet Description

Item number 7

Page 2

still owned by the Zion Cemetery Association. The church will be used for various religious and social functions.

The National Register Nomination Form was initially prepared in 1984 by the Nebraska Historic Preservation staff, however, lack of owner consent prevented any further action on the property at that time. The new owners (Zion Church Preservation Society) of the church property are now requesting National Register listing.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received 10/23/87

date entered

Continuation sheet

Significance

Item number

8

Page

2

The Zion Presbyterian Church is significant in the area of religion as the first Czech Protestant Church in Nebraska. There were very few Czech Protestants in the entire midwestern and plains region of the United States. The majority of Czech settlers in Nebraska were Catholics or "Freethinkers", so this Presbyterian element was a rarity in this state.

Zion Church represents a distinct enough architectural entity to be assessed with vernacular architectural significance. Formally of course, the church is representative of a type which was built throughout the state, and by many different denominations--e.g., the basic gabled rectangular sanctuary section punctuated with a semi-integral central entrance tower. The execution of the type, however, especially in the fitting of its decorative motifs, places the building in special relationship to other products of its type.

It should be said that while the church does exactly correspond to the formal requirements of its type, it does also impart a distinct if not somewhat intangible character as a result of the manipulation of its form which sets the building apart from the more standard versions of the type. Certainly the motifs used to decorate the exterior contribute to this character, but even the design of the tower, with its pent roof section supporting a shingled belfry, and especially the inset bonnet-spire crowning the hip roof of the belfry, contribute substantially to the character. The effect is quite medieval and Continental. Assessments of this kind cannot await the completion of intensive state-wide surveys, especially given the primary nature of the research required to finally interpret the vernacular architecture of a heterogeneous state.<sup>1</sup> Suffice it to say at this point that the character of Zion Church likely relates to a desire to emulate the Czech National spirit in architecture, especially with its Czech architect, a desire which is repeatedly manifest in the Bohemian-Nebraskan landscape, particularly in major public buildings.<sup>2</sup>

The decorative motifs employed reinforce the notion. On the exterior, the vertical and hood-molded round-arched windows and door, especially as executed in wood, set the theme for the rest of the decoration which includes the gentle S-curve of both the front masonry balustrade and the pipe-rail at the rear door. The curvilinear theme is carried through to the inside, focusing in the area of the lectern where the segmental arch on the back wall is a vertical projection of the lectern railing and platform. The cove where the ceiling meets the wall completes the repertoire.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received 10/23/87

date entered

Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8

Page 3

One would hesitate to apply a stylistic label to the building. Certainly it would not be called Romanesque on the basis of the use of round arches, or any other of the standard Anglo-American styles. Again the problems of heterogeneity confound the researcher, at least in this early stage of inquiry. Perhaps the repeated use of the curve suggests a vague sort of vernacular Baroque character which, because of its associations with National Romanticism<sup>3</sup>, continued to be popular well into the nineteenth century in the Bohemian and Moravian countryside.<sup>4</sup>

1. See Frederick Luebke. "Ethnic Group Settlement on the Great Plains." Western Historical Quarterly, 8:4 (1977), pp. 405-430.
2. cf. Janet Jefries, "Zapadni Cesko-Bratrske Jednoty (Z.C.B.J.) Hall, "National Register of Historic Places--Inventory Nomination Form (Niobrara, Knox Co., Nebr.) Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, 1975; D. Murphy, "Rad Sladkovsky cis. 8 Z.C.B.J.," National Register of Historic Places--Inventory Nomination Form (Pischelville, Knox Co. Nebr.) Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, March 4, 1981.
3. Zdenek Stary, "Prague in European History," Paper presented to the Missouri Valley History Conference, Omaha, Nebr., March 10, 1983.
4. H. J. Hansen (Ed.). European Folk Art in Europe and in the Americas. New York & Toronto: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1967, p. 107.



**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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Continuation sheet    Bibliography    Item number    9    Page    2

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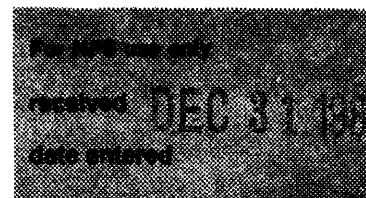
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Rosicky, Rose, A History of Czechs (Bohemians) in Nebraska, Omaha,  
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**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Verbal Boundary description and justification

Continuation sheet

Item number

10

Page 1

The church property is described as: Commencing at the Southwest Corner of the West Half of the Southwest Quarter ( $W\frac{1}{2}SW\frac{1}{4}$ ) of Section Twenty-three (23), Township Twenty (20), Range Three (3), East of the 6th P.M. in Colfax County, Nebraska, and East Twenty-nine (29) rods, thence North Fifteen (15) rods, thence West Twenty-nine (29) rods, thence South Fifteen (15) rods to the place of beginning. Including all of the historically associated real estate.

The cemetery property is described as: Commencing at the northwest corner of the West Half of the Northwest Quarter of Section Twenty-six (26), Township Twenty (20), North, Range Three (3), East of the 6th P.M., in Colfax County, Nebraska, and running thence east fourteen and one-half ( $14\frac{1}{2}$ ) rods, thence south fifteen (15) rods, thence west fourteen and one-half ( $14\frac{1}{2}$ ) rods, thence north fifteen (15) rods to the place of beginning. Including all of the historically associated real estate.